

# U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR Office of Inspector General

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## Review of National Icon Park Security

Photograph by Katie Balestra

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# Introduction

## ***Background***



The St. Louis Gateway Arch



Independence Hall

This assessment is the third in a series of reports concerning the efforts of the Department of the Interior (DOI or Department) to address homeland security issues. This report contains the results of our assessment of the national monuments that have been designated as “icons” due to their prominent historical attraction. The sites that make up the icon category typically draw large numbers of tourists and frequent media attention—factors that make them particularly attractive terrorist targets. The Department has been designated the Lead Federal Agency<sup>1</sup>, with primary jurisdiction over national icons and monuments.

This assessment was conducted by the Office of Inspector General’s Program Integrity Division. The focus of the assessment included security management, staffing, and the use of funding. Information was obtained through site visits to all the designated icon parks, scrutiny of completed security reviews, and by conducting over 50 interviews with Department personnel at all levels.

We conducted our evaluation in accordance with the President’s Council on Integrity and Efficiency Quality Standards for Inspections. Accordingly, we included such tests or reviews of records that we considered necessary under the circumstances. In the interest of security, the specific names of the icon parks exhibiting security deficiencies have been withheld.

The team’s observations were shared with park management personnel and other Department employees at the conclusion of each site visit. Many changes were made to security countermeasures as a result of our discussions, while other changes, which were pending at the time of our

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<sup>1</sup> The National Strategy for the Physical Protection of Critical Infrastructures and Key Assets

visits, have since been implemented. In general, this report attempts to represent the current status of security measures at these icon parks, although we recognize that changes and enhancements are occurring daily. At the conclusion of the report, we offer ten suggestions for action that we believe will improve the continuity and efficiency of protection for our icon parks.

We appreciate the assistance and candor of the members of the National Park Service and the Department during this assessment. We found there was a common thread between assessor and assessee: the desire to improve security.



The Statue of Liberty

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## Results in Brief

The National Park Service (NPS) has failed to successfully adapt its mission and priorities to reflect its new security responsibilities and commitment to the enhanced protection of our nation's most treasured monuments and memorials from terrorism. Our assessment revealed a lack of continuity, consistency, and creativity in the planning and execution of protection practices for the national icon parks. Necessary security enhancements have been delayed, postponed, or wholly disregarded while management attempts to equally balance security needs with other park programs and projects. More than once, we were told by park superintendents that they continue to do everything they did prior to September 11, in addition to their new security responsibilities. While it is commendable that NPS wishes to continue providing pre-9/11 services and improvements throughout its parks, this approach fails to recognize and accept the need to discard the status quo and place a higher priority on the timely implementation of new security measures. Unfortunately, we believe that current funding and staffing will not permit the desired "equal" balancing of all programs and projects. In short, it is imperative that icon park protection take precedence over all other park concerns.

Throughout our assessment, we encountered management officials lacking situational awareness and acceptance of the fact that their parks were susceptible to terrorist attacks, and they appeared unconvinced that security enhancements were necessary. Other officials lacked the expertise and resources to effectively assess, determine, and prioritize what actions and implementations were necessary. Although we found the superintendents to be dedicated to the concept of protection and preservation of their parks and visitors, many were lacking coherent and qualified direction and support from the region, bureau, and the Department regarding security augmentation.

During our review, we observed security measures that appeared to have been haphazardly determined and hastily implemented. At one park, for example, we learned that security countermeasures were installed at a certain distance based on aesthetics rather than a scientific blast analysis or recognized security standards. At two other parks, we discovered an entrance gate unmanned, unprotected, and unmonitored just a short distance from what the park management advised was one of their top three vulnerable areas. Other security deficiencies included improperly-distanced vehicle barriers, inoperable security equipment, cameras without nighttime capabilities, ineffective alarm systems, exposed security wiring, and negligent security personnel.



Improperly-distanced vehicle barriers

Security cameras at some icon parks were located at such a lengthy distance from the monuments, for reasons having primarily to do with aesthetics and/or historic integrity, that veils of trees, along with various other impediments, actually obscured critical areas of vulnerability. While we recognize the significance of maintaining the historic nature of these parks, there has to be some room for accommodating adequate security measures, such as the aforementioned cameras. Moreover, we discovered many of these cameras remain unmonitored throughout the day and go dormant at night, relying then on motion-detection devices.



