

# GEOINT Secures the Expected and the Unusual

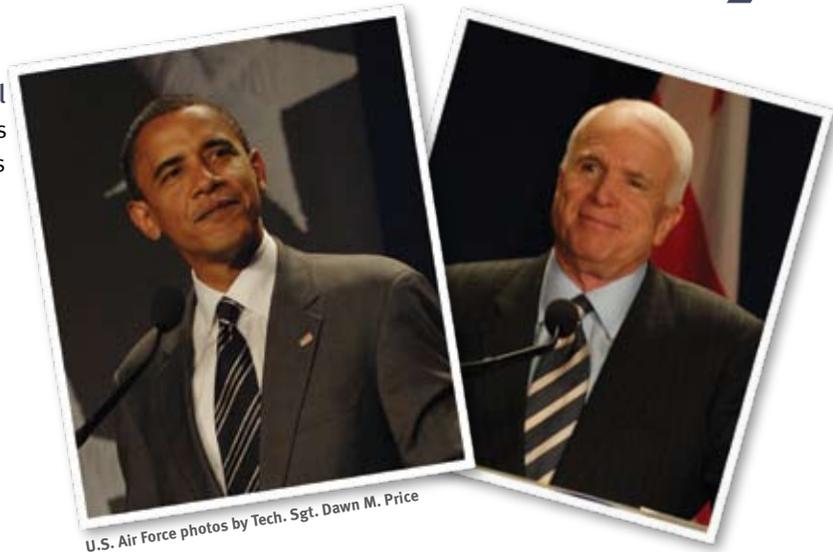
BY RANDALL HAMILTON

One of NGA's vital missions is to provide geospatial intelligence (GEOINT) support to the lead federal agencies for security operations at National Special Security Events (NSSEs), as certified by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Two such events were held this summer: the Democratic National Convention in Denver, Colo., Aug. 25–28, and the Republican National Convention in Minneapolis, Minn., Sept. 1–4. NGA analysts in the Office of the Americas, North America and Homeland Security Division, supported security efforts at these events with situational awareness tools and extensive data covering the areas in and surrounding the convention sites and by deploying analysts to provide updated GEOINT onsite.

Analysts prepared for several months before these national conventions to compile many types of information about each site. These data were then brought together and depicted on various graphics with such diverse themes as the following:

- » Locations of and information about local fire stations, police stations, emergency management services and hospitals
- » Local critical infrastructure including power stations, transmission lines, electrical substations and pipelines
- » Transportation networks including roads and highways, rail lines, ferries and airports
- » Locations of schools, universities, museums, shopping areas and tourist attractions
- » Information regarding specific venues and events occurring in and around the geographic areas of the conventions
- » Depictions of areas potentially affected by protests or other events
- » Any other specific data deemed essential for securing the two locations, for example, various hotels at which delegates stayed or temporary flight restrictions that may have needed to be established over the areas

Some of these graphics were vector-based, using computer-generated maps and symbols to depict needed features—but most were image-based, using georeferenced aerial imagery overlaid with symbols of features that fell within the represented areas. Analysts



assembled the graphics into event books for use by the FBI, the lead intelligence and law enforcement agency for each convention. In addition, analysts who deployed to the conventions had at their disposal the resources of the Domestic Mobile Integrated Geospatial-Intelligence System (DMIGS—a self-contained, mobile GEOINT office with workstations, a conference center, which enables communication and data transfer between itself and NGA locations to help them gain access to and manipulate any additional data they needed in order to keep the security operations running smoothly and efficiently.

Events like the national political conventions are typical of NSSEs supported by NGA. In the last five years, for example, NGA has given geospatial support for such events as the inauguration ceremony of President George W. Bush in 2005, the State of the Union Addresses in 2006 and 2007, and each U.N. General Assembly since 2003. Whether they occur annually or every few years, these recurring events are the type most commonly supported by NGA, and they afford analysts greater lead time to prepare and assemble the data required to implement security operations.

Also typical are events involving visiting foreign dignitaries. With or without much advance notice, NGA provides geospatial information in support of security operations for these events, too. Events supported by NGA have included the 30th G8 Summit, held in Sea Island, Ga., in 2004; the Annapolis Conference in Annapolis, Md.,



Department of Homeland Security photo

NGA supports the security of major events when requested by federal authorities.



U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Craig Clapper

President George W. Bush greets Pope Benedict XVI at Andrews Air Force Base, Md., April 15, 2008.

in 2007; and the visit of Pope Benedict XVI to Washington, D.C., and New York City in April 2008. Analysts even provided geospatial support for security at the funerals of Presidents Ronald Reagan and Gerald Ford.

NGA delivers geospatial support for security at other events, too. However, superficially, these events may not seem typical. That the agency provides support at some of these venues may seem somewhat unusual at first glance, but because these events draw so many people to a single location at one time, they are treated with the same security-conscious zeal as an event of national or international political importance. The least surprising of these, because of their multinational nature, are the Olympic Games. Terrorists have targeted the Olympics before: during the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich, terrorists held and killed 11 members of the Israeli Olympic team; in 1996, a domestic terrorist bombed the Centennial Olympic Park during the games in Atlanta; and in April of this year, Chinese officials announced that they had uncovered a terrorist plot to disrupt the Summer Olympics in Beijing with suicide bombings and the abduction of tourists.

Other major sporting events not only attract large numbers of people but also have become iconic in American culture. They are so much a part of American tradition and psyche that they warrant special security consideration. One of these is the Super Bowl. Because of its immense popularity and its status as a symbol of American society, Super Bowl XXXVI, in 2002, was the first NSSE to be

designated after the Sept. 11 attacks on New York City and the Pentagon—before DHS was established. In 2003, NGA decided to support security operations at every Super Bowl game from then on. Knowing that, it isn't too much of a stretch to guess that NGA also supports security operations at an annual event involving America's national pastime: the Major League Baseball All-Star Game. And there are still other sporting events that might seem somewhat unusual to consider, but which the agency supports. For example, analysts supported security operations for the Daytona 500 at Daytona Beach, Fla., in 2006, and the NCAA Men's and Women's Basketball Championships in 2007.

NGA has played—and will continue to play—an important role in providing geospatial support for the security of a variety of events. Whether the event is one of national political importance, involves the protection of foreign dignitaries, or is focused upon a symbol of American tradition, NGA continues to supply accurate, up-to-date geospatial information to help ensure the security and safety of everyone concerned. P

**RANDALL HAMILTON**

is a Geospatial Analyst in the Homeland Security Infrastructure Branch of the Office of the Americas.

