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There for you.

2024 SPECIAL REPORT:
Physical Security During An Election

Expect the unexpected and prepare for it all

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INTRODUCTION

Fair and free elections are a hallmark of American democracy.

As citizens cast ballots, their confidence in the value of their vote relies on the security and resilience of the infrastructure and processes that make elections possible.

In 2024, a partisan environment seethes with hostility and division, multiple wars are being waged overseas, and law enforcement eyes the risk of violence ahead of what could be an election unlike any other in American history.

Now more than ever, safety and security are bipartisan.

Now more than ever, Allied Universal is there for you®.

ABOUT

This report utilizes intelligence and experience to identify potential physical security threats that could impact the safety and operations of businesses and their assets in the U.S. during a presidential election.

It provides concerned security leaders with the information necessary to identify risks, prepare contingency plans and predict when and where to deploy resources.

These considerations are best leveraged by paying attention to significant election event dates.

ELECTION TIMELINE

National Conventions

July 15 – 18, 2024
Republican National Convention
in Milwaukee, Wisconsin

August 19 – 22, 2024
Democratic National Convention
in Chicago, Illinois

Presidential Debates

June 27, 2024
Atlanta, Georgia

September 10, 2024
TBD

Vice Presidential Debate

TBD

Voting & Transition Cycle

November 5, 2024
Election Day

December 11, 2024
Deadline for Appointment
of Electors

December 25, 2024
Vote of Electors in States

January 6, 2025
Congress Counts Electoral Votes

January 20, 2025
Presidential Inauguration

Physical Security Concerns By Election Event

National Conventions

As cities prepare for political conventions and the resulting influx of visitors and heightened media attention, it's crucial for businesses and security forces to be aware of the varied threats that could impact their operations and public safety.

These high-profile events attract massive in-person, television and social media audiences, making them attractive targets for individuals or groups seeking to disrupt proceedings or gain notoriety. Moreover, demonstrations, protests and marches are common and should be carefully monitored and managed to prevent them from escalating to violence.

The threat landscape for the conventions spans far wider than the event sites, necessitating security measures that extend beyond the immediate venues.

Overall, a robust and well-planned security strategy is imperative to address diverse threats and ensure that the conventions proceed without incident, safeguarding the public and maintaining the integrity of the democratic process.

CONSIDERATIONS

Local Impact

As Milwaukee and Chicago gear up for the 2024 National Conventions, local businesses and security forces prepare for possible impacts. The U.S. Secret Service is actively developing security plans in collaboration with law enforcement and has started outreach to businesses within the conventions' security perimeter to minimize disruptions while ensuring a safe and secure environment inside and outside the events.

Understanding the scope of security measures is crucial for local businesses and organizations. Increased security in and around the conventions may include rerouted traffic, restricted access areas and enhanced surveillance. To accommodate potential logistical constraints, businesses are advised to stay informed about security plans and consider adjusting operations – such as altering delivery schedules or operating hours – to accommodate potential logistical constraints . Refer to public announcements and resources provided by city officials and the Secret Service for updates on navigating the conventions smoothly and mitigating potential risks.

Many local businesses will extend their services to accommodate the needs of convention attendees. These plans range from increased staffing to special promotions. The presence of tens of thousands of visitors will likely boost local commerce and visibility. However, it also provides opportunities for bad actors to target businesses by taking advantage of extra traffic and crowding to divert attention away from activities such as property theft, vehicle theft, robbery, assault and destruction or vandalism.

Crowd Dynamics and Management

Political conventions attract large crowds including people who are very passionate about their opinions. While most demonstrations are peaceful, there is always a risk they could escalate into violent confrontations or attempts to disrupt event proceedings. The volatility of large groups, especially in politically charged atmospheres, increases the risk of disturbances. These disturbances can lead to collateral damage affecting nearby businesses, residents and bystanders. Effective crowd management strategies, such as designated protest zones and robust crowd control measures, are essential.

Public Disorder

Large events like these attract increased criminal activity, including narcotics and human trafficking, necessitating heightened vigilance by law enforcement and security personnel.

Insider Threats

Using volunteers and temporary staff introduces the risk of insider threats, including bad actors who could gain access to sensitive areas or information. To counteract insider threats, implementing thorough staff background checks and continuous monitoring are necessary steps. Vigilance is essential to prevent individuals trying to pass as authorized "security" or "authorized personnel" from exploiting security protocols to gain access.

Infrastructure Attacks

Infrastructure surrounding the convention sites (like government facilities, utilities, transportation networks and communication systems) could become targets for disrupting the convention or causing widespread chaos. Enhancing the physical security of infrastructure, along with increased surveillance and coordination with local law enforcement agencies, can help mitigate the risk of attacks.

Security Considerations Beyond Event Locations: National Conventions

The conventions' national impact and threat landscape extends beyond the hosting cities. The conventions can influence market movements, investor sentiments and consumer spending nationwide. Businesses should stay informed about the broader economic trends and be prepared to adapt strategies to capitalize on or mitigate the effects of these events.

Increased political activity and media coverage raise the risk of misinformation and disinformation campaigns attempting to influence public opinion and create social unrest. Businesses and individuals should rely on trusted and verified sources for news and information and be cautious about spreading unverified information.

