

SUBJECT TO DEBATE

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INAUGURATION DAY 2009

Leadership, Security, and Logistics: Challenges for Police Chiefs

By Chuck Wexler

OVER THE YEARS I'VE NOTICED THAT ONE OF THE challenges of being a police chief is that chiefs must always focus on "the big picture," but never forget to keep an eye on the little details that can quickly turn into problems if they aren't handled well. I saw this phenomenon on Inauguration Day.

First, a little background: PERF has been studying the ways in which the U.S. Secret Service works with local police agencies on big events, which are called National Special Security Events (NSSE). Of course, Inauguration Day 2009 was about the biggest NSSE that could be imagined, especially given the predictions, which turned out to be accurate, that the swearing-in of President Obama would attract a bigger crowd than any previous Inauguration.

So PERF worked closely with the leaders of a few of the major law enforcement agencies involved in the Inauguration to capture their work on January 20. The team of PERF staffers included Jerry Murphy, who worked with the U.S. Park Police, which was responsible for the Mall area where most of the estimated 1.8 million people in attendance gathered. Rebecca Neuburger was embedded with the Minneapolis Police Department, which helped the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Police Department with the Parade route. And

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A Note on PERF's Inauguration Coverage

This issue of *Subject to Debate* describes several aspects of the law enforcement role in ensuring the peaceful Inauguration of President Obama on January 20. Books could be written on this subject. Dozens of federal agencies, with support from scores of local police departments, collaborated on providing security for the Inauguration, the Inaugural Parade, and many related events, and the task of coordinating all of those agencies' operations was monumental. PERF's coverage is by no means comprehensive; this issue of *Subject to Debate* merely provides a few snapshots of police activities from several angles.

PERF would like to acknowledge the enormous contributions made by all of the agencies, including the Secret Service, Washington's Metropolitan Police Department, the U.S. Capitol Police, the U.S. Park Police, the FBI, and the many local, county, and state police departments and other agencies that helped make the Inauguration a safe and peaceful event.

Bill Tegeler and I covered the U.S. Capitol Police, which was responsible for the area surrounding the Capitol Building, including the stage where the new President and Vice-President took their oaths of office. All of these agencies and many more worked under the U.S. Secret Service.

We all were given an amazing degree of access to key locations and police officials who helped to make the Inauguration the success that it was. With the exception of some significant logistical challenges, in particular a crowd control problem that resulted in many people with coveted tickets being unable to reach their seats, Inauguration Day, thankfully, went very smoothly.

For my part, I'd like to thank the people at the U.S. Capitol Police and the U.S. Senate Office of the Sergeant at Arms for their willingness to accommodate PERF and allow us into their inner sanctum—no small matter on a day when there was an extremely high sensitivity to security issues all across the capital city. In addition to giving Bill Tegeler and me access on Inauguration Day, they spent time with us on the days running up to the Inauguration.

I also would like to thank MPD Chief Cathy Lanier for spending considerable time with me before Inauguration Day discussing the challenges in planning for this extraordinary NSSE.

Thanks also to Deputy Chief Bill Lynch of the U.S. Park Police for allowing PERF to trail him and capture his activities on Inauguration Day.

Following is an account of my experiences on Inauguration Day:

FROM THE MOMENT I OPENED MY EYES ON Inauguration Day, it was not a typical workday; for one thing, I woke up on the couch in my office at PERF headquarters. (For months leading up to Inauguration Day, officials had been warning of possibly nightmarish travel conditions for anyone trying to get into downtown Washington, so several of us spent the night of January 19 at PERF's offices.)

I left PERF at 5:30 a.m. and walked across the street to our Metro subway system, and found that even at that hour—more than six hours before the Inauguration was to happen—the trains were already pretty well packed with passengers. But the trains were moving, and 15 minutes later I exited at Union Station, and first encountered the hordes of people making their way to the Inauguration site on the west side of the Capitol Building.

Shortly before 6 a.m., I met Bill Tegeler at the U.S. Capitol Police headquarters and we went to the Command Center. Chief Phil Morse, a 24-year veteran of the force, was already there, front and center on the inner perimeter. Next to him was Assistant Chief Dan Nichols, and seated next to him were the top Secret Service

representative and a number of other officials from the Capitol Police and other agencies. Chief Morse kindly allowed me to sit directly behind him in the Command Center and shadow him throughout this historic morning.

