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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO, COMMISSIONER O'NEILL DELIVER
REMARKS AT THE NYPD GRADUATION CEREMONY**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Thank you, congratulations officers. You made it, you made it. You worked hard, you over came all the odds. It was never easy was it? There was so much that you had to do. There was so much focus, so much commitment but you stuck with it. And this is the moment that you've been waiting for and the moment you have earned. But it is also important to remember the people who made it possible for you – all of the family members who stood by you with their love and their support, their belief in you. So this is a day of victory for them as well, family members give yourself a round of applause, congratulations to you.

[Applause]

I want to thank all of the leadership of the NYPD that's here – Commissioner O'Neill and First Deputy Commissioner Tucker, Chief Monahan, everyone who has lead this department so ably. I want to thank the union leadership that is here with us today. And I want us all to have in our thoughts and prayers, Firefighter Thomas Corcoran. 12 year veteran of the FDNY, who was fighting a fire last night, fell three stories, thank God is in stable condition but he needs our thoughts and prayers so everyone keep Firefighter Thomas Corcoran in your heart and in your soul in the days ahead.

To all of our new officers, you are joining the best police department, not only in the United States of America, but in the entire world. And it's proven over and over again, each day on the streets of this city. This is a day that is joyous for New York City because 249 new guardians are here, 249 good men and women who have come forward to give their all to keep us safe. And this is a graduating class that is exceptional in so many ways. One of things I like best about these graduations is that we get to acknowledge the extraordinary stories of some of the graduates, some of the officers and their families. We also get to acknowledge those who are making their second decision to serve the public because they have done it once before on behalf of our nation. So I'd like you to join me in saluting the 38 veterans of our armed forces who are joining the NYPD today.

[Applause]

Now I mentioned the family traditions and there are some amazing examples in this class. One is new police officer James Lynagh and he grew up hearing the stories of the NYPD from his

family. And he knew he wanted to follow in their footsteps. Five family members are either active or retired NYPD members. His mom, Police Officer Sandra DeStasio, his dad Detective Second Grade, James Lynagh, his aunt Police Officer Barbara DeStasio, his uncle Police Officer Terrence Lynagh, and get this, his grandmother First Grade Detective Maureen Ayling. Now that's a family who has given themselves to the NYPD. Let's salute them.

[Applause]

Now the next example I want to give, this is a family and this is like an only in New York thing. This is a family that calls themselves the Puerto Rican blood bloods. 18 years ago they attended a graduation for Aida Sicardo who is now Crime Scene Detective Aida Sicardo. Today they are back for the graduation of her daughter, Police Officer Daniela Figueroa. With her here is her twin brother who is already a police officer, Hector Figueroa and her aunt Detective Haydee Pabey, and their uncles New York City Correction Officer Sammy Pabey and New York State Court Officer Lieutenant Henry Chen. They really are blue bloods, aren't they? Let's give them a salute.

[Applause]

Another great thing you can say about this class is it represents the best of New York City. People from every part of New York City, every back ground come together in common cause. This class speaks 40 different languages and hails from 25 different countries. Also very important, more and more women are joining the NYPD, 20 percent female in this class and we thank you.

[Applause]

Now a couple more examples to show you the richness of this graduation class – Police Officer Charles Ji, his parents came from China and as is true there and in many countries, unfortunately, a lot of people do not feel close to the police officers in their country and they come here with some distrust from their homelands. Charles decided to become an NYPD officer because he wants to make sure that in this city, the trust between the police and the community is always there, the bond is always there and people know that when they are in trouble, they can turn to the NYPD. He's taking everything that he learned and he's using it to make this city a better place. Let's thank Police Officer Ji.

[Applause]

And one more, who served our country as well, Police Officer Sabah Ali. He came here from Iraq in 2012 and her served our nation there as a civilian translator for the United State military. Now he comes with a lot of skills, Police Officer Ali speaks Arabic, Kurdish, and Turkish and he wants to use those skills to help make sure this city is safe. Congratulations Officer Ali.

