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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS LIVE ON MSNBC'S MORNING JOE**

**Mika Brzezinski:** It's Friday, April 3rd. New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio joins us in just a moment. Let's give you though the latest news – cases of coronavirus across the globe have now topped 1 million. The U. S. added almost 30,000 new cases yesterday alone with the death toll now approaching 6,000 – 6,000 deaths. New York State added more than 9,000 new cases yesterday, totaling more than 92,000 we still don't have uniform testing across the board. Those numbers are difficult to be accurate on. More than half are in New York City. The death toll there increased by 188 last night to more than 1,500. Hospitals are stretched so thin that city paramedics have been told that adult patients who are in cardiac arrest and can't be revived in the field should not be taken to the emergency room.

Joining us now, the Mayor of New York City, Bill de Blasio. Mayor de Blasio that is a pretty extreme decision that has to be made given the shortages of doctors for the most part. I want to start there. You've called for a national enlistment of medical personnel. From what we're hearing from the front lines, we have doctors that are in crisis, also a mental health crisis given the fact that their fellow doctors and nurses are falling ill right beside them. Are we going to have enough doctors to get through this?

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Mika, the truth is unless there is a national effort to enlist doctors, nurses, hospital workers of all kind and get them where they're needed most in the country in time, unless that happens, I don't see, honestly, how we're going to have the professionals we need to get through this crisis. Look at the skyrocketing number of cases. Look at how many of these patients need ICU care that takes a lot of medical personnel that takes ventilators. This country is not – actually this moment, this is the sad truth, Mika, this country is not in a position to deal with this crisis going forward. Whatever we've seen up until now, I'm guaranteeing you that next week it's going to be a lot tougher and I say that with no joy. I'm saying it to try and jolt our national leaders into understanding that next week in New York City is going to be very tough, next week in New York State and Detroit and New Orleans and a lot of other places and unless the military is fully mobilized and we create something we've never had before, which is some kind of national enlistment of medical personnel moved to the most urgent needs in the country constantly.

If we don't have that, we're going to see a hospital simply unable to handle so many people who could be saved. And Mika, is what gets me so angry. And I've been talking to the leaders of this nation for weeks now saying we're running out of time. I think we have literally days to create something that's never existed before, for a crisis this country's never seen before. We have days to set up a structure to truly mobilize the medical community of this nation, to truly mobilize our

military. And if that is not done in the coming days, you're going to see people die who did not need to die, not just in New York, but in many parts of this country.

**Brzezinski:** Yeah. So, we're hearing from doctors on the front lines, especially from the ERs, that there's people waiting in stretchers, up to five hours, and that people are dying unnecessarily. What does that tell us about what next week is going to look like and do you need the military to step in and how?

**Mayor:** Mika, I have asked repeatedly for the military to be fully mobilized. I've asked the president, I've spoken to the defense secretary, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. I've said to all of them that – just do the math. There's no way the civilian sector alone can handle this crisis at this point. You're right that hospitals are being stressed in ways they never had before. So, what next week is going to look like is we're going to see a surge in the number of cases, we're going to see easily could be at the is point 5,000 or more people in New York City who need to be intubated, who need to be in ICUs with ventilators. We have enough ventilators just to get to Sunday, Monday. We don't have enough yet for next week. We certainly, when it comes to the personnel, you can't run an ICU without people.

You can't have a ventilator save a life without a doctor or a nurse who's there constantly monitoring it and adjusting it. We're not going to be able to do that for too much longer for every single patient if we don't get reinforcements. I asked the White House, I asked the Pentagon to send 1,000 nurses, 150 doctors, 300 respiratory therapists. I asked them to get it here by Sunday. I put in that request on those 10 days ago. I've talked to FEMA. I still have not gotten a firm answer to that request, but I've told all of them literally what – it's coming down to day to day. I think somehow in Washington there's an assumption there's weeks to prepare. There's not weeks anymore. It is days now, Mika, before, not only in New York, but other places are going to run out of doctors, run out of nurses, run out of equipment. And why on Earth are – this country is acting like somehow we're still in peace time. This is a war. It's a very different enemy. It's an enemy you can't see, but it's – look at the death toll for God's sakes. Look at how many people are in danger. This is just as bad as if a foreign invader had landed on our shores and yet our military are at their basis. I know they don't want to be, but they are still. It doesn't make any sense.