I noticed that Morse and Nichols worked very closely together. They had a clear division of labor. Assistant Chief Nichols was the incident commander, on the radio talking with the multitude of units in the field. (See Bill Tegeler's account on page 4 of this issue for a detailed account of the Assistant Chief's activities.) Chief Morse was more like the trouble-shooter, looking at the big picture and how the pieces were fitting together.

Shortly after 6:00 a.m., I heard Nichols say that the U.S. Park Police had just closed the Mall between 4th and 7th Streets, because the crowd at the Mall had already gotten pretty large. What happened then was a cascading series of events that resulted in people streaming down Independence Avenue, the main east-west boulevard that leads to the south side of the Capitol.

At 6:37 a.m., Dan said, "We just lost Independence Avenue"—meaning that pedestrians had taken over the street. This caused quite a bit of consternation in the Command Center. Like most of the streets anywhere near the Capitol or the White House, Independence Avenue was closed to general traffic on Inauguration Day. However, the avenue was being used as a main artery to the Capitol Building for Inaugural support and operations vehicles, as well as the route for members of Congress to reach the Inauguration.

Reports start coming in that a number of vehicles on Independence Avenue could not move; they were trapped by the thousands of pedestrians who had taken over the street.

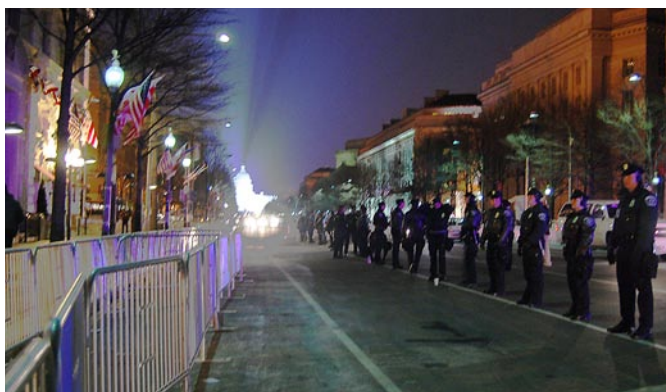
At about 6:45 a.m., Chief Morse took off his headset and said, "Come on. We need to go rescue these folks."

So we headed out in the Chief's car, and as we made the turn onto Independence, we encountered thousands of people moving right at us toward the Capitol. Even in a police car, we could hardly move.

So the chief jumped out and we walked through the crowd and began to see a lot of cars with placards identifying them as authorized and needed at the Capitol. The chief stopped at each car and reassured the drivers. As we moved through the crowd, I counted about 40 cars that were trapped in the throngs of people.

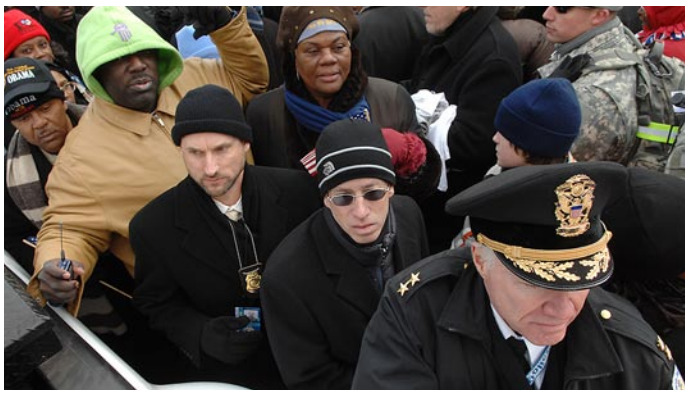
The chief then assembled the officers in the area and methodically went about getting each car to inch forward, bumper-to-bumper with the car ahead, gently asking pedestrians to move to one side or the other, and then telling the drivers to be patient. (Fortunately, the mood of the crowd on Inauguration Day was generally friendly and orderly, so no one started climbing over the cars.) After about 30 minutes, Chief Morse had the 40 cars assembled in a tight line. The chief and his officers then went to

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Securing the Inaugural Parade route began before sunrise on January 20.

PHOTOS BY REBECCA NEUBURGER



RIGHT: Members of the Minnesota State Patrol on the Inaugural Parade route

U.S. Park Police: Policing America's Backyard

By Jerry Murphy

IT WAS COLD AND IT WAS CROWDED, BUT ON JANUARY 20, 2009, Deputy Chief Bill Lynch of the U.S. Park Police had the patience of Job. Literally hundreds, if not thousands, of people stopped him to ask questions, to get directions, or to summon help for the sick or injured as he made his way around the National Mall. In every instance, he provided an answer, gave directions, and otherwise good-naturedly responded to the request.

