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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS LIVE ON MSNBC

Katy Tur: President Trump is taking his law and order message and threatening to turn it into politically-targeted policy. His administration is now threatening to withhold funding from a handful of blue cities, New York, Washington D.C., Seattle, and Portland, Oregon – for what it is calling lawless behavior that has permitted “anarchy and violence.” Leaders from those cities are now responding in a joint statement that reads, in part – “President Trump needs to wake up to the reality facing our cities and our entire country and realize he is not above the law.”

Joining me now is New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio. Mr. Mayor, thank you so much for being here. Do you take this as a threat or just empty words?

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Well, it's certainly a political campaign stunt. It's not about governing. It's not about helping New York City or any other city. I mean, I've talked to the President multiple times and I asked him for testing for this city, never got it; asked him for a stimulus to help us get back on our feet, never got it; I asked him to be clearer about what we needed to do to stay healthy and give the right message to people in this country, never heard it. So, Katie, no, this is about politics. He's using this as a campaign ploy, but it's just blatantly unconstitutional what he's saying. The President doesn't have the right to subvert what the Congress already decided in terms of a budget – that's in the Constitution, the Congress decides that. So, he's going to find out that – either he'll try it and then we'll go to court and we'll beat him, or, like so many of his other blustery threats, he's just going to let it go and hope people forget about it.

Tur: Where does the budget stand in New York City right now?

Mayor: Katie, we're in a horrible situation. You know, we were the epicenter of the coronavirus crisis for months. We've lost billions of dollars of revenue. We're trying to hold it together. And right now, if I don't get some budget relief from either Washington or my State Capitol, I'm in a horrible situation for the people of this city where we may have to lay off not thousands, but tens of thousands of City workers just when we need their help the most. So, it's stunning that in the middle of that – we're the nation's largest city that needs to be part of leading this recovery. Here's the President talking about what he can take away from us? I mean, he's just abrogated responsibility. He's also not lifted a finger for the stimulus. I mean, what a contrast, energetically trying to hurt the nation's capital, the nation's largest city, but not lifting a finger to get anyone to help they need.

Tur: So, violence is up in New York City – 791 shootings since May, that's up 140 percent since 2019; 87 percent increase in shootings year-to-date; a thousand shootings before Labor Day. It's

the worst year for gun violence since 2015. I'm obviously going to not agree with the President when he says these cities are being overrun, you can't leave them, and they're all on fire – obviously, that is not the case. Anybody who lives in New York City and is breathing knows that's not the case. But we are having an issue with crime in this city, is the budget part of the reason why crime is going up? What do you attribute it to?

Mayor: Look, we've had a perfect storm here, Katy. People – a million jobs lost in this city, people without work, kids not going to school, houses of worship not open – you name it. And then, our court system hasn't been functioning until recently, all because of the coronavirus. So, let's be clear, for the last six previous years, crime was going down steadily in New York City, safest big city in America. What changed it? A pandemic that knocked out so much of the life of the city and just created crisis after crisis. But we're starting to come out of that. NYPD is doing a great job. They've gotten their gun arrests up to the same level as last year. They're working more closely with communities to address these violence issues that are largely gangs and crews. We're going to push that back and we're going to get our court system back and the things that'll help us do it. And what the federal government should be doing is saying, how can we help you do that? And the answer is, give us a stimulus so we can stabilize and have the workforce we need to fight back and recover. It's as simple as it could be. Give us the support we need, work with us. We have the finest police force in the country, support us to get this city back on the right track.

Tur: So, police organizations will say that part of the reason that crime is up is because there has been a cut in funding to the NYPD. What do you say to that?

Mayor: This predates any funding decisions, that's just the truth. The perfect storm I mentioned started in March and April, when everything shut down and we saw the violence start in earnest May into June, into July. It's clearly because things came unglued. Now, NYPD is out there working with what they have. We're all dealing with it. Every agency is dealing with a tighter budget, because we're in the middle of a fiscal crisis on top of everything else. So, we would love to have the support we deserve from Washington to have more help out there to do more, but let's be clear, the original cause of all this is all the effects of the coronavirus.

Tur: So, let me ask you something very direct. If you got more money from the federal government or from Albany right now, where would that money go and how would it help tamp down – clamp down on this increased gun violence we're seeing in the city?

Mayor: First thing I would do is not have to do the layoffs of 22,000 public workers. That's folks from NYPD and public health and education – you name it. I could stabilize this city by having the ability to keep our public workforce strong. If I had additional resources, I'd invest even more in public safety of both through policing and through community-based solutions, because we have extraordinary things like the Cure Violence movement – community people, stopping violence as civilians in their own communities. There's so much we could do, but that's not what I can dream about right now, because, Katy, I'm trying to stop the layoff of tens of thousands of people who are doing this work right this minute and are holding the line. That's the clear and present danger in this city.

Tur: New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, thank you so much for joining us. We appreciate it.

Mayor: Thank you, Katy.

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