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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS LIVE ON NY1

Kristen Shaughnessy: Mayor de Blasio and other mayors are visiting a tent city in Tornillo, Texas. Tornillo is a small town near the Mexican border south of El Paso. That camp is where immigrant children are being held after being separated from their families. The Mayor is joining us now to talk more about his visit.

Mr. Mayor, we appreciate you spending some time with us this afternoon.

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Absolutely, Kristen.

Shaughnessy: We have a bit of a delay and we'll work through that but first of all you had tried to go with other mayors to the tent city. Were you allowed in?

Mayor: No, Kristen. We had a group of about 20 mayors, Republicans and Democrats, some of the biggest cities in the country attempting to go in and understand what's happening here with these kids.

We represent millions and millions of Americans. We were turned away just like senators and Congress members have been turned away. I mean, this is America officially but when you think about what's happening here, it feels really un-American that the federal government is not allowing elected officials nor the media to actually see what's being done in our name and with our taxpayer dollars.

What's powerful here is they have a group of – a bipartisan group of mayors say we are not going to stand for this policy. The executive order is not enough. We need these families reunified. We need fundamental immigration policy change and you see a lot of energy on the ground. And the fact that it's bipartisan makes me hopeful that something powerful could happen here.

Shaughnessy: First Lady Melania Trump is also nearby. She went to a detention facility to speak with officials. Your thoughts on that and your message to her.

Mayor: Look, the past first ladies played a profoundly important role here also on a bipartisan basis. They acted as consciences for this nation. I think that's one of the important reasons that the President started to back down, was the voices of those leaders.

We don't know enough about what our current first lady is doing but we, certainly, I'm hopeful that she's been a positive voice. It seems to be the case. I'm glad she's visiting the center because it hopefully suggests that there's some real attempt to understand what's happening to these human beings, to these families, to these children.

And I think, Kristen, part of what's so important in this moment – it feels like a defining moment that a lot of Americans are looking at this across party, across faith, and they're feeling something very human here that these children matter to all of us.

And it's making people ask the question, why are we continuing a broken set of policies. So, yeah, I'm happy the First Lady is doing that because I think it's helping to – all the first ladies are helping to get this back to a question of morality and humanity rather than politics.

Shaughnessy: I want to turn now to what's happening here in the city. Can you definitively say how many children are here that were taken from their families at the border, brought to New York City? And also do you believe there may still be others here who are just not accounted for yet?

Mayor: Absolutely. First, the most fundamental problem – the question is a great question and I wish I could give you a perfect answer but we have asked the federal government, we have asked HHS, homeland security to give us answers to these very questions we've asked. We're not getting answers. We're going to keep demanding them.

I think the pressure is mounting for the federal government to come clean. How many kids are they? Where are they? How are they being cared for? When will they be reunified?

Here's what we do know, Kristen. Yesterday we discovered 329 kids were being supported by a single social service center in East Harlem. They, at night, sleep with foster families, foster homes. 329 during the day at one center along getting service, support, education. All of them – literally all of them came to New York City because they were separated from their parents under the family separation policy that just started in May.

Now, that's one center. We know there's at least two others in New York City and we're going to visit them – our Health Department, our Administration for Children's Services – to get the numbers there.

We know in that first center in East Harlem that 350 kids have been there over the whole course of the last two months under family separation. So, 329 – I'm sorry 239. I did that backwards. 239 now, 350 total since the policy began.

And we know that some came in last night. So, we're piecing it all together but certainly hundreds and hundreds of kids in the last weeks and we have no reason yet to believe that that's going to change.

Shaughnessy: So, you're saying the access – or the cooperation, I guess, that you're still not seeing from the federal government is an issue. Where are you getting your information from and

has the federal government kind of eased up and is sort of working with you a little bit better over the last 24 hours?

Mayor: I have not gotten an updated report for today. I hope that is the case. Even with differences with the administration politically, we still work with the federal government every single day on a whole host of issues on a very professional basis.

Something like this, I can certainly from dealing with previous federal administrations, Republican and Democrat, it would have been impossible for them to withhold this kind of information.

No one would have accepted it. They would not have thought it was appropriate to withhold this kind of information. This is something we should all be worried about when the media can't get information, local officials, members of Congress, everyone's being stonewalled. Officials are not allowed into these centers.

We've never seen anything quite like this. But we're going to really push again to get that information. Where we are getting cooperating and help, Kristen, is from the non-profit providers like the Cayuga Center in East Harlem. They worked with the City in a whole host of other issues as well. They are our partners.

