

## ***WE ARE..... AC!***

*Alameda County employees serve our community in many ways. Some of the jobs we perform are well known, though many are delivered behind the scenes. One extremely important County-led operation occurs on select afternoons and evenings in the fall, when the Oakland Raiders take the field at Oakland's O.co Coliseum. A well-coordinated, multi-agency security operation led by the Alameda County Sheriff's Office is deployed at the Coliseum on game days, aiming to maintain safety and make sure as many fans as possible are able to enjoy the game without disturbance. The following story is a description of the elaborate security operation led by the Sheriff's Office. With the Raiders' 2014 football season fast approaching, we salute the Sheriff's Office and their many law enforcement partners for all they do to ensure these spirited convergences of humanity at the Coliseum stay focused on fun, football, community pride and camaraderie.*

### **No Matter the Score It's a Win for Fans**

The teams that converge on the O.co Coliseum on Sundays every fall don't all wear helmets and shoulder pads. There is also the multi-agency team of law enforcement officers – led by the Alameda County Sheriff's Office - that carries out a critical game plan of its own in and around the stadium. ACSO collaborates with no less than a half-dozen other agencies at Oakland Raiders' home games to meet one goal: to provide a safe and enjoyable environment for the 40,000 plus fans who come to the Coliseum to commune together and watch some football. The ACSO-led game-day security operation is acknowledged by the NFL as a model for other stadiums. One Sunday last fall, two County employees – Jason Lauren and Guy Ashley - were the invited guests of Assistant Sheriff Casey Nice and his team of commanders, deputies at a sold-out Raiders game with the Kansas City Chiefs. The invitation provided an inside look at an intricately planned security operation polished over many NFL seasons. The operation was up and rolling as the morning sun was low on the horizon; and it was still going strong three hours after the game, as headlights streaming down nearby Interstate 880 cut through the evening darkness.

### **Football Just a Part of It**

Game day at the Coliseum involves far more than football. It's an extended community celebration. On this Sunday, as is typical for Raiders home games, fans have flocked to the stadium hours before the 8 a.m. opening of the Coliseum's parking lots. At 7:45 a.m., the line at the Coliseum's 66th Avenue entrance stretches for several blocks and includes many "tricked out" vehicles and costumed fans giving tribute to "The Silver and Black." Kickoff is more than five hours away but the fun is in full swing.



7:45 a.m.: Cars lined up on 66<sup>th</sup> Avenue outside O.Co Coliseum Gates.

When the gates open, a phalanx of yellow-clad Landmark Event Staffing personnel guides traffic through two coned-off traffic lanes. The parking lot is filled swiftly and methodically, starting at the front and working back. "The

days when you could come down and claim 10 parking spots for you and your friends and your friends' friends are gone," Assistant Sheriff Nice says. It's one vehicle per space, but there's still plenty of room. Tailgate spreads with BBQ rigs, canopies, tables and chairs are permitted so long as they don't encroach on the narrow buffer zone – a red striped traffic lane for emergency vehicles. Veteran tailgaters are equipped with all the comforts of home – including flat-screen televisions tuned to the early game involving the rival S.F. 49ers. Raiders, Chiefs and 49ers fans mix easily. One pair of Chiefs fans say they attend their team's visit to Oakland every year and have always felt safe among the "Raider Nation." Looming above the gathering is 50-foot-tall observation tower manned by security officers who monitor the parking lot throughout the game.



*Deputies on motorcycles control traffic within the North Parking Lot and enforce the one-vehicle-per-space rule.*

### **ACSO Command Post**

By 9 a.m. the Coliseum's North Lot is half full. The mouth-watering aroma of BBQ fills the air. The ACSO monitors the festivities from a Command Post consisting of three large vehicles huddled adjacent to the Oracle Arena – the home of the Golden State Warriors. The centerpiece is ACSO's Regional Mobile Command

Center, a 40-foot tractor trailer rig equipped with state-of-the-art communications and video surveillance equipment.

The atmosphere is light as the day begins; later, the Command Post will be the scene of more serious work, after a small number of fans is brought here after being detained for public drunkenness or arrested for criminal offenses. Security is tight in and around the Command Post.



*Good vibes in the parking lot, even among rivals*

### **Securing the Scene for the Big Game**

Hours before kickoff the still-empty stadium, its parking lots, stands, locker rooms, rest rooms, concourses and other public access areas are swept for explosives. This 90-minute operation is conducted by deputies with bomb-sniffing German Shepard dogs. These canine units remain on duty the entire day, always alert and ready to seize on the scent of anything suspicious.

This season the NFL has banned all bags other than league-approved clear plastic carrying bags and small clutch purses. To minimize the inconvenience ACSO deputies walk the parking lot looking for non-conforming bags; better to direct fans back to their vehicles while they're still close to the parking lot than to turn them around at the gate.

By 10 a.m. the North Lot bursts with the sights, sounds and smells of a full-blown community celebration. Hopes are high for a Raiders victory. Sheriff's deputies mingle with revelers, sharing the joy and keeping the peace. Tailgate chefs compete for the deputies' attention. A woman wearing a Silver and Black Santa hat leaps from her chair with a friendly command – "Grab a plate. We've got the best BBQ in town."

The energetic and multi-ethnic scene belies the notion that Raiders games are intimidating affairs.



