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**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HONORS FIREFIGHTERS AND EMS WORKERS**

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Well this is a really wonderful moment.

[Dog barks]

I agree. The dog, obviously intelligent, worldly, named Dante. It runs in the family.

This is an amazing moment, and one of those moments when we are all really proud to be New Yorkers. And we're proud of the FDNY and we're proud of our firefighters and our EMTs because we have an example here that's literally all you can ask of your fellow human beings in an atmosphere of crisis, is to do all they've been trained to do, to act with bravery and fortitude. And here in this case, we've got it all on display, everything we could ask of those who protect us. I mean, it's a great story with a great outcome.

I want to thank all of the members of Ladder 107, Engine 225, and EMS stations 39 and 58. All from the borough of Kings, all from Brooklyn. I want to thank all of you for your selflessness, your courage, your strength, your service to this city. It's a moment all New Yorkers feel that appreciation. The story has been spread all over this city. And it's one that makes people feel very good about being a New Yorker.

I also want to thank the extraordinary leadership of the FDNY – of course, Commissioner Dan Nigro, Chief of Department Ed Kilduff, Chief of Operations James Esposito, Chief of EMS Abdo Nahmod. And I want to thank our colleagues from organized labor, who play a crucial role every day working with us – Al Hagan, the president of UFOA; Izzy Miranda, the president of the EMTs, paramedics and fire inspectors; and Vincent Variale, the president of the EMS officers. Thank you to all of you.

I think most people know what happened on Tuesday, but I'll recount the basics for the few who may not know. It was an extraordinary rescue. The pictures are incredible powerful. Firefighters and EMTs working together, extraordinary teamwork, extraordinary quick-thinking, extraordinary bravery. The firefighters leapt into action when they heard reports of children

trapped on the fourth floor of an eight-story building. They saw two children poking their heads out the window as smoke poured out around them. It was obvious there wasn't a lot of time. The firefighters worked calmly, rapidly, in a focused manner in a high-pressure situation.

Outstanding teamwork was displayed throughout. On the outside, Firefighter Tim Sonnenberg skillfully maneuvered the fire truck between trees – and this is a very difficult thing to do when there's no time to get it done. Maneuvered the fire truck into the perfect position to be able to get the rescue rig into action. Had to knock down a fence in the process to make it work. One of those split-second things that really defines heroism. You know, the kind of decision that has to work and has to work in very little time, and it did work. He then raised firefighter Frank Blackstone up to the window in a bucket. And the two children were successfully rescued. Kept them calm and got them back to the ground safely.

But meanwhile the fire is still burning on the inside. Lieutenant Chris Bedard, Firefighter Michael Pfaff and probationary firefighter Justin Tallet made their way up to the fourth floor. Greeted by heavy smoke that engulfed the entire floor, they had to crawl down the hallway to find the apartment with the fire. And they had flames all around them. They went into the apartment and because – in large measure – of Justin's quick thinking and good judgment, Justin was able to identify the room where there was yet another child. He noticed a TV playing cartoons in one of the rooms and that there were bunk beds and a crib – followed his instincts, went into the room, pulled back the covers of the bed to find an unconscious 3-year-old boy. He rushed the boy to waiting firefighters below. And then the EMTs came into action—Kenneth Barriteau and Ewelina Zielinska from Station 39, they were able to revive this young boy on the way to the hospital. All three children are now safe and sound.

I have to note that within this incredible story, this wonderful story, and this story with so many heroes, there's one particularly interesting story within, and that's the story of Justin who only for the second time in his life was responding to a fire. He's fresh out of the academy, just graduated in June. This was only his second fire, but it was not his first time encountering danger. He was an army medic for eight years with the National Guard, including a tour of duty he had in Afghanistan. He had just completed that service, chose to immediately to become a firefighter. And I have a particular appreciation and respect for our veterans who then decide to go yet another step in terms of public service and join our uniformed services in the city.

Every single member of Ladder 107 and Engine 225 who were present that day were instrumental in saving the lives of these three young children. It was an extraordinary example of teamwork. And every EMT who joined in the effort played a crucial role – everyone did what they were trained to do and did it in a superb fashion. So these really are heroes. We search in modern society for people we can consider heroes – look around right now and you see the real thing. And true professionals, people who took their training, put it into action to the letter. Our city is very fortunate to have people of this caliber protecting us and watching over us. And I salute all of you for what you've done – all of you for the example you've set and for absolutely living up to the name "New York's Bravest." With that, I'd like to welcome our Fire Commissioner, Dan Nigro.

