

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: December 21, 2022, 1:30 PM

CONTACT: pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov, (212) 788-2958

TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR ERIC ADAMS DELIVERS UPDATE ON PUBLIC SAFETY EFFORTS IN NEW YORK CITY

Mayor Eric Adams: Team, I went to the post party last night and they wrote about me, attacked me. Bernadette, next time I'm going to the Daily News party. Oh, man. Thank you. Good to be here with an amazing team and I'm going to turn over to my deputy mayor of public safety so he could introduce our team behind us.

Deputy Mayor Philip Banks III, Public Safety: Good afternoon and welcome to City Hall. Just like to thank everybody for coming, Fabien. And I'd like to introduce everybody here who's played a very instrumental role and important role in pushing forward the administration's public safety agenda. We have First Deputy Mayor Lorraine Grillo. We have Ingrid Lewis-Martin, who's the chief advisor to the mayor. We have Sheena Wright, deputy mayor for strategic initiatives. Keechant Sewell, NYPD police commissioner. Laura Kavanagh, FDNY commissioner. Louis Molina, commissioner of the Department of Correction.

We also have Keith Howard, our commissioner of the Department of Youth and Community Development. Christina Farrell, who's the deputy commissioner for New York City Emergency Management. Anthony Miranda, the sheriff of the City of New York. Margaret Forkjoin, the first deputy commissioner of DOT. We have our judge, Sylvia Hinds-Radix, who's the corporation counsel. Brendan McGuire, the chief counsel to the mayor of the City of New York. We have Deanna Logan, the director of MOCJ. We have Ama Dwimoh, advisor to the mayor. And A.T. Mitchell, co-chair of the Gun Violence Prevention Task Force, and we want to acknowledge and welcome there. Now I'll turn it over to the 110th mayor of the City of New York, Eric Adams.

Mayor Adams: Thank you. Thank you, Phil. As you went through the names and I think a lot of people, they may see the vegan sausage, but they don't know what goes into making it. The team behind me on each issue that we have faced in this city, we have really come together as a team and I'm extremely impressed. It's one thing to put a theory out there, but it's another thing to watch it materialize and actualize. I started in January with the team and really made it clear to Deputy Mayor Lorraine Grillo, that we have to remove the walls that I felt were preventing us from actually executing as a team.

There were so many of our law enforcement partners who were sitting on the sideline and they wanted to get in the game. You think about what Anthony Miranda has done with the Sheriff Department, it's just unique as he's dealing with so many different issues from the illegal plates

to the cannabis situation, coordinating with the New York City Police Department, the DOT and so many others. That is the teamwork and that is going to be the trademark of this administration.

I want to talk about public safety today, and I want to talk about all New Yorkers. This was something that was dear to me when I campaigned. We wanted to specifically address the violence that we were seeing in our city and really the demoralizing feeling that our police officers were experiencing. It was one of the dualities of what I needed Commissioner Sewell to tackle.

Number one, she has to bring up the morale of those officers who felt that we placed them on the front line and we left them there, and I think she has done an amazing job of sending the right message that we are going to be there for those officers who are placing themselves in a line of danger. But we going to hold them accountable at the same time. If anyone tarnishes the nobility of public protection, they cannot serve in our department. We made that clear and I think you are seeing that manifest itself.

That was a signal today. As you know, we had an officer who was shot while taking appropriate police action. He and his partners were there to take care of what it may have seemed to many New Yorkers as a minor infraction, but this person was carrying a gun, discharged that weapon. A bullet struck one of our officers and we were able to apprehend him without our fellow New Yorkers being injured.

Thank God, he appears he will be making a full recovery. The assailant is in custody and he and his family will be able to enjoy each other during this holiday season as well as the other officers involved. Public safety is the foundation of the city. I've used this term over and over again. It's a prerequisite to prosperity. Without it, we won't feel the safety we deserve. I'm talking to New Yorkers every day, when I'm on the subway system, walking the street, interacting with them in churches, in houses of worship and synagogues.

That's the number one thing on their minds. They want to be safe and they deserve to be safe. They want to not only look at the stats that show our improvement, they want to feel safe and that is crucial to combat what they felt for far too long in this city. They have been feeling that the city has been broken. There's a sense of lawlessness, there's a sense of uncertainty, there's a sense of disorder that we inherited when we came into this administration.

Gun violence was tearing apart our communities. Not only were the bullets ripping apart the bodies of the individuals that were the intended and unintended target, but it was ripping apart the emotional anatomy of this entire city. Communities were devastated by the violence that we were seeing, and we know that and we are aware of that. It has been almost a year since I've been the mayor of this city with this team behind me and my top priority will always be improving the safety of the city.

Everything else will be built on that safety. One of the first steps I did as mayor was appoint a deputy mayor of public safety with Phil Banks. Phil Banks being a former chief of the department, understands the intricacies of law enforcement and understood how important it was to coordinate all of our law enforcement entities that stand behind me and the men and women

who are part of that so we can all be on the same team, the team public safety. He had the efforts and he understood that coordination and he knew he had to build bridges to bring all our stakeholders together and we're seeing the results of those bridges that were built.

Most importantly, he knew that when it came down to public safety, we had to get stuff done and we had to get it done correctly because we were not going to trade off justice for public safety, not going backwards. We have much to do. We're clear on that. There's many difficult roads ahead to ensure all New Yorkers are safe, but I'm proud of what we have done. At the top of my appointment here, my election, I should say, was to deal with some of these big issues and Commissioner Sewell and some of the other commissioners that are behind us with their coordination, we went at it and I think that New Yorkers should feel better about the direction that we are heading in this city around public safety.

