

What Super Bowl LX Taught Bay Area Security Teams, and Why It Matters Before the World Cup

Coalition coordinated across 11 counties during Super Bowl; NCRIC Exec Dir calls for system modernization in testimony

REDWOOD CITY, CA, UNITED STATES, March 3, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- As the Bay Area prepares to host FIFA World Cup 2026 matches at Levi's Stadium this summer, San Mateo County Emergency Management (SMC EM) and the Northern California Regional Intelligence Center (NCRIC) are sharing operational lessons from Super Bowl LX that underscore both the region's strengths and the critical gaps that remain before the next major global event.

In the weeks leading up to Super Bowl LX, a coalition of law enforcement officers, intelligence analysts, and nonprofit partners conducted one of the largest anti-trafficking operations in Bay Area history. Working across 11 counties, the operation rescued 73 victims of sex trafficking, including 10 children. One victim was 12 years old. Twenty of the victims were recovered in San Mateo County. Twenty-nine suspected traffickers were arrested before kickoff.

In a separate action, a fusion center analyst in Sacramento identified a social media post from an individual announcing plans to fly a drone into restricted airspace over the stadium. The individual had a prior conviction for the same offense. The drone was seized before it ever launched. The night before the game, intelligence teams were briefed on rail sabotage threats connected to the Winter Olympics in Italy. By morning, a security bulletin had reached transit officers across the region.

"When everyone sees the same verified information at the same time, decisions get faster, coordination gets stronger, and threats get stopped before they reach the public," said Mike





The Super Bowl tested our systems. The World Cup will test them at scale.”

*Ryan Reynolds, Asst. Director,
SMC Emergency Management*

Sena, Executive Director of NCRIC and President of the National Fusion Center Association. “Our systems are better than they were. But they are not where they need to be. During the Super Bowl, our teams monitored seven different platforms simultaneously. A partner called in a test tip to see if it would arrive. It never did. When analysts are entering the same data into seven systems instead of focusing on the threat in front of them, we have a problem

worth solving.”

Sena delivered that message directly to the U.S. House Committee on Homeland Security in recent testimony focused on security for major events, underscoring the need for federal investment in interoperable intelligence platforms.

In San Mateo County, emergency management leaders are working to close these gaps locally. SMC EM has developed SCOPE (Shared Common Operating Picture Environment), a secure, shared platform that gives every partner agency, from law enforcement to fire to emergency medical services, the same real-time operational picture. The system is being built in partnership with NCRIC.

“Our county has 20 cities and 18 unincorporated areas, which include San Francisco Airport (SFO), each with its own agencies and protocols,” said Nelson Corteway, Operations Manager for San Mateo County Emergency Management and retired Chief of Police. “SCOPE gives us one common view. That is how you run a coordinated response, whether it is a wildfire, an earthquake, or a global sporting event with security implications we have never faced at this scale.”

The FIFA World Cup presents a security challenge of a different order than a single-day sporting event. Matches at Levi’s Stadium will be accompanied by fan zones, team hotels, and events stretching across multiple cities and counties over the course of several weeks. The tournament is also an international event arriving during a period of heightened global tensions, where overseas conflicts can generate local security concerns within hours.

“The Super Bowl tested our systems. The World Cup will test them at scale,” said Ryan Reynolds, Assistant Director of San Mateo County Emergency Management. “Readiness is not something you build the week before. We are preparing now, and engaging with every partner agency in the Bay Area to do the same.”

SMC EM and NCRIC are also encouraging residents to adopt basic situational awareness habits: stay alert to surroundings, know where exits are, and trust instincts when a situation feels wrong. During any emergency or major event, officials encourage the public to verify information through official sources, including county emergency management agencies, local law

enforcement, and verified government channels, before sharing on social media. Residents are encouraged to sign up for their county's emergency alert system in advance.

"The work of keeping people safe takes thousands of professionals you will never meet, technology built for the hardest moments, and partnerships forged long before the lights come on," Sena said. "It also takes you. An informed, aware public is part of this mission. The more you know about how this work happens, the stronger we all are when it matters most."

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About San Mateo County Emergency Management

San Mateo County Emergency Management serves 775,000 residents across 20 cities and 18 unincorporated areas in the San Francisco Bay Area. SMC EM coordinates regional preparedness, response, and recovery operations and works to build community resilience through partnership, innovation, and public engagement. Learn more at <https://www.smcgov.org/dem>.

About the Northern California Regional Intelligence Center

The Northern California Regional Intelligence Center (NCRIC) is one of the nation's leading fusion centers, serving law enforcement and public safety agencies across Northern California. NCRIC facilitates the sharing of threat-related information and intelligence to prevent, detect, and respond to criminal and terrorist activity. Learn more at ncric.org.

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