A typical screening site

Moreover, security equipment is not utilized in the most efficient manner. Physical security measures at these parks are assembled in an almost makeshift fashion; security countermeasures (barriers, bollards, cameras, alarms, etc.) are arranged in disorder and without the supervision of a trained professional, and therefore do not function to the highest potential level in order to deter attackers.

Overall, we found the majority of the parks' screening sites competent and professionally operated. Most of these sites made good use of contract personnel who participated in the

screening process. Unfortunately, however, this professionalism was not found across the board: we discovered that a few icon parks were not performing any checkpoint screening at all, and in some parks that *did* screen visitors, it was being done rather poorly. On both occasions where it was attempted, the assessment team was able to breach security screening checkpoints with pocket knives. On one occasion, this was due to intentionally-lowered magnetometer sensitivity. On another occasion, this was due to dead batteries in the screener's wand.

In short, the parks have not felt the pressure to perform, nor have they been held accountable for their noncompliance. The NPS and the Department must address these serious deficiencies within the security and law enforcement programs in order to adequately protect our national icons. Greater effort and guidance are needed in order to properly meet current security demands. Coordination and communication—two key characteristics of any well-functioning organization—are lacking. Specifically, we uncovered an over-reliance on small numbers of protection rangers and Park Police officers. Reliance on overworked and understaffed protection rangers and Park Police officers to provide satisfactory protection at icon parks is unwise. The park security workforce requires augmentation, and both current and incoming rangers and officers should receive more intense training in order to strengthen their skills and to enhance their ability to execute protection duties. Furthermore, technological solutions should be pursued, as well as the use of contract security personnel, where appropriate.



Security checkpoint at Boston Navy Yard

Despite these shortcomings, however, we have been encouraged by some creative and concentrated efforts toward improving the security program within the NPS recently. We are finally seeing sincere and serious dialogue in regard to examining the effectiveness of the current program, and a willingness to consider actions that transcend the status quo. The necessary infrastructure to provide the required oversight is finally being put into place

with the Visitor and Resource Protection Directorate, and is rapidly acquiring the desired impact. Notably, both NPS and certain specific icon parks made a number of significant changes throughout the course of this assessment. This is a positive sign. We anticipate many more problems to be addressed and solutions implemented in the near future, and remain hopeful that this effort will continue to flourish.

## **Security Management**

*A chief ranger at another icon park asked, "If you can't protect against everything, why protect against anything?"*

Although protection of resources has always been the hallmark of the NPS mission, the need to protect national icons and monuments from terrorist attack is new and requires the development and coordination of comprehensive policies, practices, and protective measures. Prior to September 11, 2001, the Department and NPS security programs were woefully deficient, if not completely nonexistent. In addition, the law enforcement entities whose function it was to provide security for these parks were imprudently ignored and allowed to erode. Security and law enforcement programs were not viewed as a priority at the time by senior management, and staffing, funding, and technology throughout the parks suffered as a result of this neglect. After 9/11, however, security and law enforcement factions received considerable and sudden attention; nevertheless, the pre-9/11 funding and staffing deficit has greatly impacted the parks' capability to respond swiftly to today's call for enhanced security measures. With limited resources, the Department and NPS have been challenged in their efforts to carry out their protective mission.

In addition to limited resources, the protective mission has been hindered by park managements' and some field law enforcement officials' inability to recognize—or accept—the actual threat of terrorism. This finding is troubling, since senior management for both the Department and the NPS have acknowledged and accepted the threat potential of terrorist acts and the need to prepare countermeasures.

During our assessment, we found that several parks were deficient in respect to actual situational awareness, and were observed subscribing to lackadaisical security procedures

*At yet another park, the designated minimum staffing of security posts was ignored and, when challenged, a United States Park Police official quipped, "You can go under minimum staffing as long as nothing bad happens."*

and nonchalance when dealing with the implementation of security measures. There was an overall imbalance between security and accommodation. At one park, convenience for local merchants and employees was given priority over closing a recently-purchased security gate meant to secure a specified area of vulnerability. Gates were left open and unattended at another park for the convenience of local residents. At yet another park, the designated minimum staffing of security posts was ignored and, when challenged, a United States Park Police official quipped: "You can go under minimum staffing as long as nothing bad happens." A chief ranger at another icon park asked, "If you can't protect against everything, why protect against anything?" During unannounced inspections, we often found that the reported number of officers on duty or standing guard at these parks was not in accordance with the individual park's own reported minimums. Similarly, we frequently observed ineffective patrol procedures, poor law enforcement visibility, staff fatigue, and the capricious redeployment of security personnel.

