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THE NEW YORK POST, MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2001

RUDY'S COURAGE A



EARLY REACTION: The mayor and his aides walk quickly to the disaster site after the attack Tuesday. Mary Altaffer



SEARCH IS ON: Mayor Giuliani, with Police Commissioner Bernard Kerik, holds a photo of a "black box" Wednesday. AP

How Giuliani and his team led city out of the darkness

By DAVID SEIFMAN, *City Hall Bureau Chief*

Mayor Giuliani got the most chilling phone call of his life on a sedate day at City Hall, when the primary election was on everyone's mind and the usually hard-driving mayor had postponed an 8 a.m. staff meeting to 9:45 a.m.

Giuliani had been enjoying a leisurely breakfast with his top aide and friend, Denny Young.

The pair finished up and were being driven to City Hall in the mayor's official vehicle, a Chevrolet Suburban. Two cops were in the front; Giuliani and Young sat in back.

Downtown, Deputy Mayor Joseph Lhota was already at his desk, writing a note to his secretary, when the horrible screech of a plane and an explosion just before 9 a.m. rattled his windows and shattered his composure.

Sprinting outside, Lhota spotted flames coming from one of the majestic Twin Towers.

He immediately called the mayor's car, which was making its way through traffic on Manhattan's East Side. One of the cops picked up the phone.

"Tell the mayor a plane has hit the trade center," Lhota shouted.

Giuliani's car quickly detoured and began racing toward the scene.

The mayor, who spent nearly eight years building New York into the "capital of the world," soon found himself an eyewitness to dual terrorist blows that would claim what were among the city's best-known structures.

Out of the car, Giuliani rushed to West Street and Vesey Street, where a Fire Department command post was being set up.

> ***"The mayor goes around the room and asks each commissioner what they have, what they need. Then you go out and do what you have to do."***
>
> A CITY COMMISSIONER

As the mayor was walking up Vesey, he ran into Tony Carbonetti, his chief of staff, and a group of other aides who had come from City Hall.

A former cop working for Merrill Lynch urged the mayoral entourage to use offices in the company's building at 75 Barclay St.

Carbonetti reached for his cell phone and frantically dialed the White House.

"I need Karl Rove," Carbonetti implored, the urgency obvious in his voice.

But President Bush's senior political aide wasn't to be found — and neither was any other White House official.

"Sir, he's not here," came the response from a security officer at the other end. "The White House has been evacuated. The Pentagon has been hit."

Giuliani needed no further evidence that the world as he knew it would never be the same.

Minutes later, he was fleeing for his life.

The ground shuddered as the first tower came toppling down — just as Giuliani and his aides were trying to establish a makeshift outpost in unfamiliar surroundings.

Giuliani was shoved under a desk by the cops who guard him.

A cloud of soot and debris rushed under doorways, turning windows ash gray.

"I don't think any of us conceived of the building's going under," said Carbonetti.

Clinging to one another, the mayor and his entourage of about 15 followed a building worker who tried one blocked exit after another before finding an opening that led to safety through 100 Church St.

"He probably saved us a lot of panic," said Carbonetti of the worker. "One of the cops wanted to shoot off the chains [of the blocked exits.]"

Trudging uptown, Giuliani came upon a badly shaken Deputy Police Commissioner Tibor Kerekes, covered with ash.

"He's bleeding, he's dazed," recalled Carbonetti. "He's the one that told us the building came down. We sat him down. Someone tried wiping him off. We said we just have to head north."

Days later, one City Hall official conceded privately that if the first tower had collapsed in a different direction, Giuliani would have been among the casualties.

Among those making the weary journey uptown with the mayor was First Deputy Police Commissioner Joseph Dunne, who had to hobble for a dozen blocks on a snapped Achilles' tendon.

The first possible refuge, the Soho Grand hotel, was rejected.

"Too much glass," concluded one mayoral aide.

Finally, the group that included Police Commissioner Bernard Kerik, Lhota, mayoral spokeswoman Sunny Mindel and Carbonetti settled on a nearby firehouse — but not before they watched the second tower crash to the ground.

With the buildings down, the mayor sprang into action.

City Hall had been evacuated and the Emergency Operations Center was in the danger zone, so a decision was quickly made to assemble under extraordinary security at the Police Academy on East 20th Street.

