

THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO, COMMISSIONER NIGRO DELIVER  
REMARKS AT PLAQUE DEDICATION FOR FIREFIGHTER CHRISTOPHER  
SLUTMAN**

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Thank you, Captain. It's really an honor to be with the members of Engine 46 and Ladder 27, all the members of FDNY who are here, paying tribute to a fallen hero, keeping a memory alive, standing by his family – this is what the FDNY does so honorably, so consistently, with such heart year-in, year-out, generation after generation. I thank you for that and I honor you for that. And we are all honored in this place and in this city to be joined by the members of the United States Marine Corps. Your presence means a lot to us all today. Thank you. And thank you for all you do for this nation.

Today, we pay tribute to a hero. And I can't think of many heroes who have done this much, honestly. Anytime you have to talk about someone with more than one title, because they've served in so many ways, it tells you something right away. Firefighter is a noble title. Staff Sergeant is a noble title. Christopher Slutman chose to be both. And when I met him in 2014, at Medal Day, it was a joyous day. And Medal Day, as you all know, is a time of celebration. It's often a beautiful sunny day and people are really celebrating the very best of the FDNY and moments of triumph. And in that joyous moment, I met this good young man and did not know I'd never see him again. I only knew he was a hero. He had saved an unconscious woman in a burning building. And let's face it, many of you here think that that is all in a day's work. But, for the vast majority of us, the notion of saving a single life would be our life's work. One life saved would be enough to say we did good here on this earth. But, for so many of you, you aspire to that every year, every month, every week, every day.

Certainly, Christopher Slutman proved his commitment, put it into action, and saved a life, and then did so much more. Renowned as a firefighter, a veteran who showed everyone the right way to do things and could have rested on his laurels easily, but he kept asking, what else can I do? And he wanted to serve his country, and that took him to Afghanistan, and that is where we lost him. He was there to protect all of us. He didn't have to be there, he chose to, and that makes him an even more remarkable man. So, when we say hero, we mean it. All of us, we're saluting a hero. In this city, we need our heroes. This last year, especially, may have been the hardest year we've all been through, the most fearful, the most confusing, and yet there were so many heroes we saw – our first responders, our health care heroes, so many people. And a lot of them, we will never know their names, who did such amazing acts. And they never asked for their names to be remembered. Christopher didn't act heroically because he yearned for recognition. He did it because he believed it was right, and that is the truest kind of hero.

So, to you, Christopher's family – to Shannon, to Kenley, McKenna, Weslynn, Brian, Mary, all of you – we will feel an eternal bond with you, and we own eternal debt. And one thing I know in my heart is the FDNY will always be there for you, that is a sacred bond. Thank you and God bless you.

[Applause]

**Captain Steve Moore, Ladder 27:** Thank you, Mayor. Next, we'll hear from Fire Commissioner Daniel Nigro.

**Fire Commissioner Daniel Nigro:** Good morning, everyone. Thank you, Mayor, for those remarks and thank you for being here with us today. Two years ago, today, our department, our city, our country lost a true hero. Firefighter Christopher Slutman was taken from us as a result of injuries he suffered while bravely serving on active duty in Afghanistan. He was killed alongside his fellow Marines, Corporal Robert Hendriks, Sergeant Benjamin Hines, all three assigned to the 25th Marine Regiment, Fourth Marine Division of the Marine Forces Reserve. He wore two uniforms in life, his life of service to others as a New York City Firefighter and a Staff Sergeant in the United States Marine Corps. As a firefighter, he spent 15 years as a member of this great department. He served here in the Bronx at Ladder 17, and in this firehouse as a member of Ladder 27. He was a decorated member of the FDNY, having received the Fire Chiefs Association Medal in 2014, for rescuing an unconscious woman from a burning apartment in the South Bronx. That's the impact he made on the lives of others, going into harm's way to save others.

His officers described him as a total professional and the type of firefighter that everybody wanted to have in their firehouse. Chris was someone that his fellow firefighters looked up to as well for the manner in which he performed on the fire floor and for his selfless service to his country. It was not safe for us to meet in this manner a year ago in New York City, as we were the epicenter of COVID-19 in our country. Our members were risking their lives on every call, responding to fires and medical emergencies, not knowing who had the virus and who would be infected next. But today shows that no passage of time will ever remove Christopher from our memory.

