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**MAYOR DE BLASIO AND COMMISSIONER PONTE ANNOUNCE NEW OFFICER
SAFETY MEASURES AT CITY JAILS**

Technology upgrades to include new contraband scanners and tasers

Emergency Services Unit teams will be pre-deployed to more efficiently respond to urgent incidents; Correction welcoming largest class ever to ease workload

NEW YORK—Mayor Bill de Blasio and Department of Correction Commissioner Joseph Ponte today announced a series of measures to protect staff at City jails. These measures include technology upgrades – new scanners to screen for contraband and tasers to de-escalate violence – and changes in staff deployment to more effectively and efficiently address violent incidents. Additionally, the new class of recruits graduating in November will be the largest graduating class ever, helping relieve some of the workload on existing Correction staff.

“Safety is always our number one priority, and these smart measures will give officers the tools they need to protect their and inmates’ safety. By strategically pre-deploying emergency response teams to multiple locations and equipping them with tasers, we’re making sure that our officers get critical support in urgent situations faster and more effectively. New scanners will filter out even more contraband from our facilities – keeping our staff, inmates, and visitors safer than ever,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**.

“Our reforms start and end with our officers – we seek to train, support and empower them. Although we still have much more to do, the infusion of new officers into the ranks will, in time, help ease the burden of extra shifts. The deployment of emergency response teams to each jail will integrate these forces better into facilities’ security procedures. Tasers for emergency service supervisors and supersensitive scanners will help prevent violence. The safety of our staff is paramount, and we thank the Mayor for all the support he has given us as we create a culture of safety at our facilities,” said **DOC Commissioner Joseph Ponte**.

The Department of Correction will be installing new scanners at key locations to prevent contraband from entering facilities. The new scanners will be the highest-quality non-ionizing scanners allowed under state law – much like those found at airports – and will help detect contraband that the current technology cannot. They will be placed in the visitor processing

center on Rikers Island and other key locations on Rikers Island and across the city, and will be used to screen both inmates and visitors. Contraband finds have increased by a total of 63 percent in 2016 compared to last year, demonstrating increased effectiveness in screening for dangerous and prohibited items. New scanners will help further this progress, and DOC will continue to advocate to the state for the use of more thorough ionizing scanners.

The Emergency Services Unit – a Rikers-based, centrally-located specialized unit that responds to urgent incidents – will now be stationed in teams within correction facilities rather than a centralized location, drastically decreasing the time it takes to respond to incidents occurring in the facilities, providing critical assistance to facility staff. ESU teams will now be stationed at multiple facilities on Rikers Island as well as in some borough-based facilities, allowing for significantly reduced response times to incidents requiring an urgent response.

In addition to strategically deploying ESU teams within facilities, ESU supervisors will now be equipped with tasers. Tasers will help ESU safely and effectively address incidents by allowing staff to avoid immediate physical confrontations and de-escalate violent incidents. Supervisors authorized to carry tasers will be required to undergo several days of training, including on taser use, DOC's Use of Force policy and defensive tactics training to ensure proper usage. The Department expects that at least a dozen Captains will be fully trained in the next couple weeks.

The Department of Correction has been aggressively recruiting and training new staff to help address significant overtime burdens on officers.

- This November, the largest-ever class of recruits will graduate, adding over 700 new officers to the Department's ranks.
- Approximately 1,200 recruits will comprise the next class, who will begin training in December and take their posts in April of next year.
- Last month, 117 captains graduated – at least three times larger than the average captain class, and the largest graduating class of Captains ever.

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