

# Ratcliffe helps secure region as director of anti-terrorism for district

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were "a flurry of hectic activity," he said.

"Initially for me, there was a barrage of briefings and bulletins out of Washington. The challenge there is to separate accurate information," Ratcliffe said. "The next challenge there is to disseminate that accurate information as well as security measures and directives basically through the joint terrorism task forces to the joint public and private entities and to state and local law enforcement."

Four rush-hour blasts went off within 18 minutes at three subway stations, starting at 8:51 a.m. July 7. An explosion ripped the roof off a double-decker bus less than an hour later. The attacks came as world leaders were opening the G-8 summit in Scotland and as London celebrated its success-

ful bid to host the 2012 Summer Olympics.

At least three Britons of Pakistani descent are suspected of carrying out the bombings, which killed at least 52 and injured 700.

News reports identified three of the four as Shahzad Tanweer, a 22-year-old cricket-loving sports science graduate; Hasib Hussain, 19; and Mohammed Sidique Khan, the 30-year-old father of an 8-month-old baby. Press Association, citing police sources, said police had identified the fourth suspect, but no name was reported.

United States officials have been aware U.S. mass transit systems are possible targets for some time, he said. After similar bombings of four commuter trains in Madrid, Spain, in March 2004 killed 191 people and wounded 1,460, the tactics and their use here have been studied, he said. The Madrid bombers had hand draw-

ings of Grand Central Station in New York.

The Homeland Security Department raised the terror alert for mass transit and rail service to "high" to raise general awareness, Ratcliffe said. There was no panic here in part because there wasn't any credible information suggesting similar attacks were imminent, he said. Still, precautions were necessary.

"Dallas, like most other major metropolitan cities, has different mass transit systems. Here we had concerns specific about DART, Amtrak, Greyhound and other means of public transportation," Ratcliffe said. "There's been implementing some of the safety measures and directives, including bomb-sniffing canine units, tactical SWAT units deployed, posting officers on trains and similar protective measures."

The London attacks show the American public needs to remain vigilant,

Ratcliffe said. It also shows how no amount of preparation or vigilance can stop every attack.

"As a people, we have to understand this is the 'new normal,'" he said. "The global war on terror is exactly that. Terrorists are intent on striking not only the U.S., but our strongest allies, one of which is Great Britain. Unfortunately, we're likely to continue to have terrorist acts and events, both on American soil and outside the United States, that are going to impact how we live our lives."

The British are generally better prepared for terrorist attacks than Americans after dealing with years of bombings by the Irish Republican Army, he said.

The "Secret Group of al-Qaida's Jihad in Europe" claimed it was behind the attacks. That's a new name for those in anti-terrorism, Ratcliffe said.

In his job, Ratcliffe is responsible

for the prevention, investigation, disruption and prosecution of both international and domestic terrorism crimes, threats and activities in the federal district that includes 43 Texas counties from the Oklahoma border to the Gulf of Mexico. He is also chief terrorism prosecutor in this district.

He took the job in October, but said this was far from the first major thing to cross his desk.

"I've got quite a few ongoing investigations, cases, matters involving both international and domestic terrorism. I deal with al-Qaida operatives, cells and activity as well as other Islamic extremist groups — Hezbollah, Hamas and others — really on a daily basis," he said. "What happens in Afghanistan and Iraq and those that support those efforts here in the United States are part of my daily job responsibility."

*The Associated Press contributed to this article.*