

Massive police presence in place for Boston Marathon

Kate Randall
21 April 2014

An unprecedented security operation will be in place today for the running of the Boston Marathon. Beginning at 6 a.m., dozens of police officers and analysts will be monitoring the race from a Cold War-era underground command center, communicating in real time with authorities across eight nearby cities and towns along the marathon path.

Events at last year's running of the marathon have been seized upon by authorities to beef up security. On April 15, 2013, two pressure cooker bombs exploded near the finish line of the race, killing 3 and injuring another 264. Double the usual number of police will be out in force this year along the 26.2-mile route to monitor the more than 36,000 runners and 1 million expected spectators.

Four days after last year's bombings, an area of metropolitan Boston encompassing about 1 million people was locked down and placed under virtual martial law as authorities searched for the perpetrators of the bombings. The area was flooded with thousands of National Guard troops and police, who carried out warrantless house-to-house searches in violation of constitutional protections against unreasonable searches and seizures.

Bombing suspect Tamerlan Tsarnaev was shot and killed in a shootout with police. His younger brother, Dzhokhar, was severely wounded and captured by police, and is awaiting trial. There has been no explanation from US authorities of how the alleged suspects were able to operate unhindered despite numerous warnings to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) about the terrorist inclinations of the elder Tsarnaev brother.

The massive police response to last year's events has set the bar for this year's huge security operation. Appearing on ABC's "This Week" on Sunday, former

New York police commissioner Ray Kelly said, "What we used to say is you look at your world through the prism of 9/11. Now the officers, the spectators have to look at their world through the prism of what happened on April 15, 2013."

Four months after the April 15 bombings, the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) began a massive collaboration with federal, state and local officials to design a security strategy for this year's marathon. MEMA director Kurt Schwartz told the *Christian Science Monitor* that authorities would be monitoring the race with "unprecedented resources."

Schwartz said, "This is not like securing a football stadium for a Super Bowl, where you just put a big fence around it." The event provides a training ground for a police operation involving multiple government agencies to monitor and control a heavily populated metropolitan area.

Some 4,000 police, including 500 plainclothes officers, will patrol the route using phalanxes of bomb-sniffing dogs and metal detectors. A SWAT team from the FBI has also been brought in. More than 50 observation points will also be set up near the finish line to monitor the crowd. One hundred strategically positioned video cameras will line the route, with a live feed to a command center nicknamed "the bunker."

This underground, windowless coordination center will be manned by about 260 security officials representing more than 60 local, state and federal agencies. The facility has separate rooms for tactical, intelligence and other units. Dozens of police officers and analysts will be monitoring widescreen video displays of images fed from high-resolution cameras along every section of the 26.2-mile route.

The live feeds will also include images from

Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) cameras installed on buses with the help of a \$6.9 million loan from the Department of Homeland Security, as well as cameras mounted in subway stations throughout the transit system.

The MEMA's Schwartz told ABC News, "There's cameras, but you know there's 4,000 police officers out there and they will be very engaged this year. They're all watching the public, watching the crowds, trying to detect suspicious behavior, trying to manage areas that just get too crowded.... We have expanded across the board."

Bill Evans, Boston's new police commissioner, told ABC, "We'll be looking for somebody who just doesn't feel right." He added, "A lot of our officers, during their training, [are] looking at the characteristics of someone who might be carrying explosives." Schwartz said the security officials would be tailoring their security operations throughout the day based on what the surveillance cameras are picking up and what officers in the field are observing.

Spectators have been asked to carry their belongings in clear plastic bags, and those who bring backpacks will be subject to search. Containers with more than 1 liter of liquid will be banned, along with costumes covering the face and bulky clothes or costumes. Flags or signs bigger than 11 by 17 inches are also prohibited from marathon venues, which include the start and finish areas, the course, and the athletes' village.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact