

## **2008 Republican National Convention Video Summary Ramsey County/City of Saint Paul, Minnesota**

In September 2008, Ramsey County and the City of Saint Paul was the host for the Republican National Convention (RNC). Planning for the RNC took over two years and involved coordinating the activities of many agencies from local to federal jurisdictions. Analysis of a variety of reported allegations and incidents, found video to have latent high value, and discovered a need for robust video management planning.

In preparation for the event, a closed circuit television (CCTV) camera system was installed in Saint Paul; the majority of these 96 cameras were placed downtown around the convention site. To supplement, law enforcement officials on the ground had video and still cameras and were provided training to capture field activities.

Over the course of the three-day event, thousands of “protesters” converged on downtown Saint Paul. While many of these protesters were peaceful, hundreds were not. This resulted in over 800 arrests. There were allegations of use of force complaints, improper procedure, and injuries. Different versions of events and incidents, including video accounts, were presented by various antagonistic groups. Edited video is a powerful tool. Some video records alleging facts were later found to be edited and were actually false representations of actual events. The post-RNC investigation provided clear understanding of the need for unbiased and validated video record of fact.

Post-event investigators reviewed many sources of information, including multimedia sites, documents, social networking sites, and other open sources. The CCTV 96 camera system collected 6,000 hours of video, requiring 6 TB of storage. While the CCTV system provided an overview of the events and incidents, this video was not in sync with street level operations. However, CCTV supplied metadata (time, date, and location) which later proved essential for validating other videos and picture sources of information.

The challenge was locating the connection or association among a variety of video sources to events or incidents. The process had to be done manually, took a year, and over 4,000 man-hours to complete. Two significant outcomes were realized. First, the review of the video records assisted in the identification and prosecution of violators. Second, the post RNC video investigations is a major element of in the defense of the City of Saint Paul as it relates to ongoing civil suits. There are no surprises in internal or external video records. The extent of the value of managing video can be seen in the review commission’s quote: “Through the exhaustive efforts of the post RNC investigations, the review commission was able to understand and validate the actual events and incidents as it was represented in a variety of video record accounts.”

Reflecting on the events of the RNC, in the “big picture” the layers of video data that were created during the event provided a source of critical information that had been never been considered during an investigation. Video management should have been a more robust and considered more heavily as part of the planning process. The value video records added are seen in the commission’s findings:

“The Commission found that access to photographs and video were extremely helpful in its review. Evidence of the value of video and a glimpse of the future can be found in a report prepared after the 2008 RNC. Therefore, the Commission agrees with public suggestions that official videos and photographs be made available to the public as soon as possible, subject to the limitations of data privacy and pending litigation.”

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Further evidence of the value of video and a glimpse of the future can be found in a report prepared after the 2008 RNC (Report of the Republican National Convention Public Planning and Implementation Review Commission):

- The Commission reviewed a lengthy documentary concerning the RNC entitled “Terrorizing Dissent,” viewable at [www.terrorizingdissent.org](http://www.terrorizingdissent.org). The Commission also thanked the many people who posted video of their experiences during the RNC on the Internet (Report, p. 8).
- The Commission reviewed reports of anarchist behavior at prior conventions, law enforcement intelligence of the anarchists’ plans, motives and tactics, the reports of law enforcement officers who encountered the anarchists and hours of video coverage of the anarchists’ activities, and concluded that they did indeed pose a threat to the safety and security of Saint Paul (Report, p. 9).
- The impression the Commission, after reviewing video of the events of September 1, 2 and 4, was that the use of chemical agents was often used inconsistently with the approved Continuum, but in a manner and in circumstances that would be appropriate in most use of force continuum. During the RNC, officers may have used chemical agents such as pepper spray more frequently than the Use of Force Continuum would suggest. Many times, officers can be seen on video utilizing chemical agents defensively, broadly to disperse unruly crowds (Report, p. 15).
- Videotaped coverage of this event and statements to the Commission show that law enforcement allowed journalists to self-identify and leave the site without being arrested (Report, p. 22).
- Various photographs were seen, statements received from law enforcement officers, and video, make it clear that the anarchists most certainly used human waste as a weapon and had much more that they intended to use (Report, p. 36).
- At 1:00 p.m., a group of anarchists while crossing the Marion Street Bridge over I-94 used temporary traffic signs and sand bags on the bridge as weapons of convenience, throwing them onto the freeway off-ramp below. One of the weapons struck a loaded delegate bus. This is all clearly visible on CCTV video (Report, p. 40-41)
- Anarchists were seen removing the black clothes and scarves they had been wearing. They emerged in average street clothes, thereby enhancing their ability to blend in with peaceful protesters and avoid arrest. On CCTV video, the Commission was able to see anarchists in black clothing and bandanas covering their faces disappear and then re-appear looking like students, and waving peace signs (Report, p. 49).
- During their rampage through the City, many of the anarchists disappeared behind walls or cars and removed the black clothes and scarves they had been wearing. They emerged in average street clothes, thereby enhancing their ability to blend in with peaceful protesters and avoid arrest. On CCTV video, the Commission was able to see anarchists in black clothing and bandanas covering their faces disappear and then re-appear looking like students, and waving peace signs (Report, p. 49).
- The Commission found that access to photographs and video were extremely helpful in its review. Therefore, the Commission agrees with public suggestions that official videos and photographs be made available to the public as soon as possible, subject to the limitations of data privacy and pending litigation (Report, p. 76).

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The 2008 Republican National Convention served as a wakeup call. Video documentation of events was at unprecedented level. Created from multiple sources and locations, video documents were identified along with various proprietary formats and players. Many of the documented video records were incomplete or intentionally edited resulting in false representation of the events and incidents.

The post RNC investigation made it clear that Saint Paul Police CCTV provided an overall objective and validated video record source by which many of the before mentioned video records were either completed or proven to be false.

The glimpse into the future can be seen in a Minnesota State law, *State v. Scales*, 518 N.W.2d 587, 592 (Minn.1994), the court mandated that police record all custodial interrogations, including the *Miranda* warning, or risk suppression of the evidence obtained. The impact of this decision is that in order to successfully prosecute crime in court law enforcement is required to use audio recording technology or risk the exclusion of the evidence. What used to be a choice for law enforcement is now a mandated standard. With the exploding use and deployment of video today, it seems inevitable future courts rules will no doubt mandate that law enforcement provide a video record of the events or incident or risk the suppression of the evidence presented.

Video record management today is a critical source of latent intelligence. Law enforcement agencies will need to understand and adapt to the rich source of information. This information can be collected from internal and external video systems, seized evidence, and open source sites, such as YouTube and Facebook. The future seems clear: law enforcement agencies must consider all aspects of video records and begin to manage those records to the standards of a traditional Records Management Systems.

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