

US police out in force for Fourth of July holiday

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Police departments across the United States made special deployments for the Fourth of July holiday weekend. The police mobilizations, justified by citing the possibility of a terror attack, marked another effort to expand the power of the state in anticipation of social unrest.

In New York City, nearly 120 trucks filled with sand hovered around streets where crowds were gathered for the Macy's 4th of July Fireworks Show. Reportedly, this practice is a response to the Bastille Day massacre in Nice last July, where a rented truck was rammed into a large crowd of pedestrians.

Along with the sand-filled trucks, NYPD mobilized several thousand uniformed officers and officers in civilian clothing, issued officers radiation devices, and deployed explosives-detecting dogs and aviation units. New York Mayor Bill De Blasio stated that all of this is "what keeps us safe. Do not be alarmed by that. Our officers are there to protect you, and we believe in strength in numbers. You'll see that visibly on July 4th."

In Boston, police deployed high-flying drones to receive and broadcast events on the ground. News media emphasized that this technology was first used at the Boston Marathon, and can zoom in on objects that are nearly a quarter mile away. All of this was controlled from a "secret operations lab."

In addition to the tethered drones, the Massachusetts Police Marine Unit and Air Wing also patrolled the Charles River during the event along with plainclothes troopers, local police, trained dogs, and federal bomb detection teams. Some 500,000 people were expected to attend the Boston Pops Fireworks Spectacular.

The Los Angeles Police Department mobilized a large force for a fireworks show in the San Fernando Valley. A lead officer stated that changes in security

guidelines aim "to improve security for the event due to ongoing issues happening around the world ... whether terrorism or lone wolf or just general safety. This is something that we probably should have done a long time ago."

Over the Fourth of July weekend, about 60 people were shot in Chicago, eight of them fatally. The Chicago Police Department added approximately 1,300 police officers to the work day each day between Friday and Tuesday, focusing on "violent" neighborhoods, parks, the transit system, and the lakefront where large crowds were expected to gather. At least one of the fatal shootings was from police.

Chicago police preliminarily arrested 58 people on Tuesday on gun and drug charges in a series of pre-Fourth of July raids. Police Superintendent Eddie Johnson told the media that these raids were targeting people linked to drug trafficking as well as convicted felons and people with previous gun charges. "It takes those individuals that we know drive some of the violence, it takes them out of play for a period of time."

Johnson also stated that "CPD officers are working the streets to keep residents and visitors safe in every neighborhood." At least one resident criticized the preliminary raid strategy by stating that the real problem is poverty. "A raid is a raid. They'll be right back home within whatever days."

In Washington D.C., the National Parks Service and U.S. Park Police set up big fences around the National Mall in preparation for the Smithsonian Folk Life Festival and the A Capitol Fourth Show. Officials also established security checkpoints for anyone entering the mall during the event.

Large metropolitan areas were not the only places that saw increased police presence. Vermont State Police set up checkpoints to find people under the

influence of alcohol and other drugs, while Napa Police in California deployed special patrols and checkpoints to search for drunken drivers during the holiday. Memphis police deployed 200 police officers, both uniformed and undercover, to the downtown firework show that draws tens of thousands of people.



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