MITIGATIONS

Access Control and Credential Management

Effective access control is crucial in preventing unauthorized entry managing safety and helping deflect incidents. Facilities with higher public visibility or high-value assets should consider implementing advanced access control systems–potentially with biometric or RFID technology–to ensure only authorized individuals enter sensitive areas.

Comprehensive Surveillance and Monitoring

A comprehensive network of surveillance cameras equipped with AI-driven analytics significantly enhances security by monitoring sites continuously, detecting anomalies in real time, and providing visual deterrents to potential intruders. Advanced cameras automatically assess unusual situations and, if necessary, alert security personnel or initiate an automated response.

Cameras provide a visible deterrent for bad actors, who can see that actions will be observed, recorded and reacted to. Cameras also provide the ability to record incidents for later investigation, and paired with monitoring services, communicate critical information to dispatched emergency responders.

Coordination with Local Authorities

Businesses and organizations can enhance security and response capabilities during major public events by establishing strong collaboration with local law enforcement fire departments, and emergency medical services. Public Order Management occurs when businesses collaborate with public entities to implement strategies that balance safety with the rights of the public. Public officials can help maintain order and minimize disruptions by issuing alerts, utilizing barriers, monitoring protest areas and crowd dispersal tactics. This allows businesses to continue operations smoothly, even during large public events.

Presidential Debates

Presidential debates are pivotal events in the election cycle that draw significant public and media attention. Historically, they are hosted on university campuses, which are usually open and accessible, thereby introducing distinct security challenges.

The vibrant academic environment combined with the politically charged atmosphere of the debates can heighten the potential for security issues.

By anticipating threats and implementing robust mitigation strategies, universities hosting debates can ensure they proceed smoothly and safely, minimizing disruptions and maintaining a secure environment.

CONSIDERATIONS

Local Impact
Hosting presidential debates at universities impacts the campus and surrounding community. They tend to significantly disrupt normal campus activities and local traffic, necessitating extensive security and logistical planning.

The open nature of campuses makes it challenging to secure perimeters and effectively manage access points. Without stringent access control, there is a risk of unauthorized entry, which could lead to potential disruptions or security breaches. Implementing measures like temporary fencing or increased security patrols can help mitigate the risk of unauthorized access, bolstering the overall security posture.

Campus Morale and Interpersonal Conflicts
The content of the debates can sometimes heighten tensions among students, faculty and staff within the hosting institution. Differing political views may lead to interpersonal conflicts, affect morale and incidents of hostility or violence.

Activism
Presidential debates often serve as a catalyst for student and public activism. While peaceful demonstrations are a fundamental aspect of free speech, the potential for heightened emotions surrounding the debates underscores the importance of proactive communication with all groups.

Demonstrations that escalate can pose serious security threats. Protest management is crucial to maintaining order and ensuring the safety of all participants. Providing designated areas for protests allows for expression while safeguarding the integrity of the debate venue and ensuring the safety of attendees.

Security Considerations Beyond Event Locations: Presidential Debates
While the physical security concerns of presidential debates primarily affect the host locations, the impact extends well beyond the confines of campuses. The national implications are significant, encompassing cybersecurity, economic factors, and the proliferation of disinformation.

The debates can influence market sentiments and economic decisions on a national scale. Customer behavior might fluctuate based on the perceived outcomes of debates or policy positions articulated by the candidates. Businesses across the country, especially those in the financial services and media sectors, need to prepare for potential volatility and adjust their security and communications strategies accordingly.

With the high stakes of presidential elections, they are prime targets for disinformation campaigns designed to mislead voters, sow societal discord and undermine confidence in the electoral process. The spread of false information can have far-reaching effects, influence public opinion and potentially impact voter behavior across the nation.

MITIGATIONS

Integration of Campus Security Forces
Collaborating closely with university security teams is essential to fortify existing security measures. This involves sharing intelligence, aligning security protocols, and conducting joint security drills to ensure readiness against potential threats.

Advanced Access Control Systems
Implementing access control systems at all entry points can significantly enhance security. These systems help monitor and control foot traffic, ensuring only authorized personnel and attendees access sensitive areas.

Weapons and Explosives Detection
Implementing a multi-layered approach combining canine detection teams and state-of-the-art detectors enhances the ability to detect and deter potential threats. This comprehensive strategy adds extra protection that bolsters confidence in the event's security measures.

Proactive Communication
Engaging with student groups and community activists in advance can help manage demonstrations effectively. Establishing clear communication channels and designated protest areas can ensure that demonstrations proceed without infringing on the event's security.

Conflict Resolution Initiatives
To mitigate interpersonal conflicts arising from debate content, universities can organize workshops on conflict resolution and promote open dialogues on political tolerance. Leveraging campus resources such as counseling services and conflict resolution mediators can help address underlying tensions exacerbated by the debates. Promoting empathy and understanding across political divides fosters a more inclusive and harmonious campus environment, reducing the likelihood of confrontations. These initiatives help maintain a positive environment and reduce the likelihood of conflict.

Comprehensive Surveillance and Monitoring
Temporarily deploying additional surveillance cameras and monitoring equipment throughout the venue and surrounding areas provides real-time insights into crowd movements and potential disruptions. This setup aids in rapid response to security incidents.

