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Security braces for inaugural throngs

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By **Kevin Johnson, USA TODAY**

WASHINGTON — Record crowds expected for President-elect Barack Obama's inauguration are prompting unique law enforcement strategies, including an unprecedented deployment of technology and a small army of officers and military personnel, senior security officials say.

"Every element of the plan had to be tweaked to consider crowd control," Washington Police Chief Cathy Lanier says.

The FBI — worried that crowds will slow responses to potential emergencies — for the first time is outfitting at least 100 teams of specialists in hazardous materials, weapons of mass destruction and hostage rescue with



Enlarge By Charles Dharapak, AP

Army Sgt. Derrick Brooks, left, standing in for President-elect Barack Obama, and Navy Yeoman 1st Class LaSean McCray, standing in for Michelle Obama, walk the inauguration parade route on Pennsylvania Avenue.

global positioning devices, said Christopher Combs, an FBI supervisory agent involved in the inaugural security operation.

MAP: [Route for Jan. 20 inauguration parade](#)

Supervisors at a local command center will track the teams on large screens so they can be quickly dispatched to possible crises.

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A separate cellular telephone network is being tested for use by emergency officials in case existing systems are overloaded, as occurred in the hours after the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks.

"One of the reasons the assets required (for this inauguration) have doubled, even tripled is not because of the (terror) threat, but because of the number of people coming," Combs said. "A problem can be magnified 10 times because of the size of the crowd."

John Perren, counterterrorism chief at the FBI's Washington field office, said there are no credible threats against inaugural activities. Yet because of the "anticipated crowd size," he said, it is important for "all of us to be looking at the same sheet of music." District of Columbia Mayor Adrian Fenty and other officials predict crowds will top the record 1.2 million at Lyndon Johnson's inauguration.

Northwestern University professor Hani Mahmassani said he has been advising the district's Metropolitan Police and officials about crowd control strategies. Mahmassani, a civil and environmental engineering professor, has studied crowd behavior and the deadly stampedes that have marred annual Muslim pilgrimages to Mecca.

He said district officials are including various mass communications systems to assist with crowd control, from loud speakers and strategically placed large-screen TVs to cellphone alerts.

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I am soo looking forward to watching this from the comfort in my living room. This will be a sit to be hold. I really feel that when he is sworn in that now we really have a chance again, to be a great country, and to have a Pres, that will finally do there job. And have an responsible government again. I now can sleep alot better at nite knowing that. God Bless our new Pres. And God Bless our wonderful country.. greg

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