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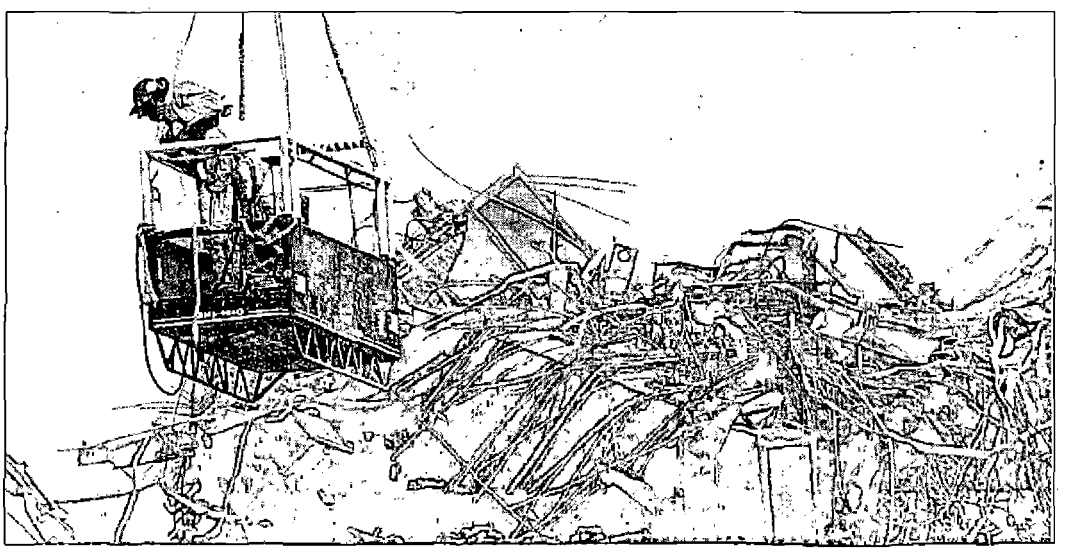
NEWSDAY, WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2001

A Passion



Pool Photo by Timothy A. Clary

Mayor Rudolph Giuliani gives a tour of the World Trade Center attack site yesterday to a group of dignitaries including UN *Secretary-General Kofi* Annan; although search and rescue operations continue, the mayor held out little hope of finding survivors.



A worker suspended from a crane surveys the wreckage yesterday; clearing the debris is expected to take months.

Pool Photo by Russell Boyce

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to Rebuild

City releases ambitious proposal for disaster site

City officials released an ambitious proposal for rebuilding lower Manhattan yesterday as the city sorrowfully acknowledged the one-week anniversary of the World Trade Center attack — and the slim likelihood of finding more survivors.

Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and City Council Speaker Peter Vallone released a six-page plan to establish an unprecedented commission with "broad and sweeping powers" to pool the city's vast resources and rebuild the area in and around the World Trade Center.

The mighty commission, which would be made up of seven members all appointed by the mayor to five-year terms, would also help businesses that were rocked by last week's disaster.

The passion to help the city move past the tragedy was also evidenced both in Washington and in Albany. President George W. Bush issued an order increasing the federal funds available to pay for cleanup of the collapsed buildings in lower Manhattan. Originally, the federal government had planned to pay for 75 percent of the costs; it will now pay for all of it. The president also signed a bill providing $40 billion that would help New York City recover.

In Albany, state lawmakers proposed various efforts to provide help, including free college tuition in the State and City University of New York systems to the children of victims and designating lower Manhattan an empire zone, which would relieve some businesses of nearly all tax levies. Attending SUNY could be worth $47,500 over four years.

After viewing the disaster site with United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, Giuliani said any rebuilding effort should include a memorial "for the massive numbers of people who were lost.

"There should be a memorial here to the spirit of the Americans that rebuilt it," the mayor said. "And then we should think of what kind of economic development should take place."

Annan said he would like for officials from other nations to see the carnage firsthand as a nudge to persuade them to join the fight against terrorism.

"We are all shocked, but to see it close up gives you a completely different dimension," Annan said. "I think we're going to have several of them come to see it."

Annan also said the UN's General Assembly meeting, scheduled for Sept. 25-Oct. 4, has been postponed indefinitely.

