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NYPD plans 'shoot-to-kill' anti-terror unit

NEW YORK POST EXCLUSIVE

By LARRY CELONA

The NYPD is planning an elite counter-terrorism assault team that would stand ready to spring into action and "kill or capture" terrorists who try to wreak havoc on the city, The Post has learned.

Top cops want to designate a lieutenant, three sergeants and 24 officers for the initiative, which would have similar training to Army Special Forces and might work closely with the military, police sources said.

"If needed, they will be trained to go in and kill or capture terrorists," said one source familiar with the proposal, referring to the team as a "Dirty Dozen"-style crew.

The round-the-clock operation, which would be attached to the NYPD's Emergency Services Unit, is one of several wide-ranging proposals the department is eyeing to beef up security in the wake of the Sept. 11 World Trade Center atrocities.

"We have to start policing a different way," one official said. "We have to be as proactive as possible and, if there is another attack, be able to respond as quickly as we did before and be more organized."

Heading the to-do list is identifying potential terrorist targets and drawing up plans to protect them — including higher police visibility, increased surveillance and better coordination with private security.

The NYPD is already working under its highest state of alert, known as Operation Omega, and is paying extra attention to more than 1,000 sites citywide — including landmarks, bridges, tunnels, government buildings, mosques, synagogues and gun shops.

At this week's Compstat meeting, the first such citywide crime analysis session since the terror strikes, commanders were grilled not about how they were keeping down crime in their precincts, but how well they were guarding Operation Omega sites.

Other efforts to heighten security include:

■ A new class of 24 cops being dispatched for six-month Emergency Service Unit training in the coming weeks. Of the 23 missing NYPD cops, 14 were from ESU.

■ Extra measures at 1 Police Plaza, including a couple of hundred cops freed up to work security details around headquarters and the attack site; fire and evacuation drills; and new police ID cards that are more difficult to duplicate.

■ An order for all 1 Police Plaza personnel to work in uniform, making them easier to identify if they respond to another terrorist assault.

■ Designating meeting points in the outer boroughs where off-duty cops could gather to receive orders, weapons and equipment in the event of another crisis.

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