



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on May 2, 2012

Chicago Prepares for NATO Summit

In anticipation of the NATO Summit, which is to be held from May 20 to May 21, the city of Chicago is preparing a practical police state. Federal officials are [implementing](#) security plans that are so broad they encompass all of Cook County, Illinois.

The core participants of the 38 G8 summit are Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russian, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the European Union.

Additionally, leaders from other nations like Brazil, China, India, and Mexico have been invited, along with representatives from international organizations including the World Bank, United Nations, and the World Trade Organization. The purpose of the summit is to discuss key global issues such as energy, terrorism, and the environment.

Approximately 10,000 people, including 2,000 journalists, are expected to be in Chicago during the summit, an estimate that does not include the potential protesters that are expected to be in the city for the summit.

In anticipation of such a large event, the city of Chicago is reportedly going to be undergoing heavy security measures.

According to the Red Cross, the city of Chicago, the Department of Homeland Security, and the Secret Service instructed them to prepare for a mass evacuation of the city in the event that there is an emergency during the NATO Summit. The Red Cross was told that they need to be prepared for possibly having to house and feed residents under those circumstances.

The Illinois Department of Transportation is also reportedly testing emergency plans to close off access to and from downtown Chicago, which involves highway security gates designed to shut down all traffic in the case of a terrorist attack.

The *Chicago Tribune* reports that in Chicago as well as the surrounding suburbs, the gates are being tested to assure that they are able to open and close access to the roads, "a procedure originally designed for use in an all-out emergency like a bioterrorism attack."

In fact, the Department of Transportation has already warned commercial truck drivers to find alternate routes during the weekend of the Summit, and have issued several prohibitions in the days leading up to the Summit. [TruckingInfo.com reports:](#)

Effective May 18-22, all oversize and overweight loads are prohibited on the expressway and ramps on:

- All roadways from Damen Ave. East to Lake Michigan and from 39th Street North to IL 64 (North Ave.)
- I-90 Chicago-(Kennedy Expressway) I-90 to IL-64





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- I-94 Chicago-(Kennedy Expressway) I-90 (West junction) to IL-64
- I-190 Chicago O'Hare to I-90 (Kennedy Expressway)

Furthermore, the city of Chicago is also reportedly relying on the "Notify Chicago" system to keep residents informed and up to date on traffic issues.

Cook County Sheriff Tom Dark has reportedly formatted a strategy to deal with widespread arrests if necessary during the NATO summit. The Chicago *Sun Times* indicates that the abandoned Joliet State Prison, which can hold up to 1,300 prisoners and is located approximately 40 miles outside of Chicago, may be reopened as a mass detention center. Additionally, Sheriff Dart is also reportedly seeking to build tents in the yard at the Cook County Jail.

Starting on May 1, the federal government intends to set up militarized red zones in downtown Chicago. The *Sun Times* [reports](#):

The head of Chicago's NATO Host Committee said Thursday she was blindsided by the federal government's decision to create a militarized "Red Zone" in the Loop to protect federal buildings in the run-up to the May 20-21 summit at McCormick Place.

CBS News [reports](#) there will soon be heavily armed security teams out in the public in Chicago around federal buildings.

Meanwhile, the Chicago NATO host committee head, Lori Healey, had no idea of most of these plans, and Secret Service has refused to address any of the preparations.

As far as Healey knew, there were no such confirmed plans. She said, "It's way too preliminary in the planning process for these summits in order to release that kind of blanket statement. We're working very closely with our partners at the federal level who are responsible for security for the summits."

"I want to clarify and say they are working very diligently with us to ensure that Chicago is open for business," Healey emphasized.

Large scale anti-globalists protests are expected in response to the summit. GoChicago.com reports that nearly 50 activist groups met in Chicago in August to start planning the protests during the summits. Members of Occupy Chicago have applied for protest permits as well.

The city has already granted the first protest parade permit to Andy Thayer, who will be marching from Daley Center Plaza to near McCormick Place. And the city has eased some restrictions on demonstrations, such as time limitations and maximum fees, after critics accused Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel of infringing upon free speech. Some contend that easing those restrictions will in fact lessen disruptions.

The city of Chicago has also designated areas for protesters to gather, some of which are rather close to the location of the summit, and is providing demonstrators with sound systems and portable toilets.

However, curfews for parks and beaches will be imposed, as well as a ban on loudspeakers overnight.

Chicago residents are unsurprisingly disoriented by the provisions being implemented in anticipation of the summit, particularly following revelations that the city of Chicago was chosen to be the newest city selected by the United States military to perform urban warfare training. Residents were concerned when they noticed Blackhawks and A/MH-6 Little Birds flying extremely low throughout downtown Chicago.

Later, the city's Office of Emergency Management and Communications released a statement indicating



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that the drills were merely “routine training exercise,” as Chicago was the site of a week-long military training drill intended to improve the military’s ability to operate in urban environments.

Overall, the preparations for the summit have some worried about the mass chaos that the summit will bring to downtown Chicago.

What’s worse is that the summit will cost the city of Chicago \$65 million to host, though Healey contends that Chicago taxpayers are not on the hook for the cost of special security. But ChicagoBusiness.com contends that the bill is worse than that, estimating a possible \$128 million economic impact on Chicago, since some businesses may have to be shut down as a result of the Red Zone that is being outlined.



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