*Sheriff's Canine Units play a key role in the Game Day security operation.*

### **Pre-Game Briefing**

Well before fans are allowed into the stadium, the Sheriff's contingent packs a small meeting room near the stadium for a briefing led by Assistant Sheriff Nice, the commanding officer; and Sheriff's Capt. Garrett Holmes, the event commander. The group is reminded of their objective, "to create the most fan-friendly environment in the NFL." To do this, deputies are reminded to enforce the league's "Fan Code of Conduct," which prohibits fighting, obscene language, offensive clothing, smoking, intoxication and other behaviors that "may harm, endanger, threaten or bring discomfort to anyone." Anyone who violates the code is subject to ejection and/or arrest. Ticket

privileges can be revoked. Those who suffer this fate must complete a 4-hour online course before they can attend another Raiders game. After running through the day's itinerary, Nice and Holmes remind the security team to stick together, as the safety of fellow deputies is a top priority.



*Deputies only briefly divert their attention towards the many foods offered to them.*

### **Slowly, the Scene Shifts**

By 11 a.m. the North Parking Lot is nearly full. The party is in full swing under a warm, sunny sky. The sounds of celebration are everywhere, as are the smoky smells that waft from nearly every cluster of fans. Celebrants chatter in nervous anticipation of the big game. Children and adults toss footballs amid the massive parking lot picnic.

At noon, with kick-off only an hour away, the smoke begins to clear. Fans are packing up and heading for the stadium. Deputies keep a close eye on the activities, as remaining in the parking lot during the game is prohibited.

Fans enter the stadium and see the players are already warming up on the field. Deputies in uniform take their posts at entrance gates and on the sidelines. They keep their eyes out for ticket scalpers and unruly fans, while also making themselves available for fans needing assistance.



## **High and Low Visibility**

As the seating areas fill, deputies walk the concourses, answer questions and exchange pleasantries. Rest rooms are monitored for illegal activity and prohibited behavior. But the deputies in high-visibility posts represent only part of the stadium security operation now moving at full tilt. Much more goes on behind the scenes. The nerve center of all security operations is a Central Command Center located in a suite high above the field. This is by no means a “luxury suite.” It is filled with hi-tech security tools – video and communications equipment and banks of personal computers. Work stations are operated by personnel of the Alameda County Sheriff’s Office, the Oakland Police Department, AEG, the Raiders organization, Landmark security, the NFL, the Office of Emergency Services. Even the FBI is involved. Together, the team monitors activities in all areas of the stadium, leaving little opportunity to keep track of the game.



*A Central Command Center inside the stadium is staffed by security team that monitors a wide range of issues.*

## **Text Messages and Binoculars**

Inside the Central Command Center sits a Raiders’ official closely monitoring a computer that displays text messages sent by fans through the Coliseum’s highly publicized security text line. The texts reflect a wide range of concerns. Currently, the most urgent matter involves a text from a fan who wants to know where to buy gluten-free beer.

The security team uses binoculars to scan the stands and to observe reported problems and the security response. No matter what type of issue is reported, it appears there is always someone available to provide the answers. Unlike the skirmishes between players on the field, there are no turf battles here.



*Deputies are posted at the edge of the playing field, scanning the stands with their backs to the field of play.*

## **Leading the Way**

The Sheriff’s Office commits the largest number of officers to the Game Day security contingent and, therefore, bears the lion’s share of responsibility. In addition to securing the North Parking Lot both before and after the game, ACSO secures the stadium’s east side seating areas (aka “Mount Davis”), the East Side Club facilities, the stadium’s upper deck, and most of the lower and middle decks. The Oakland Police Department secures the South Parking Lot, the “North Side Club” and some of the north side seating areas, including the famed “Black Hole.”

## **Game Over – Security Operation in Full Swing**

At game's end the security team's work has only just begun. Sheriff's deputies patrol the parking lot to look out for intoxicated fans and signs of post-game discord. The ACSO Command Post is a busy place, though deputies say they've seen relatively few problems during the day. Despite the sell-out crowd – and a Raiders loss to the arch-rival Chiefs – deputies have responded to only a few security breaches and no reports of violence.

Deputies are focused on keeping things peaceful until the parking lot has cleared – and show the ability to provide a “soft touch” when needed. With fans still leaving the stadium, deputies and an EMT speak reassuringly to an 8-year-old boy who has become separated from his family. The boy is calm and all smiles when his much relieved father arrives.

Meanwhile, the parking lot Command Post has become a staging area of a more serious kind. Deputies are interacting with fans who have been detained during the game. The dejected fans, some in wrist and ankle restraints, are seated in white molded-plastic chairs. In some cases, they are receiving medical attention. Most of the fans have been detained for public intoxication, though others are being questioned for scalping tickets or selling unlicensed souvenirs or other breaches of Coliseum regulations. Some are cited and released, while others are taken to Santa Rita Jail. Though some of these fans may test their composure, deputies refuse to take the bait. Rarely is a deputy's voice even raised.



*Deputies closely monitor the activities inside the stadium.....*



*.....and outside.....*

## **A Disappointing Game – But a Job Well Done**

As dusk settles over the Command Post, deputies turn in their radios, complete their paperwork, and receive a debriefing before heading home.

Final score: Chiefs 56, Raiders 31. And more than 40,000 safe football fans.

Thank you, Alameda County Sheriff's Office for showing that Raiders games are what they should be: safe and enjoyable experiences for everyone, no matter what team they support. And for showing why the NFL calls the Coliseum's game day security operation one of the best in the league.