NYC 9/11 Public Portal Document

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HBO, Rudy near deal for program on his finest hour

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The life and times of Mayor Giuliani is set to hit the small screen.

HBO is close to signing a deal with Giuliani and producer Brad Grey for a 90-minute documentary focusing on the way the mayor and his administration handled the World Trade Center terrorist attacks.

The project has not been officially announced, but a network spokesman yesterday confirmed that the mayor and his representatives were in the final stages of negotiating a deal. Anticipating a positive outcome, filming for the project began at the start of the World Series, according to a source.

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>
> Prof. Robert Thompson

Observers suggested yesterday that without the Sept. 11 attacks — and the national exposure Giuliani gained in the aftermath — there would be little interest in a documentary about the mayor.

"He's arguably one of the hottest guys on the American scene," said Syracuse University Prof. Robert Thompson, who heads the school's Center for Popular Television.

"There's an audience for him now. I don't think we would have made this three months ago. Not only does he have this great final act," Thompson added, "but you also have a little bit of scandal, a lot of dish — this guy's a major character. He's gone into the canon of great American hero."

While no specific date has been set, it is expected that the film will air in May.

Grey, an executive producer for HBO's "The Sopranos" and the negotiator for Giuliani's recent $3 million, two-book deal with Talk/Miramax Books, will serve as executive producer on the project. He was unavailable for comment yesterday.

HBO and Grey have tapped Peter Kunhardt to make the film. Kunhardt produced PBS' "The American President" and ABC's documentary on Abraham Lincoln.

Giuliani is cooperating in the project, according to a source. A representative for the mayor did not return a call.

A portion of the license fee HBO will pay to Grey will be donated to the Twin Towers Fund. Grey and Giuliani also are expected to donate their fees.

HBO's documentary will not be the first to be made since the attacks. On Nov. 19 and 20, A&E will air "Biography Close-Up: Rudy Giuliani," an installment of its popular series, which includes an interview with the mayor.

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