



NCITE Project Summary

Understanding and Preparing for Terrorism Risks at Event Venues

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Tin Nguyen (PI), University of Nebraska at Omaha
Erin Kearns (Co-PI), University of Nebraska at Omaha

Large-scale sporting events like the 2026 FIFA World Cup and 2028 Los Angeles Olympics attract huge crowds and attention, making them appealing targets for violence. This project will equip event security practitioners with practical knowledge about threats to event venues and with a defensible way to judge whether security measures that worked at one event will work at another. The team will review existing evidence, compile open-source data on attacks and thwarted plots at large events (including international cases with U.S. persons present) and conduct interviews with event security personnel. Expected takeaways include threat profiles across venue types and guidance for transferring exercise/test-event learnings to mega-events. The results will inform tools and briefings for DHS components and federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial (FSLTT) partners to strengthen planning and on-the-ground operations.

Impact Statement

This research provides DHS operators (e.g., U.S. Secret Service, CISA Protective Security Advisors and Office of Bombing Prevention, Customs and Border Protection, NCTC Joint Counterterrorism Assessment Team) with evidence-based threat insights and a repeatable process to evaluate and adapt exercise/test-event lessons for mega-event security, improving resource allocation and protective postures ahead of upcoming U.S. mass gatherings.




Policy Impact

- Executive Order 14234, “Establishing the White House Task Force on the FIFA World Cup 2026” (Mar. 7, 2025): This project supplies data and practitioner-tested methods that support interagency planning, risk assessment, and transition from test events to World Cup operations.
- Executive Order 14328, “Establishing the White House Task Force on the 2028 Summer Olympics” (Aug. 5, 2025): This project speaks directly to interagency planning and risk assessment for mass gatherings like the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles and Oklahoma City.
- U.S. House Committee on Homeland Security, Task Force on Enhancing Security for Special Events in the United States (est. May 2025): Empirical results and translation products will provide oversight bodies with an evidence base on gaps, best practices, and intergovernmental coordination for mega-event security.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND DISCLAIMER

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 ncite.unomaha.edu
 ncite@unomaha.edu
 NCITE

End User Offices with Direct Operational Impact

DHS National Threat Evaluation and Reporting Program Office	Customs and Border Protection
Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency – Protective Security Advisors and Office of Bombing Prevention	Office of the Director of National Intelligence
2026 FIFA World Cup Task Force	2028 LA Olympic Games Task Force and CEO
DHS Science and Technology Directorate	

Expected Findings and Outputs

- A consolidated picture of terrorism and other human security threats at large sporting events, including patterns from both enacted and thwarted incidents and the contextual features of targeted venues.
- Identification of security measures that are needed, unneeded, wanted, or unwanted by practitioners, with examples tied to venue and event context.
- Evidence on how event risk managers judge the “success” of exercises and test events and when those results reliably transfer to different teams or larger, more complex events.
- Conditions (external, interpersonal, and individual) that shape preparedness perceptions and influence the translation of exercise findings into real-world operations.

NCITE Strategic Priority

Targets — This work directly focuses on protecting event venues and other soft targets at scale.

NCITE Operational Area of Excellence

Law Enforcement Partnerships — The project centers practitioner engagement and co-develops actionable products and briefings for ongoing operations.

Methodology

The project will generate a rapid evidence review; collect open-source data on attacks and thwarted plots at large events (including international incidents with U.S. persons); deploy a survey of event security personnel; and engage with security/risk-management. Sampling emphasizes practitioner stakeholders involved in large-event security planning. Analytic approaches include descriptive, comparative, and thematic analyses to generate translation products and operator-focused guidance.

Please visit the NCITE website for more information on the project at ncite.unomaha.edu

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