They were absolutely forthcoming yesterday with me and my colleagues about how many kids are there and what's happening. And they took me to see the kids. They were absolutely willing. It's the exact opposite of what we're experiencing here at the border.

At the center in East Harlem, they said come over, come to the classroom, see these kids. I saw 30 or 40 kids from Guatemala and the teachers who are there trying to do their best to help them. And it was heartbreaking to see these kids thousands of miles from their parents putting on a brave face and trying to do the best they could.

Shaughnessy: Let's talk about your travels now. You went to Texas but we've got hundreds of kids here in the city. It's important for you to be here. So, when are you coming back and why the decision to go to Texas instead of staying here in New York?

Mayor: Well, both were important, Kristen. I went to the center in East Harlem yesterday and addressed the people of this city and the media about what was happening that was literally breaking news for all of us to find out the sheer magnitude.

And think about this, the policy has been in place for weeks and weeks and no information from the federal government. We had to find out almost by accident the sheer extent of what was going on in New York City. Now the New York City government is working that center and the other centers to make sure those kids get physical health support, mental health support, legal support, whatever it's going to take.

And we're going to try and do everything we can to help them get back to their parents. But there was something important to do here. The fact that mayors from all over the country, a bipartisan cross-section of mayors from this country, leaders from all over the country were gathering here to demand an end to all these policies. More than just the executive order – an end to zero-

tolerance, restoring the asylum process that's been a part of our country for generations of getting the reunification of all these thousands of kids to happen quickly.

President Trump – his administration made no commitment as to how and when those kids will be reunified. We're putting pressure on it in a bipartisan basis to get that done. So, this is the focal point right here in Tornillo, Texas. This is where the eyes of the world are right now. It was important for mayors around the country to show our unity to get this change to happen.

Shaughnessy: Alright, let's talk about when you're headed back here and what you'll be doing as you get back here and also how New Yorkers can help.

Mayor: Well, Kristen, I'm coming back in a few hours. I'll be there this evening. I'm in constant touch with my team and job-one is to support the kids that are in New York City, the hundreds of kids that are there now, to work with these social service providers, again, make sure they have the physical health support, mental help, legal support.

And then we've got to get the bigger answers and try and force the bigger changes including a real plan to reunify these kids. So, my team's on that right now. Hopefully, by tomorrow, we'll have more answers and a clearer game plan.

Now, New Yorkers do want to help and it's something beautiful about New Yorkers that they're kind and compassionate. We all as New Yorkers – the greatest city of immigrants – we all can understand what it means that people who are trying to flee violence and oppression, our ancestors did that. So many of our ancestors, as well, went on that same path so New Yorkers are immediately saying, "How can we help."

We're going to set up through 3-1-1 a system where if people want to offer any kind of support that would help these kids that they'll have a way to do that. Since this is a situation we're literally just getting the information on in the last 24 hours, it's going to take a little time but hopefully by tomorrow we'll have that up and running where anyone who wants to help can do that through 3-1-1.

Shaughnessy: Okay and just what would you say to New Yorkers. As you said this information has been coming in fast and furious. The decision to go to Texas – you have your critics who say you should be here in the city because we have hundreds of kids who are separated from their families, and they need someone to be watching out for them.

Mayor: Yeah, that's – people need to understand that if we want solve the problem we have to put pressure on this administration for change and this was a way to do it. Gathering with a bipartisan group of leaders from around the country to demand this change and to bring attention to what's happening and to not let the executive order be an excuse, it may be a small step in the right direction, it doesn't solve the problem.

So Kristen, I understand those criticisms, I would ask people to remember that we're trying to solve the actual problem, we're trying to go to the root cause not just put a Band-Aid on it. I got a team, a great team of professionals, health professionals, Children's Services professionals. The NYPD is also helping to make sure all those centers are protected because unfortunately some misguided folks were angry at the social service providers. They're not the ones who

created this policy. They are actually trying to help these kids. There were some threats towards those centers. I've been coordinating with Commissioner O'Neill and Chief Monahan to make sure they get the protection they need.

So the whole City team is on the case doing everything we can to help these kids, but we need to change the policy. We need to get our federal government to change and that is done by bringing together voices of people from around the country, particularly in way we don't see enough of on a bipartisan basis. That was what was happening here. I'm absolutely convinced this was the right place to be to actually get the change we need.

Shaughnessy: Mr. Mayor, we appreciate your time, we will see you back later tonight in the city.

Mayor: Thank you, Kristen.

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