

APRIL 12, 1999

THE NEW YORK OBSERVER

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Rudy's Secret (Shh!) Bunker!

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If a serious emergency, the facility could hold as many as 100 top city administrators. Plans also call for water and cots for commissioners and other top emergency officials who would need to work through the night to deliver the city from floods, fires, terrorist attacks and other calamities. The center will have backup generators to be used during power failures and even a place for workers to cook. As for food, the administration official said, there are a few cans of fruit and vegetables—but, he said dryly, the Mayor and his aides probably would prefer the fare at a public cafeteria on the building's third floor.

Mr. Collins told *The Observer* that the city spent \$4.9 million on general construction, \$4.6 million on electrical equipment and some \$2 million on mechanicals, plumbing and sprinklers. Add that to the city's annual rent, an average of \$1.5 million for 20 years, and the total price tag—minus operating costs—comes to more than \$40 million.

The center's first emergency lock place during a four-inch snowstorm on the weekend of March 13-14, according to Mr. Hauer, the head of the city's Office of Emergency Management, the agency that runs the facility. Mr. Hauer said the center's facilities allowed his colleagues to get to their posts the night before a storm hit. "Rather than have them drive in snow, some [could] stay over," he said.

Mr. Hauer added, however, that a

commodations were anything but swank. "They're very modest, like army bunks, double-decker bunks," he said, noting that they were based on bedding arrangements provided for Secret Service agents housed on the ninth floor of the same building.

TOP SECRET

Seven World Trade Center is a soaring office tower occupied by Salomon Smith Barney and the New York office of the Securities and Exchange Commission, among other tenants. No one—not even messengers—is allowed beyond the lobby without approval from somebody else in the building. A guard standing nearby told *The Observer* that the command center was impressively high-tech. But he said he had been instructed not to talk about the center.

Coupled with this barricade around City Hall, critics said the command center suggested a politician quick to see himself as under siege, an embattled leader surrounded by encroaching enemies. In a *Daily News* column last spring, Michael Daly pronounced the facility a "bunker"—coined, that is, with the intent to cost \$40 million, a bunker-like building inhabited by Salomon, Haselein.

"The Doctor Strange-like imagery of the project certainly didn't do the Mayor any good," observed City Council member Ken Fisher of Brooklyn, who nonetheless sees merit in the facility.

Despite the real dangers of worldwide conflict spilling over to New York, many

have questioned the need for an expensive, high-tech facility. Los Angeles, hardly a stranger to calamities like mudslides and riots, managed to convert a 1960's bomb shelter into an emergency management center, updating the facility for several million dollars. And for years, the city's emergency management system has been run effectively out of Police Headquarters. Even with the new facility all but finished, the command center at 1 Police Plaza remains operational.

There are cans of fruits and vegetables in the command center, but the Mayor probably would prefer the fare at a third-floor cafeteria.

City Hall's rugged facade and, in an indication of the agency's advanced position in the project, a new finished in less than a year. That's no small accomplishment in a city where the installation of a single public toilet or the repair of a single exit on the F.D.R. Highway takes years.

Despite the quasi-military look of the

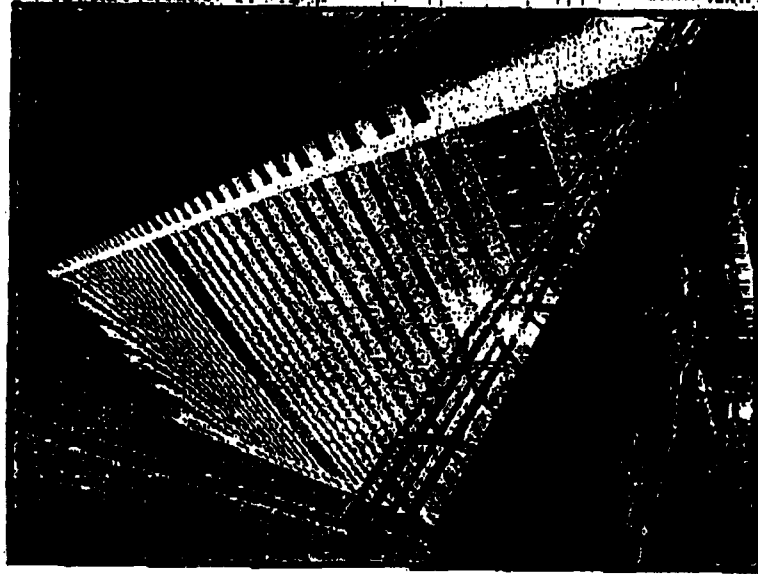
command center's décor, Mr. Hauer has strenuously rejected the suggestion that the facility is, in fact, a bunker. He has pointed out that the center is not a place for the Mayor and his aides and relatives to hunker down through disasters. Rather, he has said, the facility boasts a state-of-the-art communications system, connecting scores of people in government and law enforcement via computers to a mapping system that pinpoints the location of disasters and shows how near they are to sewers, water mains and subway tunnels.

