



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
NEW YORK, NY 10007

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: December 4, 2015
CONTACT: pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov, (212) 788-2958

**MAYOR DE BLASIO AND COMMISSIONER PONTE ANNOUNCE SERIOUS ASSAULTS ON
STAFF DOWN 11 PERCENT THIS YEAR**

Mayor and Commissioner highlight nearly \$200 million investment in officer safety

Nearly 600 officers join New York's Boldest with 1,800 more expected in 2016

NEW YORK—Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Joseph Ponte today highlighted the reduction in serious assaults on staff and the city's unprecedented investments in officer safety at DOC's graduation ceremony. The city invested approximately \$200 million in new staff, equipment, training, technology and repairs for officer safety. At the same time, inmate assaults on staff with serious injury have dropped 11 percent this year, and uses of force with serious injuries are down 17 percent department-wide during the same period.

"We know the challenges of this job, and this is why we are deploying every tool we have to fulfill our obligation to protect New York's Boldest," said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. "For too long, Rikers was an unsafe island for both officers and inmates – but through sustained investments and dedicated leadership, we are rewriting the tale of Rikers and transforming it into an island of safety, fairness and rehabilitation."

"Our 14-point anti-violence reform agenda is creating safer jails," said **DOC Commissioner Joseph Ponte**. "It has taken some time, but now the statistics are beginning to catch up to the innovations. We cannot return to the failed methods of the past, and we will continue our push until a culture of safety reigns in the Department. DOC will once again command its rightful place as a national leader in the field of corrections."

Among the city's unprecedented investments in DOC are:

- \$72.5 million for 100 percent camera coverage, x-ray machines, lock replacements, riot gear, and other safety equipment and protective gear
- \$51 million for the hiring of additional officers
- \$23.5 million for additional officer training focused on violence reduction, and on working with mentally ill and adolescent populations
- \$19.4 million for safer and modernized transportation
- \$16.5 million for information technology essential to improving safety and efficiency of operations
- \$12.7 million for stronger management tools to classify and safely house inmates

See the attached fact sheet for details on this administration's unprecedented investments in DOC.

Under Commissioner Ponte, DOC has recruited aggressively, expanding community outreach and standing up a dedicated Recruitment Unit. The unprecedented size of this winter's graduating class, which will be followed by three recruit classes of about the same size in 2016, will also help increase the headcount at DOC. This will in turn drive safety by relieving staff shortages and overtime.

The nearly 600 new officers are joining DOC at a time of unprecedented change. This is the largest Correction Academy class ever and the fourth to graduate under Commissioner Ponte. The graduates will play a key role in the Commissioner's 14-point anti-violence agenda, rolled out earlier this year, which includes new strategies to keep weapons and drugs out of the jails, house inmates more effectively to reduce violence, bring comprehensive camera coverage to DOC facilities and implement educational opportunities to keep inmates meaningfully occupied.

As part of Commissioner Ponte's 14-point agenda, recruit officers benefitted from ongoing improvement in the Academy curriculum. This included greater emphasis on the skills needed to ensure safer jails, scenario-based training to familiarize recruits with common jail-based activities and situations, and additional hours of training on how to work with inmates with mental health diagnoses and with adolescent and young adult inmates.

The Department also has strengthened its Applicant Investigation Unit with new features in order to weed out unqualified candidates and raise standards. A Field Team now visits the applicants' neighborhoods to interview neighbors, while a Social Media Team thoroughly searches applicants' online footprints for red flags, such as signs of gang or other criminal associations and risky behavior. Candidates' tattoos are photographed and scrutinized for gang signs.

In areas where Commissioner Ponte's targeted reforms have been implemented, violence has gone down. DOC has had zero stabbings/slashings and very few violent incidents in its new Accelerated Programming Unit (APU) housing areas and its Enhanced Supervised Housing (ESH) Units since the reformed units opened earlier this year. The APU model is being rolled out in further areas.

About the Graduating Class

The graduating class of 377 men and 215 women comes from a wide range of backgrounds. The graduates have the combined educational expertise of one Ph.D., 16 master's degrees, 155 bachelor's degrees, and 100 associate's degree. Another 166 have some college credits. The average age is 31. The class valedictorian is Valedictorian Officer Francis Donelly and the salutatorian is Salutatorian Officer Stacey Hipps. The newly graduated Officers hail from every corner of the city, with 186 from Brooklyn, 143 from Queens, 94 from the Bronx, 26 from Staten Island, 26 from Manhattan, 55 from Nassau County, 36 from Suffolk County, 18 from Westchester County, four from Rockland County, and four from Orange County. Fifty-seven have a military background and 116 have prior city service. More than 120 graduates have family members on the job, including three wives, 12 fathers, 17 mothers, 17 brothers, 14 sisters, 16 aunts, and 28 cousins.

About the New York City Department of Correction

The New York City Department of Correction manages the jail system for New York City. It operates Rikers Island, which houses 10 individual facilities; four borough-based jails and two hospital prison wards, as well as court pens in all five boroughs.

During Fiscal Year 2015, the Department handled over 67,000 admissions and managed an average daily inmate population of approximately 10,240 individuals, over 80 percent of whom are housed on Rikers Island. Most of the inmates in DOC custody are being detained pending the resolution of charges against them; approximately 15 percent are city-sentenced inmates who are serving sentences of one year or less.

###