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The Marino Organization Inc. 171 Madison Avenue, 12th Floor, NY, NY 10016 Phone (212) 889-0808 Fax (212) 889-2457

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BLOOMBERG WITHDRAWS SUPPORT FOR 9/11 TRIALS IN NY

WHITE HOUSE OFFICIALS HAVE TOLD THE US DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE TO MOVE A TERROR TRIAL PLANNED FOR NEW YORK TO ANOTHER, MORE SECURE LOCATION, ACCORDING TO REPORTS.

By Alex Spillius in Washington



Michael Bloomberg, the mayor of New York Photo: EPA

The move came after Michael Bloomberg, the mayor of New York, withdrew his support for plans to try Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and four other September 11 suspects in New York.

The decision of the mayor, an ally of the president, was a blow to the White House as it sought to hold trials that were intended in part make a statement about how its handling of justice and terror issues differed from the George W. Bush era.

With opposition to the plan to move the detainees from the Guantanamo Bay detention centre growing in Congress, Mr Obama was counting on the support of New York.

But echoing neighbourhood business groups, Wall Street firms and the real estate industry, Mr Bloomberg said the costs, estimated at \$200 million a year, and inconvenience were simply too high for the city to bear.

"It's going to cost an awful lot of money and disturb an awful lot of people," he said. "My hope is that the attorney general and the president decide to change their mind."

Mr Bloomberg concurred with Julie Menin, chairman of Community Board 1 in lower Manhattan, who said the Justice Department should consider "outside-the-box" ideas for a trial venue, such as Governors Island, a former military base in New York Harbour, or the military academy at West Point, north of the city in New York state.

Steven Spinola, chairman of the real estate board of New York, said that the steep price tag for security, which would be incurred mostly from police overtime, was only part of the problem.

"What's the economic impact on the city of New York?" he asked. "The restaurants in Chinatown, the small stores in lower Manhattan? This is just the wrong place to put the trial."

Dean Boyd, a Justice Department spokesman, said, "We are aware of the impacts that added security can have on neighboring communities, and we will work closely with local officials to minimise disruptions to the community to the greatest extent possible, consistent with security needs."