Mayor demands New Yorkers "respect police officers"

Isaac Finn
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At a ground-breaking ceremony for a school in East New York on Monday, New York City's self-proclaimed "progressive" Democratic mayor, Bill de Blasio, went out of his way to demand that New York residents "respect" the police. His comments were a direct response to a handful of videos of New Yorkers insulting cops.

In the videos New York residents have cursed out New York Police Department (NYPD) officers and expressed outrage with the police. In one video, Christian Roman, 20 years old, berates officers for searching him for a gun. In his video he is recorded saying to several cops, "You searched me, didn't find no f**ing firearm on me, and you detained me. No, you guys took my freedom away from me for 15 f**ing minutes for no reason." He was then arrested for disorderly conduct.

Two other videos had also surfaced, one in which residents yell at police to leave their building and another where a man berates police while filming inside a police station. Nobody was arrested for activity in the other video; however, the NYPD has since issued a memo that officers can arrest individuals that refuse to stop filming inside police buildings.

The *New York Post*, a Rupert Murdoch-owned tabloid, has documented such videos and claimed these outbursts against the police as the product of the "NYPD's go-easy policy." The police unions have similarly claimed the outbursts are the product of politicians "demonizing police officers" and the supposed "lawlessness" under Police Commissioner James O'Neill. Go-easy apparently means the scaling down of the hated NYPD stop-and-frisk policy that began in the last months of Michael Bloomberg's tenure and the recent reduction on NYPD arrests for marijuana possession. Both policies overwhelmingly affected minority working-class youth.

De Blasio, in a move to solidarize himself with the police, stated on Monday, "Respect for police is absolutely necessary. It doesn't matter what your views are, you have to respect police officers." He added in a supercilious tone, "I've seen some videos that disgust me. They are not acceptable. Anyone who thinks it's cute, it's not cute. Knock it off. Show respect."

The mayor's recent comments are reminiscent of his statements in 2014, at which time he called on anti-police-violence protesters to "show respect and support for our police" He called for a halt to all protests against police violence following the killing of two cops by a mentally ill man. He soon faced a near-revolt by police officers, hundreds of whom literally turned their backs on the mayor in a series of events in the aftermath of the killings.

There is not much progressive sheen left to the Democratic mayor who ran for office in 2013 on a platform of fighting the inequality of a "tale of two cities" and explicitly calling for the NYPD to be reformed and even expressing sympathy with anti-police-brutality protesters.

Since then a pattern has emerged of feigning concern over police brutality, but quickly falling in line behind the police by defending their actions and arming them with military-grade equipment.

In 2014, de Blasio issued initial criticism of the NYPD after Eric Garner was choked to death in Staten Island by a plainclothes cop. But the following year de Blasio announced that he would veto any legislation that would designate the police use of chokeholds a misdemeanor, despite the hold being explicitly banned by the NYPD manual.

Earlier this year de Blasio told Gwen Carr, Garner's mother, that only the plainclothes officer that put

Garner in the chokehold, Daniel Pantaleo—who was not charged with any crime in Garner's death by a grand jury—and his supervisor Sgt. Kizzy Adonis would face departmental charges.

In the video footage of Garner being choked, several officers can be seen pinning Garner to the ground and handcuffing him while he yells, "I can't breathe! I can't breathe!" Pantaleo, who had a record of misconduct before choking Garner, has worked desk duty for the past four years because the NYPD delayed proceedings, claiming a federal investigation was ongoing. If judged to have committed misconduct, Pantaleo faces penalties ranging from a warning, loss of vacation days, or loss of a job.

In 2015 de Blasio announced a plan to hire an addition 1,300 cops, out of which 300 officers would be part of a heavily-armed counterterrorism team. Soon afterwards the then-Police Commissioner William Bratton accidentally disclosed that they planned to use the counterterrorism team to deal with situations such as protests against police killings.

Last April, the mayor commented on the police shooting of Saheed Vassell, an unarmed mentally ill black man, claiming that police did not have enough time to realize Vassell did not pose a threat. Two of the three cops involved in the shooting were from the elite Special Response Group. De Blasio also defends his community policing program—which is based on cultivating police informers in working-class neighborhoods—as a means of addressing police shootings.

The decision by the de Blasio administration and both the Democrats and Republicans to continually defend and militarize the police has been taken as a green light for cops to terrorize the population.

According to a report from the New York City Civilian Complaint Review Board, allegations of police misconduct increased in 2017 for the first time since 2009. Last year there were 4,487 allegations of police misconduct, and 55 percent of the complaints came from incidents that led to no arrests or summons issued.

The reflexive instinct of de Blasio to call for "respect" to the NYPD and the inability and unwillingness of his administration to introduce any serious reforms that address police brutality are an expression of deep disquiet in the entire political establishment about the growing discontent in the working class over pervasive social inequality in America's largest city.

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