

Kerik book with WTC story is rushed

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Police Commissioner Bernard Kerik's autobiography will be rushed into print next month — with a new chapter about the World Trade Center disaster — to maximize sales before the city's top cop leaves his job on Dec. 31, the Daily News has learned.

But the revised publication date and a sales pitch that touts Kerik's role as "a leader at Ground Zero" have raised eyebrows among people both in and out of government.

City Councilman Sheldon Lefler (D-Queens), chairman of the Public Safety Committee, said capitalizing on the World Trade Center tragedy is in bad taste.

"It profits from the tragedies of others," Lefler said.

The book, entitled "The Lost Son — A Life in Pursuit of Justice," was originally scheduled for publication early next year, with Kerik presumably out of city government. It now will hit bookstores on Nov. 13.

ReganBooks publisher Judith Regan was eager to get the book out before Kerik retired from the NYPD, according to a spokesman for the company.

The spokesman, Paul Olsewski, pointed out sales were lackluster for former Police Commissioner William Bratton's memoirs, which came out two years

after he was forced to resign by Mayor Giuliani.

"There's a lesson to be learned — get the book out while he's still commissioner," Olsewski said.

Kerik, the first police commissioner to publish memoirs while still in office, is slated to make at least 22 appearances to promote the book, including visits to the "Today" show, Howard Stern and Bob Grant.

A publisher's blurb on the Barnes & Noble Web site says the books will feature 16 pages of "never-seen photographs covering the attack and its aftermath."

Olsewski said the photos were taken by John Botte, an NYPD staff photographer.

Police spokesman Tom Antenen acknowledged that Botte is a member of the NYPD photo unit, but said he could not confirm whether Botte took the pictures.

Antenen also said the decision to move up the book's publication date had been made before



HOT COPY Police Commissioner Bernard Kerik's book with 60 pages on World Trade Center tragedy hits bookstores Nov. 13.

Sept. 11.

NYPD officials had no comment when asked to explain how photos taken by a public employee could be used in a for-profit book. It also was unclear if ReganBooks had paid the NYPD for the photos.

Asked if any profits from the book would be given to charity, Antenen said, "Not that I'm aware of."

Wayne Hawley, counsel to the city's Conflicts of Interest Board, said city property can be used only for city purposes, but declined to comment on the photos in Kerik's book.

In May, Kerik was granted a waiver by the conflicts board before he signed a six-figure deal to write the memoirs, in which he tells of how he was abandoned by his mother when he

was 3. Kerik's mother was later murdered, and Kerik recounts — with the help of co-author Jess Walter — how he tried to track down her killer.

'Appearance problem'

Gene Russianoff, executive director of the New York Public Interest Research Group, said the prospect of the police commissioner traveling on the book circuit creates "an appearance problem."

"I would call on the commissioner to ask his publisher to remove this from their promotions," Russianoff said. "It feels like someone is exploiting this terrible tragedy."

According to the book's promotional material, Kerik finished his memoirs in the early morning hours of Sept. 11, the day of the attack. Over the next four weeks, he penned a 60-page afterward entitled "Ground Zero."

Olsewski insisted that Kerik is sensitive to the tragedy.

"If somebody wanted to do a photo shoot [of Kerik] at the World Trade Center, it's not going to happen," the spokesman said.

ReganBooks is also publishing a book of World Trade Center disaster photos with forewords by Kerik and Fire Commissioner Thomas Von Essen. Proceeds from that book will be donated to charity.

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