Many of the park officials responsible for making security decisions do not understand the basic objective: a terrorist attack is less likely to occur the more difficult it is for the terrorist to accomplish the deed. Terrorists also seek targets that will provide them with maximum impact and may be aimed at destroying property, killing individuals, or both. Experience has shown that terrorists are interested in attacking symbols of America, and intelligence information suggests that no attack will take place without first scrutinizing a target for its weaknesses and vulnerabilities. If proper security measures are in place when this scrutiny occurs, there is a good chance that the terrorists will seek some other, less protected target. Simply stated, a well-protected, adequately staffed facility will help deter terrorists from attacking it.

The goal, however, is not to develop a foolproof security plan. Recognizing that an asset cannot be protected completely without absorbing much higher costs and

without inhibiting some business operations, a balance between cost-effective security and visitor accommodation must be maintained in order for each park to both function and protect itself to the highest possible extent. Therefore, the goal in instituting icon park security measures should be to make it more difficult for an adversary to breach security and effectively execute an attack.

*At one park, the chief ranger admitted that he was told the park could not afford the transition to an orange alert, and that he was not to implement the increased security.*

Many of the efforts to date fall short of reaching a deterrence level for “pre-screening” by terrorists. Many of the parks have failed to provide adequate training to their respective non-law enforcement staff concerning the identification and reporting of suspicious persons and activities. At several parks, during the unannounced period of our assessments, the team went unchallenged when taking photographs of security-sensitive areas or while accessing controlled areas without identification. At another location, team members strolled through a restricted area past several employees, who did not make any attempt to stop or report the incident to security personnel. The team *was* challenged at a few of the parks, but the parks’ follow-through proved inadequate: park security personnel did not always perform the appropriate steps to assure a proper negation of the prospective threat.

A standard protection plan needs to be developed for icon parks. Currently, each park has separate operational policies and staffing methodologies that not only fail to coincide but, in some instances, actually negate each other. For instance, visitor screening is not done at every park, the ratio of law enforcement officers on duty per area or per visitor varies, and the use of closed-circuit television cameras is different at each location. Some security personnel often appear confused about the specifics of their mission, which results in complacency and a sense of frustration and disinterest among law enforcement personnel. Also, some NPS officials exhibit an air of insolence while others feel unappreciated in the face of what they view as an overwhelming task not fully under their control.



Simulated explosives placed next to a critical structure went undetected for several hours during high alert.

*We also believe that the designation of an icon park should ensure that the park is recognized within an exclusive category for budget, staffing, and matters of policy.*

There is also significant confusion in respect to the national alert levels. Each park has developed its own response plans for heightened threat levels. When inspected, a number of parks were discovered to be implementing their own interpretations of national threat levels—which some characterized as the “flavors of orange.” The reasons varied, but most were founded on a lack of clear direction from the regional offices as well as the Department. At one park, the chief ranger admitted that he was told the park could not afford the transition to an orange alert, and that he was not to implement the increased security. At other parks, staff believed they only had to increase security based on park-specific threat levels and that the national threat levels did not mandate an official reaction. One Park Police official wanted to know when he would again be able to “bring officers back down to normal shifts.” A number of icon park officials also seemed to be under the impression that orange alert was not intended to last longer than a few days.

However, Regional NPS offices and the Department have failed on occasion to provide the necessary preparedness and guidance to the parks during increased levels of threat. Confusion also has been generated by the Office of Law Enforcement and Security (OLES) modifying or enhancing threat levels and security measures in response to special initiatives, such as Operation Liberty Shield<sup>2</sup>, which became known as “enhanced orange” by some NPS officials. At other times, icon parks have been inundated with multiple calls and governances from Headquarters, Regional offices, and OLES, confusing the matter even more.

In conducting our assessment, we visited each of the designated icon parks under the management of the NPS. While there, we met with the management teams and inquired as to how the icon list was generated. Collectively, no one could state how certain parks, monuments, and memorials were included and what criterion was used.