Internal Organization and Employee Safety
To maintain an uninterrupted work environment, establish support systems to help employees manage stress and interpersonal conflicts that might arise from a politically charged atmosphere. Providing support is good for morale and ensures that employees remain focused and effective in their roles. Consider conducting regular training sessions on security protocols and response strategies that include scenario-based drills and conflict de-escalation and resolution.

Election Day

Election Day presents unique security challenges because it involves securing the voting process and managing the broader public reaction to the unfolding results. This requires a multifaceted security approach that addresses potential threats at polling places and the possible impacts on nearby businesses and the public.

CONSIDERATIONS

Local Impacts

Election Day security measures must be implemented across a wide range of locations from urban centers to small communities. Polling places can become a focal point for disruption and nearby businesses may experience increased foot traffic and potential disruptions.

As results are announced, emotional responses may escalate and potentially lead to public gatherings or protests, which businesses and security teams must be prepared to manage.

Voting Location Security

Ensuring the safety of voting locations on Election Day is crucial for protecting voters and election workers against threats, abuse or harassment. It's also important because many voting sites are multi-use facilities such as schools, community centers or places of worship that may have regular activities concurrently with voting. Security measures need to be comprehensive enough to secure the voting area and ensure the safety of other areas of the facility.

Disruptions to Business Operations

Businesses near polling locations face unique challenges, including increased customer traffic and potential disruptions from heightened political activity. These disruptions can extend to the availability of employees, as some staff might be hesitant to work close to a polling site due to concerns about overcrowding or political tensions.

Businesses should prepare contingency plans to manage workforce shortages and ensure smooth operations.

Disruptions in Public Gathering Locations

Disruptions in urban centers or public gathering places can significantly impact local businesses and the community. These areas, often bustling with activity, may experience increased foot traffic and potential overcrowding, leading to logistical challenges like traffic road closures and detours. Businesses should plan for disruptions by adjusting their operational strategies, perhaps altering delivery schedules or business hours to accommodate the changes. Clear communication with customers about how Election Day might impact services is vital to managing expectations and maintaining smooth operations.

Security Considerations Beyond Event Locations: Election Day

Businesses near polling locations should develop contingency plans to address potential disruptions and workforce shortages. Flexible work arrangements, such as remote working options or staggered shifts, can help maintain operations. Additionally, businesses might consider enhancing on-site security measures and providing staff with clear guidelines for handling increased customer traffic or potential conflicts.

Local authorities and businesses must collaborate on traffic management and public safety strategies. This could involve rerouting traffic providing timely information to the public about congested areas and increasing the presence of law enforcement to manage crowds effectively.

The charged atmosphere of Election Day can also heighten tensions within organizations. It's important to foster a respectful workplace environment and prepare to mediate conflicts that arise from differing political views.

MITIGATIONS

Access Control and Monitoring

Implementing strict access control and surveillance technologies at polling places will help monitor and manage voter flow and detect any unauthorized or suspicious activities ensuring a secure environment for voters and staff.

Coordination with Local Law Enforcement

Effective collaboration with local law enforcement agencies is essential for responding quickly to security incidents. A quick response is crucial for dealing with incidents of violence or voter intimidation.

Preparedness and Response Plans

Businesses should develop emergency plans that include procedures for handling increased customer volume and responding to potential crises, such as nearby protests or civil unrest resulting from the election results. These plans should be communicated to all employees so they know what to do in different scenarios.

POLLING LOCATIONS

Access Control

Implementing access control systems with ID verification at non-public entrances prevents unauthorized access to non-election-related spaces.

Surveillance Systems

Cameras can monitor both voting facilities (subject to legal requirements and restrictions) and other facility activities.

Personnel

It's crucial to have trained security personnel on-site who can quickly respond to incidents and ensure the safety of election and non-election activities. It's also important to provide security training to election workers to rehearse potential scenarios and equip them with reactions and responses so they feel prepared and empowered.

Report Violence

Complaints related to violence, threats of violence, or acts of intimidation at a polling place should be reported immediately to local authorities by calling 9-1-1. They also should be reported to the Justice Department after local authorities are contacted.

Presidential Inauguration

The Presidential Inauguration is a ceremonial event marking the formal transition of executive power in the United States. It is also a significant security focal point that draws global attention due to its high-profile nature and attendance by heads of state, dignitaries, thousands of citizens and media from around the world.

Given its stature and visibility, the inauguration is planned with meticulous attention to security. It involves comprehensive coordination between multiple agencies, including the Secret Service, the Department of Homeland Security, and local law enforcement agencies.

The convergence of high-profile dignitaries and celebrities large crowds and the global spotlight escalates the risk of potential security threats, necessitating unprecedented vigilance and readiness from all involved security personnel.

LOCAL CONSIDERATIONS

Due to its large-scale nature and the massive influx of visitors, the inauguration and associated events pose particular challenges for businesses and residents of Washington, D.C. The associated security measures and crowd dynamics can significantly disrupt normal daily activities and pose specific threats.

Crowd Control
The sheer volume of attendees can overwhelm local infrastructure, leading to congested transportation systems and restricted access to certain areas. For businesses, this can mean a drastic increase or decrease in foot traffic, potentially affecting daily operations and revenue. Residents may find their routine activities disrupted by road closures and enhanced security checkpoints.

