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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO, COMMISSIONER NIGRO DELIVER
REMARKS AT THE ANNUAL FIRE DEPARTMENT MEMORIAL DAY CEREMONY**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: I want to thank everyone for being here. I want to thank everyone for honoring those we have lost with your presence. I want to thank you all for your devotion to this city. It is very important that we gather. We do this every year and that consistency speaks to the commitment that every member of the FDNY feels for each other and exhibits for each other and for the families. That commitment that never ends – it's one of the things that marks this extraordinary organization.

I want to thank all of the leaders of the FDNY who are here for their extraordinary service to this city. Commissioner Nigro, First Deputy Commissioner Kavanagh, Chief Leonard and to all of the leaders of the FDNY present, thank you for all you do. I thank the union leadership that is here with us for representing the men and women of this agency so well. And I want to acknowledge and thank Public Advocate Letitia James for joining us today as well.

Today is a day when of course our hearts are heavy. We come here with a somber, painful feeling but we also come here in pride. We have to let that pride shine through even our pain. Today we rejoice in the memory of the best our city has to offer. The novelist Lauren Stern once said quote, the best hearts are the bravest. They must have been thinking about the FDNY. That title, New York's Bravest, that has been earned continuously for 153 years. That bravery has been full of heart, that's what New Yorkers feel – the compassion, the decency, the goodness that every single member of this service exhibits and the work that they do. It's not just a bravery, it's something deeper, it's a bravery full of human spirit and human soul. When New Yorkers hear a siren in the night they are reassured. They know the very best are on the way to serve them. And the appreciation they feel every day is so strong, so clear, they don't wonder, they know that the very best are coming. And by the way this whole nation knows it because God forbid a disaster ever strikes but when it does strike, from all over the country they ask for help from the FDNY. And members of this department did so much to help people in Houston and in Puerto Rico and in the Carolinas and we will certainly be called upon again.

When people anywhere hear FDNY is on the way, they are reassured too. Women and men of this department have what sounds like an impossible job description to exercise immeasurable courage in the face incalculable danger. But that's what people have done for 153 straight years.

And there are no better examples than the 14 heroes that we memorialize today. I want to single out just a few.

Fire Marshall Christopher Zanetis and Lieutenant Christopher Raguso served both the FDNY and the US Air National Guard, gave their lives for their nation in Iraq. We honor them, we honor their families for this extraordinary service in so many ways. Lieutenant Michael Davidson fell just eight days, eight days later – we lost two heroes and then lost another one just eight days later battling a blaze in Harlem. And then a hero we lost who fought such a long, long battle, Chief Ronald Spadafora – served our city for 40 years, four decades. One of the people who supervised rescue and recovery efforts at World Trade center after 9/11. We lost him in June to cancer he developed as part of his service in the rescue and recovery. Those four and ten more we honor today. And we just hope we can be just a little bit as good as they were. If everyone devotes ourselves to that this will surely be a better place.

On behalf of 8.6 million New Yorkers I want to offer my thanks to these families, our appreciation, our love, our support, and I say God bless you and God bless the FDNY. Thank you.

[Applause]

Captain Mark Guerra, FDNY: Thank you Mayor. I would now like to introduce our Fire Commissioner, Dan Nigro.

Fire Commissioner Daniel Nigro: Just after dawn on September 11th each year a contingent of our members gathers here to place wreaths at the base of this fabulous memorial. We gather here on that anniversary and every year on this solemn occasion because this is our memorial, the Firemen's Monument. It was created in a far different time, nearly a century before our mission would expand to include the critical emergency medical care our members provide and before our ranks began to better reflect the city our men and women bravely serve.

The memorial is flanked on the north and south by sculptures aptly representing duty and sacrifice, two words that epitomize the department. While the name of this monument may no longer be accurate for our modern times, what it stands for is as true today as it was when they first broke ground. It was built by the people whose lives and property our department swore to protect no matter the cost. Those who contributed to its creation did so because they saw an FDNY whose members raced through the streets of our city to fires, first on horse drawn engines, and then for years to come on motorized apparatus whose size grew along with the city. They witnessed firefighters scale ladders, battle roaring flames, and so often emerge with trapped occupants whose lives were saved by the truest form of bravery.

As we gather this morning before this monument, to all our members who've made the supreme sacrifice, I'm struck by the fact that the bravery of FDNY members truly knows no bounds. It's on display every day in our city. A city that not only grew with the FDNY, it grew because of the FDNY. To date 1,150 members have given their lives in the course of their sworn duty, most recently Lieutenant Mike Davidson, a nozzle man at his core, who was taken from us while battling a massive fire in Harlem not far from here. Bravery was in Michael's blood. He had

protected Harlem and every resident there for 15 years, just as his father had before him for more than two decades. Countless times he saved others with his talents, his ability, and most of all, his bravery. We remember and honor Lieutenant Davidson today.

It must be said that so often the bravery of our members extends well beyond our borders and in particular – and is particularly on display by those among us who wear two uniforms, the FDNY and the United States Armed Forces. Currently, 64 FDNY personnel are on extended military orders in the branches of the United States Armed Forces, serving around the world, and more than 1,400 members are military reservists or veterans. Fire Marshal Christopher Tripp Zanetis and Lieutenant Chris Raguso were bravely serving their country as members of the New York Air National Guard 101st Rescue Squadron. They were killed in Iraq in a horrific helicopter crash that claimed the lives of seven brave Americans. Tripp and Chris were heroes in every sense of the word, they fought fires here at home and they fought to save their fellow service members overseas. We remember and honor Fire Marshall Christopher Tripp Zanetis and Lieutenant Chris Raguso today.

Bravery means doing the difficult work despite the dangers and it means battling illness with every bit of your strength, as firefighter Robert Tilearcio, Marine pilot Thomas Phelan, and Assistant Chief Ron Spadafora did for so long. They are three of more than 180 FDNY active and retired members who have died due to World Trade Center illness. A number of fallen heroes that continues to grow with no end in sight, we remember and honor them today as well. In all we remember 14 FDNY members today, each one who truly lived life bravely. Each of our members we honor possess the bravery that has been the most enduring tradition of our department, bravery that inspired the creation of this monument.

We honor all of them not for how they died, but for the remarkable way in which they lived dedicating themselves to the lifesaving mission of this department. To the families of these brave members, please know, we will always remember your loved ones in our hearts and here every year at our memorial. Your continued strength in the face of such immeasurable loss is an inspiration to all of us. The thousands of FDNY members lining the streets today because your loved ones mattered greatly to this department and to remind you that the FDNY will never leave your side. May God bless the memory of every FDNY member who has died in the line of duty, who is battling illness, and all those members of the FDNY we lost this past year, and may God continue to bless the FDNY.

[Applause]

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