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<sup>2</sup> Concentrated security enhancement coinciding with the commencement of the Iraqi war

*The majority of the parks relied on their chief law enforcement officer or ranger to make security-related decisions. During our interviews, we learned that few of these law enforcement officials had ever received any physical security training and were similarly ill-suited to manage such responsibilities.*

Most agreed that the list was produced shortly after September 11, when a “budget call” was made for parks that needed increased security funding. The parks that received funds from the supplemental funding became known and referred to as icon parks. In discussions with OLES, we later learned that NPS senior management subsequently endorsed the original list of icon parks at least two times, and then submitted them to the Department to be included in a broader list of DOI key assets<sup>3</sup>.

This icon list includes several parks and monuments with international recognition and indisputable threat potential<sup>4</sup>, such as the Statue of Liberty, the Liberty Bell, Independence Hall, and the Washington Monument. Others on the list do not possess the same degree of recognition and threat potential. When questioned, OLES advised us that the list of icon parks submitted to OLES was not “second-guessed,” despite some disagreement with several of the parks on the list. Key NPS officials have also questioned the legitimacy of several of the parks being included on the key asset and icon lists.

No official priority listing or other designated category for the icon parks exists. Theoretically, while each park was placed on the list due to an increased likelihood of attack, specified vulnerability (significant loss of life and/or symbolic value), or a need for increased security measures, we found that the icon parks were not equally treated by the NPS or by OLES. We also could not detect any across-the-board minimum standards for security.

In addition, several of these parks encompass icons that are not the property of DOI, or are they under the management of the National Park Service or Department of the Interior. The USS *Constitution* and USS *Arizona*, for example, remain commissioned ships of the United States Navy, while Fort Point National Historic Site houses the east footing of the

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<sup>3</sup> “Key assets” have been identified as locations warranting additional security measures due to their mission, value, or symbolic status

<sup>4</sup> “Threat potential” estimates an asset’s attractiveness as a target in respect to potential attacks

Golden Gate Bridge. The NPS and the Department certainly have some security responsibilities at these locations; however, we believe the property owners should retain greater, if not primary, responsibility for these assets.

We believe that the designation of an icon park should ensure that the park is recognized within an exclusive category for budget, staffing, and matters of policy. With the exception of receiving supplemental funding, many superintendents claimed there were no other benefits to being recognized as an icon park. Moreover, only a few superintendents believed their requests were viewed and acted upon differently than their non-icon park contemporaries. We were provided anecdotal accounts of security-related projects awaiting State Historical Preservation Office (SHIPO) approval, and being held up by non-security/lower-priority requests. Other examples included the regional offices changing priorities of park security projects and giving them a lower priority than non-icon security projects.

Icon status has also not reduced the expectation of continuing to support all other park functions, programs, and projects. Several of the icon superintendents reported that, whereas security was a significant concern, it was only one of many of the competing programs at their parks.

In conducting our assessment, we found all icon parks to be lacking access to a certified, full-time security professional. Individually, most parks have done as well as could be expected given the limited guidance and technical support received from the Department or NPS. For years, superintendents and their staffs have been placed in position to determine what security measures to implement, with little or no guidance from qualified security professionals.

The NPS is well aware of the importance of retaining a full-time security professional, and is currently in the final stages of bringing a qualified candidate onboard. This individual, they maintain, will facilitate dialogue among the parks, NPS,

and the Department, conduct specific assessments of each icon park, and will ultimately provide a much clearer direction to the field. Currently, at the time of this report, this position is held by a temporary security officer who has illustrated to NPS the importance of attaining a full-time security specialist. OLES has only recently filled its permanent security manager position.

Several of the icon parks, including the Statue of Liberty, did possess individuals assigned to the position of security officer; however, those individuals also maintained a number of collateral duties. In the case of the Statue of Liberty, a Park Police sergeant was designated as the security specialist, but also performed the duties of primary squad supervisor, training officer, firearms instructor, and fitness instructor. Interestingly, we were notified one week following our assessment visit to Ellis and Liberty islands that Park Police senior management had abruptly designated the sergeant as the full-time security specialist and had relieved him of all other duties. We fully support the expediency of this action; however, we recommend that this security specialist, and all other security specialists, complete an adequate training course and obtain appropriate certifications.