[Applause]

**Commissioner Daniel Nigro, FDNY:** I think the mayor told the story quite well as to what happened that day. And just a few words about how that happens is, the fire department starts with the best people in the world – I really – I believe in our department. Our firefighters and EMT are the best. They receive great training, they continue training their whole life. The discipline at fires is such that this team split up and half worked outside, half worked inside and the rescues were made from both locations. Great leadership, great people, desire, and the job's not over until we get the folks to the hospital. And that's what happened here – the pass off to the EMTs. Everything went as it's scripted, as it should go, and that's the way it goes most days and most nights in New York with our fire department because of the quality of the people and the quality of the training. And sometimes people ask why I came back to the fire department and all around me is the reason. I'm thankful every day to the mayor for giving me the opportunity to lead this great department. He mentioned Justin – I mean, he's just another example of thousands of folks we have in the department of how qualified they are, how dedicated, and the kind of job they did. And the dedication around us – all of these firefighters came to support their brothers and sisters. They had a golf outing planned today and they skipped that golf outing because they would prefer to be here, to be with those being recognized. So we thank them for commitment and we thank you, mayor, for your commitment to the fire department. Thank you very much.

**Mayor:** Thank you.

[Applause]

I always like to say that I could not be more happy that Dan Nigro agreed to come back. And I love the story of his family – Dan was the class of 1969, his father was the class of 1946. Between you how many years? I want to say 55 but that might be too little. Over 60 – 66 , even better. Sixty-six years of combined service between father and son, and that's part of what makes you such a great leader of this department, that you have that incredible legacy. We're going to call up each of these heroes to be recognized individually with a certificate. I want to say to our friends in the media, after we do that, we'll take questions about this incident and how they dealt with it. We'll take questions on topic after we do the certificates. So, I'm going to call out each name, and where do you want us to stand [inaudible]? I should stand right there? Okay, I'm going to gently move you, and we'll call up each person.

Firefighter Justin Tallett.

[Applause]

The paparazzi, Justin, it's tough. Well done.

Firefighter Frank Blackstone.

[Applause]

Lieutenant Christopher Bedard.

[Applause]

Firefighter Timothy Sonnenberg.

[Applause]

Firefighter Michael Pfaff.

[Applause]

Firefighter Daniel Simon.

[Applause]

Lieutenant Brian Nicholson.

[Applause]

Excellent. Firefighter Christopher Savino.

[Applause]

And Dante.

Come on Dante, you've got to come over here. [Inaudible] He's like reverse from the paparazzi, I like that. Excellent. Well done.

[Applause]

Firefighter Matthew Murphy.

[Applause]

Firefighter Anthony Maneri.

[Applause]

Battalion Chief James McDermott.

[Applause]

EMT Kenneth Barriteau.

[Applause]

EMT Richard Lewis.

[Applause]

Excellent, thank you. Now let me try to say it right.

EMT Ewelina Zielinska.

How'd I do? Was I close?

[Applause]

Medic Diana Reyes.

[Applause]

And finally, Medic Meleki O'Neal.

[Applause]

All right, excellent. Well done, let's give them all a round of applause.

[Applause]

Now for our friends in the media, any questions on this, including questions for the individuals who did these heroic acts? Feel free. Go ahead.

**Question:** So what's the dog's role? Like, is it a firehouse dog or –

[Laughter]

**Mayor:** So what's up with the dog, was that your question? Who would like to address the role of the dog?

**Commissioner Nigro:** The dog is a mascot. They used to have a role in the days of horses [inaudible]. They had a formal role at one time with horses and such, but now they're mascots. And same role they play at home. Yes, pets.

**Question:** And he's the mascot for what, for the fire house that responded to this?

**Commissioner Nigro:** He's attached to the fire house in Brooklyn.

**Mayor:** All right, any other questions from our friends in the media? It's been well covered, but we like to give them a chance to ask anyway. Going once, yeah?

**Question:** So everybody up here, is everybody from the fire house and everybody from the EMS that responded. That's who's standing here?

**Commissioner Nigro:** Well we have layers of response. This is the first – the firehouse – the first due companies – the first to arrive and they did the rescues and put out the fire. The engine company uses the hose line and puts out the fire. And the EMS crews are those that responded and treated the patient. There were other members of the department there. And also the battalion chief who was in charge of the fire.

**Mayor:** So everyone – the bottom line is everyone played an important role. And this is the kind of teamwork necessary to save lives, and it's on display right here. Last call for the media. Going once, going twice. Thank you everyone. Congratulations.

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