The U.S. Park Police is a federal agency, but it really resembles a city or county police department in structure and mission, and probably has as much experience as any law enforcement agency in the country in managing crowds. After spending 12 hours with Bill Lynch on January 20, I walked away (no one drove that day) impressed by the performance of the U.S. Park Police and its ability to manage large crowds.

In fact, large isn't an adequate word to describe the gathering that day. "Historic" is the better term, because never before had so many people gathered on the Mall—"America's Backyard." The D.C. government estimated that 1.8 million people gathered to witness President Barack Obama's Inauguration. The overwhelming majority of them were neither dignitaries nor invited guests with access to the grounds of the U.S. Capitol. They were ordinary folks who gathered on the open spaces of the Mall, beginning at 4th Street west to the Washington Monument and on to the Lincoln Memorial—a distance of almost 2 miles.

The massive crowds were orderly and festive. Before dawn they streamed onto the Mall moving eastward, with the earliest arrivals getting as close to the Capitol as possible. As each "panel" of the Mall filled with spectators from east to west, the Park Police cordoned it off with bicycle rack barriers and directed visitors to the next panel. At 9:30 a.m. we went to the top of the Washington Monument to observe the crowds. From an altitude of 500 feet we watched Park Police officers direct rivers of people west down Independence Avenue and north along cross streets until each successive panel was filled, creating a vast sea of celebrants.

About every tenth of a mile, from the Capitol to the Lincoln Memorial, was a Jumbotron with speakers (which afforded surprisingly good picture quality and sound), allowing the crowds to see and hear the Inauguration ceremony.


As people waited for hours for the Inauguration to begin, a tape of the "We Are One" Inaugural Celebration that had been held

at the Lincoln Memorial on Sunday, January 18, featuring many performers such as Beyonce, Stevie Wonder, and Bruce Springsteen, was re-broadcast over the Jumbotrons. This kept the crowds occupied and entertained.

By the time President Obama finished his Inaugural address around 12:30 p.m., much of the crowd had been out in the cold (the wind chill was in the teens) for at least six or seven hours. As soon as he said "God Bless America," many in the crowd began to exit the Mall. Because all access to the north was blocked by fencing and barriers (to keep the Mall crowd from infringing on the parade route), the crowd was forced to exit the mall to the south, using the small number of cross streets that bisect the mall.

This exodus created the day's most frightening moments that I witnessed. The result was human gridlock, with different people wanting to go south, east, or west at the same time. I stood in one spot for almost five minutes. While my feet moved, I didn't make any headway, and I was literally turned in circles. My group of four became separated at one point, not because we wandered off in different directions but because we had no choice but to move with the flow of the crowd. Finally, we found refuge against a Park Police truck (see top left photo). This mass exiting could have led to trampling if it weren't for the good nature of those in attendance.

One of the amazing outcomes of the day was that neither the Park Police—nor any other law enforcement agency—made any arrests. The day was not without its glitches, however. In most circumstances, the problems occurred outside the geographic area of responsibility of the Park Police, but the Park Police had to deal with the consequences. For a variety of reasons several streets were closed, which resulted in people with tickets to the Capitol lawn finding themselves wandering in circles looking for access points to the Capitol grounds. After the Inauguration was over, the exiting crowd quickly filled Metro subway stations, so to prevent overcrowding or even trampling, officials temporarily closed certain stations, forcing people to walk much further than they had planned. Many people became separated from their groups. For local residents, this was generally a less significant problem, but for out-of-town visitors who didn't know their way around Washington, this caused tears and panic for some. Too many people didn't dress properly for the bitter cold, and a good number needed medical attention as a result.

Seemingly every one of these people who was lost, separated, or in need of medical attention approached Deputy Chief Bill Lynch seeking help and directions, and he tirelessly obliged them. 

Jerry Murphy is PERF's Director of Homeland Security and Development.

U.S. Capitol Police: Ensuring the Peaceful Transition of Power

By Bill Tegeler

THE UNITED STATES CAPITOL POLICE (USCP) WAS created by Congress in 1828 in order to provide security in the Capitol Building, following an assault on John Quincy Adams' son in the Capitol Rotunda. Today the USCP has exclusive jurisdiction within the Capitol buildings and concurrent authority with fellow police agencies in an area of approximately 200 blocks around the Capitol.