**Brzezinski:** Mayor de Blasio what could the military do specifically that the civilian force right now cannot accommodate? President Trump watches. He responds in his tweets that shows he's watching. So speak directly to the president. What could he do to help New York City right now?

**Mayor:** Mika, here's what I'd say to the president – the military has well over 10,000 doctors, from my understanding, the military has doctors and nurses not only on regular duty, but in the reserves. A lot of those doctors and nurses are at places where they're doing important work, but not the same as fighting at the front to save thousands of lives. All of them should be mobilized immediately. The military has the finest logistical and operational capacity of any organization on Earth – our military. They should be organizing a civilian enlistment of medical personnel. If you think about a doctor somewhere in America's heartland, who right now is going about business as usual, doing good work, but we need that doctor at the front where they could be

saving lives, we're going to lose lives that could have been saved. It's as simple as that. So we need the military with their incredible logistical and organizational capacity, their command and control ability, to look at this entire nation and say, okay, here are the places where we must surge medical personnel, use as much of their own medical personnel as possible, and bring in a civilian enlistment program.

And they could get a doctor who right now is doing good work, you know, in Iowa or Utah, they could have them in New York City at the front in hours. That's how good our military are. But they have not been given that order and time is running out. If they were given that order, we could create something in our time that could rival the incredible work of that greatest generation in World War II where they created from nothing. Remember, our military was almost nonexistent at the time of Pearl Harbor. It had to be created almost from scratch to fight World War II. Our nation did that. We have to create something we've never had before. We have to create the ability to take the incredible medical talent around this country and put it on a war footing, put our military on a war footing, get the resources to the front and then move them, Mike. The second New York City turns the corner, move them, take those doctors, take those ventilators where they're needed next. There is nothing like that being done right now, Mike. That's the blunt truth. I've had this conversation, with all due respect to the president and all the other leadership of this nation – I've had this conversation repeatedly. I've warned them where this is going and no such order has been given.

**Willie Geist:** Mayor de Blasio, it's Willie Geist. I want to ask you some specific questions about what's happening in New York. You, yesterday, recommended that New Yorkers, when they go outside, wear some kind of a face covering over their nose and mouth. What was the medical basis? What information did you get to make that public recommendation yesterday?

**Mayor:** Willie, simply a set of studies have come in just in the last few days, most especially one from Singapore, which is a place that handled this crisis very well that [inaudible] now, for the first time, our medical leadership here in the city increasingly sees evidence that there could be that asymptomatic transmission. There's not been real evidence in their view of that before. And so this is an abundance-of-caution move. It's a face covering. It could be a scarf, a bandana, anything. And the blunt truth is people are think – are thinking, well, 'Oh, this'll mean I personally can't contract this disease'. That's not actually the idea. The idea is to help make sure that all of us don't accidentally spread it to someone else because we might have it, we might be asymptomatic, not even know. This an abundance-of-caution move to make sure that people are not spreading it to other people. And it's only pertinent when you might be close to people. If you're socially distanced, you don't need it. If you're among the people that you live under the same roof with, you don't need it. But if you think you might be in closer proximity, it's a smart thing, but Willie not – this does not mean take those surgical masks or the N95 masks away from our first responders or our health care personnel. No, that is sacred. They need it. They are protecting all of us. Anyone can make a face covering at home. Again, scarf, bandana, anything like that'll do.

**Geist:** Yeah, and we're expecting the White House to make a similar recommendation today on a national level. The USNS Comfort, sent by the president and the United States Navy – it dramatically sailed into New York Harbor and up the Hudson River a couple of days ago, passed

the Statue of Liberty. We learned yesterday it was supposed to give relief to the hospitals to take non- COVID-19 patients and provide 1,000 hospital beds. We learned yesterday so far only 20 patients aboard that ship. Why is that number so low and do you expect to see that pick up soon?

