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Kelly's back, vows to keep city safe

By MICHAEL SAUL and JOHN MARZULLI
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITERS

Taking the job of police commissioner for the second time, Raymond Kelly vowed yesterday, "We will keep crime down. We will protect our city."

Mayor-elect Michael Bloomberg announced his widely anticipated choice of Kelly at a news conference delayed a day by Monday's plane crash in Queens. Kelly, 60, had earned high marks as police commissioner during the 1993 World Trade Center bombing.

"I think if you go back and take a look, the reduction in crime in this city started when he was police commissioner at the beginning and it has continued since then and he will continue that process," Bloomberg said. "Who said you can't come home again? I think that this city is so lucky to have Ray Kelly and will be so well served by him."

Although Bloomberg had offered Police Commissioner Bernard Kerik the chance to stay on, Kerik stuck to his decision to leave once Mayor Giuliani's term ends. Kelly had endorsed Bloomberg in the mayoral race.

Kelly, a 32-year NYPD veteran, is returning to lead the nation's largest police department when the city faces the formidable task of rebuilding after the Sept. 11 terrorist attack that destroyed the Trade Center.

Can't argue with success

Kelly, who was the city's 37th police commissioner and will become its 41st, repeatedly sounded themes of continued crime reduction and security for the city, but offered few specifics yesterday.

"You cannot argue with the success of the last eight years," Kelly said.

He said he would keep the CompStat system, which lets police commanders track crime hot spots daily, and continue some version of the Operation Condor overtime program, although city budget woes are likely to curtail overtime spending.

Kelly was top cop for the last 14 months of the Dinkins administration. He was an early proponent of addressing minor crimes before they turned into major problems and of community policing. When he left the department after Giuliani took office in 1994, the crack-ravaged city had logged 1,927 murders for the year.

That was an improvement over the all-time high of 2,254 in 1990, but a far cry from the dramatic reductions achieved during the Giuliani administration. Last year, there were 671 homicides in New York.

With the murder rate plummeting and major crime down 35% under Giuliani, continued crime reduction is a mandate for the new commissioner.

After leaving city government, Kelly went on to help Haiti modernize its police force and worked for the Clinton administration as the Treasury Department's undersecretary for enforcement and later as head of the Customs Service.

Bloomberg said Kelly's experience will be a plus in formulating the city's anti-terrorism plans and forging a closer partnership with the feds.

Kelly is walking away from a lucrative job as head of global security for Bear Stearns and will have to forfeit his NYPD pension.

Asked how he could make that financial sacrifice, Kelly said, "It would have been a more difficult decision for me to make if Sept. 11 had not occurred."



MIKE ALBANS DAILY NEWS

LAWMAN New top cop Raymond Kelly (r.) with Mayor-elect Michael Bloomberg yesterday.

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