Many of the icon park superintendents we interviewed acknowledged that access to an in-house security professional would be beneficial to their programs. Most stated that they felt inadequate making serious security decisions based on their own limited training and lack of expertise in this field. The majority of parks relied on their chief law enforcement officer or ranger to make security-related decisions. During our interviews, we learned that few of these law enforcement officials had ever received any physical security training and were similarly ill-suited to manage such responsibilities.

Lacking qualified security professionals and staff within both the Department and Bureaus, the Department has learned to rely primarily on private security contractors to

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complete security risk and vulnerability reviews. The various assessments and reviews have employed a variety of evaluative formulas and tools to produce specific recommendations. This has led to the NPS being provided with individual assessments for each icon park with no methodology to use the information globally or compare results. We found some of these assessments to be of questionable value, and we doubt the effectiveness of many of the measures that these particular assessments recommended for implementation. Hence, there remains no single individual or group responsible, or capable, of professionally reviewing the security needs of the NPS icon parks, and to effectively recommend a specified, unified course of action to senior NPS management.

In addition, we became aware that some individual assessments were manipulated or otherwise influenced by park management in order to find a balance between park accommodations as opposed to real security concerns. Thus, we are concerned with the integrity of these recommendations having been impaired by management intervention.

The NPS also lacks a comprehensive protection plan for its icon parks. As a result of operating without a service-wide plan, the NPS's efforts remain dependent upon each individual superintendent's willingness to adhere to and interpret the security program. This is a poor implementation of security measures, since the program itself lacks standards for NPS visitor screening, surveillance cameras, contract security guards, and vulnerability assessments. Until just recently, little evidence existed that icon park managers even communicated outside their respective boundaries in order to seek advice or to identify best practices. Recently, we were pleased to discover that the Northeast Region instituted regular icon park conference calls. This practice should be replicated in other Regions.



Security measures at the Lincoln Memorial

## **OLES and the Icon Parks**

*“This is my house,” remarked one Park Police official, “and I know what is wrong in my house. I don’t need everyone telling us what we need to do different and what we are doing wrong.”*

We were also recently advised that Sandia National Laboratories<sup>5</sup> is developing a much needed methodology to aid in the ranking of DOI’s assets and setting priorities for security actions. Sandia’s project team has visited several of the icon parks in order to incorporate the issues unique to those specific locations. The project is being jointly funded by the Bureau of Reclamation and the NPS. The use of a risk matrix would greatly assist the Department and NPS with evaluating its key assets and can then serve as a consistent, universal measuring tool.

When questioned, most park officials indicated that support received from the Department’s Office of Law Enforcement and Security varied from park to park. At two locations, the park superintendent and chief ranger had never even heard of OLES. A third park official admitted to very little direct involvement with OLES, although the communication and assistance received was said to be constructive and a “breath of fresh air.” Several park officials reported receiving valuable assistance from OLES: for instance, the superintendents at the Statue of Liberty and Independence Hall welcomed OLES to their parks and found their support to be both necessary and advantageous.

OLES not only has been able to increase advocacy for the icon parks, but has also been instrumental in getting results in a timely fashion. At one location, we encountered the perimeter security to be grossly ineffective. We briefed the superintendent, detailing our concerns and recommendations, but received no assurance of a timely resolution. After briefing OLES on the situation they, too, visited the park, made the same observations and conclusions, and directed that the perimeter be reinforced. Soon after, the perimeter was properly secured, negating the observed vulnerability.

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<sup>5</sup> Sandia is a multiprogram laboratory operated by Sandia Corporation, a Lockheed Martin Company, for the United States Department of Energy’s National Nuclear Security Administration

*During a visit to one of the most vulnerable of the icon parks, we were told, "We know what is best. We do not need anyone coming here to tell us what to do."*

*"I'm not concerned about al-Qaeda. I am more concerned with individuals. Al-Qaeda has never been around here before."*

## **Staffing**

Overall, there remain conflicting impressions of OLES. Confusion arises from the multiple instructions received by each individual icon park from OLES, particularly when OLES bypasses the NPS chain-of-command and often provides direction to parks which conflicts with more formal NPS instruction. The NPS feels it cannot hold the icon park superintendents accountable for what they fail to do if their direction comes from another source, such as OLES. Likewise, a similar problem occurs when, for example, the region decides parks should not advance to higher threat levels when OLES says they should. On a few occasions, we were told that parks were directed by OLES to take actions that were especially costly, despite the absence of a specified funding source.

