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**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO DELIVERS REMARKS AT NYPD URBAN  
MINISTERS SYMPOSIUM AT ONE POLICE PLAZA**

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Good morning, everyone. I had the honor of making a brief cameo appearance. The commissioner told me about this extraordinary gathering of clergy leaders from around the city, and I wanted to spend a few moments with you.

I want to thank the commissioner. I want to thank First Deputy Commissioner Ben Tucker. I want to thank Chief Jimmy O'Neill and Chief Carlos Gomez for their leadership, all the leadership of the NYPD here – an extraordinary leadership group, I want to add, that is doing so much to keep making this the safest big city in America and to deepen our efforts to bring police and community together.

This is an extraordinary time in our city. We are recognizing the fact that we have to form a lasting partnership between police and community. It is not an idle conversation. It's not a secondary thought. It is essential to everything we are doing.

We have, over the last year-and-a-half, embarked on a vision of reform to overcome many of the challenges we've faced for decades; to create an approach to policing that keeps everyone involved safe – keeps community members safe, keeps officers safe; to overcome some of the contradictions that used to plague us.

And what's so extraordinary is that this department, over this last year-and-a-half, the men and women of this department and their leaders have continued such progress on driving down crime, on showing that we could reach new heights.

Yes, we have some challenges – we always have met them openly – some areas we have to do better, for sure, but if you look at the overall trends, they continue to show that there's farther we can go in driving down crime for all of our communities.

At the same time, profound reforms are underway – the retraining of our entire force to emphasize cooperation and involvement with the community, to show approaches for deescalating in any confrontation between an individual and a member of this force; the efforts to not only reduce unnecessary, unconstitutional stops, but also to reduce some of the marijuana arrests for the lowest levels of possession that, rightfully, were a source of great concern for community leaders and parents and grandparents for a long, long time. But these actions are changing the approach to policing. They're allowing more focus on serious crime. Obviously, the

extraordinary effort that has begun with body cameras is another example of creating transparency and accountability and ensuring that everyone knows this is a police force that will act fairly and according to its exceptional training.

Well, as many of you have heard, we took another step forward in the last 24 hours, reaching an agreement with the City Council to add almost 1,300 additional police officers to our force over the next year, but at the same time, to deepen the vision of neighborhood policing that our commissioner has worked on not just for years, but for decades, and to apply that vision on the grandest scale yet to show the people of this city what we can achieve with a police force that is deeply connected at the neighborhood level, where police officers know community residents, know the clergy, know community leaders, know the needs and the life of the community; where officers are kept in communities to build relationships, rather than rotated around.

This is the shape of things to come, and we believe that the investments we have agreed to will both achieve lasting success in terms of a safe city, but will also deepen the reforms and that constant path forward towards a true partnership between police and community.

Now, I only will say a few more things, but one of the most important things I can say is, for all this to work, we're going to need your active participation. There'll be a lot more to say in the next few days about how this vision of neighborhood policing will play out, but I can say one thing for sure, because I believe throughout my life that the most profound and lasting change comes from the grassroots. It's not a top-down reality – it never has been. History shows us this. Real change comes from the grassroots. And if neighborhood policing is going to achieve all it can and should in terms of the safety of our people and in terms of a true partnership between police and community – mutual understanding, one mission shared by all – if that's going to work, a lot of that will run through all of you in this room.

It is a statement of fact that you are highly respected in your communities, and people listen to you and see you as not only leaders and guides, but also as honest brokers. With your help, we can bring together police and community like never before.

And we need – we need our force to reflect every element of this city. Speaking plainly, you've seen some of the media reports over the last year – we have not seen as many young men of color, particularly young African American men, signing up to join the force. We want every kind of New Yorker to know that this is an extraordinary profession. This is one of the most profound ways any individual can help their fellow human being.

It's crucial that this force reflects all of New York City. And as this police force becomes better and stronger, as it deepens its connection to the community, there should be all the more reason for good young men and women to believe this is the best career for them – but they will believe it if they hear it from you.

We're going to be recruiting and we're going to be recruiting energetically. And all of our voices, I hope, will matter, but your voice will matter even more. So help us. Help us take that next step on the road to a more perfect union by bringing so many of the best and the brightest of this new generation into this police force to serve the people of New York City.

Again, thank you for all you do every day – not only for your congregants, but for your entire community and for the people of this city. This meeting is testament to the deep regard Commissioner Bratton and all of his leadership hold for the clergy of this city and the need for us to work closely together.

I want to thank you for being here. I want to thank you for what you do. I want to thank you for being partners in the progress that we will achieve. Thanks very much.

[Applause]

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