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THE STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE, MONDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2001

City alert, but not in 'lockdown'

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ADVANCE CITY HALL BUREAU

The city has heightened security at "sensitive" locations around town, Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani said yesterday.

At first, Giuliani declined to identify the sites that would get added attention. "To put out a list would be counterproductive," he said.

Later, he said there would be heightened security at airports as well as other "access and egress points" throughout the city — which would include tunnels and bridges. There will be additional police and National Guard troops at these locations.

Last night, trucks were restricted from using the lower level of the Brooklyn-bound Verrazano-Narrows Bridge for security reasons, a Bridge and Tunnel police officer said. Trucks were not stopped and checked, however.

A published report said the city was headed today into a "lockdown" mode that would surpass security measures put in place in the hours immediately after the Sept. 11 attack on the World Trade Center. The mayor acknowledged that security at locations would be kicked up a notch, but he didn't think things would get any

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worse than they were immediately after the attack.

"We won't see that unless there is a need for it," Giuliani said.

Giuliani said the city has had this plan on the books for the past three to four years, specifically to deal with a terrorist threat. The plan was put together with the help of the Joint Terrorist Task Force, comprised of city and federal law enforcement officials.

If the city determines a certain location is a possible target, it could be shut down for a period of time, the mayor said. But he scoffed at the report that the city was going into lockdown.

"I don't even know where that expression came from," he said. "You do a lockdown at a jail when you have a problem."

City officials said the heightened state of alert will be open-ended.

"This is not just a one-day event," Giuliani said. "It's going to be a lengthy, protracted effort. We're going to be dealing with this problem for quite some time."

He acknowledged the problems commuters have faced since the tragedy.

"It makes sense for commuters to stagger their times that they come into and go out of the city. It would also be a good idea to use public transportation."

There has been a sense of heightened security in the city ever since Sept. 11. There are police at almost every corner, and state troopers and National Guardsmen have been deployed. Vehicular traffic in Manhattan has been reduced by the ban on single-occupancy vehicles between 6 a.m. and noon.

Giuliani also said that later this week, he will discuss how the cost of the city's recovery is going to affect the city's $39 billion budget. "We're going to lay out our approach to deal with it, how we're going to make sure the budget is balanced," he said. "We've got quite a bit of flexibility to absorb this."

Just to show how strong the city's economy is, he said the city also has in place a "stabilization account" — a rainy-day fund that can be used to help in the event of an emergency. He also talked about the city's diverse job base.

Regarding any economic fallout the tragedy may have, Giuliani was optimistic. "We can absorb it and we can help and assist to make this economy grow again," he said. "We've just gone through four years of record job growth, so this horrible blow happened when we were at our strongest."

The mayor was in Times Square earlier in the evening and was pleased by the crowds of tourists that he encountered.

"This is really great. Times Square is perfectly normal. I've met groups from Oregon and all over the country that have come to New York to show their support."

He added that crime has plummeted in the wake of the attack because the police deployed to check for terrorists are also deterring other criminals.


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