The mayor said he also believed it was crucial for officials to view the site firsthand, and to that end he took several members of Congress to the site by way of a police boat, including Sen. Daniel Inouye (D-Hawaii), Sen. James Jeffords (I-Vt.), Sen. Ted Stevens (R-Alaska), Sen. Bob Smith (R-N.H.).

In Washington, the harsh talk was turned up another notch as Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld suggested that the United States could consider overthrowing governments that refused to stop their coddling of terrorists.

As for rebuilding New York, the proposal to establish a special commission was met with some suspicion in certain quarters of the city, primarily because of the involvement of Vallone, a Democratic mayoral candidate. The legislation is scheduled to be introduced Friday at an emergency state-of-the-city council meeting called by Vallone.

A campaign aide for Public Advocate Mark Green called the proposal "ambiguous" and said it was an attempt by Val-



Newsday Photo / Kathy Kmonicek

Gov. George Pataki, left, speaks with Yasmine Delawari, a Manhattan resident, during a subway ride to lower Manhattan to visit the site of the collapsed World Trade Center towers.

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lone to politicize the rebuilding process just days before the mayoral primary.

Eric Lane, former executive director and counsel to the 1989 Charter Revision Commission, said there's nothing illegal about city officials changing the charter, but he said "a host of policy issues" would arise by allowing the mayor to make all of the five-year appointments.

Vallone has denied he is seeking political gain in the aftermath of the tragedy.

Vallone spokesman Jordan Barowitz said the legislation was still on the drawing board and being drafted to withstand any possible legal challenges.

"This design is in the infant stages, but given the extraordinary circumstances, the commission needs broad and sweeping powers," Barowitz said.

As bewilderment begins to fade, city residents are starting to realize the inconveniences that come with increased security, traffic and paranoia might be around for a while. According to the estimates of one city official, the cleanup will take a year. That is based on calculations in which workers continue to clear out 15,000 tons of rubble a day.

As rescue workers made their first foray into the vast shopping mall underneath the ruins, they reported that although it was dark and deserted, it had mostly remained structurally intact.

At the Torneau store, amid eight clocks on the wall showing times from around the world, the New York clock had stopped at 9:10 a.m., the time the attack commenced. Apparently, some people had other things on their minds as they fled the scene: There were windows smashed, revealing empty Rolex cases.

At ground level, search-and-rescuers are using high-tech cameras attached to the ends of fiber-optic cables along with miniature lights to see what is beneath the rubble.

Above ground on Church Street, there were some patriotic messages scrawled into the dust on the side of some buildings, like "God Bless America" and "RIP." But there were also some uglier messages. One said, "Kill them all, let Allah sort them out."

As for finding survivors, the statements of workers and officials around the site are becoming increasingly hopeless.

One Fire Department captain near Ground Zero conceded that "FEMA is pretty much taking over. They're moving in the cranes. It will be a miracle if they find anyone."

Another firefighter said: "At some point, you've got to move in the heavy machinery. We're not going to sacrifice more guys at this point. You can't. But it's hard. Guys don't want to give that up."

Even Giuliani sounded as pessimistic about the hope for survivors as he has since this all began last week.

"The chances of recovering any live human beings are very, very small given the amount of time and the condition of the site," he said.

"We will still conduct ourselves as a rescue effort, as well as a recovery effort. But we don't have any substantial amount of hope that we can offer to anyone that we're going to be able to find anyone alive."

An interdenominational coalition of clergy called the Ground Zero Clergy Task Force, which has formed around the World Trade Center disaster, announced it has started to collect information on volunteers who might be available to help the cleanup effort in the future when volunteers aren't as easy to come by.

Those interested in registering should go to www.operationhope.ag org. The task force, made up of from 50 to 75 houses of worship from across the city, has also established a short-term relief fund to help families with such immediate financial needs as funeral costs and relocation, said Jeremy Del Rio, son of the Rev. Richard Del Rio of Abounding Grace Ministries in the East Village who founded the task force.

The scope of the disaster became clear yesterday to the employees of Windows on the World restaurant, formerly atop Tower One of the World Trade Center, who gathered in midtown to get information from their union about benefits available to them. Of the 360 workers, about 75 are missing. Many of the workers were foreign-born, and the discussions were translated into Cantonese, Spanish and French.

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