

Mayor Defends Plan to Build Crisis Center

Bomb-Resistant Complex Is a Necessity, He Says

By KIT R. ROANE

Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani defended his plan to build a \$15 million emergency control center in the World Trade Center complex yesterday, as emergency experts questioned its viability, City Council members complained that they had not been consulted and radio hosts turned it into a punch line.

The Mayor said the project was not intended merely to be a bunker, where select city officials would be safe, as some critics have suggested. Rather, he said, it would be a secure control center where emergency operations could be directed in case of a disaster.

"This is really an attempt," he said, "to put the city for the next 20 years in a position where it can deal with the kinds of emergencies that might be unique to America's biggest city, its most densely populated city, and the best-known city in the world. And I would think that even City Council members would refrain from playing politics with this."

But Council members could not resist. Calling the Mayor's actions increasingly bizarre, the City Council Speaker, Peter F. Vallone, said, "If he wants to build a bunker for the only people he trusts, all he needs is a phone booth."

Other Council members continued to accuse the Mayor of concealing his plans for the center and questioned the need for it at a time when he has threatened to cut some city services for the elderly, youth and the poor.

The Mayor pointed out, however, that the center was plainly listed on page 995 of the capital budget adopted on June 5. He said the line items read: "Mayor's Office of Emergency Management, Design, \$1.5 million. Construction, \$15.1 million."

"This is in the capital budget for this year," Mr. Giuliani said. "I know that there are some Council members that don't read the budget, but that's their problem. This money has already been obligated in terms of contract."

The Mayor refused to provide details about the center, saying such information could help those who "want to take advantage of victimizing the city." Administration officials, however, said it would occupy 46,000 feet on the 23d floor of 7 World Trade Center, bringing together more than 100 representatives from city, state and Federal agencies, as well as public utilities, in times of emergency.

Currently, operations during all large-scale city emergencies are directed from an eighth-floor room of police headquarters that is lined with maps, television monitors and banks of phones for city agencies. The Mayor said yesterday that there "were things lacking" at the center.

While emergency management experts applauded the Mayor's attempt to upgrade the city's disaster preparedness, they questioned the wisdom of placing the command center on an upper floor of a building not owned by the city, particularly one in traffic-congested lower Manhattan. The center will be in a building jointly owned by Silverstein Properties and the Port Authority of

Continued on Page 37

Mayor Defends Plan for \$15 Million Crisis Center

Continued From Page 1

New York and New Jersey, costing \$1.4 million a year in rent for the 20-year life of the lease.

"When you are talking about emergency management, I don't think you want to be in an office building in the middle of Wall Street, where you have to worry about your lease and the tenants above and below you," said Edward Shaughnessy, a professor of sociology and law at John Jay College of Criminal Justice and an expert in emergency management.

"While it may provide you with the opportunity to survey the city," he said, putting the center on the 23d floor not only makes it hard to reach should the power in the rest of the building be cut, but also "leaves you open to a missile attack."

Professor Shaughnessy praised the work of Jerome M. Hauer, director of the city's Office of Emergency Management, but he added, "I just

think the place they are choosing has the potential for too many problems and they might need to re-examine it."

Mr. Hauer has said the site would be able to withstand hurricane force winds. Administration officials also said it could survive some bombs, would be impenetrable to gunfire and have a closed air circulation system to prevent the influx of gas. Its telecommunications equipment, they said, could operate even after a nuclear blast.

Accommodations for at least 30 would include beds and showers, while the Mayor would have a private area to hold meetings and a pull-out couch to nap on. Generators and a water tank on separate floors would insure that those inside could continue working for as much as a week if the city went black.

But whatever its assets, the center was the butt of jokes on radio talk shows and evening newscasts. One weatherman joked while announcing a coming rainstorm, "Tomorrow,

you'll wish you were in the Mayor's bunker."

Earlier in the day on WABC-AM, the lawyer and talk-show host Ron Kuby said he took a call from Mr. Hauer. As he questioned Mr. Hauer about who would be allowed into the center, sound effects of King Kong and bomb blasts echoed over the air. Mr. Kuby also sponsored a naming game, allowing callers to offer their favorite moniker for the site. Among the best, he said, was "Rudy's Nuclear Winter Palace."

Some Council members argued that if the center was such a good idea, the Mayor might have been expected to publicize it.

Sheldon Leffler, chairman of the Council's Public Safety Committee, said he still had reservations.

"Sunlight is the best disinfectant, and this project should be subject to some public scrutiny so we can make the best decision," he said. "What the Mayor did was essentially try to slip this thing through the budget in a subterfuge."