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LYNN SWEET

The scoop from Washington

White House advisors in Chicago today for NATO/G-8 briefings

By [Lynn Sweet](#) on January 31, 2012 6:20 AM | [No Comments](#)

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Planning for the May NATO and G-8 meetings in Chicago is ramping up: On Tuesday, two White House advisors--Ben Rhodes, Deputy National Security Advisor for Strategic Communications, and Elizabeth Sherwood-Randall, Senior Director for European Affairs--hit Chicago for a series of briefings on the substantive foreign policy issues the global leaders will be discussing. The White House said the trip is also to "ensure the Summits highlight Chicago as the best of America and support our national security goals."

Rhodes and Sherwood-Randall will be meeting with the Host Committee, the large consular corps and local journalists.

Meanwhile, teams from Washington--the "planning task force" --have been working on the physical planning--venues for events, etc. The summits' main meetings will take place in the McCormick Place complex but there will be a variety of related events--including probably head of state spouse programs--at other sites.

More background: Most of the focus so far in Chicago has been on logistics because of the potential for large numbers of protestors and local concerns about the costs that the city may be saddled with--though federal dollars are expected to cover a lot of the bills. Worried about protestors, downtown and Michigan Avenue business owners were warned recently to step up security in May. Mayor Rahm Emanuel--who as President Obama's former chief of staff arranged for Chicago to host the NATO and G-8 sessions-- has tangled with the City Council and outside groups over some of his security plans, seen as overly restrictive.

In April, Emanuel is also bringing to Chicago the World Summit of Nobel Peace Laureates, where former awardees come to the city for an international three-day event called "Speak Up, Speak Out for Freedom and Rights."

Locally, Emanuel created a Chicago G-8 and NATO Host Committee at the non-profit World Business Chicago to be the lead in working with NATO, the G-8, the White House, the State Department and local business, cultural, education, neighborhood and other groups. Chicago has a big diplomatic, or consular corps, one of the largest in the nation with representatives from 76 nations running missions in the city.

How the arrangements are being made, from the White House: "The White House is working in collaboration with NATO and Chicago's Host Committee on the planning of the G-8 and NATO Summits to be held in Chicago this May.

"Over the next several months you'll see officials from Washington, Brussels and Chicago visiting one another's respective cities for consultations in support of the Summits.

"One such visit is occurring today, when Ben Rhodes, Deputy National Security Advisor for Strategic Communications, and Elizabeth Sherwood-Randall, Senior Director for European Affairs, will be in Chicago to consult with the Host Committee and local Consular corps. Mr. Rhodes and Ms. Sherwood-Randall will exchange views with these groups on how we can best work together to ensure the Summits highlight Chicago as the best of America and support our national security goals. Mr. Rhodes and Ms. Sherwood-Randall will also speak to a small group of journalists covering the Summits to talk about the significance of hosting the G-8 and NATO Summits to U.S. foreign policy.

"At last year's G-8 Leaders Summit in Deauville, France, President Obama joined other

heads of state and government from France, the United Kingdom, Germany, Japan, Italy, Canada, Russia, and the European Union. During the two-day Summit, the President and other Leaders agreed to closely cooperate on a wide range of key global priorities. We look forward to hosting these leaders in the United States and discussing a similarly wide range of priorities this year.

"Meanwhile, America's relationship with our NATO Allies is a cornerstone of our engagement with the world, and enhances both our security and the democratic values that we share. At a time when we have dealt huge blows to al Qaeda and are winding down our wars abroad, the Chicago Summit will advance goals that the United States shares with NATO: achieving our objectives in Afghanistan; reforming NATO so that it has the capabilities it needs; and strengthening partnerships beyond NATO's borders."

NATO run-up to Chicago summit: In Brussels on Monday, NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen said at a press conference, "in Chicago we hope to announce the interim capability for our missile defence system.

"In Chicago we will also make clear our enduring commitment to Afghanistan, which remains our top operational priority. Afghanistan is moving in the right direction. Transition to Afghan security lead is on schedule and is making steady progress."

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