

Testimony of former
Boston Police Commissioner Edward F. Davis, III
Before the House Committee on Homeland Security
April 9, 2014

Chairman McCaul, Ranking Member Thompson, distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me back before you today to once again discuss the events of April 15, 2013, when the Boston Marathon and our nation came under attack by a pair of extremist brothers bent on challenging our freedom.

I came before you last May as Commissioner of the Boston Police Department to offer my insights into the information-sharing that occurred before and during the events of last April. I also came to you on behalf of the Boston community, and specifically, four people whose voices could no longer be heard because of the attacks of these cowards.

Once again, before I begin my remarks, I ask that you remember the lives of Martin Richard, Krystle Campbell, Lu Lingzi, and MIT Police Officer Sean Collier. Let my comments today reflect that none of us should ever forget four lives that were senselessly cut too short by the events of that week.

Next Tuesday afternoon at 2:50 p.m. we will mark the one-year anniversary since two pressure-cooker bombs were detonated on Boylston Street, on a historic stretch of a Boston Street that leads to one of the most inspirational sights an athlete can view – the finish line of the Boston Marathon.

A lot has changed in that one year. For the hundreds of victims wounded in the attacks, life has been altered. Yet on a daily basis, we continue to see and hear the inspirational stories of those victims – stories like that of Adrienne Haslet-Davis of Boston, a professional dancer who returned to the stage last month despite losing part of her left leg in one of the explosions. Or Jeff Bauman of Chelmsford - the iconic image of him being wheeled away from the devastation by a Good Samaritan is emblazoned in our minds. He just announced he's engaged and is going to be a new father soon. Or Martin Richard's sister Jane, whose recovery has inspired a team of

runners to run on her behalf in this year's marathon. Or the dozens of nurses and first responders who will be undertaking their first marathon ever next week, in honor of the victims whose lives they helped save. There are literally hundreds more stories that I could share with you. I just want to make sure none of them are lost to time, as we continue to examine the events that led up to the attacks and the actions that unfolded in the days and weeks afterwards.

I also want to speak on behalf of a community. Not just a Boston community, or even simply Metropolitan Boston, but the greater community at large. In the year since, as I have travelled across this country talking about the lessons learned from this tragedy, I have come to realize the community that rallied behind the Boston Strong mantra numbers in the millions, because that is how aggrieved our nation felt after these attacks on our freedoms and the innocents caught in the path of those explosions.

In the weeks after last April's attack, many questions were raised about who knew what when, and what kind of information was being shared between law enforcement agencies.

I am here to tell you that throughout this past year, the level of inter-agency cooperation and information-sharing that has occurred between local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies has been critical to ensuring that we have found answers to as many questions as we could pose.

Within the first few minutes of hearing about the explosions on Boylston Street, my first phone call was to my friend and colleague Rick Deslauriers at the FBI. He and I worked side-by-side throughout the ensuing week, and I consider him a staunch friend and ally. He offered all of the services of the FBI and other agencies to make sure that we not only apprehended the terrorists responsible for this crime, but also to ensure that our inter-agency collaboration affords all of our agencies the critical amount of information-sharing needed for our organizations to operate at peak efficiency.

What all of us learned that week and in the ensuing 12 months, though, is just how big our community is beyond the partnerships within the levels of government. Our law enforcement community is obvious. With me today are some of my colleagues from the neighboring Watertown Police Department, the community where the manhunt came to an end and a community that found its neighborhoods under siege like never before in our country's history.

Make no mistake about this – Boston Police, Watertown police - none of our agencies could have enjoyed the successes we achieved without the involvement of a much larger community, one that felt personally victimized by the attacks. That is the community which has come to be known as Boston Strong.

