

Inter Agency Cooperation During 2007 US Open

By Sergeant Albert Wessel – Allegheny County Police Bomb Unit

When planning for a major event you begin meeting and planning with the event coordinators eight months to a year in advance. You think you have all the time in the world to develop the greatest, most thorough Operations Plan ever written. Then the requirements start coming in and you begin thinking, “My God how will I ever be capable of covering all these tasks.”

For the 2007 USGA, US Open Golf Tournament at Oakmont Country Club, located just outside of Pittsburgh Pennsylvania, the tasking definitely sounded overwhelming. Prior to the first day of practice rounds everything needed to be searched, and none of the areas would be available before 0001 hours Monday morning. There were the vendor tents, corporate sponsor’s tents, grandstands, Trophy Club, Merchandise Tent, all the trash receptacles throughout the course and club house grounds. Which brings us to the clubhouse, with all its, restaurants, kitchens, lounges, locker rooms, offices, dorm rooms, and basement storage areas. And of course, staffing the Bomb Management Center. All of which would be required throughout the full week of the tournament. In addition to all this, we had the responsibility of vehicle screening.



The Allegheny County Police were named the lead agency for this event and as the Bomb Squad Commander I was tasked to provide the EOD protection with my six Bomb Techs and four EOD K-9 teams. So I put out the call to the Western Pennsylvania Chapter of the IABTI for “HELP.” To my surprise the response was unbelievable.

Our SABT, Tom Welsh, offered himself and three other SABT’s, Jim Tanda, ATF, gave up eleven Explosive Security Specialists, City of Pittsburgh Police Bomb Squad sent four Bomb Techs, Pennsylvania State Police Hazardous Devices Unit sent four Bomb guys and Brian Plants from the United States Postal Inspection Service provided nineteen investigators with explosive back grounds. Then there was Dan Bohe from the Federal Air



Marshals who offered himself and his one, Explosives Specialist. I now had a team of fifty three people to work with. Then came the K-9’s; three K-9’s from the Port Authority Police, one K-9 team each from the Allegheny County Sheriff’s Office, the Pennsylvania State Police and the University of Pittsburgh Police. And to top everything off the United States Customs provided one of their VASCS trucks for screening the delivery vehicles.

It was decided that we would work twelve hour shifts with two, Diagnostic Assessment Teams and two Render Safe Teams assigned to each shift. Then we needed communication and transportation (they tend to frown on the Bomb Truck running down the Fairway). Here we fell into some incredible luck; Kuchera Defense Industries in cooperation with Cohernt Inc. offered us a prototype electric dune buggy for evaluation. This vehicle could do 0 to 60 in a little over three seconds, could carry over a thousand pounds of equipment and was so quiet we had problems getting through the crowds because they could not hear us coming up behind them. (This vehicle was the talk of the event, we could have sold it ten times over). As far as communications, Region 13 Emergency Management (combined 13 counties in southwestern PA.) provided me with five additional radios and a repeated frequency of our own.



While driving to the Police staging area on Sunday June 10th, I was beginning to stress out, with over sixty “cops” from ten different local, county, state and federal agencies my personnel and management problems were going to be a nightmare. Was I ever wrong! These men and women pulled together into one well oiled machine. Every task was accomplished; every mission handled and never was a golfer aware that a member of the Bomb Management Team was at work only a few feet away. We did not have ten different agencies providing support; we had one team working to keep the USGA, all the vendors, volunteers and over 20,000 to 60,000 spectators, wanting to see their golf heroes each day, safe from any type of explosive incident.

The staffing of the BMC was handled by Tom Welsh, Jim Tanda, Brian Plants and Dan Bohe; don’t ever tell me that Feds can’t work together; these men made

my job seem like a vacation. It was a pleasure working with all these professionals. The Bomb Community is a wonderful group of technicians and investigators whose professionalism, expertise and resourcefulness could never be duplicated. As an organization we should be proud of our accomplishments, no matter where in the country or the world we go, we all strive for the same goals; keeping our cities and people safe and of course having fun doing it. I salute you all and want to publicly thank the Western Pennsylvania Chapter of the IABTI for being there when needed.



Sgt. Albert Wessel Bomb Squad Commander 32 years as a Bomb Tech with the U.S. Army and Allegheny County Police

“Never one thing and seldom one person can make for a success. It takes a number of them merging into one perfect whole.”

- Marie Dressler, Canadian Actress (1869-1934)