

New York City mayor calls for a halt to protests against police violence

By Andre Damon
23 December 2014

In a move unprecedented in recent memory, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio called Monday for a nearly week-long halt to demonstrations against police violence following the shooting of two New York City police officers. De Blasio's statement comes amidst a broader drive in the media and political establishment to pin the blame for the officers' deaths on ongoing protests against police violence, thereby painting them as "violent" and illegitimate.

Earlier in the day, New York City Police Commissioner William Bratton told NBC News that the shooting was a "direct spinoff of this issue of these demonstrations."

"I think it's a time for everyone to put aside political debates, put aside protests, put aside all of the things that we will talk about in due time," de Blasio said at a luncheon of the Police Athletic League Monday. "So I would ask that any organizations that were planning events or gatherings that are about politics and protest—that could be for another day," he added, urging that the protests be put on hold until the officers' funerals, which are scheduled for Friday and Saturday.

Police nationwide have already begun using this attempt to link the shooting and protests against police violence as a means of intimidating opposition.

The *New York Post* reported that Devon Coley, 18, was charged with making a terroristic threat after he allegedly posted a picture of someone shooting into a police car, with the caption "73Next," which police interpreted as the 73rd Precinct in Brooklyn.

The local press reported Monday that Police in Chicopee, Massachusetts have filed charges against a man for posting "put wings on pigs"—a phrase allegedly used by the shooter—on Instagram. A spokesman for the Chicopee Police Department said,

"In the eyes of every police officer in America today, 'Putting wings on pigs' is a threat."

Monday's comments by de Blasio amount to a capitulation before the police unions, which had denounced the mayor for having expressed vague sympathy for the protests. "There is blood on many hands, from those that incited violence under the guise of protest to try to tear down what police officers do every day," said Patrick Lynch, the president of the Patrolmen's Benevolent Association (PBA), on Sunday. "That blood on the hands starts on the steps of City Hall in the office of the mayor."

On Saturday, dozens of police officers turned their backs on de Blasio as he walked into a press conference at the hospital where the officers were taken. Former New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani joined the chorus denouncing de Blasio Sunday, declaring that he and Obama had encouraged protests, including violent protests, against police.

The *New York Post* reported Sunday that a widely-circulated email among police officers, reportedly issued by one of the police unions, declared, "We have, for the first time in a number of years, become a 'wartime' Police Department... We will act accordingly."

De Blasio devoted his Monday press conference to an attempt to delegitimize opposition to the police. When asked by reporters about protestors who called police officers murderers and racists, the mayor denounced those who make "unacceptable" remarks about the police.

"The few who do not represent the majority, who are saying unacceptable things, who shouldn't be saying those things... everyone must participate in finding those individuals, providing information to the police... alerting the police. There are some bad people who say

inappropriate things, who say hateful things... they have no place in these protests.”

De Blasio bent over backwards to demonstrate his loyalty to the police department, touting the fact that he had allocated hundreds of millions in additional funding to the NYPD in recent months. “Actions speak louder than words,” he declared.

The mayor called on New York residents to “protect” police officers, saying, “We as citizens have an obligation to join in protecting our police just as they protect us.” He added, “People are always struggling in a democracy to understand how they can contribute to making things better. So, I can tell you...show respect and support for our police.”

Police departments across the country have put cops on high alert following the shootings. The Associated Press reported that police unions warned New York City officers to “respond to every radio call with two cars—no matter what the opinion of the patrol supervisor.”

The two officers, Rafael Ramos, 40, and Wenjian Liu, 32, were shot around 3PM Saturday while sitting in a patrol car in Brooklyn. Police said the alleged shooter, Ismaiyil Brinsley, had shot and wounded his girlfriend earlier in the day.

There is no evidence linking Brinsley to the protests. His family described him as someone who had struggled with mental illness his entire life and who had recently attempted suicide.

Police said he made Internet posts threatening to “put wings on pigs” in retribution for the deaths of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, and Eric Garner in Staten Island, saying, “They take 1 of ours, let’s take 2 of theirs.”

The July choking death of Eric Garner is the most high-profile incident in a wave of murder and violence by the New York Police and Corrections Departments. In October three top officials at Rikers Island prison resigned following revelations of widespread violence by prison guards that led to a series of deaths. Last month, a New York City police officer shot and killed an unarmed 28-year-old in the stairwell of a housing project, prompting renewed protests.

De Blasio’s press conference followed the announcement by Milwaukee County District Attorney John Chisholm Monday that Milwaukee police officer Christopher Manney would not be charged for shooting

unarmed homeless man Dontre Hamilton to death in April.

Chisholm had provoked a confrontation with Hamilton as the latter was sleeping and shot him fourteen times. Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker put the National Guard on alert over the weekend, and police carried out 74 arrests at a demonstration Saturday. “We are currently making preparations to stage National Guard members and will be ready to respond rapidly if needed,” Milwaukee County Sheriff David A. Clarke Jr told the *Journal Sentinel*.

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