Target for Violence
High-profile events attract supporters and dissenters. Businesses and residential areas could become unintended victims during acts of protest or violence. The risk of property damage from vandalism or looting during unrest is an added concern, particularly for businesses on the ground floor or those with street-facing properties.

Logistical Disruptions
The extensive security perimeters and logistical requirements of such a large event can lead to delivery disruptions impacting supply chains for local businesses. Residents might also experience interruptions in services, such as trash collection and public transportation.

Accessibility Issues
Road closures and security barricades can significantly impact the ability of emergency services to quickly reach certain areas; this can be critical for businesses and residents needing urgent medical or police assistance.

LOCAL MITIGATIONS

- Enhance security measures by installing more cameras, hiring additional personnel and tightening access control.

- Train employees in emergency procedures.

- Adjust operating hours and staffing to accommodate varying customer volumes. Communicate regularly with customers about the best times to visit and any changes in services.

- Prepare for logistical disruptions by exploring alternative supply chains and establishing backup plans to ensure business continuity.

- Adopt backup communication methods such as mesh networking apps to maintain communication without relying on cellular service during crowded events.

Considerations for Inauguration Attendees

Attending a high-profile event like a Presidential Inauguration presents unique security challenges and risks. Employees and individuals who plan to attend should be aware of the potential threats and take appropriate measures to ensure their safety.

Targeted Attacks

The event could attract attacks aimed at causing mass casualties or disruption. Individuals should remain vigilant and always be aware of their surroundings.

Personal Safety Threats

With high crowd densities, individuals are more vulnerable to theft, pickpocketing and other forms of petty crime.

Crowd-Related Incidents

Large gatherings can lead to crowd surges, stampedes or panic, especially if a perceived threat exists. There is a heightened risk of being caught in a crush, which can result in serious injuries.

Communication Challenges

Cell phone networks can become overloaded during large events, leading to communication difficulties. Establish a pre-planned meeting point and have backup communication methods in case of separation or emergency.

MITIGATIONS FOR INAUGURATION ATTENDEES

- Stay up to date on event specifics and crowd control strategies to avoid congested areas.

- Establish a communication plan, including a predetermined meeting point in case you become separated from your group.

- Maintain situational awareness for spotting and report suspicious activities.

- Improve personal safety by carrying only essential items in a theft-resistant bag and stay in a group, which helps deter potential threats and provides assistance when needed.

Nationwide Impact: Threats Outside of Washington D.C.

While the Presidential Inauguration takes place in Washington, D.C., its effects resonate across the country, affecting people and businesses nationwide. The national scope of the event introduces unique security concerns and operational challenges extending beyond the immediate vicinity of the ceremony.

Cybersecurity Threats

Hackers might exploit this high-profile event to launch attacks ranging from disruptive distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks to more severe breaches involving ransom ware or data theft. Enterprises and individuals should be particularly vigilant about their digital security, ensuring all systems are updated and secure.

Domestic Extremism

The political nature of the inauguration can be a catalyst for domestic extremist activities across the country. This might manifest in planned protests, civil disobedience or more severe forms of violence and terrorism, potentially targeting government facilities, infrastructure or public gatherings.

Breakdown of Law and Order

The general population has significant concerns about the potential breakdown of law and order. This is reflected in online discussions, online term searches, an increase in gun purchases (including by first-time gun owners) and weekly training and recruitment events by right-wing militia groups. The concern is further elevated by media coverage and statements by politicians.
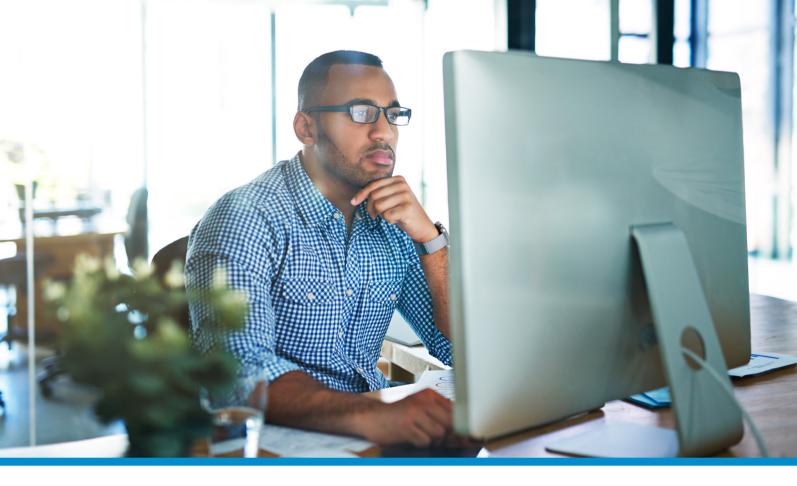
Concerns over a breakdown in law and order have the potential to cause fear and changed behavior amongst employees and customers; significantly impact supply chains (including food items and other goods); and lead to illegal behavior (e.g., looting, vandalism and property damage).

Isolated Violence

There is an increased likelihood of politically motivated isolated incidents of violence (e.g., vehicular rammings, shootings and assaults). It is difficult to predict the location and nature of isolated acts of violence; businesses should remain alert and vigilant, especially if they are near protests, politically significant sites or in some way linked with a candidate or party.