"We have a mayor who knows what he's doing," former Deputy Mayor John Dyson would say later.

"But we also have a team that's worked together for eight years. Everybody knows everybody's wife, everybody knows everybody's home number. We all know everybody's strengths and weaknesses."

Without that built-in edge, Dyson speculated:

"It would have been hard for any mayor, no matter how skilled, to have taken on these tasks."

By late afternoon Tuesday, barely six hours after the most audacious terrorist attack in American history, the mayor and his team of 40 to 50 aides were ready for the near-impossible job of trying to restore normalcy.

"Stand tough," Bush told the mayor by phone on Tuesday afternoon, when the two finally hooked up after repeated efforts.

The first crisis meeting that Giuliani called, at the Police Academy, was more businesslike than anyone might have thought.

"I was in Vietnam," said Dyson. "I expected a little more stunned reaction. The mayor's own extraordinary courage gave everybody sort of a calming sense. Nothing would daunt him."

In private, Giuliani delivered the same message that he would in public:

"The message was, we're going to take care of this," said Deputy Mayor Robert Harding.

That first horrific day, Giuliani didn't leave the command center until after 3:00 a.m., to return to pal Howard Koeppel's apartment, where he's been staying lately. He was back before 7 a.m. on Wednesday.

As the crisis unfolded, it was Giuliani who set themes for each day.

Tuesday, his message was restoring safety to the city. On Wednesday, the mayor focused on the ex-

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BEACON FOR US ALL

tent of the tragedy, bracing New Yorkers for the shocking statistics of loss that would come.

Thursday, Giuliani stressed prayer and met with religious leaders. Friday was Bush and a message of hope. Saturday, the theme was mourning, as three top firefighters were buried.

Sunday, it was clear the mayor had chosen to emphasize recovery and the city getting ready to go back to work.

The mayor's resolve never wavered in public — even though he and his aides were grieving in private, like so many other New Yorkers.

In addition to losing much of the top hierarchy of the Fire Department, the mayor's inner circle had to struggle with the disappearance of a hero firefighter, Capt. Terry Hatton of Rescue 1, husband of Beth Petrone, the mayor's executive assistant for nearly two decades.

"The moments I had to cry, I let myself cry," said Mindel, explaining how she dealt with the enormity of the tragedy.

She wasn't the only one.

Other top mayoral aides have also wept after 18-hour days filled with once-unimaginable body counts and missing-person statistics.

No one's seen Giuliani cry, but those close to him say he has shed tears, in private.

"I can't believe this," he sometimes remarks to people around him.

But Giuliani always comes back with a determination not to give in to the grief or the terrorists.

"We have a much larger responsibility right now," said Lhota. "I'm sure in our own time, in our own way, we'll deal with the personal emotions."

The daily meetings quickly settled into a routine modeled after the mayor's Cabinet meetings.

"The mayor goes around the room and asks each commissioner what they have, what they need," explained one commissioner. "Then you go out and do what you have to do."

Aides pointed to Thursday as typical, which began with the mayor conducting interviews on CBS-TV's "The Early Show" at 7:48 a.m. before the first staff meeting at 8:34.

"He opened up by telling everyone how important it was to take care of themselves," said one insider.

But Giuliani, who's trying to adhere to a strict diet as he recovers from prostate cancer, seems not to have the time to take his own advice.

His breakfast that morning consisted of half a glazed donut and half a cup of coffee.

After joining Gov. Pataki in a conference call with President Bush at 11 a.m., Giuliani fielded a call from Sen. Hillary Clinton at 12:07 p.m. and her husband, the former president, a few minutes later.

One insider said the relationship between the governor and the mayor, who haven't always seen eye to eye, has warmed considerably.

Pataki or his representative attends every session and the mayor and the governor have never finished a press conference without complimenting one another's "leadership."

But that didn't stop Giuliani from kidding Pataki one morning about "heavy traffic" when he showed up late to one session.

The governor, like the mayor, travels in a vehicle equipped with lights and sirens.

Some things, however, haven't changed.

"A considerable amount of time is spent berating the press for getting things wrong," said one insider.

The insider said city officials were especially unhappy about an MSNBC report on Saturday night spotlighting a need for volunteers — long after city officials had announced a volunteer overload.

