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Miami police keeping plans for FTAA under wraps
By Susan Stabley

Citing security concerns, Miami police plan to wait until October to announce what downtown areas will be blocked during November's international trade meetings, according to Detective Herminia Salas-Jacobson.

The events' potential impact on the business community will be discussed in a Sept. 5 meeting with Miami's Downtown Development Authority, said Capt. Thomas Cannon, coordinating security for the events.

Organizers expect up to 100,000 persons protesting creation of a free-trade zone among 34 nations of the Western Hemisphere to descend Nov. 17 to 19 during the Eighth Americas Business Forum. It is set for the James L. Knight Center, and the related Free Trade Area of the Americas ministerial meeting Nov. 20 and 21 will be held blocks away at the InterContinental Miami.

"The city has assured us they will be working with all affected property owners to coordinate special security or traffic plans for the event," said Timothy Keable, a director with Insignia ESG and property manager for Wachovia Financial Center. Tenants at the 55-story tower at 200 S Biscayne Blvd. include Wachovia, law firm Steel Hector & Davis and Prudential Securities.

BankAtlantic has already decided to activate a contingency plan for its One Biscayne Tower offices and may use alternative space that week, said Rebekkah Cohen, business continuity officer.

Miami police will use officers from throughout the area and county police have already been assigned to cover Miami International Airport, Port of Miami and the American Airlines Arena, said Chief Randy Heller.

Citing examples such as past Super Bowls and Hurricane Andrew, he said, "This is unique in the sense of type of protestor who may be here. It's not unique in the sense we feel very confident with large-scale events."