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Military: Plan for security, traffic, weather on Inauguration Day

By *Evan Koslof*

With just 36 days remaining before the 58th Presidential Inauguration, the organizers unveiled their progress so far, and discussed tentative plans for the big day.

The presentation was made by the Joint Task Force - National Capital Region, in front of a couple hundred people at the DC National Guard Armory, Wednesday morning.

The highlight of the presentation was a 40 x 60 foot map of the city, including replicas of major landmarks like the Washington Monument and the White House.

"I have a clear view of the city around me," joked Master Sgt. Aaron Lovely, as he stood in the center of the map.

Lovely described the rough itinerary for the President-elect, including an escort from the Capitol to the White House, during the Inaugural Parade. The event is referred to as the "Rehearsal of Concept Drill" and is held in preparation for all inaugurations.

Maj. Brian Fidderson, who was primarily focused on the parade, said it was a massive undertaking.

"We've been planning this," he said. "For - well - over two years.

So you can just tell that every detail is going to be covered." The Task Force estimated that there would be approximately 8,000 national guardsmen at the event, and approximately 5,000 active duty soldiers.

The current crowd estimates are at 800,000 people, although that number could go up. During the 2009 inauguration of President Barack Obama, well over one million people flocked to the district.

Lieutenant Colonel Nicole Brugato had a message for D.C. drivers.

"Driving is probably going to be a nightmare," she said. "I would definitely recommend that if you want to be a spectator, that you take the Metro."

The Task Force also discussed the topic of safety and security, since protests are expected for the

inauguration.

Major General Errol Schwartz, of the National Guard, said that they would only intervene if local law enforcement requests the help. For the most part, he said the military was there to "assist" D.C. Police and The Secret Service.

"If something goes bad," he said. "It's up to the law enforcement agency to make the first move if you will."

The U.S. military has been a part of this tradition since the first inauguration in 1789, when George Washington was escorted to his ceremony in New York City.

Brigadier General William Walker said that the tradition is always welcomed as an honor for those that wear the uniform. "There's a lot of excitement," he said. "There's joy. There's a sense that you're actually witnessing history. I mean - you are. You're witnessing the transfer of power."