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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO DELIVERS REMARKS AT THE INTREPID SEA,
AIR, & SPACE MUSEUM'S ANNUAL MEMORIAL DAY CEREMONY**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good morning, everyone.

Audience: Good morning.

Mayor: There, that is much better.

If any of the personnel from Arlington or the other ships did not answer with a lot of vigor because they're still a little blurry-eyed from last night, that's okay. But everyone else, I appreciate that strong answer on this important day.

We are gathered here in common cause. Everyone here is here because you feel something for your nation and you feel something for the people who serve our nation. I want to thank all the active duty personnel in the United States Military. I want to thank all the veterans. I want to thank the first responders. I want to thank the family members of all those people and anyone who is just here because you support those who serve us and you honor them.

So that's everyone here, so, I'm going to ask you something – applaud your neighbor please.

[Applause]

Admiral, thank you for your tremendous service to this country and for your powerful remarks. And this is a man who truly loves New York City. I appreciate that. All New Yorkers appreciate that. Four Fleet Weeks, that's pretty good. Thank you, Admiral.

I want to thank our very special guest, Secretary Chao – an honor to have you with us today in New York City. Congressman Maloney, thank you so much. I also want to thank, of course, everyone who serves in our New York City Department of Veterans Services, and they are an energetic group who want to serve veterans every day especially the very energetic Commissioner Loree Sutton. Thank you, Commissioner.

[Applause]

And to all my colleagues here who are part of making the Intrepid great, the Intrepid means so much to New York City. I thank you all – Susan and all of your colleagues, thank you for making this such an important part of our city.

The Intrepid got the right name. When the ship was commissioned it could not have known all that the Intrepid would go through – torpedo attack, four kamikaze attacks – so many times when this ship could have been counted out but the Intrepid kept coming back.

And everyone who has served on this ship, I thank you and I honor you and I feel a special connection to all of you and to this ship because of my dad's service that you heard about a moment ago from Bruce. While Intrepid was in the seas around Okinawa and Leyte Gulf, my dad was on the ground with the U.S. Army and those were such intense battles particular Okinawa, legendary for all the men who served, who gave so much.

My dad spoke about his experiences and as many of you know when you talk to someone who served in battle, it's not always an easy conversation for them. I looked up to him and I honored him for what he had done but I have to be honest, he didn't always want to talk about it.

But sometimes he would let his memories come forth and he would often speak about his friends, his buddies, his comrades in arms who did not come back. And the pain even decades later was so real and the sense of a bond that they had, like no other bond that people feel. It was palpable to me even as a young man trying to understand that deep sense of loss but also something so good in the powerful memory because when my father spoke about his comrades in arms it was as if they were very much alive still in his heart.

Unfortunately, he also left something on the battlefield. He lost half of one leg on Okinawa and as with all who suffer physical harm, he was never quite the same after although he'd fought his way back and it went far beyond the physical scars. He faced many other challenges as the weight of that wartime experience bore on him for decades after and it came back to affect our whole family as it does so many families.

So, when I think about Memorial Day, the first obligation we have is to remember those who were lost, to really honor them, to really think about them as people who did something so brave but then I think our next obligation is to support all those who came back. And I think those who are lost, if they could send a wish forward to us, they would first tell us to take care of their own families for them and of course they would have every right to ask us to remember them but then they would want us to take care of those they served with who were blessed enough to come home. And they would want us to take care of everyone who wore that uniform and then came back to contribute in so many other ways in civilian ways.

So, Memorial Day is about supporting our veterans, as well Memorial Day is about supporting the families of those we lost and those who came back. Memorial Day is about appreciating what military service means and making sure that we bring alive that appreciation.

Today is important because we have to use words and symbols in unity to help us remember but our actions thereafter, I would argue, are even more important.

In this city, which has – and Admiral, I'm very proud of this fact – almost half-a-million service members, former service members, and their family members. This is a great, great city of veterans.

We are committed every day to making their lives better whether it was getting rid of the scourge of chronic homelessness among our veterans – an idea that is so painful to even consider that that existed in this city or any other city but that scourge has been overcome – onto making sure there are employment opportunities for veterans. I say this on Veterans Day but I say it on Memorial Day too – if you want to do something great for your nation, hire a veteran.

[Applause]

And finally, to making sure that our veterans get the health care they deserve and to say openly and respectfully to all that health care is sometimes physical health care, sometimes it's mental health care, some need both. There is no dishonor in any of that. It is our job to make sure all is available and to respect people by actually giving them that helping hand. That's what we must commit ourselves to.

So, I conclude by saying this city is so proud of all of you. And when Fleet Week comes each year, we open up our arms and welcome. It is a joy to be able to say thank you and to honor those who have done so much good for all of us.

Thank you and God bless you all.

[Applause]

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