The Capitol Police plays a unique role in our nation's law enforcement community. Like a municipal police department, the 1,700 sworn and 350 civilian members of the USCP provide basic policing services for Congressional buildings, parks, and thoroughfares. Like the FBI, although not to the same extent, the Capitol Police play an active role in the collection and analysis of, and response to, criminal information and terrorist threats, in order to protect the U.S. government and its citizens. Like the U.S. Secret Service, the USCP provides protection to government officials—in the case of USCP, to the members of Congress and their families. In order to accomplish these various tasks, the USCP works in partnership with many other federal, state and local agencies.

The distinctive mission of the United States Capitol Police is never more evident than during the time leading up to a Presidential Inauguration. As USCP Assistant Chief Dan Nichols said, "It is important for the world to see the peaceful transition of the democratic government of the United States of America."

In preparation for what was correctly anticipated to be the most highly attended Presidential Inauguration ever, the USCP hosted a Table Top Exercise (TTX) on January 8. The TTX began with all of the participating agencies identifying their core mission or operational focus, their assets and resources that would be deployed, and the location and hours of their command posts. This information helped everyone to understand and delineate the lines of responsibilities for each agency.

Agencies participating in this training exercise included the USCP; the U.S. Secret Service; the FBI; the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Police Department (MPD); the U.S. Park Police; the U.S. Marshals Service; the Air Force, Army, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard; the Department of Defense Joint Force Headquarters, National Capital Region; the Federal Aviation Administration; the Transportation Security Administration; FEMA; Metro Transit

Police; Amtrak Police; the Washington, D.C. Fire Department; and many others.

Potential threats and issues discussed at the TTX included bomb threats and suspicious packages; Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Devices (VBIEDs, or "car bombs"); hazardous materials and crowd evacuation; fire-fighting capabilities; and a medical emergency event.

In final preparation for the event, a full Inauguration rehearsal was conducted at the Capitol on January 18 to test plans, the timing of events, and protocol. The following night, 15 hours before President-Elect Obama would be sworn in, Capitol Police Chief

Phillip Morse and Metropolitan Police Chief Cathy Lanier met one last time to review their operational plans and coordinate the activities of the men and women of their departments.

The USCP Command Center opened at approximately 5:00 a.m. on Inauguration Day. Inside the center were representatives from many agencies, watching large video screens that showed interior and exterior views from security cameras throughout the Capitol.

Following is a timeline of what I heard and saw at the Command Center. This partial

list of reports that came in to the Command Center is intended to provide an idea of the variety of issues and tasks that can come up during a major event. Not all of the reports had detailed information or even correct information, but they all needed to be checked out and handled.

6:15 a.m. – The Park Police report that the Mall is already filled to capacity in the general viewing area from 4th Street to 7th Street.

6:22 a.m. – Members of Congress begin to arrive, but reports come in that some are having problems gaining admittance into secured areas.

6:30 a.m. – Heavy crowds prevent TSA screeners from getting to the "Silver Ticket" entry point as scheduled.

6:35 a.m. – Pedestrians trying to get a good vantage point take over Independence Avenue between 4th and 7th Streets.

6:45 a.m. – A report comes in of some type of "event" occurring at the Smithsonian. Details are not available, but the report is investigated.



Preparations at the Inauguration rehearsal on January 18

7:12 a.m. – Marine One lands in the East Zone of the Capitol, to serve later when President Bush leaves following the Inauguration.

7:15 a.m. – A report of a fatal traffic accident on Route 66 in Virginia comes in.

7:55 a.m. – Electrical power is lost at half of the metal detectors at the Blue ticket-holder gate; the Architect of the Capitol responds to investigate.

7:58 a.m. – Independence Avenue and 14th Street are shut down due to pedestrians, creating further complications for members of Congress trying to drive to the Capitol.

8:08 a.m. – The Mall is reported to be filled to capacity all the way to 12th Street.

8:36 a.m. – The Architect of the Capitol is unable to fix the electrical generator problem at the Blue gate, so a replacement generator that was prestaged at a nearby location is sent to the area.

8:50 a.m. – Armed federal marshals are reported to be denied entry into the Capitol area because they lack special credentials to be carrying weapons into the secured zone.

9:02 a.m. – A report comes in of “mass casualties” at Lafayette Park, across Pennsylvania Avenue from the White House. The report proves to be false.

9:06 a.m. – A report of sick people getting off the escalator at the Farragut North Metro station, near the White House, proves to be false.