Spread of Misinformation

High-profile events like inaugurations are often accompanied by the spread of misinformation and conspiracy theories, particularly on social media. Brand perception and reputation can be adversely impacted for any organization mentioned in these types of communications. It can influence public opinion and behavior, leading to real-world consequences. It's crucial for individuals and organizations to rely on verified sources for information, be cautious in communications and prepare possibly respond to content that is negative or attacking.

Polarization and Public Sentiment

Presidential Inaugurations can heighten political polarization, affect social cohesion and potentially lead to public unrest, organized protests or spontaneous demonstrations. While these are generally concentrated in major cities, smaller protests can occur in communities nationwide. Businesses and communities should be mindful of the broader social dynamics during this time and consider strategies to maintain workplace harmony and community relations.

Workplace Conflict

The Presidential Inauguration, especially in a highly polarized political climate, can exacerbate tensions among coworkers with differing political views. Employers should be proactive in fostering a respectful workplace environment where political discussions, if they occur, are conducted in a manner that upholds the organization's values of respect and inclusivity. Implementing clear policies on workplace behavior and providing training on conflict resolution can help mitigate tensions and prevent conflicts.

MITIGATIONS

- Implement a holistic security approach combining cybersecurity and physical security measures. Key strategies include enhancing cyber defenses with advanced technologies such as multi-factor authentication, end-to-end encryption and regular security audits.

- Prioritize cybersecurity awareness training for all employees to help them recognize phishing attempts and safeguard data.

- Develop and rehearse comprehensive crisis management plans addressing both physical and digital threats.

- Actively engage with local communities for increased early threat detection and mitigation.

- Monitor social media to manage and correct misinformation.

- Maintain clear and transparent communication with stakeholders and the public to reinforce the organization's commitment to stability and security.

Civil Unrest

Civil unrest (demonstrations, protests, riots, rallies, marches, etc.) is part of the U.S. political landscape and the most pressing security risk of the 2024 Presidential Election.

Overview

Civil unrest has the potential to restrict safe access to sites (for employees, customers and/or goods); cause public transportation and/or traffic delays; and negatively impact the availability and responsiveness of emergency services.

Crimes committed during civil unrest often include vandalism, arson, theft and looting. The risk of larger-scale civil unrest and violence increases if a candidate declares victory prematurely or if there are allegations of election tampering. Violence is more likely when there are counter-protests or supporters of both candidates are present.

There has been an increase in domestic extremist groups conducting counter-protests as well as initiating their own protests. This presents a risk of escalating tensions between opposing groups following the election and is more likely to occur in areas where these groups have already been active.

It is unlikely that a single group or coalition of groups will be able to effectively organize national civil unrest. It is more likely these events will unfold in succession between November and January in a rather uncoordinated manner but with similar goals, spanning across multiple social and political groups.

Potential Timing

In a review of U.S. presidential elections within the last 50 years, there is a consistent trend of civil unrest occurring on the night of Election Day and continuing for 48 to 72 hours or longer. Civil unrest is likely to continue for weeks if election results are contested.

Larger, more organized acts of civil unrest typically occur on and around Inauguration Day and have, historically, been in Washington, D.C.

Social media has dramatically increased the speed in which protests materialize. Influencers have proven their ability to quickly create situations and motivate demonstrators and others. Many of these rapidly initiated demonstrations have lasted well over 30 days.

Potential Locations

Civil unrest generally occurs in and near major downtown metropolitan areas and public spaces like city centers, higher education campuses, government buildings, parks and well-known civic locations.

Cities that have sustained relatively long periods of consecutive civil unrest include Chicago, Minneapolis, Portland, Seattle, New York, Los Angeles, Atlanta, Illinois and Washington, D.C.

States with the most incidents of political violence or civil unrest are California, New York, Florida, Texas and Pennsylvania.

The location of civil unrest can be fluid as police control or shutdown areas and participants move to other areas.

Threats to Businesses, Property and People

The primary threats to businesses, property and people during civil unrest are restricted safe access to facilities; road closures, roadblocks and detours impacting commutes; property damage; and a possible delay in response time of emergency services.

Criminal activity – such as vandalism, arson, theft and looting – is more likely after dark, particularly in urban environments where there is easier movement between areas and a mix of residential, commercial, and business districts.

There could be criminals who use the chaos of civil unrest to target locations with higher payout, such as jewelry stores, cash loan offices, car dealerships or where merchandise is readily available and not well secured. Offices and businesses near higher risk locations are also at risk for possible damage or theft.

Impacts to Law Enforcement and Emergency Services

Local emergency services may be delayed during civil unrest due to a shortage of personnel and/ or road closures. Local emergency personnel may also be restricted from entering areas due to safety concerns, like possibly being attacked while trying to render aid.

While some forms of civil unrest are more peaceful than others, incidents involving clashes between police and participants do occur. When law enforcement is given instruction to provide minimal engagement with protesters, the likelihood of clashes is lower, however, some isolated incidents have occurred where protestors have acted violently against law enforcement regardless of their posture. The use of more forceful crowd control methods increases the likelihood of violent clashes resulting in injuries and violence to law enforcement, participants and civilians.

