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**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO DELIVERS REMARKS AT FLAG CEREMONY
MARKING THE BEGINNING OF VETERANS WEEK**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Well, I'm going to coin a new phrase here today – it takes a general, and General Sutton you've done a fantastic job as the leader of this office, and we want to thank you for starting a new tradition – a powerful and positive new tradition of bringing a wonderful military tradition here to City Hall Plaza to honor our veterans. I want to welcome everyone this morning. I'm very proud to welcome you to what's a first – the first ever posting of all of the flags of the different branches of our armed forces here at City Hall to mark the beginning of Veteran's Week.

By the way, our version of Veteran's Week actually goes all the way to November 20th because we like to do things the right way here in New York City – we do everything big in New York City. So, our Veteran's Week is a big long extra week. And we're proud of it; we're proud of all we do, and we're proud of launching this new tradition.

I want to thank for a stirring, truly stirring rendition of the national anthem – from the Navy Sailor, Dominique Anderson. I want to thank TJ Chin and the Joint Color Guard for their service, and they're joining us here today.

[Applause]

I want to thank some of the folks who do so much for our veterans who are here, Dan McSweeney the incoming president of the United War Veterans Council; the legendary Vince McGowan chairman and current president of the Council. I want to thank Colonel Joseph Davidson a commander at Fort Hamilton; Commander Corey Barker of the U.S. Navy. And I especially want to thank Todd Haskins the chair of our Veteran's Advisory Board, and all the other board members who are here and have done so much to help us enhance our efforts to serve veterans.

So for the next 16 days when folks come to City Hall they'll be greeted by these beautiful flags representing all branches of our armed services; a reminder of all they do for us, and a very proud tradition. In addition to the flags you see regularly, the flag of our nation, and our state, and our city, and the POW MIA flag; you'll be seeing the flag of the army, the Marine Corps, the Navy, the Air Force, and the Coast Guard.

Now, all branches do so much for us. I must say I come from an Army family. My father served in World War II and my wife's father served in World War II, both in the army. And both our mothers served in the war effort on the civilian side, so we're a family that is steeped in that tradition, and has the deepest appreciation for what our veterans have done for us. And it's so important to keep that mind every day. And I think these flags are a reminder to us of that extraordinary service.

I have to tell you that we know – we know every day we have to keep not only our veterans in mind, but think about and act on what we can do to help the lives of our veterans. This office gives me an opportunity to do

something I'm very proud of; to follow our president on the pledge to end veteran's homelessness by the end of this year. And this is a big effort. And it's, by the way, an effort long overdue. We've had many, sadly, thousands over the years – veterans who are homeless on the streets of this city, and cities all around the country. It makes no sense. It's not something that should have been tolerated. I give the president tremendous credit, and I give mayors around the country a lot of credit for picking up the call, and really moving the effort and the resources to change that.

While I have everyone here, I want to make a personal plea – both to everyone gathered, but also through our colleagues in the media. Every New Yorker, potentially, can help us in this effort to help veterans. If anyone has an apartment available to rent, or knows someone who does, we want to help get that apartment to a veteran who needs it – to a homeless veteran. We have the resources to provide for the rent. I want to make an appeal to any and all New Yorkers who can help – if you know an apartment available that we can get a needy veteran into, please call 3-1-1. 3-1-1 is ready to accept those calls and make sure that that opportunity is followed-up on.

And it's equally important to help on other fronts. There's been a tremendous effort over the last few years of working with employers big and small to remind all our employers that when you hire a veteran you not only do something good for this country, you hire someone who has been trained to handle any situation, you hire someone with a lot of professionalism, because that's what our military gives to all who go through it. So, I want to emphasize again, everyone can help. If you have a job opening, let's go out of our way to find those opportunities for veterans who have served us, and to give them the economic opportunity they and their families deserve.

Under Loree's leadership, the Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs connects veterans to those housing opportunities, to employment opportunities, to healthcare – both physical and mental healthcare services. We're very, very proud of that work, and we make sure that anyone who needs that help – we are aggressively acting on their needs. And we'll keep doing that.

I want to thank everyone who is here today. I want to thank all of you who have served, all of you who are serving our nation now, all of you who are here to respect all those who have served and their families because we know the entire family becomes part of the military experience, and in all of efforts we want to support the whole family. And we especially are proud of the fact that we're celebrating what our military does for us every day.

Just a few words in Spanish –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that, it is my pleasure to bring back Commissioner Sutton – General Sutton, whichever title you prefer. We'd like to hear from you again, general.

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