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## Chicago officials deny permit for May 20 NATO protest march

By David Heinzmann

Clout Street

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After approving a parade permit for a group protesting the G-8 and NATO summits in Chicago, the city has denied an identical application by the same group seeking to move their parade one day later in the wake of the White House's decision to move the G-8 conference.

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The demonstrators asked to move their march from Saturday, May 19, after word came that the G-8 meeting scheduled to start that day had been moved by President Barack Obama to Camp David. The protesters filed a permit that was identical to the one the city approved for Saturday, except the date of protest was moved to Sunday, May 20, when the NATO meeting is set to start.

But this time the city rejected the request, citing a lack of police officers as well as other security and logistics complications from the very summit the demonstrators are seeking to protest.

"The commissioner finds that there are not available at the time of the parade a sufficient number of on-duty police officers, or other city employees authorized to regulate traffic, to police and protect lawful participants in the parade and non-participants," wrote Mike Simon, assistant commissioner of the Chicago Department of Transportation.

The previously approved May 19 permit was to begin at Daley Plaza and wind its way south to McCormick Place, where world leaders plan to meet. The new application for May 20 proposed following the exact same route.

In a March 15 denial letter, the city offered an alternate route chosen by city officials, which would keep the march out of the Loop by moving the starting location to the Petrillo Band Shell in Grant Park along the east side of Columbus Drive.

Protesters, including the permit applicant, Andy Thayer, met with city officials today to discuss the city's proposed alternative route. Thayer said they rejected the alternative, but will continue meeting with the city.

"Hopefully, we can work something out," Thayer said.

Although the same route had previously been approved for the first day of the G-8 summit, the denial states the city can't handle such a demonstration on the first day of the NATO summit.

“Motorcades for the NATO attendees will create significant traffic impediments, which would be exacerbated by the 2.64 mile proposed parade route,” Simon wrote. “Moreover, the proposed parade route winds through the city center on the first day of the National Special Security Event, and would create significant traffic concerns and a drain on existing police resources.”

The denial letter also predicts a security situation in downtown that could impede movement for everyone, not just demonstrators.

“Movement of up to 5,000 NATO delegates and staff from various locations, including the city center, to McCormick Place, the site of the event, and the associated entry to the event site on this date will require heightened security, traffic re-routing, and security checkpoints and will demand large numbers of police and other city resources,” Simon wrote. “In addition to covering the entire downtown area, including the hotel zone, business district and routing traffic near and to McCormick Place, police and other city resources will also be required to provide protection and services to the rest of the city.”

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