[Applause]

To all of you who are becoming police officers today. You are coming into this department at an amazing time. This is a record setting police department. Every year, finding ways to make us safer and safer. Doing things that people thought would be impossible but nothing is impossible

for the NYPD. I have to tell you, this is a winning team for sure and to give you some evidence about as recent as it can get. This last weekend, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, there was not a single shooting in all of New York City. Isn't that amazing?

[Applause]

You know, when you think about the history we came from and the challenges that had to be overcome by this NYPD, it's absolutely extraordinary but I want to emphasize, a city of 8.6 million people, not a single shooting for three days. Let's thank the NYPD for what they have achieved.

[Applause]

This is working because the NYPD has the best strategy, the best training, because neighborhood policing is bring our communities and our police closer together, because they are sharing information for a common good like never before, because this department never rests on its laurels. This department always seeks to get better. A championship team, you can call it a championship team not just because of what was achieved but because of the attitude of champions – always striving to get better. I will conclude with this – we celebrate today, this wonderful group of young men and women who are joining us and we celebrate the accomplishments of this department. But to all of the family members, I want you to know that everyone up here, we realize that we have an obligation to all of you, to keep our officers safe, to make sure that they are given the tools they need. That is why we have the finest training that his police department has ever had, the best technology ever, the best equipment ever, 2,000 more officers on patrol in the last two years. These are the things that make this the safest big city in America but these are also the things that will keep your loved ones safe. And we are committed to ensuring that for you. I want to thank every single one of you who came forward and made this decision to join the NYPD. It is a noble calling. Your city thanks you and on behalf of 8.6 million New Yorkers I say God bless you all.

Lieutenant Tony Giorgio, NYPD: And thank you so much Mr. Mayor. It's indeed my pride and pleasure to introduce the Police Commissioner of the City of New York, the honorable James P. O'Neill.

[Applause]

Police Commissioner James P. O'Neill: I didn't disappear. I just had to get my speech. Morning everybody, first day on patrol, that's what you're going to look like? All those grim faces? You're going to scare everybody. Morning recruits.

Audience: Morning, Sir!

Commissioner O'Neill: Alright, kind of like smile. Morning everyone, thanks for being here, welcome to our recruit graduation ceremony and to our newest police officers, welcome to the NYPD. I know it wasn't easy to get here. I know there are many different paths you could have chosen, but you chose this one, you chose to become police officer, and I want to thank you for that because it wasn't an easy choice.

Police work is definitely not for everyone. You are going to face things in this career that your family and friends will never face. Let's be honest, most people couldn't manage the challenges of this job or of this city, but over the past six months you've proven that you are not most people, your NYPD cops. Think about that for a second, let it sink in.

You are now members of the largest and most respected police department in the country. You are now responsible for the safety and security of 8.6 million New York City residents and nearly 63 million tourists a year, and millions more who commute here for work each day. It's a tremendous responsibility, but you wouldn't be sitting here today if we thought you couldn't handle it. I have to say, I feel a little jealous looking out at all of you. There is something about the first day on the job that you can't ever replace and you're going to remember this day forever.

You have your whole career in front of you. There will be rewards, but this job is going to present challenges to you too, and truthfully, there will be some bad days. I've been a cop now for 36 years and I can promise you the good days will far outnumber the bad ones. I still wake up every day grateful for the opportunity to work for the greatest police department in the world, with the best cops and civilians in our profession. We're incredibly fortunate to do what we do and our work has never been more meaningful to the people we serve.

We have a very clear, well-defined mission. That's to fight crime and keep people safe. That's it. That's the job. And no one does it better than the men and women of the NYPD. That is our department's legacy, and now it's your legacy. It's your job to keep it going but it won't be easy. A lot of time away from families, there will be missed birthdays, holidays, anniversaries, but this isn't a regular job, and like I said earlier, it's not for everyone. But I will tell you again being a cop without a doubt is the best job in the world. Every single day you're out there helping people, affecting their lives in a positive way, it doesn't get any better or more special than that. That's why you took this job, to make a difference, to do good, and here you are, so remember that while you're out on patrol. Meeting the people who live, work, and visit New York City's neighborhoods, and never underestimate what you mean to them and the impact that you might have on their lives.

