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NATO staffers to check out Chicago

Hundreds to visit the city this week to figure out logistics of May summit

By [Kathy Bergen](#), Chicago Tribune reporter

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Hundreds of NATO staffers are visiting Chicago this week to scope out the city in advance of the May 20-21 meetings for the security alliance, according to the city's host committee.

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Word of the visit came as a Chicago delegation, including members of the host committee, returned from NATO headquarters in Brussels.

As many as 800 personnel from NATO and its 28 member countries will arrive in Chicago to become more familiar with the layout of the city and the McCormick Place convention center as they plan the logistics of the summit. Some were to arrive as early as Sunday, with others coming midweek, summit planners said.

In May, delegations from as many as 50 countries totaling about 7,000 people, as well as about 2,500 journalists, will descend on the city to hold two days of meetings of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. With the U.S. Secret Service overseeing security for the event and the large number of world leaders requiring top-quality hotel suites, preparations for motorcade transportation and organizing lodging have been complex, summit planners said.

Last week, the White House highlighted a couple of events during the summit: a "working dinner" at Soldier Field on the evening of May 20 and earlier that day a tour of the Gary Comer Youth Center on the South Side led by first lady Michelle Obama for spouses of NATO dignitaries.

NATO's 28 members are from Europe and North America, but leaders from other countries affected by the policies of the alliance typically attend the meetings as well. This year's summit, hosted by President Barack Obama, will focus heavily on the future of western military intervention in Afghanistan.

A Chicago delegation, led by Mayor Rahm Emanuel's wife, Amy Rule, spent last week at NATO headquarters promoting the virtues of Chicago as a business and tourist destination. The NATO weekend was to be a double summit until Obama decided last month to relocate the G-8 economic summit to Camp David. City officials continue to bill the NATO meetings as an opportunity to shine a global spotlight on Chicago.

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