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The New York City Department of Correction

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**COMMISSIONER PONTE ANNOUNCES OPENING OF FIRST  
ENHANCED SUPERVISION HOUSING**

*Cornerstone of Reform Effort, Unit For Violent Offenders Will Make Jails Safer for  
Staff and Inmates*

EAST ELMHURST, N.Y. – Correction Commissioner Joe Ponte announced that the first unit of Enhanced Supervision Housing (ESH) is opening today at the Otis Bantum Correctional Center (OBCC) on Rikers Island. Part of an ongoing reform effort, ESH is designed to reduce violence and enhance jail safety by confining the most dangerous inmates to one area.

The Enhanced Supervision Housing unit will have unique features, such as a higher staff-to-inmate ratio of four officers to 50 inmates, compared to one officer to 33 inmates in the general jail population. Mandated services, such as a law library, psychological counseling, and religious ministry, are provided within the unit. The centralization of services is aimed at reducing violence throughout the facility by eliminating the unnecessary movement of violent inmates. ESH programming provides incentives for good behavior within the unit and is aimed at facilitating rehabilitation and reducing idleness.

“I am pleased to inaugurate ESH, which is a cornerstone of our agenda of meaningful reform at Rikers,” Ponte said. “Some seven percent of the population perpetrate most of the violence in our jails. By letting us manage our most dangerous inmates more effectively, ESH will enable DOC to create a safer environment for staff and inmates throughout our facilities. It will also allow us to make reasonable reforms to punitive segregation, such as eliminating time owed from previous incarcerations.”

The new unit will initially house 20 inmates but will ramp up to house 50. When completed, five ESH units comprising 250 beds will be available and operate in two facilities: OBCC and the George R. Vierno Center (GRVC). Five Captains and 41 Correction Officers will staff the initial ESH unit. DOC will determine who is placed in ESH and for how long, with an established, periodic review process that will include input and participation from the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and a right of appeal.

The Board of Correction (BOC), which provides oversight for the New York City jails, last month unanimously approved a rule change allowing for the establishment of ESH. Per BOC rules, ESH will house inmates posing the most direct security threats, including:

- Gang leaders and those who have participated in dangerous gang-related activity;
- Organizers or participants in gang-related assaults;
- Those who have committed slashings, stabbings or repeated assaults or who have seriously injured another or rioted or participated in inmate disturbances while in custody;
- Those found in possession of scalpels or other weapons while in custody;
- Those engaged in serious or persistent violence;
- Those who have engaged in repeated activity or behavior presenting great danger with a direct, identifiable and adverse impact on the safety and security of the facility.

#### About the New York City Department of Correction

The New York City Department of Correction (DOC) manages the jail system for New York City. It operates Rikers Island, which houses 10 individual facilities, four borough-based jails and two hospital prison wards, as well as court pens in all five boroughs. In FY 2014, DOC had 77,141 admissions involving 56,218 individuals.

Its Average Daily Population is approximately 11,400, over 80 percent of whom are housed on Rikers Island. Most of the inmates in DOC custody are being detained pending the resolution of charges against them; approximately 15 percent are city-sentenced inmates who are serving sentences of one year or less.