9:35 a.m. – A report comes in of a woman being struck by a train at the Gallery Place Metro Station. Fortunately, the woman is not seriously injured, and the Metro line is quickly put back into service.

9:57 a.m. – Nextel and Sprint frequencies appear to be jammed, making some communications difficult.

10:10 a.m. – Secret Service reports a suspicious package sitting on the Inauguration platform. The package is found not to be a threat.

10:50 a.m. – The Presidential motorcade leaves the White House for the Capitol.

11:00 a.m. – President Bush and President-Elect Obama arrive at the Capitol as scheduled, and are welcomed by Senate Sergeant at Arms Terry Gainer, who escorts them into the building.

11:12 a.m. – The Northwest Drive area of the Capitol complex is reported to be overwhelmed. Motors are dispatched to help with crowd control.

11:16 a.m. – Former Presidents begin to be seated on the viewing platform.

11:43 a.m. – President-Elect Obama enters onto the Inauguration platform, and Sen. Dianne Feinstein shortly thereafter begins the ceremony.

11:58 a.m. – Joseph R. Biden, Jr. is sworn in as Vice President.

12:00 noon – As the ceremonies are conducted, the Command Center continues its work. Assistant Chief Nichols advises

officers to pat down spectators at the Blue ticket gate and to continue to allow ticket holders entry. As Yo-Yo Ma plays his cello, officers are asking for assistance and permission to open gates to relieve pressure from the crowds attempting to view the Inauguration. Secret Service personnel at those locations are instructed by the Assistant Chief to continue screening those coming through the gates. USCP officers are told to “give very clear instructions to the crowd.”

12:05 p.m. – Barack Obama is sworn in as the 44th President of the United States.

12:07 p.m. – Instructions are given to break down all gates to allow reverse crowd flow, and personnel working the magnetometer stations may clear.

1:33 p.m. – Following the President’s Inaugural address, officers are redeployed from Constitution Avenue to 3rd Street and are directed to secure the east side of the Capitol for the departure of “POTUS” (President Of The United States), as President Obama is now called.

2:00 p.m. – The Command Center announces the following statistics: From 3:00 a.m. January 19 to noon on January 20, 60 medical emergencies were handled with no deaths. As of 2:00 p.m., the Metro system has accommodated 632,000 passengers.

2:12 p.m. – The Command Center receives a report that several pedestrians have been hit by a vehicle on the 14th Street bridge that links Washington, D.C. and Virginia.

2:20 p.m. – A bomb threat is received at the 911 center. The threat is found to be a hoax.

2:35 p.m. – During the luncheon in Statuary Hall, Command Center personnel respond to a Senator’s illness and work on deconflicting the President’s planned movements with the medical response.

3:15 p.m. – Assistant Chief Nichols issues a radio advisory to prepare for the President’s departure.

3:24 p.m. – President Obama and the First Lady enter the Presidential limousine to leave the Capitol. Eleven minutes later, the Presidential motorcade enters onto Constitution Avenue.

3:41 p.m. – The Command Center contacts the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Police Department’s Joint Operations Center to advise them that a large group of friendly pedestrians are following the Presidential car along the sidewalk and may soon run into the barrier on Pennsylvania Avenue.

3:35 p.m. – The Presidential caravan enters onto Pennsylvania Avenue and approaches 7th Street, the boundary at which the Metropolitan Police Department assumes control of the event. At 6th Street, the President’s car stops, and the President and First Lady get out and begin to walk the parade route. All in the Command Center watch and wait until the First Couple passes 7th Street.

4:09 p.m. – Assistant Chief Nichols declares the Command Center shut down and thanks everyone, to spontaneous applause.

Bill Tegeler is PERF’s Deputy Director of Management Services.



the front of the line and opened up the crowd, directing the cars through the crowd to the Capitol.

By about 7:30, all of the cars had been freed, and the chief returned to his car and headed back to the Command Center. In the car, he told me, “You can’t always do this from the Command Center. Sometimes you just have to go out there, figure it out, and get people moving.”

It was impressive. Here was the chief of police taking charge personally on a problem that cropped up unexpectedly, as everyone else was consumed with their predetermined assignments.

We weren’t in the Command Center for more than a few minutes when the chief again decided he needed to go out, because a crowd of people was pushing up against a fence. So we drove to an area near the Capitol Reflecting Pool, and there were thousands of people up against the fence, with open space on the other side. I watched as the chief quietly reassured the people that this was about as far as they could go and that he appreciated their patience. He also reassured his officers.

