NYC 9/11 Public Portal Document

# Making Sense of Security

## On heels of alert, city cautious but accessible

By Graham Rayman
STAFF WRITER

At the shopping mecca of Herald Square yesterday, a lone police officer stood post at 34th Street and Broadway. At the westbound entrance to the Brooklyn Bridge, where national guards once blocked access, two police officers watched civilian cars flow into Manhattan.

At Grand Central Station, once awash in camouflage uniforms, a single national guard roamed the crowded main hall. And at Penn Station, one Amtrak police officer sat at a desk in the area where riders wait for trains.

On the day after Homeland Security Director Tom Ridge issued his third vaguely worded terror alert, there was no appreciable increase in security around Manhattan. In fact, visits to a dozen of the city's high-traffic areas show that visible security has been at least substantially reduced since the first month after the Sept. 11 attacks. On the other hand, it seemed clear yesterday that government and private officials don't intend to echo 1993, when they were criticized in the media for reducing security in some places just a month after terrorists detonated a huge bomb in the World Trade Center parking garage.

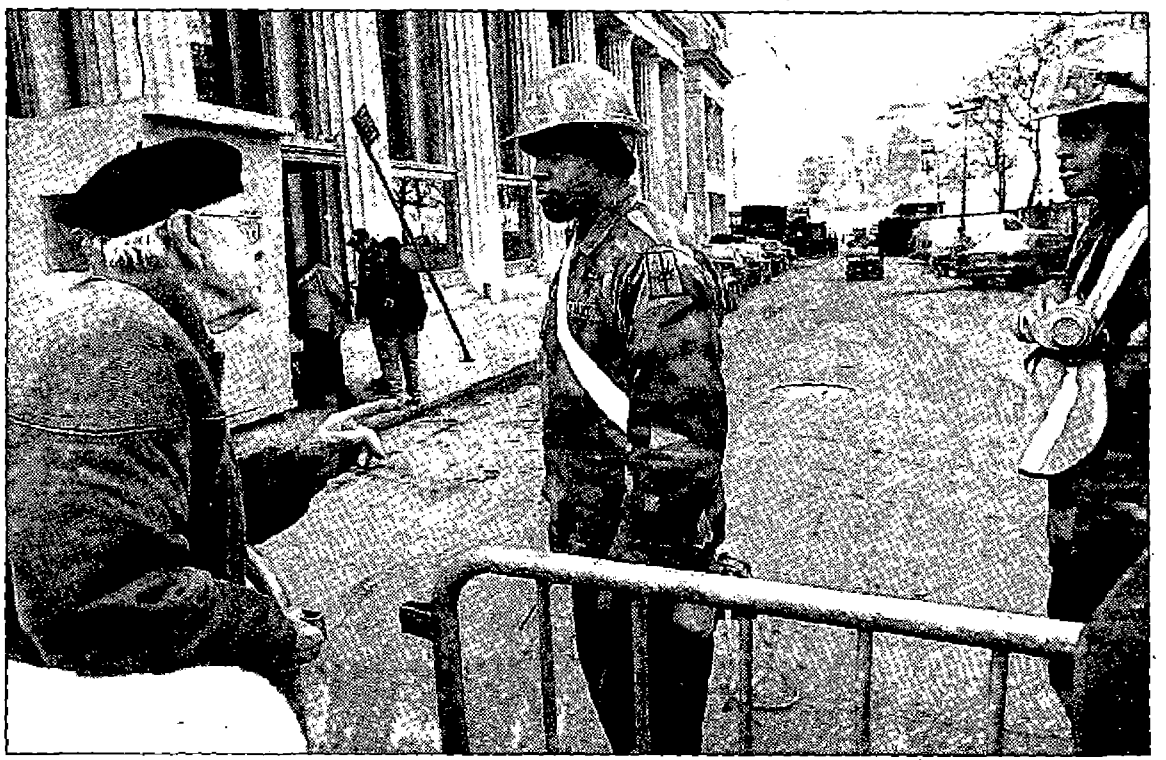
At the Empire State Building, for example, guards are still querying visitors, checking identifications and using metal detectors three months after the attack. At the George Washington Bridge, two national guards with M-16 assault rifles slung over their shoulders still watch cars passing through the toll booths. The United Nations buildings are still surrounded by a cordon of sand-filled city dump trucks and steel barricades.

On Monday, Ridge said U.S. intelligence and law enforcement agencies had picked up a higher number of threats to justify a "general alert." He pointed to an upcoming cluster of religious holidays, including the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. He did not offer further details. "The further removed we get from Sept. 11, I think the natural tendency is to let down our guard," he added. "Unfortunately, we cannot do that. We are a nation at war."

Other than City Hall, One Police Plaza and Ground Zero, where security has been consistently high, the one area swarming with police yesterday was Rockefeller Center. The Police Department last week redeployed officers to enforce quality of life crimes, and to staff the renewed Operation Condor, the crackdown on low-level drug offenses.

Though there was no visible jump in security in the city, Gov. George Pataki backed Ridge's announcement, saying the state would take Ridge's admonition seriously. Pataki said his security chief, James Kallstrom, had issued an advisory to law enforcement officials throughout New York. "There are no specific threats, just general information, so it makes it very difficult," Pataki said. "But it also means we have to do everything across the state we can to be as vigilant as possible."

*Staff writer Andrew Metz contributed to this story.*



Newsday Photo / Mayita Mendez

**National Guard members watch an entrance to Ground Zero, one of a few areas where security is still visibly high.**

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