Proactive Security

In times of civil unrest, when crime is heightened and first responder response times are lengthened, many businesses and organizations hire private security providers. As a result, private security providers report turning away potential clients due to high demand. Contacting and contracting with a private security provider ahead of predicted civil unrest may better the odds of securing desired resources and allow more time for the thoughtful implementation of security protocols.

Mitigating Civil Unrest

For tips for civil unrest threat and risk mitigations, see "SPECIAL SECTION: Tips for Security Operations" on page 24.

2024 Global Risk Intelligence Report

Global Risk Intelligence Report:

2024 U.S. PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION EXPECTED TO SPUR POLITICAL VIOLENCE

In Allied Universal's 2024 Global Risk Intelligence Report, intelligence analysts predicted that the ability of countries to contend with ongoing economic and social challenges – exacerbated by conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza – will greatly influence local political and security outlooks for many countries. Around 40 countries will hold national elections this year, the results of which are expected to be influenced by economic conditions.

Political Violence

The 2024 U.S. Presidential Election is expected to be a significant driver of North American legislative decisions and potential political violence. The election is overshadowed by a heightened threat environment, as noted by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The primary concern lies in the potential for violence directed at election infrastructure, particularly from domestic extremists, as a recent survey by the Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI) revealed that 23% of Americans express support for political violence.

Foreign Adversaries

Foreign adversaries are expected to exploit vulnerabilities in election infrastructure to foster discord and cast doubt on the integrity of the electoral process. Influence campaigns, notably orchestrated by Russia and Iran, are anticipated.

Artificial Intelligence and Cyber Actors

There is growing concern about the introduction of artificial intelligence (AI) into the campaign cycle by domestic and foreign actors to disseminate conspiracy theories or influence election results. Cyber actors are also expected to target online election infrastructure at the state and local levels. The risk is most pronounced for election-related entities, including polling places, ballot drop box locations, voter registration sites, campaign events, political party offices, and vote-counting sites.

Civil Unrest

Civil unrest in North America is likely to remain one of the most acute security challenges, with an elevated potential for vandalism and violence in major U.S. cities. Political controversies, labor activism, new legislation, and judicial decisions are likely to result in protests. Demonstrations pertaining to the Israel-Palestine conflict are likely to occur frequently while the fighting in Gaza continues. Vandalism and clashes at these demonstrations remain possible, particularly in large U.S. cities such as New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco, as well as when law enforcement or counter-protesters are present. College campuses will likely remain a hotspot for such activism, though government infrastructure such as city halls and state/provincial capital buildings will also remain prominent demonstration locations. These locations may experience more frequent demonstrations coinciding with the 2024 Presidential Election and trials against former President Donald Trump. However, large-scale violence is not highly likely, as law enforcement has heightened its capabilities to counter violent demonstrations. Large protests over highly contentious issues have the potential to be infiltrated by malicious actors seeking to coopt peaceful demonstrations to cause disruption and/or destruction.

CLICK HERE TO DOWNLOAD A FULL COPY OF ALLIED UNIVERSAL'S 2024 GLOBAL RISK INTELLIGENCE REPORT.

Organizational Security During The U.S. Election

INSIGHTS FROM THE WORLD SECURITY REPORT

Allied Universal recently released the first-ever World Security Report, reporting results of an anonymous and independent survey of 1,775 chief security officers (CSOs) from large, global companies. The biggest takeaway? The world is an increasingly dangerous place and companies face complex, multidimensional hazards and threats.

The report highlights several concerns that are surfacing as the election nears.

Economic Unrest and Social Stability

In North America, 49% of CSOs say that economic unrest will be the biggest security-impacting hazard in 2023 and 2024. This unrest is often exacerbated by political events such as elections, leading to increased risks of civil disturbances and social unrest. Organizations planning security changes now may choose to prioritize measures to mitigate these risks, including robust physical security and crisis management plans.

Cyber-Physical Security Integration

The report underscores the growing interconnection between cyber and physical security. With 90% of CSOs saying that cyber threats pose challenges to their physical security systems, it's crucial for organizations to adopt integrated security solutions. This involves enhancing cybersecurity measures and ensuring that physical security systems are resilient to cyber-attacks.

Technological Advancements

According to CSOs, technological advancements play a crucial role in modern security strategies. The report indicates a strong trend toward the adoption of predictive technologies, AI, and automated threat detection systems. These technologies can significantly enhance situational awareness and response capabilities, crucial during the heightened threat profiles associated with election periods.

Internal Threats and Insider Risk Management

89% of organizations have experienced internal threats, including the misuse of company resources and data leaks. Given the potential for insider threats to escalate during politically charged times, organizations should consider implementing stringent insider risk management protocols and conducting regular security training.

Preparedness and Response

The World Security Report highlights the importance of preparedness and response – a key factor for any turbulent time. Organizations with high involvement from third-party security providers reported fewer incidents and higher confidence in handling security issues. This suggests that leveraging external expertise is a critical component of an effective security strategy – for the election period, and beyond.

CLICK HERE TO DOWNLOAD A FULL COPY OF ALLIED UNIVERSAL'S WORLD SECURITY REPORT.

