

Police counter-offensive continues in New York

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Amidst the popular uproar over police violence in the US, the near mutinous response of the New York Police Department continued this week, promoted by sections of the media and political elite.

New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio was greeted with boos and jeers Monday as he addressed a ceremony for 900 graduating police cadets at Madison Square Garden. A section of the audience again turned their backs on the mayor, two days after hundreds of officers did the same at the funeral for one of the officers shot and killed last week.

As de Blasio remarked during a groveling speech Monday that the new officers will face problems they did not create, one heckler shouted, “you created them.”

The December 20 killing of two police officers, Rafael Ramos and Wenjian Liu, by a mentally unstable man has been exploited by the media and political establishment, unleashing a wave of praise for the police and promoting the absurd notion that it is they who are under siege—not the workers and youth who are habitually harassed and brutalized by cops, or the estimated 500 to 1,000 civilians who are victims of police killings each year.

De Blasio praised the “heroic choice” of the newest officers Monday, saying “it takes a special kind of person to put their lives on the line for others.” US Vice President Joe Biden “thanked God” for the police during his eulogy at the Ramos funeral, calling the NYPD “the finest police department in the world.”

On Tuesday the NYPD confirmed reports that the number of arrests in the city plummeted for the week, down 66 percent from the previous week. Traffic citations were down 94 percent, and parking tickets dropped by 92 percent as officers reduced their activity in protest over de Blasio’s feigned sympathy with

demonstrations against police violence.

The Patrolmen’s Benevolent Association head, Patrick Lynch, who has emerged as the leading mouthpiece for the police counter-offensive, issued the call for a slowdown and even open defiance of orders following the killing of Ramos and Liu. A memorandum from the police union declared that the NYPD is now a “wartime” department. Lynch has pinned the blame for the killing directly on the mayor and the tens of thousands who protested peacefully against police violence, threatening, “Those who allowed this to happen will be held accountable.”

Taken as a whole, the actions of the police department, a militarized force of 35,000, represent a direct challenge to civilian authority in an attempt to intimidate and criminalize any opposition to police violence.

The seriousness of this development is underscored by the fact that over the past decade, the NYPD has expanded its repressive apparatus, stockpiling an arsenal and building up a spying infrastructure worthy of an army. Police forces around the country have followed suit under the guise of the “war on terror,” a trend that is mirrored at the national level with continued expansion of the NSA, CIA and other military-intelligence agencies.

This process has had the full support of both political parties and the Obama administration.

In New York, the differences that have emerged among the ruling elite are entirely within the framework of defending the political instruments of the ruling class. De Blasio himself has responded coweringly to the ravings of Lynch and others, meekly calling for unity and the toning down of rhetoric.

The *New York Times* came to de Blasio’s defense Tuesday, with an editorial that began, “Mayor Bill de

Blasio has spent weeks expressing his respect and admiration for the New York Police Department, while calling for unity in these difficult days, but the message doesn't seem to be sinking in."

The *Times* criticized Lynch and the NYPD for their "anti-de Blasio campaign." By claiming to be above criticism, the editorial argued, the NYPD loses credibility and respect. The department should take notice that de Blasio seeks to "do right by the police department," as evidenced by his appointment of Bill Bratton as commissioner, the increased financing of the department and the modernization of equipment.

The alliance between Bratton and de Blasio is particularly significant. After de Blasio's election, which was in no small part due to popular opposition to "stop-and-frisk" policing, de Blasio immediately appointed Bratton in order to reassure the city's elite that there would be no fundamental shift.

While the use of the stop-and-frisk tactic has declined, the underlying "broken windows" style of policing—that is, aggressively policing of petty, quality-of-life infractions—has continued unabated. In a city that is starkly divided along class lines, the police effectively occupy minority, working class neighborhoods.

In a lengthy piece appearing in the *City-Journal* magazine this week, Bratton defended the "broken windows" strategy, signaling that despite the upsurge of criticism following the police killings of Eric Garner and Akai Gurley, there will be no let up in aggressive police actions.

De Blasio has made similar signals. His professed sympathy and invocation of his bi-racial son notwithstanding, his remarks since Garner's killing have always acknowledged the role that police play. "Police officers are called 'peace officers,' because that's what they do—they keep the peace," the mayor said on Saturday. "They help make a place that otherwise would be torn with strife a place of peace."

De Blasio also issued a call to halt protests in the aftermath of the killing of the two cops, and joined in the vilification of protesters who failed to comply. "As I have said, it's deeply divisive to hold political protests during this period of remembrance."

De Blasio and Bratton understand full well the explosive conditions that exist within New York and around the country. "You need to understand this isn't

just about policing," Bratton said on Meet the Press over the weekend. "This is about the continuing poverty rates, the continuing growing disparity between the wealthy and the poor."

Backed by the Obama administration, both remain absolutely committed to building up the police force to defend the privileges of the ruling class.



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