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## **Federal agents to begin protecting ‘Red Zone’ for NATO next week**

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Starting next week, expect to see a showing of federal law enforcement in “battle” gear, weapons slung, in a highly visible effort to protect a perimeter that encompasses the federally operated buildings in the Loop.

Law enforcement has dubbed their efforts “Operation Red Zone.” It’s headed by the Federal Protective Service, which is working with state, federal and local law enforcement in anticipation of the NATO Summit in Chicago on May 20 and 21.

Even though the actual meetings for the summit will happen at McCormick Place, federal law enforcement is aiming to protect a vast area in the Loop where thousands of federal employees and dozens of government offices are located.

Included in the zone is the Dirksen Federal Courthouse, the Kluczynski Building, the RH Metcalfe Building and the Metropolitan Correctional Center. It also includes the so-called “State Street cluster” — other federally owned buildings on State Street. The perimeter runs from Harrison Street to the south, Adams Street to the north, State Street to the east and Franklin to the west.

The Federal Protective Service will deploy additional personnel beginning May 1, bringing in more people from out of town and outfitting them in “battle dress uniform.”

They will be carrying “non-lethal” long guns — bean bag weapons — in a show of force that at the same time will allow people to move in and out of the zone freely, Cleophas Bradley, deputy regional director with the Federal Protective Service told federal employees on Wednesday.

“Will you see a highly visible police force? Yes,” Bradley told employees. “But we will not be preventing anyone from entering the red zone.”

Bradley did not disclose the number of additional law enforcement expected, but one law enforcement source called it “significant,” saying there will be groups on regular patrol, traveling swarms and those who will have specific posts.

An information sheet obtained by the Chicago Sun-Times outlines the goals of “Operation Red Zone” as:

- ◆ Preserve the peace
- ◆ Minimize disruption to the federal complex

- ◆ Ensure the public's safety
- ◆ Ensure continued government operations
- ◆ Ensure protection of individual rights to peacefully assemble and express opinions
- ◆ Protect government property from damage and destruction
- ◆ Demonstrate . . . our commitment to employing the highest standards for the safety of government employees and the security of federal facilities with our core mission to safeguard occupants and secure facilities.

It also said there have been no specific threats to federal facilities nor “any credible threats related to terrorism by international terrorist organizations.”

Employees were told to expect nonviolent demonstrations leading up to the summit, but that there was some concern of so-called “splinter groups” who could be more unpredictable.

There are at least two planned protests on May 18 and 20 that could draw more than 1,000 protesters. Officials on Wednesday said they expect the Occupy movement to grow in size and numbers and anticipated that being an issue as well.

In the event of “civil disobedience” taking place, the feds will shut down access to the “Red Zone” temporarily, get the Federal Protective Service to restore order and then reopen the area.

Some business owners surrounding the federal complex also met Wednesday with law enforcement, including representatives from Bank of America, the Berghoff Restaurant and other smaller shops. Federal law enforcement is expected to take control of the alleyway area that leads from the Berghoff Restaurant to the federal courthouse.

Businesses were told to make sure their security cameras were in working order and to give vendor lists to law enforcement. One business owner said he would change the schedule of his deliveries so they don't conflict with the NATO summit weekend.

“The reality is that FPS deals with protecting federal buildings, so they do have their work cut out for them,” said Jeff Cramer of Kroll Inc., which has been consulting with businesses on how to secure their companies in anticipation of the NATO summit. “There are a fair amount of federal targets for protesters to make a point with if they wanted.”

Even though the summit won't be held in the Loop, Cramer said he has no doubt protesters will show up there.

“You're probably going to get some media attention if you have a protest in the middle of the Loop,” he said.

Cramer said the difficulty for federal law enforcement will be to protect the area but make sure it's business as usual inside critical buildings, including the federal courthouse and central post office.

The Chicago Federal Executive Board estimates there are 55,000 federal employees in the Chicago area and the surrounding suburbs.

Bradley would not answer media questions.

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