



Rabbi Yossi Lipsker with Essex District Attorney Paul Tucker. STEVEN A. ROSENBERG/JOURNAL STAFF

## Law enforcement steps up security outside Jewish institutions

BY STEVE MARANTZ

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Rabbi Yossi Lipsker searched for the word to describe the Hamas invasion of Israel, the gruesome killing and hostage-taking. Then he found it: pogrom.

“We are shocked that a pogrom has taken place in 2023 – the grief is indescribable,” said Lipsker, founder and director of Chabad of North Shore.

In the hours and days following Israel's bewildering security lapse, North Shore synagogues, temples, Jewish day schools and community centers continued to operate, on heightened alert about their own security. Chabad of North Shore has sites in six communities.

"We are all resilient and hopeful and strong and filled with faith," Lipsker continued. "That said, I will tell you we have taken a very hard look at redoubling our security efforts in the wake of all this."

Israel was caught off-guard and paid dearly. That won't happen to Jews in Greater Boston, according to security experts and law enforcement officials keeping watch.

The FBI's Boston office issued a statement on Monday, after more than 1000 pro-Israel supporters rallied on Boston Common: "We are tracking closely the events in the Middle East and we are coordinating with our law enforcement and community partners, in keeping with our standard practice. At this point in time, we are not aware of any specific or credible threats to FBI Boston's area of responsibility. We remind the public to remain vigilant and report any suspicious or threatening activity to law enforcement."

Essex County District Attorney Paul F. Tucker promised proactive vigilance from his office and from area police departments: "We work very closely with local, state, and federal law enforcement colleagues in identifying and

prosecuting those who threaten or commit criminal acts of hate crimes and violence against the Jewish community.”

Peabody Police Chief Thomas N. Griffin said his department was closely monitoring local Jewish sites. “Our federal partners keep us informed of specific threats or concerns, and at this point there’s no specific intelligence relative to this area,” Griffin said.

Rabbi Richard Perlman, of Temple Ner Tamid in Peabody, is a chaplain with the Peabody Police Department and Massachusetts State Police. Perlman confirmed that Peabody Police were doing “extra sweeps” near Jewish facilities.

“Our temple is always mindful of security, and we have a security plan in place at all times, which I’m not going to discuss for obvious reasons,” said Perlman.

Marblehead Police Chief Dennis King said his department increased checks of the town’s two temples, as well as the Jewish Community Center of the North Shore and Epstein Hillel School. Marblehead Police utilizes FBI intelligence and works with security experts of Combined Jewish Philanthropies and New England ADL.

“Our goal is to make sure that people feel safe at Jewish communal locations, and that comes with a commitment to increase our presence, planning, or other safety measures as needed,” King said.

JCCNS issued a statement confirming that Marblehead Police is providing increased surveillance and protection. “We have safety measures in place and work directly with the local authorities to ensure that we are alerted to any and all potential threats to our community’s safety,” the statement read.

Swampscott Police will increase its presence around the town’s two Jewish places of worship, said Sgt. Steven Luck.

For most local Jewish institutions security measures are in place, thanks in large part to Combined Jewish Philanthropies. In 2016, CJP created its Communal Security Initiative (CSI) which provides free security services to about 250 Jewish organizations in Greater Boston.

Under the direction of Jeremy Yamin, CSI is a multi-layered program, with emphasis on security assessments, emergency operating procedures, and management of threats and security incidents. The CSI team at CJP includes Daniel Levenson and Ken Berkowitz.

CSI works with 14 day-schools, 40 pre-schools, 110 synagogues, 40 Chabads, and 50 agencies. Last year it trained 2700 people in security protocol, consulted on 88 security incidents, and helped bring in \$3.5 million in state and federal grants.

“We’re constantly working with our organizations to have sustainable levels of security,” Yamin said. “We try to empower them to make better security decisions.”

Integral to the CSI program is collaboration with local, state, and federal law enforcement. Training programs at synagogues are conducted with participation of local police, which “reinforces relationships and makes them more sustainable,” Yamin said. Support from the non-Jewish community is essential, he emphasized.

“The larger issue is we don’t want people to be scared to come to synagogue, or to send the kids to a Jewish day school or summer camp, or to attend Hebrew school,” Yamin said. “The existential threat is that we’re too scared to come together.

“This program, the CJP’s Communal Security Initiative, is really to help organizations prepare so that we can come together and do it more safely, despite the very challenging environment at times like this.” ☹

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