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**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO DELIVERS REMARKS AT MAYOR'S VETERANS
DAY BREAKFAST**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Well good morning everyone and welcome. Please be seated. [Laughter]. Well if there were seats. Where you have them. Sit if you have them. That's like smoke if you have them, right? Sit if you have them.

Today we gather, as people have done for so many years, on the eleventh day of the eleventh month. We are part of an unbroken chain of respect and memory, and we continue that year in and year out. Reflect on the courage of this nation's men and women who answered the call of duty no matter how difficult the challenge ahead. We thank them for their service. We can never thank them enough. It's important we do it every opportunity we have. And if there's one group who deserves our special thanks and our constant thanks, some of them are here today. I want you to applaud them all as our Gold Star families. Let's thank them.

[Applause]

And let's thank everyone who made today's event possible and made it the special event it is. Firstly, our sponsor, the History Channel – let's thank them for making this possible today.

[Applause]

And the NYC Joint Service Color Guard, the Team Liberty Band, and someone who I thought did a fantastic rendition of the National Anthem, Sergeant Lewis Licalzi. Let's thank them all.

[Applause]

We have a number of special guests, a number of members of my administration here, our Public Advocate Tish James is here, and we thank her for supporting this event, and my former boss is here. I always love to see a Marine who keeps serving in every way – our former Mayor, David Dinkins. Let's thank him for all he's done.

[Applause]

I can tell you, having worked for years for Mayor Dinkins, I heard many a Semper Fi along the way. Never, ever, failed to stop and greet his fellow Marine and he is proud of that to this day.

We are also joined, just arriving to join us, Congressman Charlie Rangel and Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney – let's thank them for their service.

[Applause]

And I am told that Jacob deGrom is here, from the New York Mets – is that a true statement? No, he's going to be joining us then.

Audience: Right here, right here.

Mayor: Where is he, where is he? Jacob, thank you.

[Applause]

Jacob, I have to say, just proves that no matter what happens, there's always hope for the New York Mets. As a standout pitcher this year and the National League Rookie of the Year, he brought a lot of hope to New York City. Thank you Jacob for all you have done, and thank you for supporting our veterans.

This day has meant a lot always for my family because we have something that makes us very proud as a family. My wife and I both had parents from the World War II generation, and literally all four of our parents served in the war effort each in their own way. My wife's father was in the army in Europe, in France and Italy. Her mother was a classic Rosie the Riveter. She worked in the Springfield, Massachusetts armory making armaments for our troops overseas.

My mother worked here in New York City at The Office of War Information helping to send broadcasts to then occupied Italy, the land of her parents. My father served in the Pacific Theater in the Army, in a number of battles including The Battle of Okinawa where he was grievously wounded, but thank God survived and came back.

So, each of the parents that we grew up with talked all the time about their experiences. And sometimes they wouldn't talk about them. Sometimes they were too difficult to talk about or they didn't have the words for it. But we, my wife and I, had such a pride in our parent's service. And I think a lot of people here in this room can understand when you grow up with that you have a deep feeling what it means for someone to serve.

And in some ways, the things that aren't said, and the challenges that continue to follow those who serve throughout their life speak volumes. Sometimes the things that aren't put into words stick with you as well. It all builds a tremendous respect for people who went forward into battle or went forward into any form of service on behalf of our nation. It also reminds you there is often a price they pay and a price that their families have to pay in support of those who serve.

So this is a day when we have to think deeply about our commitment to the men and women who have served us. As a commitment that we have to feel each and every day. It can never leave us, it can never be something that we look away from. It's very convenient to forget those who served when there isn't a war going on or there isn't a war that we feel here at home, but it's not allowable for us ever to forget. Our obligation to them is literally eternal. It's something, especially those of us in public service, have to keep in front of our minds at all times.

So Veterans Day to me is a day of recommitment. It's a day of memory and appreciation, but most especially of recommitment to those who have served.

Now let's be clear, the challenges that those who return to this country from battle face are immense. They've become in some ways even harder over the years. There's always challenges economically, and in these times, tougher than in some past years. Unemployment, even homelessness afflicting our veterans. PTSD in ways we've never seen before.

So we have to help each veteran, each in turn, each in the way they need. This city is a home to over 225,000 veterans. That is a source of great pride for New York City.

[Applause]

But those numbers continue to grow as so many have returned from Iraq and Afghanistan and again, some with challenges even deeper than those known by past generations. So today, we're in a place that is part of the solution. Literally, this building is a place where things are happening in support of our veterans that are examples to us all of what we need to do.

Nearly forty veterans living here in The Prince George might be on the streets otherwise. People who have served with distinction, who took up the call of their nation, think about it, might have ended up on the streets homeless were it not for this facility and the people who run it. We want to particularly thank a wonderful organization called Common Ground that makes possible the work here. Let's give them a round of applause.

[Applause]

They are one of the city's largest providers of housing to homeless and low-income families, and they're here for our veterans as well. They serve over 450 veterans, and those veterans deserve all of our help.

Now, there's still a challenge with homelessness in this city and so many other cities around the nation when it comes to our veterans, but there is real progress. Since 2011, the number of homeless vets in New York City is down 64%. That is something to be happy about.

[Applause]

It is something to be happy about, but it is not a cause for complacency. And you'll hear from General Sutton in a moment, and I have to tell you, she and I are deeply committed by the end of next year to not having a single homeless veteran in this city – and we need your help to achieve that.

[Applause]

And there's more than just housing that has to be accounted for. With the help of the city's Office of Small Business Services, there are special Workforce1 centers for veterans. And these centers have placed over a thousand veterans and spouses in jobs since January. By the way, sometimes if a veteran is unable to work, the best thing, obviously, you can do for the family is help the spouse get work, and that's how these Workforce1 centers operate to great effect. They've helped more than 3,800 veterans with career counseling and workshops, and they're expanding services to be available all over the city.

When I thought about the challenges we face, again, some of them more complex than we've ever seen in terms of our ability and need to service and support our veterans. I thought about who would bring the energy and the focus, and the up-to-date understanding of what our veterans face, and that person is General Loree Sutton, and I am so honored that she took the role as our new city's Veterans' Affairs Commissioner.

[Applause]

Mayor: You're going to hear from her in a moment and you'll tell immediately what I could tell. This is someone with a real passion for helping all those who serve, for helping their families. She served as the Army's highest ranking psychiatrist and she was a pioneer in innovative treatments for PTSD and TBI, and she understands we have to treat the whole veteran and the whole family, and you'll hear from her in a moment, how she is proceeding with that work which is so important.

One more thing I want to say in English, and then I'm going to say something briefly in Spanish – it being New York City, we speak many languages. And then I'll call up the General.

Another veteran said something a few decades back about the meaning of this day – not just in terms of the people who serve, but what they serve to achieve. A famous veteran who served his nation in so many ways, John F. Kennedy. And he said, on a day like this at a Veterans Day ceremony, that what our men and women in uniform fight for, he said, "is never a few feet of cornfield or a rocky hill", but to ensure our country can continue to fulfill the "great hopes of its founders."

Remember that, it's not just the act of serving or the physical achievements. It is in the name of freedom. It is literally in the name of all of us. We can never forget that every November, and I'll state the obvious, every day we have to remember and we have to act on that memory. A moment in Spanish.\

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that – we'll switch back to English now – with that, it is my honor to introduce the city's Veterans' Affairs Commissioner, General Loree Sutton.

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