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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** September 23, 2014

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No. 454

**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS PRESS AVAILABILITY AFTER SPEAKING  
AT UN CLIMATE SUMMIT**

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Good morning, everyone. I just want to say up front, this gathering is incredibly important. It's going to be historical if we take the actions we need to take. There's a real tone of urgency this morning, which I appreciated deeply. I give the secretary-general tremendous credit. He marched on Sunday, which is, I think, maybe the first time any U.N. secretary-general has participated in such a protest. The message that he sent this morning, and the other speakers sent, was very clearly one of urgency – an uncompromising message, the need to address climate change.

I'm very proud that New York City is hosting this gathering. I'm very proud of the fact that we are providing real global leadership. I said last night at the C40 and again today, I have tremendous respect for what my predecessor Michael Bloomberg did on these issues. We're trying to build upon that aggressively with our commitment to the 80-by-50 goal, and with our decision to retrofit all of our public buildings and to create a very clear pathway to making sure that our private buildings, particularly our largest private buildings, are retrofitted in the near term.

This is something we have to do for the health of our citizens, we have to do to set an example to other cities around the world, and to be part of this global movement. So it was – I will also say, personally – a tremendous honor to address the United Nations and to participate, again, in a moment that I hope we'll look back on as a truly decisive one. With that – let me just see if there's anything on topic and then we'll do off-topic's.

**Question:** Mayor, have any municipal or world leaders indicated to you that they might follow the city's lead [inaudible]?

**Mayor:** I've talked to a number of mayors of cities that have not yet committed to 80-by-50. There clearly was a great interest. They haven't given firm commitments, but clearly they duly noted that one of the largest cities in the world has acted. Now we are the largest city to commit to that goal. What's very interesting – I hadn't experienced it in the same way before the last couple of days – is how mayors around the world are looking very carefully at what each other is doing. You know, I've seen that nationally through the U.S. Conference of Mayors, but the number of mayors who came up and explicitly or specifically said to me they were aware of one or another policy we were undertaking and wanted to talk about it was very striking. It's certainly a good example of a more interconnected world. So I think the commitment in New York City to 80-by-50 has registered very squarely with mayors around the world and I hope it will spur them to action.

**Mayor:** On topic – anything?

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, can you discuss a scenario where the city would have to mandate the efficiencies in the private sector?

**Mayor:** Sure.

**Question:** How might that work?

**Mayor:** Well, we're going to start with a voluntarily approach. We're going to sit down with the private sector of this city – the real estate community and others – to determine a pathway in common. And we're very clear about the need to support it and incentivize it. I'm particularly enthusiastic about a part of our affordable housing plan that we issued back in May through which we're going to very directly incentivize smaller landlords who agree to keep their buildings affordable. We want to make that an easier equation for them by directly covering the retrofit of those buildings. It may be through a grant or it may be through contractors that the city hires directly – we're still working on the details – but we want to figure out incentives that will work, we want to figure out voluntary standards that will work, and then we're going to set, with everyone's full knowledge, a timeline. And my view is simple – if the timeline is not being met by objective measures, we'll move to mandates. We have to figure out what combination of city and or state legislation would be needed – or our administrative actions. But I think the point is – and by the way, I've heard this clearly from a lot of folks in the private sector – they know this is not an optional reality at this point, that we have to get there. I appreciated deeply the comments by Rob Speyer from the Real Estate Board related to the fact that this is truly an urgent issue. So my hope is that a cooperative effort will get us there, but you know, as Ronald Reagan used to like to say, trust but verify. It's good for people to know that if we're not getting there fast enough voluntarily that we will move to stronger measures. On topic.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, I'm wondering what you think of – you know, yesterday we went into a second day of demonstrations on the street about climate change, about this issue – I'm wondering what you think about the momentum maybe behind this as a motivating issue for voters, for residents of New York City, and maybe around the world?