"Given the things that have happened in this city," noted Bob Loudon, an expert in emergency management at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, it makes sense "to upgrade what they are doing and create a new entity to make sure all agencies work together."

HEADING FOR COVER?

Of course, on a less dramatic note, the opening of the command center coincides with a dip in Mr. Giuliani's popularity and a perceived political vulnerability. The Rev. Al Sharpton has managed to reinvent himself yet again, this time as Mr. Giuliani's expense, with two weeks of well-publicized demonstrations at Police Headquarters. The tactics of his Police Department have come under national scrutiny. And just the other day, a coyote roamed loose in Central Park.

Officials may say the facility is not a bunker, but even so, Mr. Giuliani might be forgiven for taking cover in a quiet place with a fold-out couch until his political storm blows over. "He may need it—his poll numbers are dropping," quipped



If there's an emergency, you'll find Mayor Rudolph Giuliani on the 23rd floor of this building, in a high-tech command center with direct telephone access to the White House.

City Council member John Sabini of Queens.

Then again, he may find no relief there, no matter how comfortable the pulpit may be. The command center was the

source of plenty of hall intrigue, with a few insiders whispering that the command center was an attempt by Mayor Giuliani and Mr. Hauer to exert more control over emergency operations at the expense of the Police Department. Various agencies have a place in disaster, and emerge to protect their turf.

Indeed, it remains to be seen how the command centers will coordinate when they spring into action to deal with the latest disaster.

Conflict between centers could exacerbate talk of a feud between Mr. Hauer and Police Commissioner Howard Safir, who reported to have been at odds since plans for the new center were revealed last year.

The Mayor recognized early on the need for better coordination between various agencies if confronted with him, said former Police Commissioner William Bratton. "So there was a perceived need [for a new center], based on watching agencies battle each other. And it also fit into his well-known penchant for absolute control."

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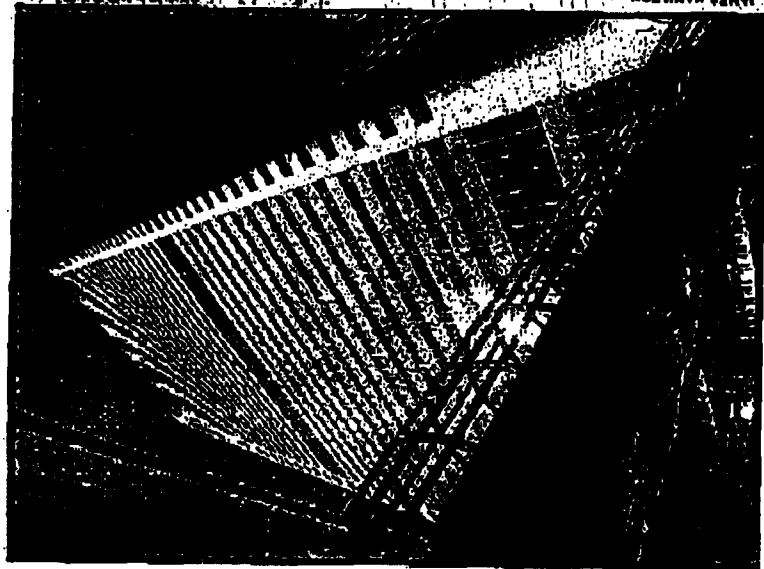
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