In the past 12 months, Boston Strong has been used a rallying cry for an indomitable spirit, a sign of resilience and perseverance. Our hometown baseball team, the Red Sox, showed its tenacity and found inspiration from its message to win a World Series. It came to personify our indefatigable patriotism and commitment to neighbor helping neighbor. In New England, we don't just see Boston Strong as a clichéd hashtag on twitter, as see it as a proclamation that we stand together, united in the face of previously-unimaginable atrocity, and determined to hold fast to our ideals and basic tenets of freedom. Boston Strong became an exclamation by a community that wants the world to know that it can rally in the face of adversity and, armed with the necessary information, can work with its governmental partners to achieve a safe and desired outcome to a horrible and senseless act of violence.

Anyone who has ever visited Boston in the spring, or spent any time there, you know that the Boston Marathon is the People's Race. This is a 26.2 mile line that starts in Hopkinton, winds through Ashland, Framingham, Natick, Wellesley, Newton, and Brookline before ending in the heart of downtown Boston. And it occurs, appropriately enough, on Patriots' Day, a state holiday in Massachusetts that helps recognize the birth of the American Revolution, but has also come to embody our patriotic love for our community and our country. In New England, you either watch the Marathon, you know somebody who runs it, or you run in it yourself. I had close friends and colleagues running in last year's race, many of whom were pressed into immediate service by the explosions. The Marathon is part of our fiber, and an attack on the institution is an attack on our community as a whole.

This is the same community who waited anxiously as the largest manhunt in New England history played out over four days. When law enforcement decided to release the photos of the two suspects, we knew the dissemination of information into the hands of the public would be one of the most effective ways we could apprehend the individuals we wanted.

As we saw it play out on Thursday and Friday of that week, when the suspects took to the run, and began endangering innocents in other communities, we had to take the unprecedented action of asking more than half a million people to shelter in place while we search for these two men, who were throwing bombs at the police officers trying to catch them.

And for that historic Friday after the marathon, when we asked our communities to work with us and remain at home to keep the streets clear so we could do our job, they listened.

They listened because they shared a common goal, of wanting us to catch the men responsible. They listened because they trusted law enforcement, and by extension, their government, to take care of them.

As anyone who has followed my career with the Boston and Lowell Police Departments knows, I believe in community policing, and the critical role that our residents play in helping to keep a

community safe. It was relationships built before the marathon attacks that allowed us to implement such drastic measures, and those relationships only grew stronger when our communities saw the professional responses from their police agencies.

Sir Robert Peel was the Conservative Prime Minister of the United Kingdom in the early 1800s, and helped establish some of the modern concepts of our nation's police forces.

It was Peel who said "The police are the public and the public are the police – the police being only members of the public who are paid to give full-time attention duties which are incumbent on every citizen in the interests of community welfare and existence."

Nearly two centuries later, that basic tenet still holds true today.

Together, we solve problems.

In the case of the multi-agency responses required in the wake of the attacks, yes, we did identify some areas we could improve upon, especially in terms of information sharing. But I remain supremely proud of the work done not just by the first officers, firefighters, or EMS workers who responded to the attacks, but also by the sea of yellow-jacketed Boston Marathon volunteers, and the runners who stopped short of their 26.2 mile goal to help innocent people suffering on the sidewalks along Boylston Street.

Beyond the successes we have achieved with the cooperation of the media agencies that cover our agencies, we also learned quickly what a valuable information tool our social media networks could be to us as that week unfolded last April. Systems that remain in place a year later, and allow our agencies to more effectively and more rapidly communicate directly with the men and women we are sworn to serve and protect

Next Monday, an historic number of runners will take to the pavement again to run in the fabled Boston Marathon, and next Monday, they will be protected by an historic amount of law enforcement personnel from among a wide swath of agencies, all of whom have been meeting on a regular basis for months to ensure the safety of everyone who will be running and watching the event. We are all working together.

When he came to our city a few days after the attacks, President Obama told the world that Boston will run again, and he was right.

We run to support the dreams and personal aspirations of every man and woman who will be lacing up their sneakers to complete the grueling course.

We run for the ideals that this kind of event brings our community together to celebrate everything that is great about our city, our state, and our nation.

And we run for the men, women and children who can't be there this year – Krystle Campbell, Lu Lingzi, Martin Richard, and Officer Sean Collier.

All of us, - Boston, Massachusetts, New England, the United States - we run together.