During a visit to one of the most vulnerable of the icon parks, we were told, "We know what is best. We do not need anyone coming here to tell us what to do." This same official made the following remark concerning terrorist threats: "I'm not concerned about al-Qaeda. I am more concerned with individuals. Al-Qaeda has never been around here before." These remarks were alarming, telling, and unfortunate. In addition, we found several other officials discounting the terrorist threat notwithstanding repeated national alerts. "This is my house," remarked one Park Police official, "and I know what's wrong in my house. I don't need everyone telling us what we need to do different and what we are doing wrong."

Protection rangers and Park Police officers are the foundation of icon park security. The events of September 11 and the resultant augmentation of security have had an incredible impact on both parks and law enforcement officers service-wide: rangers have been detailed from their permanent parks to supplement the icon park forces, leaving many other parks with an atrophied and weakened protection staff. Several non-icon park superintendents have voiced concerns that their rangers have been detailed to the parks with designated icon status.

*On one occasion, we witnessed a Park Police officer leave his assigned post—without relief—to purchase lunch....When this situation was brought to the attention of a Park Police supervisor, the supervisor's reply was, "Nothing I can do about that. The guy has to eat."*

Early on in our assessment, we found the NPS's process of detailing rangers somewhat confusing. Rangers were traveling from icon park to icon park, seemingly without discretion, and the entire process proved unorganized and ineffectual. On a few occasions, rangers assigned to icon parks were detailed to other parks, necessitating other rangers being detailed to cover their absence. Quite often, detailed rangers reported to their assignments late, and would leave early. There appeared to be very little coordination. Recently, however, NPS has implemented a more thoughtful response to this problem: the development of two teams of rangers, with one designated as a "quick response" unit and another as a "rapid deployment force." NPS is now able to quickly detail a designated group of rangers assigned to nearby national parks within six to eight hours of notice. This immediate response group is then relieved by a group of rangers that are on standby deployment within 24 hours, in most cases. NPS law enforcement management has scheduled the standby duties on what they refer to as the "fair share concept," and they have exempted icon park and border rangers.

In addition to the detailing of rangers, most protection rangers and Park Police officers assigned to icon parks have been forced to work 12-hour shifts for extended periods of time, with little time off since September 11, 2001. It was reported that officers were working 12-hour shifts seven days a week for several months and with no days off. These officers only recently began receiving one day off per week. We have a concern about the long-term effectiveness of the protection staff and the officers who operate under these intense conditions. Fatigue and waning morale often impede an officer's perspicacity. A representative of one ranger group characterized the exhausted state of the protective ranger workforce as "setting up to fail." He also provided examples of some rangers being "constantly on the move" between homeland security assignments and wildfire duties. At one of the most prominent of the icon parks, a single officer working a 12-hour shift was responsible for monitoring 101 different security cameras on eight different



Out to lunch

*The impact of the additional security responsibilities has affected all NPS programs across the board. The protection workforce has been the most dramatically impacted, and the role of the protection ranger has made a significant exemplary shift.*

*The “icon” status does not automatically incorporate additional staffing for the mandatory increase in protection.*

security monitors. Despite occasional breaks, this is an arduous and taxing assignment for any officer, let alone for an officer required to put in so many unassisted hours.

The impact of the additional security responsibilities has affected all NPS programs across the board. The protection workforce has been the most dramatically impacted, and the role of the protection ranger has made a significant exemplary shift. Recently, there has been increased discussion throughout the NPS concerning the use of Park Police officers and protection rangers for sentry-like functions at icon parks. Some NPS managers and employees question whether current position descriptions allow the use of protection rangers for guard duties. Others recommend replacing protection rangers with US Park Police Officers at all urban parks. We do not believe the Park Police would be able to absorb these extra duties nor would they find themselves equipped to perform such tasks. In fact, the two locations that the Park Police maintain primary security responsibilities for are wrought with deficiencies, which suggest they would not be the best choice.

We believe the NPS must examine the practicality of utilizing private (contract) security guards, or perhaps NPS security guards in conjunction with protection rangers, to relieve the current workforce. We also believe the NPS and the Department would benefit greatly from increased exploitation of technical solutions in lieu of the more traditional, personnel-intensive solutions.