Here we are, one year later, hopefully and slowly emerging a little better each day from the shadow of this pandemic. And, together, our Department pays tribute to this extraordinary man who gave his life for our country. Shannon, you and your daughters and your entire family have been through an incredibly painful time. I'm sure this terrible year due to the pandemic has often made that pain more difficult to bear. Please know, we are very grateful to have you with us this morning as we remember your husband and permanently memorialize him in this firehouse he called home. That's what this plaque means. Chris will always be remembered for his bravery for all he did to save others every day of his outstanding career and for how we protected and defended our country. This firehouse and the entire department will always be here for your family. May God bless Firefighter Christopher Slutman, and may God continue to bless the New York City Fire Department.

**Captain Moore:** Thank you, Commissioner. Next, we will hear from Acting Chief of Department Thomas Richardson.

[Applause]

**Acting Chief of Department Thomas Richardson, FDNY:** Good morning, everyone. Welcome once again to Shannon, McKenna, Kenley, Weslynn, such beautiful names, really. And the girls have really cool sneakers on today too, so I pointed that out before. And the entire Slutman family and friends, thank you for being with us today for this ceremony to remember Chris. These plaque dedications are so important to the FDNY because this is how we pay tribute to our fallen members and how we make sure their dedication and service to this Department, to the City, and in this case to our country lives on forever. I'd like to thank the officers and members of Engine 4-6, Ladder 2-7 for your efforts getting the firehouse ready for today. I want to say thank you to Steve and John, the captains and company commanders, the place looks great. Thank you very much. Well done.

Chris spent 15 years as a New York City firefighter. As you all know, the FDNY is a large family and your officers and firefighters of 46 and 27, present and future, will be your extended family for a very long time. Chris was also proudly a United States Marine. As a point of information, we have over 1400 members of the Department that are either active reservists, or veterans. It's a large number of people. These are special people. Chris was a decorated firefighter, as previously mentioned, receiving the Fire Chiefs Association Medal of Valor in 2014 for rescuing a woman from a fire in the Bronx. He truly led a life of service. A few years back, I had the privilege of participating in several trips to Walter Reed Medical Center and Bethesda Naval Hospital at the time, with other members of the Department to visit wounded members of our military, to let them know that the FDNY had great admiration for them, and simply wanted to say thank you. They, just like Chris, took up to fight for us after 9/11. I think I speak for most who participated in those trips that they were humbling, somewhat life-changing, and really an inspiration.

Today, we pay tribute to Chris, and acknowledge once more that the FDNY continues its promise to never forget. My dad was a Korean War Marine, proud. As I grew up and became a young teenager, I remember in my dining room at home, he had a framed poem on the wall, all by itself, and he was extremely proud of it. I didn't see it until I was a little older, like I said, as a teenager, and this was the poem, it was called, The Title, United States Marine. Here's what it says, "It cannot be inherited, nor can it ever be purchased. You or no one alive can buy it for any price. It is impossible to rent, and it cannot be lent. You alone and our own have earned it with your sweat blood in lives. You own it forever, the title United States Marine. I might argue, and hopefully my friends in the Marine Corps here won't be upset, we might use that same poem that describing New York City firefighter. These titles are not careers, quite frankly, their vocations, their callings to something bigger than us.

Chris's service was noble, it was selfless, and it was in the greatest traditions of bravery and service to our country and to the FDNY. We can never forget that, and this plaque that will be unveiled shortly ensures that fact. We all – we call these ceremonies plaque dedications, the words, dedication, and commitment are synonymous. While both words refer to a strong feeling

of loyalty and strong support for someone or something, I can say the word commitment can also refer to an obligation or a pledge. So, today, we are pledging that the plaque being dedicated will also serve as a memorial to Chris. This memorial plaque will serve as a remembrance, a reminder of who he was, what his sacrifice was, and most importantly, it will be here forever. To the current and future members of this firehouse, and to all those in the neighborhood that this firehouse protects, Chris's memory will continue to live on. That is our solemn duty. As new members come here, they too will learn his story, when we need to make sure that his story is told. By doing that, he will continue to inspire others for generations to come. I want to, once again, say thank you to all the members here for their efforts and especially thanks Shannon and your family for being here today to pay tribute to Chris. Thank you. And God bless you all.

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