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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS LIVE ON WCBS 880

Steve Scott: We are joined now live in our news line by New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio.

Michael Wallace: Mr. Mayor, thank you for coming on. What is the latest you can tell us on New York City's coronavirus outbreak?

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Well, the first thing I have to tell you is a tough news to hear because these numbers just keep growing. And I want to tell all your listeners – I mean, to some extent, this is because we have much, much more testing available than we did even a few days ago. Finally, we're starting to have real capacity here in New York City. You know, we've finally gotten the federal support starting, but it's nowhere near where we need it to be. So, based on brand new testing, our number has really jumped up. We now, unfortunately, have to report, we have 1,871 confirmed cases in New York City and 11 New Yorkers have passed away since this began. So, those are very sobering numbers.

Scott: Now, yesterday, Mr. Mayor, you warned the possibility of a shelter-in-place order. Governor Cuomo then said he didn't think was necessary, at least not yet, and insisted that would be his call anyway. Where do we stand on that?

Mayor: I spoke to the Governor about an hour ago. We had a very good conversation. Look, the State – I was very explicit when I spoke to this – the State, ultimately, has to make this decision. I respect that. But I wanted to be honest with New Yorkers that this is something we have to get prepared for. The model – and I think I should have said this more clearly yesterday, so I want to make it clear now – the model I'm looking at is what's going on in San Francisco right now. And it's – online, people can get all the details. In San Francisco, they've said to people stay home – but they're not making it an optional thing, they're not making it a gray thing – they're saying, stay home. Only essential work happens. And they make very clear, you know, that means health care, that means transit, that means the kinds of things that are necessary to keep people going – grocery stores, pharmacies, it's a clear list of things – those businesses keep going. People still go and get the basics they need for life, but everything non-essential stops and people stay home to the maximum extent possible except when they need to go out for a very specific reason and only for that reason. So, the San Francisco model is working right now. And we're talking about a major city and its whole metropolitan area is doing this – millions of people – and it's working. That's what I was talking about. I talked to the Governor about that model. We're having a good conversation, a productive conversation. We'll going to talk more in the next 24 hours. He feels a lot of urgency. I feel a lot of urgency. I think the important thing here is that we know we have to keep fighting this crisis and we need to protect people. We need more and more people to really

take seriously this situation. But I want to be clear, I think some people interpreted it – and again, I'll take it on myself, I should have been blunt or clearer – some people interpreted it as like closing the bridges or closing the border, you know, this kind of thing. That's not what I meant. I meant a model that is all about only doing what's essential and staying home, otherwise, not doing a lot of the optional things that people are still doing in New York City. It is not as draconian, I think, as some people may have started to assume. And I do not see any context for closing borders and things like that, or closing bridges. What I see is the need to really tighten up and try and continue to knock down the speed with which this epidemic is emerging.

Wallace: Mayor de Blasio, with fewer people out and about. Have you and Governor Cuomo had any discussions about not shutting down, but perhaps modifying mass transit?

Mayor: Well, so far, I think, you know, the Governor and I – we've talked through many things, and our teams have, from the beginning, and the decisions that the State has made I think have been right very consistently and, obviously, we all agonized. You know, I made the decision on the New York City public schools and the Governor had gotten to the same place in terms of what was going on around the State. We got to the same place in terms of shutting down bars and restaurants, limiting them to takeout and delivery. So, on this point – I mean, right now, I believe fundamentally, I think the Governor's in the same place, and you have proof, because the MTA continues to run. We've got to keep transit open for those essential workers at minimum, for all those health care workers, for all those first responders we have to keep transit open. The amount and the timing, you could see some variations over time. But, right now, I believe it will be consistent with the current realities to maximum extent possible. And what we've got to understand is, we need the basics, the most essential services to keep working to protect people. I mean, that's what's so important here. We want people to go home who can go home, stay inside who can stay inside, but we still need those most essential services to protect us. We need food, we need pharmacies. All that has to happen and the transit system is one of the things that allows that to happen.

Scott: Mr. Mayor, some Council members have expressed concerns about COVID-19 possibly spreading in City jails. Are you looking to release more inmates or have the NYPD make fewer arrests?

