



Sheriff Rosie Cordero-Stutz

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Good afternoon, Chairman McCaul, Ranking Member Pou, and members of the House Homeland Security Task Force on Special Events. I would also like to acknowledge the representative from my hometown Congressman Carlos Gimenez. Congressman always so nice to see you.

Thank you for the opportunity to address this Task Force and provide a detailed analysis of the lessons learned from Copa America, and the ways in which we have reassessed and put into motion advanced safety protocols in preparation for future high-profile events such as FIFA 2026.

While it is appropriate to recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of the event, it is equally incumbent upon us to acknowledge the inherent challenges we encountered during Copa America. Foremost among the lessons learned is the critical importance of meticulous, early-stage planning including comprehensive scenario-based drills. Equally vital is the development of robust mitigation strategies that prioritize crowd dynamics, layered security perimeters, agile deployment forces, event-based intelligence gathering, and seamless interagency collaboration at local, national, and international levels.

During World Copa, stadium personnel, alongside members of the Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office, faced considerable operational challenges stemming from a large influx of individuals at the stadium premises. The crowd demonstrated persistent attempts to breach established security measures in an effort to gain entry. The existing single gate entry system was inadequate for efficiently managing the volume of attendees. Notably, many individuals present did not possess tickets but still attempted to access the sold-out event. Due to the density of people at entry points, it was difficult for deputies, security staff and other law enforcement agencies to accurately distinguish ticketed guests from those without tickets, and no procedures were in place for the removal of unauthorized individuals.

To address these challenges, a three-tiered entry protocol has since been adopted to ensure early identification and preemptive removal of individuals without valid

credentials, thereby alleviating pressure at main entry points. Each tier features a screening process that mandates attendees to present valid admission tickets. This approach enables the effective identification and removal of individuals without tickets prior to their arrival at the main entrance. Further security enhancements include reinforced barriers and specialized fencing within the inner perimeter, providing an additional layer of deterrence against unauthorized access. Staffing at each checkpoint has been increased, with both private security personnel and MDSO staff deployed to ensure the efficient management of large crowds.

The strategic placement of specially trained deputies throughout the stadium has proven effective in overseeing large and potentially volatile crowds. These officers serve as a significant deterrent and are prepared to effectively manage complex scenarios. During recent FIFA Club World Cup events, Rapid

Deployment Force personnel were assigned to critical areas, successfully addressing unruly spectators and ensuring comprehensive security around the stadium perimeter.

The initial event preparations involved gathering baseline data; however, this information proved insufficient for supplying stakeholders with actionable insights. As a result, an enhanced methodology has been implemented, incorporating crowd behavior monitoring, social media analysis, and threat identification. This comprehensive approach empowers key stakeholders to make timely and well-informed decisions.

At this time, I would like to present an overview of the strategies and safety protocols being implemented and evaluated in preparation for future high-level events such as FIFA 2026. For example, the adoption of integrated communication systems is essential. Real-time, synchronized communication among all stakeholders including law enforcement, emergency response services, event organizers, and local authorities ensures seamless information flow and coordinated responses. Additionally, transparent communication with the public is crucial for fostering trust and encouraging compliance with safety protocols.

Empowering qualified volunteers and personnel through comprehensive training programs is also a key priority. Regular drills and scenario-based exercises equip staff with the necessary skills to respond swiftly and effectively to emergencies, suspicious activities, and guest assistance needs. It is equally important to ensure that venues and communications are accessible to all individuals, including those with disabilities and

from diverse cultural backgrounds. Employing multilingual law enforcement agents, both overt and covert, further supports effective crowd management and engagement.

A healthy budget is fundamental to ensuring the highest level of safety at major events. Adequate funding is required for additional deputies, overtime, and investment in advanced technologies which will enable rapid response capabilities and reinforce MDSO's commitment to safety.

The establishment of centralized command centers throughout the venues is critical for the coordination of resources, information sharing, and decision-making during large-scale events. Command centers serve as operational hubs, enabling authorities to monitor situations in real-time and deploy resources where needed most efficiently.

Community engagement and educational outreach prior to high-level events are vital to overall safety efforts. Informative campaigns through op-ed pieces, videos, and other media will educate both locals and guests about safety protocols, emergency procedures, and available resources, thereby enhancing preparedness and promoting a culture of safety throughout the host community and beyond. Before closing, I would like to underscore one final point. The Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office is committed to public safety. While we recognize and appreciate the partnership between event organizers, vendors, and sponsors for large community events; their operational costs and projected revenues should NOT override or minimize the importance of public safety considerations. MDSO maintains sole authority over personnel deployment and resource allocation for these large-scale events.

In conclusion, the World Cup served as a pivotal event, offering valuable insights, experiences, and lessons learned. A thorough analysis of areas for enhancement has strengthened MDSO's approach to safety and security for forthcoming major events. By embracing technological advancements, fostering interagency cooperation, and implementing comprehensive training, we remain committed to ensuring a secure and exceptional experience for all participants at FIFA 2026.

We should move forward with collective responsibility and vigilance to ensure that FIFA and other international events hosted by Miami Dade County exemplify both the celebration of achievement and the highest standards of safety, unity, and resilience.

Thank you for your attention. I am available to answer any questions or receive recommendations.