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Sent: Friday, May 22, 2015 2:27 PM

To: Press Office

Subject: POOL REPORT -- McCray's Roundtable with Military First Ladies

Your pooler is at Pier 92 in Manhattan where Fleet Week is underway.

It's a perfect Friday morning under a cloudless blue sky as hundreds of families, school children and tourists gather at the piers to tour the ships.

We are escorted by sailors in crisp white uniforms who bring us aboard the USS San Antonio, she is the lead ship of her class of amphibious transport docks. Currently the USS San Antonio houses about 300 sailors who work and live on the ship.

Your pooler was escorted through the ship, deep into the bowels of it and through several hallways and into the ward room where First Lady Chirlane McCray and Mayor's Office of Veteran's Affairs Commissioner Loree Sutton will host a roundtable discussion with military "First Ladies" — the spouses of several high ranking members in the armed services.

The ward room is typically where officers eat, a sailor tells me.

The room looks like your typical cafeteria with soda fountains and stainless steel appliances off to the side.

Today, the room has been decorated with red, white, and blue accents. McCray's table is decorated with a white tablecloth, blue chair coverings and red napkins. There are glasses of water at the waiting and a spread of fruit, cookies, pastries and coffee at a nearby table. The china is white with gilt rimming and decorated with the Department of the Navy seal.

McCray, Sutton and the First Ladies enter the room at 11:23 a.m.

They are escorted in by Captain Michael Patterson, United States Navy Commanding Officer.

He welcomes them to the ward room.

Patterson: "The topic you are going to talk about is very important, I talked to the First Lady on the way up."

"We recognize that the ship can't be ready unless the families are ready, the sailors are comfortable knowing that families are being taken care of."

Sutton thanks Patterson for the warm welcome and commends his staff for fixing up the room and hosting the event.

Sutton:

"We're here to focus on the needs of our families, our soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, coasties and to get your perspective. "The First Lady, and all of us are just really thrilled to be part of this, so thank you for your hospitality."

Patterson tells them his ward room is now their ward room and he exits after briefly introducing his staff.

Sutton, sitting next to McCray and across the table from the other women takes the lead.

She talks about the importance of making sure military families are taken care of, that they have access to resources and the importance of mental health services in the military community.

Sutton:

“We know that families serve too. We so appreciate this opportunity to discuss the veterans and their family issues with you today, we’re so grateful to have this warm embrace from New York City”

The women at the table include Tracy Davidson, D’arcy Neller, Robin Williamson, Ellen Miller, Erin Davidon, and Barbara Martin. Each woman is married to a member in each of the armed services. The women are from New Jersey, Virginia, and other states.

At this point McCray introduces herself. Speaking softly, McCray begins by telling the women it’s “an honor to spend time with the First Ladies.”

She goes on to detail her family’s connection to the military. Her father served in Europe in World War II and her mother worked in an assembly line.

McCray:

“I have some members of my family who have served in the military so I have a deep appreciation for some of the challenges and sacrifices that you make.”

McCray also mentions Mayor Bill de Blasio’s ties to the military - his father fought in the battle of Okinawa where he was severely wounded and lost half of his leg. De Blasio’s mother, McCray says worked at the Office of War Information in New York City.

She mentions the challenges veterans face when coming home, including mental health, finding jobs and homelessness.

McCray:

“Sadly, this is still true for way too many of our veterans, we are working hard in New York city to make sure that our veterans get the treatment and services that they need.”

At this point, reading from prepared remarks McCray begins to outline some of the work the Mayor’s Office of Veterans Affairs has done to help local veterans including the administration’s pledge to end veteran homelessness by 2015.

She says she has been visiting programs across the city and meeting with veterans and their spouses to hear their thoughts on what is working and what needs to be fixed.

“The stories I am gathering are part of our bigger plan that we want to put together for this city — we are calling it the New York city roadmap to mental health and I just want to thank you again for sitting down with us.”

At this point, as the first ladies began to speak, your pooler was escorted out. It is 11:40 a.m.

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Questions, thoughts concerns:

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