Mayor: In the next 48 hours, we will identify any inmates who we think need to be brought out either because of their own health conditions, if they have a preexisting conditions, etcetera, or because the charges were minor and we think it's appropriate to bring them out in this context. That said, we still need our criminal justice system to function. Clearly, NYPD as reduced arrests overall in general while still keeping us safe. If they need to arrest someone there's a very specific protocol on how to do it and how to keep everyone involved safe, if someone – particularly, if they're symptomatic. But we've got to balance here public safety with the very real concern about health in the jails. So, that's something we're going to be looking at every single day.

Wallace: In this city that never sleeps, there seems to be construction work still going on. I have to admit, it was refreshing to hear jackhammers as I walked into our Hudson Street station today. You okay with that? With the construction work?

Mayor: A soothing sound for New Yorkers.

Wallace: That's right. You okay with that construction work continuing, Mayor?

Mayor: At this moment. And, you know, as the City and State have looked at this situation, we're in the same place. And I'll note that, if you look at this San Francisco model, and it's very clearly outlined if you go on the City of San Francisco website, even they exempt construction for the reason that it is an outdoor activity, which is very different. We all know there's much less likelihood of contracting this disease if you're outdoors than if you're indoors just in terms of the way it transmits and what the open air and the breeze and all does to, you know, diffuse anything that's out through – any kind of liquid that's coming out of someone, like a sneeze, for example. So, outdoors, a lot of times the workers are spread out. And we also need what they're creating in so many cases. In San Francisco, they're exempting any construction around housing, for example, but it has to be looked at every single day because this crisis is growing. We're going to be making adjustments as we go along. So, right now, yes, construction is exempted, but, you know, that that could change as things develop.

Scott: Mr. Mayor, the military we learned is sending a hospital ship to a New York Harbor. How does the City plan to use that? And could other big venues like Madison Square Garden or the Javits Center become medical spaces?

Mayor: It's a great question. I spoke yesterday to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for the armed forces, General Milley, and it's extraordinary. We talked about all the different capacities the military has. I'm so happy to hear that, that hospital ship is coming our way. I think the first point is about the military – and I would say this directly to a New Yorker who is our president right now – President Trump should fully activate the United States military. It's unconscionable. I have no idea – for a guy who says he honors our military, I don't understand for the life of me why President Trump has not put the military on full alert, full mobilization. All military assets that are not involved internationally in protecting us overseas should be immediately deployed to the parts of the country where the need is greatest. That military has amazing medical capacity, logistical capacity. I mean, we're running out of some basic supplies now that we need to guarantee for when this really gets bad in the weeks ahead. And the military, except for – you know, the Governor was right to get the National Guard involved, for example – absolutely – but the entire military should be brought to bear at this point. This is a national security crisis of a different kind. So, I don't know what President Trump is waiting for, but I wish he would stop waiting and give the order.

So, that's one part of the question. Your second question about a space – yeah, we're going to get our hands on anything and everything that can be converted into a health care facility or anything that will support this effort against the coronavirus. For example, we're going to see if we can convert hotels that can be made empty into medical facilities or into places for those who may need a, kind of, quarantine-like setting. We definitely want to look at some of the big spaces in the city to see if we can use them either for medical facilities or for logistics [inaudible]. We need a lot more supplies to come through this city to deal with this crisis. So, we're going to be looking to get our hands on a lot of large locations and turn them to this effort. This is going to

be like a war effort, and most New Yorkers haven't experienced what this city in this country is like in a full-scale war. My parents both served in the war effort in World War II. I heard these stories from, you know, the youngest years of my life, when the entire community, the entire city, entire nation are in common cause it's a different reality. And everyone is going to have to work together to overcome this crisis and we're going to use every tool, every building, everything we can get our hands on. I mean, another piece of news today, I asked for retired medical personnel to step forward to help us. In the last 24 hours, 1,000 New Yorkers who are retired medical personnel have volunteered to join the effort to fight coronavirus. I think that's so inspiring, so many people are coming forward to help and that's how we're going to beat this back.

Wallace: New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, last week when we had 92 cases, you predicted we'd be over a thousand this week, and here we are – 1,871 cases in New York with 11 deaths. Mr. Mayor, we appreciate you coming on today. Thank you.

Mayor: And we're all going to keep fighting this together. Thank you very much.

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