



**Congressional  
Research Service**

Informing the legislative debate since 1914

---

# National Special Security Events: Fact Sheet

**Shawn Reese**

Analyst in Emergency Management and Homeland Security Policy

Updated September 16, 2019

**Congressional Research Service**

7-....

[www.crs.gov](http://www.crs.gov)

R43522

## Introduction

Major federal government or public events that are considered to be nationally significant may be designated by the President—or his representative, the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)—as National Special Security Events (NSSE). P.L. 106-544 designated the U.S. Secret Service (USSS) as the lead federal agency responsible for coordinating, planning, exercising, and implementing security for National Special Security Events.

## Legislative Authority and Presidential Directives

On May 22, 1998, President William J. Clinton issued Presidential Decision Directive 62 (PDD 62)—Protection Against Unconventional Threats to the Homeland and Americans Overseas.<sup>1</sup> PDD 62 established a framework for federal department and agency counterterrorism programs, which addressed terrorist apprehension and prosecution, increased transportation security, enhanced emergency response, and enhanced cybersecurity. PDD 62 also designated specific federal departments and agencies as the lead agencies in the event of terrorist attacks.<sup>2</sup> USSS was designated as the lead agency with the leadership role in the planning, implementation, and coordination of operational security for events of national significance—as designated by the President.<sup>3</sup> Other lead agencies for counterterrorism activities included the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Department of Defense, and the Department of Health and Human Services.

On December 19, 2000, Congress enacted P.L. 106-544, the Presidential Threat Protection Act of 2000, and authorized the USSS—when directed by the President—to plan, coordinate, and implement security operations at special events of national significance.<sup>4</sup> The special events were designated National Special Security Events (NSSEs). Some events categorized as NSSEs include the following:

- presidential inaugurations,
- major international summits held in the United States,
- major sporting events, and
- presidential nominating conventions.

## NSSE Designation

Prior to the establishment of DHS in January 2003, the President determined what events of national significance were designated as NSSEs. Since the establishment of the department, the

---

<sup>1</sup> PDD 62 was superseded by a classified appendix to Annex II of National Security Presidential Directive 46/Homeland Security Presidential Directive 15, *U.S. Strategy and Policy in the War on Terror*, on March 6, 2006. The appendix maintains USSS responsibility in planning, coordinating, and implementing security operations at NSSEs.

<sup>2</sup> Presidential Decision Directive 62 is classified. The White House issued a fact sheet abstract about it, and the Federation of American Scientists has posted an “unclassified abstract” said to be “derived from” PDD 62, available at <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/pdd-62.htm>, October 25, 2007.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Secret Service, Office of Legislative Affairs, “National Special Security Events: Meeting the Counter-Terrorism Challenge” (Washington: 2006), p. 1. This document is available to congressional clients by contacting the U.S. Secret Service’s Office of Legislative Affairs.

<sup>4</sup> P.L. 106-544, Sec. 3. 114 Stat. 2716.

DHS Secretary—as the President’s representative—has had the responsibility to designate NSSEs. NSSE designation factors include the following:

- anticipated attendance by U.S. officials and foreign dignitaries;<sup>5</sup>
- size of the event;<sup>6</sup> and
- significance of the event.<sup>7</sup>

Recent NSSEs include President Donald Trump’s 2017 inauguration, and the Republican and Democratic presidential candidate nominating conventions in 2016.

## NSSE Security Operations

When an event is designated an NSSE, USSS becomes the lead federal agency in developing, exercising, and implementing security operations. The goal of these security operations is to “develop and implement a seamless security plan that will create a safe and secure environment for the general public, event participants, Secret Service protectees, and other dignitaries.”<sup>8</sup>

The USSS’s Dignitary Protective Division (DPD) is responsible for NSSE planning and coordinates with other USSS headquarters and field offices. Some of the coordination includes advance planning and liaison for venue and air space security, training, communications, and security credentialing.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, DPD coordinates and conducts liaisons with other federal, state, and local agencies—primarily law enforcement entities.

