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## To Joliet jail for NATO offenders?

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Mothballed for a decade, the Joliet Correctional Center could be temporarily reopened to serve as a detention facility for those arrested for serious offenses during the May 20-21 NATO summit.

Cook County Sheriff Tom Dart says his first choice was to use Division 3 at Cook County Jail before the once-empty division had to be filled with detainees over the last two months.

A less desirable alternative was to put up tents in the yard at Cook County Jail.

But, Dart said the solution that makes the most sense is Joliet, the hulk of a prison facility mothballed in 2002.

“They shut down Joliet prison. It’s sitting there empty. Could I turn the key and open it up? Does the water still work? Does the electricity work? If that’s a question, I might just look at the yard and whether to put up tents with some cots and utilize that setting at Joliet,” Dart said.

“It’s empty and it will be empty. There are no issues with that. If it’s functional, it wouldn’t take a lot of manpower to monitor. Transportation would be a straight shot down I-55. Across the street is Stateville [Correctional Center] We’re going there anyway.”

Thousands of demonstrators are expected to descend on Chicago to protest the summit that will bring President Barack Obama and the leaders, foreign and defense ministers of more than 50 nations to McCormick Place.

But after researching similar summits in other cities, Dart predicted that the number of arrests for serious offenses would be relatively small.

The sheriff called the 2010 G-20 summit in Toronto an “anomaly” with more than 1,100 arrests. There were also nearly 1,000 arrests at the 2007 G-8 summit in Germany that drew 25,000 demonstrators.

But, the rest of the recent summits have been relatively tame. They include: the 2009 G-20 in London (35,000 protesters, 122 arrests); the 2009 G-20 in Pittsburgh (4,500 protesters, 190 arrests) and the 2008 G-8 in Japan (44 arrests).

“A lot of times, they’re taken to a police station where they can bond themselves out. There’s a filtering process,” Dart said.

“It’s the ones above that — offenders who cause serious property damage or strike people with items that cause injury — who will need to be detained” for a longer period of time.

The sheriff added, “The only thing everybody agrees is this is unpredictable. We’re trying to keep that in mind.”

Sources said the Chicago Police Department plans to separate men and women arrested for less serious offenses. Men will be taken to Area North at Belmont and Western, which has a bond court and a capacity to hold up to 300 prisoners.

If that fills up, sources said overflow males arrested for minor offenses will be taken to Grand and Central, home of the 25th District and Area North Bureau of Patrol, with a capacity of up to 200.

Women will be taken to an undisclosed location somewhere on the South Side, sources said.

The need for mass detention facilities was first raised in January during a briefing by top mayoral aides and officials from the Chicago host committee.

Since then, President Obama shifted the G-8 summit from Chicago to Camp David. That’s a decision that, law enforcement officials hope, will make Chicago less of a target for hard core demonstrators and so-called “anarchists” bent on destruction.

The Joliet Correctional Center served as a prison from 1858 until 2002. The classic movie, “The Blues Brothers” opened with Jake Blues being released from Joliet prison. The now-shuttered prison was also featured in the first season of Fox network program, “Prison Break” and in the movie “Let’s Go to Prison.”

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