**Mayor:** I think there's tremendous movement at the grassroots. The march Sunday was extraordinary. What we saw – parallel marches around the world – suggests something is really gelling, that we're reaching a critical-mass moment on this issue in terms of public opinion. And this is not the first time you've seen a scenario where the people are leading and the leaders have to get out of the way and follow the will of the people. I think it's galloping forward now. So this gathering today is crucially important, but I actually think the march set the stage even more powerfully by suggesting that the grassroots are already there. I think there's been a bad stereotype in public debate that the policy-makers have to somehow pull the people along and the people were unwilling to make change. I actually think the people – years ago – recognized what a profound threat the earth faces and are very comfortable that we have to make change and are ready to do what it takes. So I think those marches are going to prove to be decisive.

**Question:** What did you think of the tenor of yesterday's demonstration on climate change? You know, it seems a little bit more anti-establishment, I guess, than the day before.

**Mayor:** Which piece? Are you talking about Occupy?

**Question:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Mayor:** Look, I think Occupy has an approach and, you know, I respect them and their message, but they have a different approach than a lot of other people. What I was particularly pleased with yesterday is I thought the NYPD did a fantastic job allowing the protesters to make their point, but handling the situation with a lot of flexibility and restraint. And it ended up, obviously, with very few arrests and very little conflict. So I think Occupy was consistent with its previous tradition, but the NYPD, consistent with how they have handled Occupy in the past, did a great job of striking the right balance. On topic, last call. Going once – yes –

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** You were too fast. On topic, going once.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor –

**Mayor:** Going twice. On topic?

**Question:** Yeah. Piggy-backing off that, I think, last I checked – 102 arrests yesterday. Do you think these protests are at all going too far or is that just kind of something to be expected, in your mind, with a protest of this magnitude?

**Mayor:** No, I can't say they're going too far. I think, first of all, the issue is one of tremendous urgency and whenever you have an urgent issue, people utilize civil disobedience. It's not a new phenomenon. I thought, clearly, we had a situation where it was civil disobedience as it's supposed to be, meaning it was peaceful, the police handled it beautifully, and those who really wanted to get arrested got arrested. That was their choice. They were given every opportunity to not get arrested, but they chose to. But I think these are the kind of issues that bring out incredibly strong passions and they should – this is about the survival of the earth. On topic, last call. Going once – on topic –

**Question:** Following up on that, so future protests – you know, I mean, they clogged up a lot of traffic. Are you ok with that? And what happens in the future, when protests want to do something –

**Mayor:** First of all, I think the First Amendment is a little more important than traffic. The right of people to make their voices heard, regardless of their views, is a fundamental American value. And we'll protect that value. I think there's going to be times, in this city – because we're an international capital – where we'll see protests that create inconvenience, but again, it's part of our responsibility as the hosts of the United Nations to handle that appropriately. So, no, I think everything was done the right way. Obviously, as New Yorkers, we would like our streets to keep moving along, and we're going to do everything we can to achieve that. But we have to respect peaceful protests.  
Off topic.

**Question:** You're preparing to go overseas today to Manchester, England. Can you tell us a little bit about what you plan to say to the Labour party, the [inaudible] of your speech?

**Mayor:** The Labour Party, to its great credit, is profoundly focused on income inequality, and recognizing that there's a tremendous lack of opportunity right now, for so many people in their nation. And I wanted to support their initiative to try and change the debate, and change the debate not only in their nation, but obviously beyond – and the fact that we have to address inequality, and in particular, income inequality. The fact is, just as climate change is a profound threat, greater stratification of our society is going to fundamentally undermine us, and the Labour Party is one of the forces in the world that's speaking most powerfully to this issue, and Ed Miliband, their leader, has made it the centerpiece of everything he's doing, and he asked me personally if I would come and support their efforts, and I am proud to do so.  
Yes.

**Question:** There was a report that your wife had gone to a CompStat meeting. Is she going to take a more active role with police and community? Did she come back and advise you and tell you what she saw?

**Mayor:** First of all, like anyone who goes to a CompStat meeting, she was tremendously impressed. It's – one of the things New Yorkers should be proudest of is the strategic brilliance of the CompStat system. We have Commissioner Bratton to thank for it, obviously, Jack Maple – may he rest in peace – did something profoundly important for this city when they brought that system into place. When you see it in action, it shows you how

the NYPD is working every day to improve all it does. So, it was very important for the first lady to see it, because, as I've said probably a thousand times, she's my most important advisor, and the person I'm closest to in the world, and the person I listen to the most. So, I encouraged her to see it for perspective. She's working on a whole range of issues. She'll continue to work on a whole range of issues. But I wanted her to see it so she could understand just how extraordinary it is, and she came away deeply moved by it.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor?