NSSE security is planned, exercised, and implemented through a unified command model that is comprised of representatives of participating federal, state, and local agencies with NSSE responsibilities. During the NSSE’s planning phase, each participating agency is tasked according to their expertise or jurisdictional responsibility. USSS states that, “with the support of hundreds of federal, state, and local law enforcement and public safety organizations, each of these events has successfully concluded without any major incidents.”<sup>10</sup>

NSSE operational plans include the use of physical infrastructure security fencing, barricades, special access accreditation badges, K-9 teams, and other security technologies. To ensure consequence management, DHS pre-positions Domestic Emergency Support Teams, Urban Search and Rescue Teams, National Emergency Response Teams, Nuclear Incident Response Teams, and the Strategic National Stockpile and Mobile Emergency Response System. Specific teams and groupings of teams are designed for each event based on coordination with other federal entities, state and local jurisdictions, available local resources, and mutual aid agreements.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, USSS sponsors training seminars for command-level federal, state,

---

<sup>5</sup> Events attended by U.S. Government officials and foreign dignitaries may require federal interest in ensuring that the event is executed without incident and that sufficient resources are available in case of an incident.

<sup>6</sup> A large number of attendees and participants increases security requirements. Additionally, larger events could possibly increase terrorist intentions of attempting to attack the event.

<sup>7</sup> Some events have historical, political, and symbolic significance that may heighten the possibility of terrorist attacks, <http://www.secretservice.gov/nsse.shtml>.

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Secret Service, Office of Legislative Affairs, “National Special Security Events: Meeting the Counter-Terrorism Challenge” (Washington: 2006), p. 1. This document is available to congressional clients by contacting the U.S. Secret Service’s Office of Legislative Affairs.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of the Press Secretary, “National Special Security Events Fact Sheet,” July 9, 2003.

and local law enforcement and public safety officials to provide principles for managing security at major events and strategies for reducing vulnerabilities related to terrorism. The seminars also discuss key strategies and lessons learned from past NSSEs.<sup>12</sup>

## NSSE Funding

Even though NSSEs have been designated since 1998, Congress has only appropriated funding specifically for a general NSSE fund since FY2006. The following table provides amounts appropriated for NSSEs since FY2006.

**Table I. NSSE Appropriations, FY2006-FY2019**

(all amounts in millions)

Fiscal Year	Appropriation
2006	1
2007	1
2008	1
2009	1
2010	1
2011	1
2012	19
2013	4
2014	5
2015	5
2016	5
2017	5
2018	5
2019	5

**Source:** CRS analysis of enacted FY2006-2019 DHS appropriations.

## Author Contact Information

Shawn Reese  
 Analyst in Emergency Management and Homeland  
 Security Policy  
 /redacted/@crs.loc.gov...

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

# EveryCRSReport.com

The Congressional Research Service (CRS) is a federal legislative branch agency, housed inside the Library of Congress, charged with providing the United States Congress non-partisan advice on issues that may come before Congress.

EveryCRSReport.com republishes CRS reports that are available to all Congressional staff. The reports are not classified, and Members of Congress routinely make individual reports available to the public.

Prior to our republication, we redacted phone numbers and email addresses of analysts who produced the reports. We also added this page to the report. We have not intentionally made any other changes to any report published on EveryCRSReport.com.

CRS reports, as a work of the United States government, are not subject to copyright protection in the United States. Any CRS report may be reproduced and distributed in its entirety without permission from CRS. However, as a CRS report may include copyrighted images or material from a third party, you may need to obtain permission of the copyright holder if you wish to copy or otherwise use copyrighted material.

Information in a CRS report should not be relied upon for purposes other than public understanding of information that has been provided by CRS to members of Congress in connection with CRS' institutional role.

EveryCRSReport.com is not a government website and is not affiliated with CRS. We do not claim copyright on any CRS report we have republished.