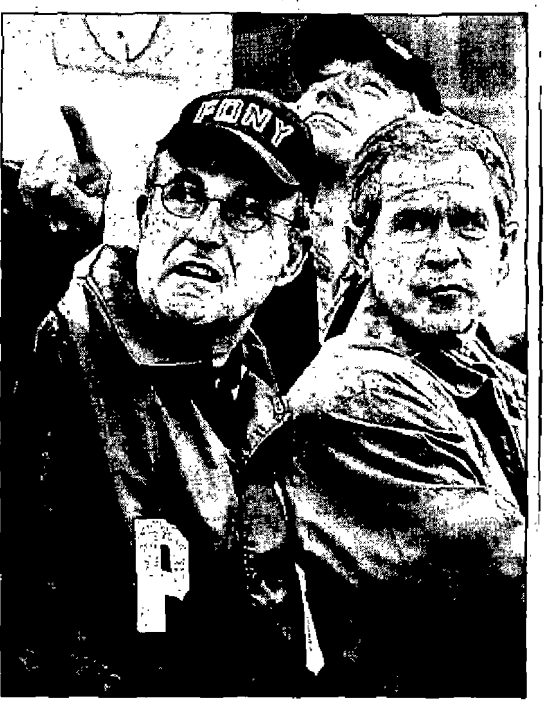
Giuliani's performance in rallying the city led Newsweek magazine to declare him the "new mayor of America."

The mayor's voice has even been heard in Iran.

Tehran Mayor Morteza Alviri sent condolences to Giuliani, marking the first direct contact between that nation and the U.S. since 1979.

And so, with less then four months left in office, no one will be calling Giuliani a lame duck as he sets about laying the groundwork to rebuild the city.

He's been reading up on the Battle of Britain to prepare for the monumental task ahead.



LEADERS MEET: Mayor Giuliani guides President Bush through the ruins and debris of lower Manhattan on Friday. AP



REFLECTION: The mayor pauses as firefighters carry the casket of FDNY Chief Peter Ganci in Farmingdale Saturday Reuters

Albany nixes extending his term

By FREDRIC U. DICKER
State Editor

ALBANY — Key state officials have considered — but rejected — delaying the November election so Mayor Giuliani could remain at the helm of city government, The Post has learned.

Officials also researched the possibility of having the state Legislature repeal the city's term-limit law to permit Giuliani — whose handling of the aftermath of the nation's worst terrorist attack has won worldwide praise — to seek a third term as mayor, sources said.

They decided to reject that course of action as well, according to sources.

"The possibility of delaying the election until next year was discussed by several officials late last week," a high-level Republican offieial, who demanded anonymity, told The Post yesterday.

"There's no doubt that everyone agrees that Rudy is doing a great job in the crisis and that it would make a lot of sense to see him stay on.

"But it was decided that practicality, at the very least, dictates otherwise.

"The mechanics of making a change in the election would be enormous, it would become very partisan, you have six mayoral candidates out there with a vested interest in the election. [Assembly Speaker] Shelly Silver would never go along with it.

"While it's something I might support, the reality is it's not going to happen," the official continued.

Legislative sources said Gov. Pataki and the state lawmakers could delay the city's November election — and the Sept. 25 primary — through a law changing the state's election calendar in the wake of the terrorist attack.

The sources also said it was possible for Pataki and the Legislature to pass a law superseding the New York City charter, which imposes a two-term limit on city mayors.

But Silver, a Democrat whose lower Manhattan district includes the World Trade Center site, said he would never support such an election delay — in part because it could be seen as giving in to the terrorists.

"This attack was a strike at democracy, and are we going to now, in effect, give the terrorists their wish and suspend democracy?" asked Silver.

"A citizen's right to participate in a vote is a fundamental right of democracy, and I just don't think it would be appropriate to interfere with that," Silver continued.

A state Republican, who said he was "sympathetic" to delaying the mayoral election until next year, also said he rejected pursuing such an action because of the "practical difficulties" it would impose.

"If you have a mayoral race going on next year that would take a tremendous amount of attention away from the governor's race — and what about all the races for state Legislature — who would pay attention to them?" the official asked.

Meanwhile, Democratic gubernatorial hopefuls Carl McCall, the state comptroller, and Andrew Cuomo, the former federal housing secretary, have announced the temporary suspensions of their campaigning and fund-raising, citing the terrorist attack.

Spokesmen for both said they didn't know when campaigning would resume.

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