**Mayor:** Go ahead, over here. I'll come around.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, the U.S. has attacked an Al Qaeda offshoot called Khorasan in eastern Syria, that along with the air attacks on ISIS. Do you feel like that's ramped up the security issues for New York, the counter-terrorism issues?

**Mayor:** Well, a couple things. First of all, I just want to say very clearly – I think the president is right to authorize the airstrikes, and I think the president is equally right to say we're not going to have combat troops on the ground, and I really want to remind all of those who are trying to rush to a bigger war, of how destructive that would be for the interests of the United States. And the president has calibrated this properly. Obviously, it's very important that there's been congressional approval, and that there has to be ongoing congressional approval for any other actions taken. But it's very, very important that we draw the line at airstrikes, and not sending in combat troops. On the question of the threat we face, since I am so regularly briefed on the different issues that we face, I can tell you one thing – there's continuity. It's the strongest element here. We are the number one terror target in the United States – we were yesterday, we will be tomorrow, we will be for years to come. ISIS has added a new element, and certainly the specific call that ISIS put out – for its adherents to look at targets in the United States, and in New York City – was deeply troubling, but it doesn't change our strategic approach. We have a thousand officers devoted to counter-terrorism. NYPD has outposts all over the world, where we're keenly aware of each and every move, but the fact is, our vigilant levels were – our vigilance levels were already very, very high, and they're going to remain there. I've said very clearly – I can't imagine a day when I'm mayor of this city that we're not going to be facing this threat as the number one target, and it's just something we have learned to prepare for, and we'll even get better at.

**Question:** Mayor –

**Mayor:** Yes.

**Question:** Good morning.

**Mayor:** Morning.

**Question:** – following what Rich was saying, will New Yorkers see anything different – I know you can't say a lot about some things, but will New Yorkers see anything differently in the coming days, because of what's going on in Syria?

**Mayor:** I don't think you'll see profound differences. I think the NYPD is already at such a state of readiness, and again, there's a lot you see and there's a lot you don't see, and it's so sophisticated, that I think we have the tools in place as we are right now. But, you know, what happens from time to time is we get a specific incident in the world that causes some tactical changes. For example, when there were attacks in France, some weeks ago, against Jewish locations, NYPD beefed up security around synagogues and other prominent Jewish sites. We'll do that as events warrant, but again, continuity is the most fundamental reality here. We're in a high state of vigilance. We'll remain in a high state of vigilance.

**Question:** On the race for control of the State Senate, and Governor Cuomo's pledge at the Working Families Party, the campaign for a Democratic senate – do you feel that he's done enough so far, and what are you expecting to see him do between now and election day?

**Mayor:** I've been working very closely with Governor Cuomo on the effort to take back the State Senate. We talk about it constantly. Our teams are at work constantly on it. I think there's been a great deal of follow-through. Obviously he had his own primary to grapple with, and now has a general election just six weeks away, so he's got a lot he has to focus on. But the commitment of the coalition that came together is strong and consistent, and I'm very confident of victory.

**Walzak:** Two or three more over here, please.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, there's a report out suggesting that you were [inaudible] pied-a-terre tax? Just interested to know whether or not this is something that you are considering, and is it possible that you'll propose it next year.

**Mayor:** We'll certainly take a look at it. It's a new proposal, so we'll assess it, and then once we have a better sense of it, we'll have more to say.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, during the campaign, you spoke about how cellphones in school, forbidding cellphones in school was a safety issues. Do you still plan on changing that rule, and if so, why have you not, and does Dante bring a phone to school?

**Mayor:** So, I think the fact is that every school, as you know, has handled this differently. That's what really happened as a result of the previous administration's policies. It was, to some extent, don't ask don't tell, and to some extent, every school coming up with its own policy. To unwind that and come up with something consistent has taken some work. We do intend to get there, but we have to figure out the right way to do it. Dante's school tends to be pretty open, so yes, he brings a cellphone. But the fact is, I think it is, for parents, very, very important to know how to reach their kids, and we have to come up with a universal way to make sure that that opportunity is there for our young people.