Special Section

Tips For Commercial Security Operations

Conduct security system tests to ensure all CCTV, communication, barrier, fire suppression, alarm systems and lighting are fully operational. Make any necessary repairs.

Host exercises, drills and training to ensure all relevant personnel are fully aware of policies and are fully prepared for potential threats and emergency situations.

Consistently brief security personnel and instruct them to remain alert for potential threats and known risks associated with civil unrest in their local area.

Rank business locations by risk of possible demonstrations, both in terms of facilities near probable demonstration hot-spots and potential risks faced should demonstrations occur. The highest-risk locations should consider preemptively securing their premises to minimize property damage – including the potential of boarding up windows and doors.

Protective agents patrolling or conspicuously standing at a site act as a strong deterrent for opportunistic criminal activity.

Evaluate location of high-value assets to limit ease of access if unrest occurs (i.e., nothing of high-value next to the front door or visible through windows).

Work with the appropriate internal departments to source vendors if immediate repairs are needed and to determine the processes for securing locations if an immediate closing and/or evacuation is needed.

Ensure emergency kits are fully stocked, operational, and in easily accessible locations.

If possible, **have employees leave and arrive at work locations in daylight**. Consider remote work during periods of civil unrest.

Have a robust intelligence capability in place leading up to election events. Intelligence support during a time of unrest allows for a near real-time overview of the local climate and operating environment should tensions rapidly escalate.

Identify and procure security services to augment existing security team. Contract security companies will likely experience a surge in demand for their services and may prioritize existing clients. Understanding your options before an event occurs may help protect at-risk locations.

Tips For Social Media And Open-Source Intelligence Monitoring

Monitor social media and online forums. Communicate trends and credible threats to relevant personnel for awareness and so they can adequately prepare for threats.

Track brand, company, facility, locations and personnel mentions; known and evolving hashtags; protest announcements and/or updates; trending election, social and/or racial injustice mentions and hashtags; and local news coverage.

Subscribe to local, state and federal governmental outreach programs and intelligence products such as OSAC, DSAC, State Intelligence Fusion Centers, etc.

Meet with local, state and federal law enforcement personnel for intelligence and information sharing.

Participate in Business Alliance Groups for intelligence and information sharing.

Review and enforce company social media policy regarding political commentary by employees. With high political tensions, personnel should be aware that any comment, for or against, may be used by the opposite side to bring unwanted attention to the individual and the company. As seen in other incidents, social media comments may be used to incite boycotts, targeted protests against the company, harassment, property damage and even potential violence.

Monitor social media, online forums and evolving hashtags.

Tips For Surviving An Active Shooter Situation

Run, Hide, Fight: If you can safely run away from the shooter, that is the best option. If not, find a place to hide where the shooter cannot see you. As a last resort, if your life is in imminent danger, prepare to fight.

Be Aware of Exits: Wherever you are, always know the nearest two exits. If an active shooter situation unfolds, you'll need to make a quick decision about which one to use.

Avoid Panic: Remain as calm as possible. Panicking can lead to irrational decisions and make the situation worse.

Silence Your Phone: Noises, like your phone's ring or vibration, could reveal your location to the shooter. Keep it silent and, if safe, communicate with law enforcement via text message or silent modes of communication.
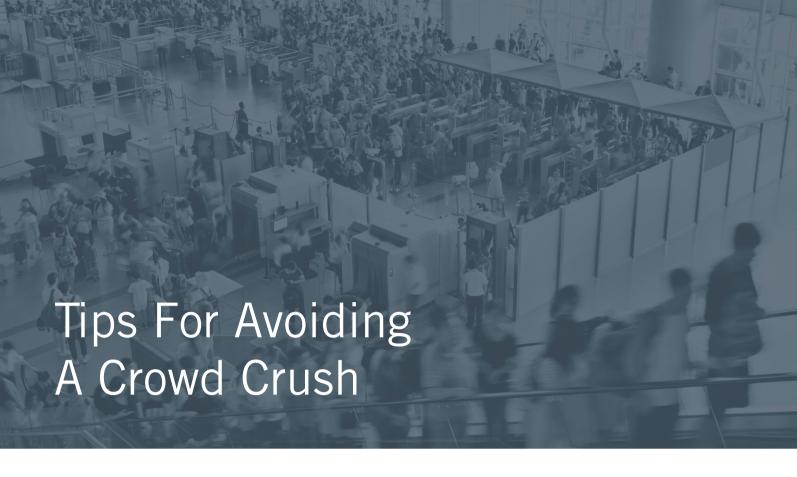
Spread Out if Hiding: If you're hiding with others, a large huddle of people makes an easier target. Spread out within the hiding place, if possible.

Improvise Weapons: If you must fight, look for anything that could be used as a weapon. If could be anything from hot coffee to chairs, fire extinguishers or heavy objects.

Listen for Clues: Pay attention to any sounds that could tell you where the shooter is and where you should not go. This information could be crucial in deciding when to run or continue hiding.

Follow Law Enforcement Instructions: Once law enforcement arrives, keep your hands visible and follow all instructions. They may not know who the shooter is and clear, calm behavior on your part helps them secure the area more effectively.

> Remain as calm as possible as you run, hide or fight.

