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Will Tension Grow as Swearing-In Nears?

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Differences between Rudolph Giuliani and Michael Bloomberg could spawn tension between their two camps as the mayor steps aside for the mayor-elect.

Already there is private speculation at City Hall over how smoothly, and for how long, the two such tenacious executives will cooperate.

"I think things will be happy — for a while," predicted an administration official who declined to be identified. "Then we'll go back to normal."

Normal, as it has come to be known since 1994, means the Giuliani team steamrolling critics and even those seeking to stay neutral, to get its way on matters of executive power.

The two are not really friends. Bloomberg, the second consecutive Republican-elected mayor, has stated clearly that he'll pick his own administration.

Giuliani's own takeover began cordially enough in 1993 with appearances alongside the defeated David Dinkins and visits to Democratic elected officials.

Those good feelings proved to be short-lived.

Small flash points that billionaire Bloomberg's arrival at City Hall just may grow into more of a hostile takeover than it now seems include:

- Bloomberg in a campaign debate called his management style less "insular" than Giuliani's and based more on listening to others.
- Bloomberg — who warned Democrat Mark Green would "tear City Hall apart" — would not say yesterday how he'd use the lower Manhattan "transition" office Giuliani created.
- Giuliani stayed neutral when longtime associate Herman Badillo skewered Bloomberg's credentials and credibility during the GOP primary.
- Gov. George Pataki will be in elected office next year and Giuliani will not. It is no secret that Giuliani aides have warred with Pataki's people. Bloomberg and company just may listen to the governor or his surrogates on such matters.
- Deputy Mayors Joseph Lhota and Robert Harding, two of the cannier minds in the Giuliani government, are expected to leave.
- Weeks ago, Giuliani said his main concern in seeking a term extension was a "seamless transition," given the team in place for the Sept. 11 emergency.
- Giuliani's none-too-veiled policy of disdaining open-government laws, which has spurred several successful lawsuits, may not stand.
- Bloomberg proved quite thin-skinned about unflattering campaign stories, stiff-armed policy questions and offered "off-the-record-only" sessions to reporters.
- Back when it seemed likely Bloomberg would lose, Giuliani reacted to the candidate's huge spending disclosures by quipping it was good for the economy.

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