**Question:** Can I ask you to come back to the Islamic State? Do you feel that Congress should have to authorize these specific attacks because, in a lot of people's minds, the reading is that the authorization is limited to those who attacked us on September 11th?

**Mayor:** No, I think we need congressional approval. I think the – look, I am a child of the very end of the Vietnam era. My brothers were draft age during Vietnam. You can't look at that history and then the very painful history of our involvement in Iraq, and not recognize that we have a pattern that repeats and repeats and is a very dangerous pattern. We have to focus on the fact that U.S involvement on the ground in other countries comes with tremendous negative connotations. History is very clear on this. And one of the ways, after Vietnam, that Congress grappled with this issue was to pass the War Powers Act – and it's supposed to ensure congressional approval for major military operations – and that's the right way to do things. So I think, as we move forward, the president's impulse usually has been to seek congressional approval and I think that's the right way to go.

**Question:** But do you think these current airstrikes that are happening now in Syria are authorized –

**Mayor:** Again, I think it's good that Congress has weighed in on the funding for the anti-government forces in Syria. That's the right direction to go. I think the immediate airstrikes are an issue that's a little bit different because it started in Iraq where we obviously have an ongoing role. But I would say, as we move forward, if this becomes a more prolonged conflict, yes we should seek congressional approval.

**Question:** Just following up on the cell phone question. Just wondering if you can be a little bit more specific on the timeline, given that the system that was created – as you said– it created a different situation for different schools, which left a lot of high-poverty kids paying money every day to store their phones. So, there seems to be an urgency to –

**Mayor:** There is an urgency. Now I will say, as we came into office – and you’ll remember we came in half-way through a school year – we’ve had to focus on first creating the team that we needed at DOE and then forwarding a series of policies that we thought were profoundly important for changing our schools – pre-k, afterschool, community schools, the teachers’ contract, the training efforts. Those have been the priority areas for us. Now that some of that is moving along well, we’re going to turn to other issues like cell phones. So we’ll have more to say in the coming weeks about timeline. The fact is, when you’re going from a kind of [inaudible] strategy – which is what we have right now as the previous city policy – to a universal strategy will take some time, but I want to make sure we get there so parents know where their children are.

**Walzak:** Last call, guys.

**Mayor:** Let me do these two. I’ll do these two.

**Question:** What is your reaction to the latest news on Rikers Island – essentially, the accusation that a report was sanitized before being handed over to federal investigators? Are you confident that what needs to happen there [inaudible] –

**Mayor:** First, on the bigger situation, we inherited an incredibly problematic situation at Rikers Island. It’s going to take a lot of work to fix. One thing we’ll always do is tell you bluntly just how bad it is. It’s a very bad situation. We’ve put in new leadership. We’ve put in new resources. We are changing training. We are changing supervision. We are particularly focused on the younger people who are there and reforming policies towards them. A lot of work has to be done. So, I am clear and sober about the fact that this is a very thorny situation years in the making that we have to undo as quickly as possible. I have a lot of faith in Commissioner Ponte, but I can also say we have a lot of work to do.

**Question:** What actions will be taken to rectify that situation at Rikers?

**Mayor:** In general? You mean –

**Question:** In general, yes. I mean, Preet Bharara indicated that City Hall might not be willing – ready to act.

**Mayor:** Oh – no, we’re very ready to act. And I have a lot of respect for the U.S. Attorney, but the fact is we’ve said very clearly from the beginning – and I think Commissioner Ponte in his first testimony before the City Council, set the tone by saying, this is a broken situation. We’re not mincing words about it – it’s an unacceptable situation and it has to be unpacked and changed to the foundations. We’re handcuffed by some laws, in terms of how we choose personnel. And we are going to work to change those laws, because we have to have the flexibility to bring in people who can help us really fix something profoundly broken. But it’s going to be a combination of leadership – and we’ve brought in a series of people and we’ll continue to bring in talent, consultants, etcetera; more resources – which we’ve put into the city budget – I am certain that will be an ongoing commitment; and a recognition that the way things were done in the past is not a milestone for us or a paradigm for us. We are going to look at this from scratch, and do everything we can to fix this situation. Thanks very much.

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