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The New York City Department of Correction

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Commissioner Ponte Announces Groundbreaking Housing and Staffing Strategy to Accelerate Violence Reduction on Rikers Island

Strategic classification system will allow DOC to more safely house rival gang members and affect up to 600 adults over the age of 22

Timothy Farrell appointed new Deputy for Classification and Population Management

East Elmhurst, N.Y. – As part of the Department of Correction’s 14-point anti-violence initiative, Commissioner Joseph Ponte announced today an accelerated violence reduction program that aims to reduce violence through a more strategic understanding of the inmate population. This program will focus on preventing violence instead of reacting to it and will allocate resources such as housing, staff, educational programs and services to populations classified according to risk.

The new strategy launched in the George Motchan Detention Center (GMDC) on Rikers Island on May 27 and will reclassify approximately 600 adult inmates over 22 years old – half of the GMDC population. DOC plans to expand this new program throughout the department’s facilities after gaining tactical insights from the launch at GMDC. This will create a precedent for change in other facilities and inform a new standard operational procedure for the entire department. Among the chief aims of this new strategy is allowing DOC to more safely house rival gang members.

For the first time in DOC history, this program will conduct a coordinated review by facility intelligence staff, staff of DOC's Central Intelligence Bureau, and the NYPD to create a more nuanced and complete understanding of which inmates are violence-prone. Using this information, the new program will then re-classify inmates as high-risk, high-medium risk, medium-low risk and low risk, and assign inmates to appropriate housing units, such as dormitories for the lower-risk inmates or more secure cell units for higher-risk inmates. Captains staffing the newly reclassified units will be mentored by high-performing Captains and tour commanders in order to establish and reinforce best practices.

DOC's new housing strategy will accelerate violence reduction by:

- Aggregating multiple information sources in order to create a more complete, nuanced understanding of the inmate population. These information sources can include:
 - o Information from facility staff about an inmate's current behavior;
 - o Information from the DOC's Central Intelligence Bureau, which can provide information from other parts of the Department;
 - o Information about an inmate's street activity; and
 - o Information from the NYPD about gang affiliation and gang's activities and territory.
- Replacing outdated protocols for deciding where to house inmates with protocols that focus on factors like gang affiliation, for example; and
- Ensuring oversight and swift implementation through the appointment of Timothy Farrell to the newly created position of Deputy Commissioner for Classification and Population Management, where he will lead the rollout and implementation of the Department's new classification and housing efforts.

“The new housing strategy that Deputy Commissioner Farrell is launching at GMDC represents a major overhaul of outdated practices and a strong step toward institutionalizing a culture of safety at DOC,” **Commissioner Joseph Ponte** said. “If we want to reduce violence in our jails, we need to understand which inmates show a tendency for these acts before they occur. By reviewing indicators like gang affiliation and age when an inmate arrives, we can start to better understand which inmates are truly high-risk—and house them appropriately.”

“I'm honored to play a leading role in Commissioner Ponte's forward-thinking plan to better classify and house inmates,” **Deputy Commissioner Farrell** said. “By launching this new strategy, we can proactively identify and prevent violence from the moment an inmate steps into our jail—rather than reacting once an incident has already occurred.”

To further accelerate violence reduction, this new program expands the access GMDC inmates have to educational programming and services. In addition to minimizing idle time, which has been found to reduce violence, expanded programming will increase inmates' skills, reducing their opportunities and incentives for violence during their incarceration and recidivism in the long term. New weekday programs at GMDC will include computer training, cognitive behavioral therapy, job readiness (resume writing, interviewing skills, professional etiquette), and enhanced library services (book clubs, creative writing, guest authors). Based on committed

attendance to the weekday programs, inmates will have the opportunity to take weekend courses in construction and food protection – helping ready them for the job market upon their release.

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 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.