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500 troopers may help handle NATO protesters

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As many as 500 troopers from the Illinois State Police will assist the Chicago Police Department in handling thousands of protesters expected to descend on Chicago during the May 20-21 NATO summit, City Hall sources said Friday.

The 500-trooper contingent would represent nearly 40 percent of the statewide total, raising questions about how the State Police would be able to juggle their other responsibilities to patrol state expressways and tollways and perform other emergency functions.

Monique Bond, a State Police spokeswoman, refused to discuss the assistance or what it might cost.

Chicago Police Department spokeswoman Melissa Stratton said the size of the State Police contingent is “evolving, as is the attendance and type of delegations” attending the NATO summit.

She refused to confirm the 500-trooper number, citing the fact that the NATO summit is a “National Special Security Event,” a designation normally reserved for the Olympics, the Super Bowl and the Democratic and Republican National Conventions.

“Illinois State Police is assisting with motorcade support and supplying a number of Mobile Field Force personnel,” Stratton wrote in an e-mail to the Chicago Sun-Times.

“This is a large, complex event and it is our responsibility to ensure the success of the event as well as the security and safety of those attending and the residents and visitors within the city during the summit. CPD has stated from the beginning — and ensured through the [City] Council — the superintendent’s authority to contract with outside law enforcement. CPD’s planning ... has looked to all options as our responsibility will be to deliver police services throughout Chicago, provide security support for the [event] and provide dignitary and motorcade protection.”

For the first time, Stratton also revealed that police from northwest suburban Rosemont would provide assistance near O’Hare Airport as motorcades bearing world leaders, foreign and defense ministers from 50 nations “exit airport property.”

“They are only helping with the border area of O’Hare and have a very minimal role with traffic for delegate arrivals and departures,” she said, refusing to reveal what, if any, other police agencies may be involved.

Last month, President Barack Obama shifted the G-8 summit from Chicago to Camp David. That prompted protesters to seek to shift their march from May 19 to May 20, same time, same route.

City Hall refused, saying it did not have a “sufficient number of on-duty police officers” or traffic control aides to “police and protect” participants and spectators. The city subsequently granted a permit that will allow the protesters to march on the outskirts of the Loop to McCormick Place.

Earlier this week, the Illinois National Guard disclosed that as many as 600 of its troops would help move international delegations around the city during the summit.

The National Guard also revealed that it has scheduled an emergency response drill outside the city during summit weekend so even more of its troops can be summoned to Chicago in the event of largescale trouble.

Before the G-8 was moved to Camp David, Chicago

Police Supt. Garry McCarthy was talking about seeking roughly 850 reinforcements to assist his officers.

McCarthy once served as operations chief for the New York City Police Department, which has extensive experience in crowd control, civil unrest and protection of visiting dignitaries.

But, sources said McCarthy was determined to limit his request for outside help to officers within the state of Illinois, including State Police, Cook County Sheriff’s Police and officers from suburban and Downstate municipalities.

It was not immediately clear why McCarthy was hesitant to ask for out-of-state help, but cost may have something to do with it.

Officers from outside Illinois would have to be fed and put up in hotels. Officers from the suburbs could go home at night.

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