Tips For Avoiding
A Crowd Crush

Stay Aware of Surroundings: Be alert to changes in crowd density and movement. Recognize early signs of crowding and prepare to move if conditions start to feel unsafe.

Leave Dense Areas: If the crowd becomes uncomfortably dense, don't hesitate to leave the area. It's crucial to act before conditions worsen and your movement becomes restricted.

Keep Standing and Protect Your Chest: It's vital to stay on your feet. If you fall, getting up can be difficult and dangerous. Keep your arms in front of your chest to protect your breathing space, which can be crucial in preventing asphyxiation.
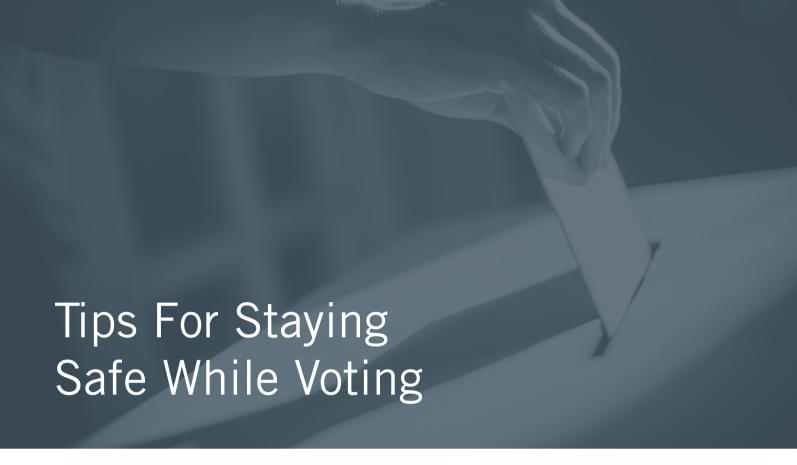
Avoid Solid Obstacles and Choke Points: Move away from barriers like as walls or fences; they increase the risk of being crushed if the crowd moves against them. Similarly, avoid choke points like narrow exits and doorways that can become dangerously crowded.

Look for Alternative Exits: Always be aware of multiple exit routes. In emergencies, main exits can become overcrowded, so knowing alternative ways out can provide a safer option. Consider less obvious exits like service doors or windows (if safe and feasible).

Don't Push Back: If you feel pressure from the crowd, resist the urge to push against it. Pushing can create dangerous counter-movements and increase the risk of injuries.

Control Your Breathing: Conserve oxygen by controlling your breathing, especially in tightly packed conditions where air flow might be restricted.

Be aware of your surroundings and leave crowded areas.

Tips For Staying Safe While Voting

Plan Your Visit: Know your polling station's location in advance and consider visiting it beforehand to familiarize yourself with the area.

Stay Alert and Report Suspicious Activity: Be aware of your surroundings and vigilant about unusual activities. If you observe something suspicious, report it to election officials or security personnel immediately.

Maintain a Low Profile: Engage in minimal conversation about political preferences at the polls to avoid conflicts or arguments.

Consider Safety in Numbers: If possible, go to the polls with a friend or family member. There is safety in numbers and having someone with you can make the process smoother and safer.

Follow All Election Protocols: Adhere to any specific guidelines or protocols set by the polling location, which may include health safety measures, especially in the context of public health concerns.

Keep Children at Home: If possible, avoid taking children to polling locations to protect them from any unforeseen disturbances.

Prepare for Restrictions: Be aware that some areas might restrict vehicular movement on election day, so plan your transportation accordingly.

Plan your visit and follow all election protocols.

Tips For Protecting Small Businesses During Civil Unrest

Stay Informed: Keep up to date with local news and official announcements about planned protests or potential unrest. Knowing the schedule and nature of the events can help prepare adequately.

Enhance Physical Security: Reinforce windows and doors to prevent easy access. Consider boarding up windows and doors if severe unrest is expected. Install or upgrade surveillance cameras to monitor property.

Secure Inside Assets: Move valuable items away from windows and, if possible, lock them in a safe or secure room. Secure all merchandise, documents and money in locked or reinforced areas.

Develop a Communication Plan: Ensure all employees are aware of emergency protocols. Establish a communication chain for updates and instructions during a crisis.

Remove Outdoor Risks: Secure or remove anything outside that could potentially be used as a projectile or to cause damage, such as outdoor displays, signs, planters and trash cans.

Collaborate with Neighbors: Work with neighboring businesses and local community organizations to share information and resources. There is safety and strength in numbers, and a united community can better withstand disruptions.

Protect Data: Ensure that all business and customer data is backed up remotely. Strengthen cybersecurity measures to protect against an increased risk of cyber-attacks during times of unrest.

Review Insurance Coverage: Check insurance policies to understand what is covered in the event of damage due to civil unrest. Consider whether additional coverage might be necessary.

Plan for Business Continuity: Develop a business continuity plan in case business operations are disrupted. This should include remote work options where possible and strategies for maintaining customer service.

Engage with Local Law Enforcement: Before an event, contact local law enforcement to express any concerns and ask about plans for protection of commercial areas. Knowing the extent of expected police presence can help you adjust your security measures.

Show Support for Peaceful Protests: If appropriate and aligned with business values, showing support for peaceful protests can sometimes reduce the likelihood of becoming a target. This might involve messages of support on windows or through social media channels.

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