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PRESS
RELEASE



The New York City Department of Correction

MAYOR DE BLASIO ANNOUNCES 1,900 NEW OFFICERS TRAINED IN DE-ESCALATION TECHNIQUES

Commissioner Ponte's de-escalation training results in 41% fewer serious assaults on staff; 50% fewer serious uses of force

Brooklyn, N.Y.—Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Ponte today announced nearly 2,000 new correction officers have completed new training in de-escalation techniques to tamp down conflicts and increase safety in city jails, or about 22% of the total officer corps. This training has resulted in fewer serious assaults on staff and fewer serious uses of force toward inmates.

“Safety in our jails has always been a top priority for my office and Commissioner Ponte,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. “The drop in assaults on staff and serious uses of force demonstrates that our investment in de-escalation training is paying off. Thanks to Commissioner Ponte and the department’s hardworking officers, we are taking significant steps toward building a culture of safety in our jails.”

“We are giving our officers the tools they need to manage inmate behavior without resorting to unnecessary uses of force—and it’s working,” **Commissioner Ponte** said. “The dedicated men and women who serve in our jails each day are now equipped with more training and tools to keep our jails safe—and officers and inmates alike are benefitting from fewer serious incidents of violence in our jails.”

In the first four months of 2016, assaults on staff resulting in serious injuries declined 41% and assaults on staff resulting in minor injuries declined 22%; overall assaults on staff dropped 17%. At the same time, uses of force resulting in serious injuries declined 50% and uses of force with minor injuries fell 17%.

Since becoming Commissioner in April 2014, Ponte has implemented systemic reforms to improve the performance of DOC staff and reduce violence across the Department. Ponte immediately began revising the curriculum at the Correction Academy so that the rising officer corps would be trained on the best evidence-based practices to achieve those goals. The new training, which comes as part of a variety of new courses, has added an additional two weeks and three days, or 144 hours, to the Academy curriculum and has helped the Department lower the number of serious assaults on staff and serious uses of force.

The revised curriculum that emphasizes de-escalation techniques includes a Safe Crisis Management course that trains officers dealing with adolescents on adolescent psychology, and Mental Health First Aid to recognize the signs of distress in mentally ill inmates. Other courses emphasizing de-escalation techniques are being added to reflect the Department's new Use of Force policy. New or revised Academy courses including de-escalation techniques introduced under Ponte include:

- o Use of Force Policy
- o Crisis Intervention & Conflict Resolution
- o Defensive Tactics
- o Probe Team Training
- o Cell Extraction Team Training
- o Direct Supervision
- o Young Inmate Management

The unprecedented size of this graduating class and the expected even larger sizes of the upcoming recruit classes are designed to help increase the headcount at DOC and help relieve staff shortages. Commissioner Ponte made the announcement as 623 new officers graduated the New York City Correction Academy, the largest class ever, at a ceremony at the Christian Cultural Center in Brooklyn.

About the Graduating Class

The graduating class of 382 men and 241 women comes from a wide range of backgrounds. This diverse class possesses the combined educational expertise of 24 master's degrees, 157 bachelor's degrees, and 117 associate's degree, 327 have some college credits, and 81 have prior experience as a peace officer. The average age of the class is 30.

The Department of Correction is often regarded as a family and is known for employing multiple generations of family members. This Recruit class is no different, with 108 Recruits having family members who are currently on the job. These relatives include six sisters, nine brothers, nine aunts, 20 mothers, 18 fathers, 27 cousins, ten uncles and three husbands.

The class includes Recruit Officers from every borough with Brooklyn – at 203 – contributing the largest number, and 151 from Queens, 69 from the Bronx, 29 from Manhattan, and 42 from Staten Island. In addition, there are 18 from Westchester, 42 from Suffolk County and 53 from Nassau County in Long Island, and five from Rockland County, ten from Orange County and one from Dutchess County.

The class valedictorian is Recruit Officer Jonathan Forte. The salutatorian is Recruit Officer Michael Eckerle. And the class Top Gun at the weapons training is Recruit Officer Thomas Congero who qualified 3 times, scoring 100 on his written exam and scoring 100 on his Firearms & Tactics Unit exam.

About the New York City Department of Correction

The New York City Department of Correction (DOC) provides for the care, custody, and control of persons accused of crimes or convicted and sentenced to one year or less of jail time. The Department manages 12 inmate facilities, 9 of which are located on Rikers Island. In addition, the Department operates two hospital Prison Wards (Bellevue and Elmhurst hospitals) and court holding facilities in each borough. During Fiscal Year 2015, the Department handled over 67,000 admissions and managed an average daily inmate population of approximately 10,240 individuals.