Everything you do matters, like it mattered to Police Officer Mahmoud Mohamed, whose graduating with you this morning. Mahmoud grew up in Brooklyn at a time when drugs, gangs, and violence were all around him. You saw how those negative influences ensnared some of his classmates and threatened to destroy their lives before they even began. Then on a basketball court, Mahmoud and three of his friends who put them on a very different path, a NYPD cop. That officer took time to play basketball with them, to mentor them, and to show them that they had real opportunities if they're willing to put the work. That officer understood that kids like Mahmoud and his friends were the future of this city and he made a personal investment in their futures, now with Mahmoud's graduation today, all four of these childhood friends are now NYPD cops. Congratulations Officer Mohamed and welcome to the NYPD.

[Applause]

Every one of you has a unique story about how you got here. You all have one thing in common, you didn't get here on your own. You are in these seats today because of the people who are

sitting behind you. So to all the family members and friends of our graduates, we thank you for your support and let's give them a round of applause.

[Applause]

I know you have gloves on, but you can applaud too for your family and friends, come on, let's go, give them a round of applause.

[Applause]

That's your first order from the Police Commissioner. I say all the time that cops have the greatest jobs in the world and we really do, but you are families, you have the hardest jobs, the most difficult jobs, it doesn't matter whether the person you are here for today is the first member of your family to become a cop or the latest in a long tradition of public service. Either way I understand the mixture of emotions your feeling right now, you're proud, excited, and maybe even a little apprehensive.

I want you to know this, you walked into this theatre with one son, daughter, niece, nephew, brother or sister, and your walking out with 36,000 more, because when a police officer swears the oath we just heard, the NYPD swears an oath to that officer too. Our department and our city promised to honor them, to protect them, and to never forget their commitment to the people of New York. And always that promise extends their loved ones as well.

There is an officer graduating today who already understand that very clearly. She just turned nine-years-old just two days prior when her life and the lives of all Americans changed forever. On September 11th 2001 her father, Police Officer Ramon Suarez, said goodbye to his family and went to work like he has done thousands of times before. He had been a police officer for 14 years and there was nothing remarkable about that Tuesday morning when he posted at a subway stations on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. And then he and his partner, Police Officer Mark Ellis, heard about what was happening at the World Trade Center. Being on a foot post, they did not have a vehicle on their post, so he commandeered a taxi cab and sped across town to what had become Ground Zero.

When they got there, these NYPD heroes immediately went to work evacuating survivors from the North Tower, repeatedly going in and out of the buildings to carry out anyone who could make it on their own. Among them, an asthmatic who collapsed after descending 49 flights of smoke filled stairs, and a woman, seven months pregnant, who they led to safety to a triage center. And Officer Suarez and Ellis went back in but they did not come back out.

Even now, 17 years later, none of us has completely come to terms with happened that day and I don't think we ever will, but this morning, we're here at the NYPD Police Academy Graduation of Ramon's daughter, and that in it of itself says a lot about how far we have come and how the NYPD will never be deterred from the critical work that we do. I know your dad is proud, you're wearing his shield Jillian, and so are we. Congratulations Police Officer Suarez.

[Applause]

Jillian, you heard those applause, right? No pressure. I want to thank the dedicated instructors and staff of the Police Academy and our Training and Personnel Bureaus for preparing our police officers for their careers ahead. And to our newest cops, never forget who you are, what you do, and why you do it. Don't ever doubt what you mean to this department, the people of this great city. It's my great privilege to welcome you all to our NYPD family. Good luck, watch out for each other, and always stay safe. Thank you very much.

[Applause]

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