Requiring police officers and protection rangers to perform sentry duties for extended periods of time is not in the best interest of the officers nor, for that matter, the Department itself. Few officers and rangers have received training as sentries and are more accustomed to random police patrol. Most officers do not *want* to perform sentry-like duties, particularly for long periods of time, and become discontented and unmotivated. On one occasion, we witnessed a Park Police officer leave his assigned post—without relief—to purchase lunch. This officer’s negligence

left a national monument and its contract screeners without an immediate law enforcement presence. When this situation was brought to the attention of a Park Police supervisor, the supervisor's reply was, "Nothing I can do about that. The guy has to eat."

Another staffing issue concerns the disparate staffing levels at icon parks. There exists no specific staffing model or methodology for designated icon parks. Because of this lack of methodology, we found one urban icon park to have as few as two protection rangers on duty during daytime hours. Worse, it was not uncommon to find examples of no law enforcement presence on duty at some other parks. The "icon" status does not automatically incorporate additional staffing for the mandatory increases in protection. With the exception of the Boston Navy Yard, no icon park has received a significant amplification of permanent rangers since September 11. Even more remarkable, many of the parks are currently operating with protection forces *below* pre-9/11 levels.

At one park, prior to 9/11, we found that money for six additional protection rangers was supplied, but after deductions for assessments and an overall park deficit, one ranger had been hired and only three new positions had certificates issued. When questioned about this, the chief ranger advised us she "had to wait," and that the money was "needed elsewhere." Soon after our visit, she was told she could advertise a noncompetitive reassignment she had requested. But three months after our visit, only one position had been filled in addition to the one previously noted.

Shortly after the attacks on September 11, the Department received \$92 million in supplemental funding from Congress, \$63,248,000 of which was allocated to the NPS. This funding was to provide relief for the costs associated with increased security and emergency construction relating to security at icon parks. In June 2002, we conducted a review to determine whether the bureaus had implemented



The Lincoln Memorial

## Funding

*Simply stated, while the NPS recognizes the importance of awarding special parks with high-profile status, they have failed to apply a similar status when it comes to prioritizing funding.*

strategies and controls to ensure that the funding was used for the desired purpose. During this review, we examined the expenditures and uses of the supplemental funding received by the NPS and were satisfied that NPS had closely monitored and properly disbursed the funding.

The only significant misuse of funding did not involve this supplemental funding, but previous years' funding earmarked for physical security. For example, we found that one park had received \$40,000 in 1999 to install closed-circuit cameras at the park, but that the superintendent redirected the money to other non-security activities. The funding was also included in the park's base funding and has been appropriated for the past four years. Shamefully, no camera system exists today despite the significant need for one. To make matters worse, the park has actually submitted a new funding request to install a camera system throughout the park. Incidents like this highlight the need for continuous OLES review of the use of security funding.

A portion of the supplemental funding received was used to pay for increased temporary staffing at parks and dams. Due to monetary restrictions, however, no new permanent positions were gained and, once the money was spent, no permanent increase in security was realized. We learned that estimates of security needs and costs were typically drawn up in unreasonably short timeframes—some as quick as three hours—then submitted to the regions and, later, to Congress for approval. By all accounts, the early projections on costs and needs proved inaccurate and insufficient.

In the days immediately following September 11, the icon parks found themselves in a rush to implement additional security, to determine what security measures were insufficient, and request funding adequate enough to bring park security up to new minimum levels. Without comprehensive security analyses and with little to no understanding of the equipment, procedures, and personnel necessary to successfully enact such change, icon parks

submitted timely but ill-conceived funding requests for each icon park.

Finally, when a park uses detailed rangers, expenses are incurred not only for that officer's per diem and travel but, many times, for a replacement for the detailee's home park as well. Regardless of whether or not a backfill (often in the form of overtime) is necessary, the use of detailees is significantly more expensive than the cost of hiring a permanent ranger. At one park, for example, the daily cost of the cheapest detailee equaled 1 ½ times the cost of the average daily payroll of a GS 7/4 permanent ranger on overtime. It is our opinion that the use of detailees is not an adequate long-term solution to the problem.

For many years, NPS has attempted to treat all parks equally: we were repeatedly told funding requests from the Statue of Liberty, for example, were given the same consideration as funding requests from Badlands National Park in South Dakota. There was no distinction.

