

# United States Department of the Interior



## NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Midwest Regional Office  
601 Riverfront Drive  
Omaha, NE 68102

IN REPLY REFER TO:

### MEMORANDUM

October 6, 2009

To: Ernest Quintana, Acting Deputy Director, National Park Service

From: James Loach, Associate Regional Director, Operations, Midwest Region

Subject: 2009 Greenpeace Incident at Mount Rushmore National Memorial

### INTRODUCTION

On Wednesday, July 8, 2009, Greenpeace unfurled a 35 foot by 65 foot "global warming" protest banner on the Mt. Rushmore sculpture. Twelve persons were arrested during and immediately after the unfurling of the banner. A grand jury subsequently indicted 11 of the persons and Greenpeace, Inc for the misdemeanor charges of trespassing, climbing Mt. Rushmore, interference with a government official, and aid and abetting.

This document explores lessons learned and identifies actions being taken to address the security weaknesses exploited by Greenpeace.

Executive Summary: Greenpeace's action was characterized by speed, advance extensive planning, intelligence acquisition, organization and discipline in the execution of the plan. Greenpeace ascended the mountain in darkness, staged in a gully near the summit the following morning, entered the Hall of Records Canyon area of the sculpture and within 35 minutes unfurled the banner.

The speed and deliberateness of the action indicates extensive planning. This planning included fast access to the sculpture and unfurling of banner, accurate anticipation of law enforcement response methods and effectively delaying the law enforcement response, arranging for real-time media coverage, extensive video recording, strict rules of engagement to avoid felony charges, and the successful evasion and escape of support personnel.

Greenpeace team members executed their assignments quickly and competently. Ropes, hardware, locks, and other equipment matched intended uses. The banner's size and design fit the space next to Lincoln (the drawing of President Obama's head was approximately the same size as the heads of the sculpture, and President Obama's eyes were the same height as President Lincoln's). Greenpeace has stated to the

media they spent months planning and training, and they conducted legal research to minimize criminal consequences for participants.

Media reports claim Greenpeace members spent time in the developed area of the park gathering information prior to the event. The Greenpeace team climbed to the top of Mt. Rushmore in darkness following an approach requiring route finding skills through forests, slot canyons, talus, and rocky terrain, suggesting excellent orienteering skills or prior route knowledge. Greenpeace members told media their study of NPS activities on the sculpture, such as hauling July 4<sup>th</sup> fireworks and sculpture cleaning, revealed anchor locations. Their possession and use of materials and tactics to delay or prevent law enforcement response suggests prior knowledge of locations where these would be most effective.

Our review identified deficiencies in the protection strategy and operational practices and procedures. These included:

- Failure to maintain security equipment to its fully operational design.
- Operational procedures for activating key components of the security systems were not followed which compromised the designed capabilities of the security system.

Further, it is imperative that additional physical security measures be employed at select perimeter access points.

This document explores lessons learned and identifies actions being taken to address the security weaknesses exploited by Greenpeace.

## **GREENPEACE STRATEGIES**

Greenpeace's action exhibited the following characteristics:

### **Speed**

Within 33 minutes the banner was being unfurled.

### **Excellent Intelligence Collection Capabilities**

Media reports claim Greenpeace members spent time in the developed area of the park gathering information prior to the event.

Greenpeace's possession and use of chains and locks to delay or prevent law enforcement response suggests prior knowledge of the existence and location of gates.

Several Greenpeace arrestees were in possession of radio scanners.

### **Organization and Discipline**

Greenpeace coordinated actions over radio through a "Dispatch".

Team members were careful to avoid purposefully damaging government property.

## MOUNT RUSHMORE/NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

### Inadequate Security System

The current mountain security system was installed in 1998. The system only monitors the Hall of Records and the top of the Sculpture.

- On Wednesday, July 8, certain cameras within the system were inoperable or not functioning as designed.
- On Wednesday morning, July 8, sensors designed for protection of the approach to the sculptures were turned off to allow a tour. These were not turned back on when the tour left the area.

Corrective Actions: A number of measures are being employed to expand detection, deterrence, and barriers around the mountain, as well as, identify and eliminate errors which may compromise the security system.

Corrective Action: The park will augment and expand the surveillance zone using state-of-the-art cameras and sensors. X

### Operational Security

Over the past decade, many people have toured the secure area (663 in 2008), photographs revealing anchor locations and other sensitive features have appeared in magazines, and components of the security system have been discussed in at least one trade magazine.