**Mayor:** Yeah, I've talked to our colleagues in the Navy. I don't have a question in my mind, Willie, that number's going to change very rapidly. And the USNS Comfort was extraordinary – the appearance, the arrival meant so much to New Yorkers. It was like the greatest sign of hope we've received in weeks. I'm sure that ship will be very full soon. They have to be smart about the cases they take and create a protocol that's going to work because it's going to get very busy very quickly next week. So I'm convinced that over the next few days they'll be prepared and they'll be filling up. Next week is what worries me. That's when things really jump off and we're going to need the Comfort and every other place in the city that we can get hospital beds up and running because we're expecting a huge surge just in the next few days.

**Geist:** And also, the Jacob Javits Convention Center providing an additional 2,500 beds to provide some relief as well. We've had you on a bunch over the last couple of months. Mayor de Blasio talking about this. You've been gracious to come on a bunch and update us and update the country about the state of the problem. Obviously the set of facts we have today are a lot different than they were two months ago, but you tried to calm people on these morning interviews where you would say, 'I'm not going to close the schools, I'm not going to close the playgrounds. I think you can still go out and live your lives'. Knowing what you know now, do you wish you'd close the schools a little bit earlier? Do you wish you had closed the restaurants and bars a little bit earlier just to stop the spread and maybe save some lives?

**Mayor:** You know, Willie, we're all trying to make sense of something we'd never dealt with before, every single day. Look, this city – I gave the order to close the restaurants and bars. Obviously, that was one of the – we were one of the first places to do it. I called for shelter in place right after San Francisco did it – and I give them great credit. Mayor Breed did something very important there. I called for it immediately after. We were one of the first places in the country to do that. There's always going to be questions about, you know, did we get all the information we needed? Did we act on it? I did my best. I think all decision makers are doing their best, but this isn't even the issue now. The issue now is we're about to go into the hard part and this is where we really have the opportunity to save lives.

Think about it this way, Willie – and I've had this conversation with our health care leadership. They can project right now the number of cases that we're expecting next week. They can project right now how many ventilators we need, how many doctors, how many nurses, and we know we don't have all of that for next week despite constant pleas to Washington. And everyone knows where the epicenter – a quarter of the cases in the entire country. So, Willie, I'm obsessed – I had this conversation with the president yesterday and all the top leadership in his administration. I'm obsessed with getting us through next week and saving every life, every life we can save. And I want our national government to see it that way, to recognize that there are lives, there are people who will be alive and will live full lives if we act now. And if we don't, first it will be hundreds Willie, then it will be thousands who will lose – Americans will lose, who did not need to die. That's how urgent it is. That's where all our focus should be right now as a nation. When the smoke clears, when this crisis is over – and thank God we know the day will come when this is

over – then we can figure out what we need to learn from it. But right now, how could we not be on a war footing? It's just – you can feel it. The nation's not on a war footing and yet we're fighting a war.

**Brzezinski:** Well and let's try and message some facts to our leaders here. Let's talk Mayor de Blasio, as tough as it is about the rate of deaths in New York City and accommodating the bodies. The government has put in an order for 100,000 body bags. What is the rate of death right now in New York City? What do you expect it to be next week? What does that look like and are you able to accommodate that?

**Mayor:** Mika, I am – I think it's so important for people to hear the truth. You have doctors, nurses, fire fighters, police officers, EMTs, paramedics, all doing their job in an heroic fashion. They are fighting to save every life. I have absolute faith in them. What I don't have faith in is that they will have the equipment they need, certainly, especially those ventilators and they'll have the reinforcements they need. Because here's the problem. So many of our health care workers and our first responders, they've gotten sick themselves. Now, most of them come back after seven days, 10 days. But we've got to recognize, we're not even – we don't even have our full complement we would normally have of these crucial, crucial – these lifesaving folks because a lot of them got sick themselves. On top of that, the demand keeps surging. That's why we need those reinforcements. Now, Mika, again, I say to the President of the United States, I said to the Pentagon over a week ago – 1,000 nurses, 150 doctors, 300 respiratory therapists. For the nation's largest city, 8.6 million people, you'd think in a country this big, this strong, that would be an easy request to fill. And I'm still waiting. So, those reinforcements have to come, or our health care professionals, they'll just be swapped. 1,500 deaths already and we have not even gotten to the hard part of this.

**Brzezinski:** Mayor Bill de Blasio, thank you very much. We will hopefully be talking to you again soon, trying to see our way through this.

**Mayor:** Thank you.

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