Conversely, the events of September 11, 2001, should have demonstrated to NPS the need to prioritize security measures at certain high-profile parks, but the organization has been slow in shifting its funding philosophy to effectively meet these needs. Simply stated, while the NPS recognizes the importance of awarding special parks with high-profile status, they have failed to apply a similar status when it comes to prioritizing funding. Though icon parks received base increases in recognition of their distinctive security needs, some of the money received by these parks has been redistributed to non-icon parks.



The Jefferson Memorial with the Washington Monument in the background

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## Conclusion

*The most disturbing discoveries were the misrepresentation of security implementation and the failure of key personnel to accept the actual threat potential present at their parks.*

Progress has been realized in the Department's efforts to develop and enhance security at our national icon parks. The most significant advancements have been made within the last three months and, in all likelihood, improvements will continue to be made in the foreseeable future. The Department and NPS were slow to react to the newly required security mission and spent precious months entangled in bureaucratic dialogue and inaction while security enhancements were addressed solely by the temporary deployment of rangers and Park Police officers. Now that OLES staffing levels are adequate and serious planning and direction are underway, the newly created office is finally fulfilling its envisioned role. The NPS law enforcement and security program has also progressed, albeit at a much slower pace, and will eventually reach its potential—if supported by senior NPS management in regard to staffing and funding.

The assessment revealed some serious deficiencies with the overall security program of the Department and NPS. Some are a result of the infancy of the program and the initial lack of organizational infrastructure, but others are more serious flaws—a failure of Departmental managers to embrace and support the security mission, for example. The most disturbing discoveries were the misrepresentation of security implementation and the failure of key personnel to accept the actual threat potential present at their parks.

At a time when our country's susceptibility to attack is at the forefront of concern, every reasonable course of preventative action must be taken. After conducting this assessment, we believe that, as of now, this is not the case.

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## Suggested Actions

1. The Department should revisit the definitions of key assets and critical infrastructures provided by the Homeland Security Department with a view toward refining NPS's icon park list. Once an updated list is established, the NPS should maintain universal security standards at all icon parks, which include a minimum of countermeasures and staffing.
2. The Department must clarify the role of OLES in the planning, management, and oversight of its key assets. The responsibility for planning and implementing security countermeasures at icon parks and other key assets should be a collaborative effort between OLES and the respective bureaus. Bureaus must recognize and accept OLES's continuous involvement with key asset security. OLES must develop, in collaboration with the NPS, policies and procedures concerning resolution of operational concerns involving icon security.
3. The Secretary should firmly establish the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Law Enforcement as the individual with final authority to decide the outcome of any internal conflict relative to key asset protection.
4. The Department and NPS should ensure, through senior management discussions, directives, and in-service training, that organizational commitments and responsibilities for key asset security are widely known and supported throughout the Department and NPS.
5. The Department and NPS must increase the accountability of all officials responsible for providing or overseeing security at key asset locations. Modifications to operational plans and security countermeasures should not occur without proper notification and approval. OLES security

audits should continue in order to determine compliance with established policies and procedures.

6. Recognizing the importance of protecting national icon parks, and the responsibilities attendant to Homeland Security in general, NPS should consider grouping the icon parks in a separate category, outside of the traditional regional grouping for all security-related matters, including funding. This would allow for more specific oversight of the icon parks, streamline the notification and reporting process during increased national threat levels, and enhance communications with external entities, such as the Department of Homeland Security.
7. Icon parks with the most significant threat potential should have trained and certified security managers on-site.
8. Security assessments of icon parks should be conducted and completed every three years by a single source, coordinated through the NPS security manager, utilizing a standard risk assessment methodology. Additionally, the Department of Homeland Security's threat levels need to be strictly adhered to by all icon parks. OLES should ensure that random testing of these security procedures takes place and that all approved plans have been fully implemented.
9. NPS should explore the use of contract security guards—both armed and unarmed—to complement protection now provided by existing NPS rangers and police officers. It should be noted that a pilot project at one icon park is currently underway. If this pilot is successful, the NPS and the Department should seriously consider the benefits of establishing a DOI security guard force with a limited scope of authority for the purpose of providing physical security protection for all key assets throughout the Department.

10. Security awareness training should be provided for all employees at each icon park. At the minimum, this training should consist of identification of suspicious persons, packages, and occurrences, with special attention on identifying and reporting individuals conducting surveillance.

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