Corrective Actions: Mountain tours have ceased. Entry into the closed area is now allowed only upon Superintendent approval. Department of Homeland Security has asked Argon National Labs to conduct an open sources search of Mount Rushmore information to better assess security issues. X

### Pre-Incident Intelligence

A cornerstone of Mount Rushmore National Memorial's protection strategy has been to increase law enforcement protection around the sculpture in response to threat advisories from investigative or intelligence agencies. No such warnings occurred prior to the Greenpeace action. The park needs to develop and sustain tactics to better detect potentially suspicious activity.

The park has no formal standards or procedures for ensuring adequate and effective mountain patrols.

Corrective Actions: Patrol and training procedures are under revision to enhance both deterrence and recognition of suspicious activity. X

### Staffing

The Park lacks positions to maintain and manage its complex security program.

Corrective Action: Mount Rushmore is developing a funding justification and position description for a Security Program Manager position incorporating physical security specialist responsibilities and qualifications and an Electronic Systems Mechanic. X

Dispatch staffing is inadequate during periods of high visitor use. At the current staffing level the Communications Center is generally limited to one dispatcher. In addition to providing law enforcement and emergency services support to rangers, this person answers telephones, remotely controls the Administration access road barrier gate and two Administration Building doors, monitors Mountain cameras and alarms, and monitors a fire/intrusion/panic/door access system displayed on four monitors. The national minimum standard for a Communications Center of this nature is two persons per shift.

Corrective Action: The Park has prepared a funding request to address this deficiency.

The ranger force is inadequate to simultaneously protect both the public and the sculpture. )

Corrective Actions: The Department of Interior's Office of Law Enforcement and Security (OLES), the Midwest Regional Office (MWRO), and Mount Rushmore concur the current ranger staffing level is inadequate. The Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Buffer Zone Protection Plan update and Security Review/Assessment will generate information and recommendations valuable for identifying the appropriate staffing level. Once these DHS reports are available Mount Rushmore will submit a staffing proposal and funding request for MWRO and OLES approval.

Recruitment and retention of dispatchers and rangers is challenging. A significant number of persons accept positions to obtain important training and permanent career status. Turn-over is ongoing as individuals transfer upon acquiring training and career status. A delay of two or more months from the time the park submits appropriate documents to Human Resources to vacancy announcement is common. Once announced, recruitment, selection, and relocation requires an additional three or more months. Entry level ranger selectees are out of the park for required training several months in their first 2 years.

Corrective Action: The Regional Director has taken actions expediting the announcement of critical positions.

Maintaining the park's physical security, intrusion, fire, panic, cameras and sensors, and gate controls; and ensuring the effective use of new and current technology has been a challenge due to system components located in rugged and in some instances vertical terrain.

Corrective Actions: Mount Rushmore is preparing a funding request justifying the benefits of staffing an Electronic Systems Specialist position, who will be trained to function in steep mountainous terrain.

### **Criminal Consequences not Commensurate with National Significance**


The risk of prosecution for petty offenses was not a deterrent for Greenpeace.

Corrective Action: The Superintendent will work with the Midwest Regional Office and the Justice Department to explore options to enhance criminal penalties.

## What went well

National Park Service and interagency response to the Greenpeace action when discovered was superior. The first notice was from a non-law enforcement employee who noticed people on top of the sculpture. A maintenance employee carried cutting tools up the mountain on his own initiative upon hearing that Greenpeace had placed locks on Fence/Gate #1. Interpretive Rangers and other employees relayed observations resulting in arrests. The responses of Pennington County Sheriff's Office, Rapid City Police Department, Pennington Special Response Team, South Dakota Highway Patrol, U.S. Forest Service, FBI, and other National Park Service units in the Black Hills region were quick and integrated. This integration reflected close cooperation and mutual understanding of roles and capabilities as developed during recurring interagency events at Mount Rushmore such as the annual Independence Day Celebration, Sturgis Motorcycle Rally, and dignitary visits.

Within 90 minutes park rangers had ascended 800' to the summit, rappelled the sculpture, collapsed the banner, located and arrested 12 subjects, and activated and coordinated an interagency response.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James B. Paul". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line above the first few letters.