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POOL PHOTO/BY ANGEL FRANCO

Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani, who has been a stalwart presence in the city since the terrorist attack Sept. 11, greets workers in lower Manhattan on Monday.

POOL PHOTO/BY PATRICK KOVARIK

Giuliani listens to French President Jacques Chirac, right, during a helicopter tour of the attack site in New York yesterday.

BY DOUG MILLS—ASSOCIATED PRESS

Giuliani, with President Bush on Friday, has earned much praise for his handling of the city after the World Trade Center attacks. The New York Post has written longingly of the possibility that Giuliani might remain past his term.

Can Giuliani Go Beyond the Distance?

Some Say City Needs Mayor Past His Legal Term Limit, But the Possibility Is Dim

By Michael Powell
Washington Post Staff Writer

NEW YORK, Sept. 19—Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani is flirting with the legally distant possibility of staying past the end of his term in December, casting an even longer shadow over Tuesday's mayoral primary.

Giuliani has earned much praise for his handling of the city after the World Trade Center attack. He nearly perished when one tower collapsed on top of his emergency headquarters, and his commanding presence and calm tone since have some likening him to a sort of metropolitan Winston Churchill.

Asked about remaining as mayor, Giuliani has shrugged off the question without ever precisely dismissing it.

"This is not the time to talk about that," Giuliani said at his daily news conference today. "Yes, there are things to talk about and discuss, but it almost doesn't seem *right to be talking about that right now.*"

The New York Post has written longingly of the possibility that Giuliani might go beyond the distance. And Joe M. Allbaugh, director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, suggested that the city would be well served by many more months of Giuliani. "I have to tell you, Rudy Giuliani and his team . . . provide the leadership for their city that needs to remain intact for the foreseeable future," he said on NBC's "Today" show.

But that possibility remains dim. Giuliani has served his legal limit of two terms, and New Yorkers have voted twice in recent years to affirm the limits for city officials.

There are only two means of overturning term limits: The City Council must pass legislation reversing them, and voters must approve the measure. Or Gov. George E. Pataki, who has often quarreled with his fellow Republican Giuliani, and the state Legislature could pass emergency legislation.

State Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver (D-Manhattan) has dismissed that possibility as anti-democratic.

"I think right now he's the mayor for the next 3½ months," Silver said Monday. "I don't think we should come to Albany to overturn the will of the people."

And few City Council members seemed interested in the prospect of Giuliani 3, no matter how spectacularly he has performed since the attacks Sept. 11. Curiously, City Council Speaker Peter Vallone seemed most intrigued by the question—and he's one of four Democratic candidates running Tuesday to replace the mayor.

"If it was up to me, I'd keep everything in place," he said.

Later, Vallone seemed to realize this would mean the end of his political ambitions and reconsidered. He talked about abiding "by the decisions of democracy."

Vallone is running against three other Democrats: Public Advocate Mark Green, City Comptroller Peter Hevesi and Bronx Borough President Fernando Ferrer. Billionaire media titan Michael Bloomberg and former Democratic congressman Herman Badillo are competing in the Republican primary.

This looms as a primary conducted under the most stressful circumstances short of outright war. Primary voting began Sept. 11, but city officials halted the election about an hour after the airplanes struck the World Trade Center towers.

Officials set a new election date of Sept. 25.

Since then, the candidates have refrained from campaigning for reasons of good taste and because the city Campaign Finance Board prohibited any candidate receiving public funds from spending money on anything but get-out-the-vote efforts.

"I feel terrible for them. There's no good way out of this," said Ed Ott, a political operative for New York's Central Labor Council. "If the people could have Rudy right now, they'd have him, no doubt about that."

Meanwhile, the city's security needs have forced officials to relocate a planned memorial service Sunday from Central Park to Yankee Stadium at 3 p.m. Admission will be by ticket, and priority will be given to the families of the missing and dead and to the fire and police departments and their families.

The mayor said security problems simply made Central Park unworkable. Besides, he added: "It's too early in the grieving process for a memorial service."

In fact, none of the candidates has campaigned yet, and none plans to do so before Sunday, when all will join in a low-key mayoral forum. Bloomberg, a financier who switched from Democrat to Republican just before announcing his mayoral run, had filled the air with commercials all summer, spending tens of millions of his own dollars. But that, too, has stopped.

"We are relying on the goodwill of the voters," said Bill Cunningham, a Bloomberg strategist. "We will return to the air at some point, but there won't be any balloons."

The campaign, to the extent that it exists, has taken on a subterranean quality. Local 1199, a health care union that endorsed Ferrer, began calling voters Monday, which annoyed some labor leaders who said a city *still in mourning.* The city's largest labor union, District Council 37, endorsed Vallone. But the union's phones were knocked out and officials have not been able to get back into their downtown office building.

"The psychological fact is that a lot of unions have lost members in this disaster, or know people who have," Ott said. "I'll tell you the truth, I'm not even sure I'd want the mayoral job at this point."

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