Many who were present on Inauguration Day commented that it was a good thing that the mood of the crowd was peaceful, because in many areas people were packed together so tightly that even a minor incident could have resulted in a stampede. I noticed that as the crowd pushed up against one another and the fence, the fact that the chief was there, calming everyone, seemed to reduce the overall tension.

Chief Morse and I got back in the car and went to each of the posts surrounding the Capitol, and the chief spoke to his officers at each post. And then we went into the Capitol and the chief looked at the Inaugural stage, where one of the most historic Presidential inaugurations would happen within the hour.

By about 11:15 a.m., we were back at the Command Center, and the chief picked up his headset and looked at the monitors in front of him as dignitaries took their seats. By 12:05 p.m., the new leader of the free world had taken the oath of office. That was the end of Phase 1 for the U.S. Capitol Police. The next phase was the departure of Former President Bush by helicopter. And finally, Phase 3 involved President Obama leaving the Capitol by motorcade.

A FEW COMMENTS ON WHAT I SAW:

Police agencies now have sophisticated Command Centers to coordinate the work of multiple agencies involved in these events. And we have a great deal of technology that is able to transmit images of what is happening on the street.

Yet with all of these advances in technology, what I saw on Inauguration Day was that chiefs still need an intangible, instinctive capacity to understand that there are times when personal leadership is needed. Sometimes the television monitors at a



Command Center do not accurately reflect what is happening on the street. I saw this last summer in Minneapolis at the Republican National Convention, where the images of protesters on the television screens at the Command Center sometimes appeared more threatening than what was actually happening on the ground. Sometimes there is no substitute for actually “being there” to capture the mood of a situation. Other times, a Command Center may show a problem unfolding, but no one on the ground can see the big picture and know what to do. Police chiefs need to straddle a lot of different roles. That includes assessing the overall situation as well as the details, and knowing when it’s time to step up and lead without delay.


In the post-9/11 world, we have become preoccupied with security—for good reasons. Today, security at a Presidential Inauguration means guarding not only against snipers, but also against dirty bombs, Mumbai-like attacks, subway bombings, car bombs, IEDs, and other threats. And the historical nature of the 2009 Inauguration, with America’s first African-American President, brought an

even stronger sense that everyone needed to be concerned primarily with security. We also need to acknowledge that an NSSE of this magnitude—with 58 federal, state and local agencies working to provide security, using more than a dozen command centers—presents huge organizational challenges.

There is an inherent trade-off between security and logistical issues—in particular, managing the ability of people to move around as they wish,

or in some cases as they need to do. Security inherently involves things like funneling people through checkpoints, which can result in delays and inconvenience even if all the plans and systems work perfectly, which they rarely do.

We need to think more about the logistical aspects of NSSEs—not at the expense of security, but in addition to security. For thousands of people who spent Inauguration Day waiting in line in a tunnel rather than watching the proceedings, the day was disappointing. Many of these people had traveled great distances to be in Washington and attend the Inauguration, and I can appreciate how frustrating this day was for them. One of the challenges for law enforcement will be finding ways to ensure that logistical problems at big events, to the greatest extent possible, will be anticipated, planned for, and managed—and that police are well-positioned to respond quickly and effectively to *unanticipated* problems as well.

At the same time, we should not forget that most of the 38 million people who watched the 2009 Inauguration on television probably thought the entire day went perfectly, or pretty close to perfectly. And in fact, many aspects of the day did go remarkably well. Approximately 1.8 million people—a record number for an Inauguration—were able to attend; no one was seriously injured; and the Inauguration, the Parade, and related events took place without any disruptions. 

Plan to Attend PERF's Annual Meeting

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Obama Administration Officials Tell Us:

- The Changes that Police Chiefs Can Expect—on Policies, Issues, and Funding
- The Latest Details About the Stimulus Bill—Grant Opportunities, Procedures, Deadlines, and More

What I Have Learned About Policing and Handling Crises By Prof. George Kelling of Rutgers University, Co-Developer of the “Broken Windows” Theory

The Economic Crisis

- What Police Departments Are Experiencing with Budget Cuts and What They Are Doing About It
- The Need for Strategic Planning to Minimize Damage to Your Department
- Pensions, Unions, Mergers of Police Departments, and Other Issues
- The Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department’s Comprehensive, Proactive Approach to Managing the Crisis
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- The Controversy Over DNA Testing of Officers
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