The hard work of the NYPD and other agencies have been focused on making the city safe. Some of the numbers are reflecting that. As you know, we talk about it often, murders are down double digits. Shootings are down double digits. You look at in the month of November, for the first time in over 16 months, major crimes have gone down during the month of November. So it's about trending in the right direction. Anyone who studied crime, they know it's about how do we continue to trend in the right direction.

We knew that the change wouldn't happen overnight, particularly much of what we did when they look at the number of apprehensions we have made, how many repeated offenders are back on our streets? The catch, release, repeat system of our criminal justice system and the bottleneck of that system has really hampered our efforts, but we pushed ahead in spite of that. New York remains and people sometimes forget this, but I really want to highlight this. New York remains the safest big city in America. We have to be clear on that. We are still the safest big city in America and in 2023, we are going to push this city to be safer.

Let's look at the numbers so far. Since January of this year, New York City has seen a more than 17 percent drop in shootings. Over 12 percent drop in homicides in a 27-year high for gun arrest. Very important. It was what we want to focus on with our anti-gun unit and with the combination of our patrol forces and the anti-gun unit, we're seeing a 27-year high for gun arrest. The NYPD has seized nearly 7,000 firearms off our streets. The other area of focus that we stated at the beginning of the year clearly were the ghost guns. This includes out of that 7,000, 430 ghost guns, a 73 percent increase from the prior year and the highest number in city history. Our cops are working.

Detectives are clearing homicide cases at a near historic level and our clearance rate for the seven major felony categories is the highest in 20 years. It's a 20-year high. Our cops are working. Subway safety has also improved. We started out in the beginning of the year with our subway safety plan and we did several evolutions because we want to continue to get it right. With a 13 percent reduction in major crime in its transit station during the month of November compared to the same period last year, and this is even with a substantial increase in ridership. We've reached a high level mark, 3.9 million, the highest since the COVID crisis began.

Public safety is also traffic safety in our mind. We are focusing on traffic safety because there's no condolences that can come to our family or they don't feel any better if their loved one is killed by a steel bullet or a vehicle made out of a steel car. Whether we're walking down the street or crossing it, that is why we ramped up traffic enforcement across the board, seized illegal dirt bikes and ATVs and we crushed them so they would not be used again. That was one of the number one complaints I heard in the city, the ATVs and illegal bikes that really, they were taking over our city. We continued to go after the ghost cards. The police commissioner, in her analysis, realized that many of these ghost cars were being used to commit crimes such as robberies and other crimes in our city. We zeroed in on them and we have removed thousands off the street. The drivers who use paper or illegal license plates or those who intentionally obscure or deface their plate to commit crimes and avoid accountability. This was part of the feeder, the many rivers that were feeding the sea of violence. These ghost cars and paper plates and illegal cars were being ignored far too long. We took a proactive approach and went after them.

In 2022, the NYPD continued a high level of enforcement with 12,000 total summonses and they seized over 5,500 vehicles with ghost plates. It's a significant number of these illegal vehicles on the road. This is the highest number ever recorded in this city since we began tracking these stats. And thanks to our partners in Albany, we were able to begin what we fought for. One of our Albany agendas always surprises me how people said we didn't get any victories in Albany. We walked away with just about everything we asked for in Albany. And one of the most significant points was a 24/7 speed camera operation leading to a dramatic 25 percent decrease in speeding in camera zones. Pedestrian fatalities also are down 8 percent. Let me pause for a moment. Y'all looking over there so the police in me is asking, "Is something going on over there?" (Laughter.)

Okay. All right. All right. You know I'm still po-po. Thanks to our partners in Albany, we were able to begin our 24/7 speed camera operation leading to a dramatic 25 percent decrease in speeding and camera zone. We're seeing results. Pedestrian fatalities are down 8 percent and overall traffic deaths are down 8 percent, but Vision Zero is that. Vision Zero. We have more to do and we are going to do that. In the coming year, we will work with our partners in Albany to advance new legislation that will hold drivers accountable for their dangerous behaviors. We're seeing too many people speeding and we're seeing too much reckless driving on our highways and we want to add new legal penalties for reckless driving that ends someone's life. We want to get drivers with the history of dangers driving off our road, they have become repeated offenders and abusers, we want to zero in on them and that's how we get to the zero fatalities that we are looking for.

We're also taking action to improve conditions at the Department of Correction. I cannot thank Commissioner Molina enough for what he's doing there. I don't know if we keep the stats on it, but I probably visited Rikers in my first year more than any mayor of the history of all mayoral administrations. I've been on Rikers speaking with inmates, speaking with staff, walking through Rikers Island to make sure we can get the results we are looking for. And I cannot be more proud of what Commissioner Molina is doing. We are also doing our job investing millions in upgrading facilities to ensure better working conditions for the men and women who served there and more humane conditions for the persons who are in custody. We're taking steps to reduce assaults on staff and end violence on inmates' violence. Something that people often forget. 80

percent of the people who are assaulted on Rikers Island are the inmates. So as we advocate for inmates that are committing crime, let's not forget those who are the committing crimes on. And we are looking at that.

Commissioner Molina has increased searches for weapons and drug contraband resulting in over 5,000 weapons and over 1,300 items of drug contraband this year. We're going to be rolling out more initiatives to even clamp down more on drugs on Rikers Island. We're also addressing staff shortages. Remember the staff shortage issue? I don't know how many articles you wrote on that. You haven't wrote one yet showing how good Commissioner Molina has done. So hopefully this year you'll turn over a new leaf because Santa knows who's naughty and who's nice. Due to Commissioner Molina's action, absentee have been reduced by 65 percent. 65 percent reduction. All of these numbers reflect just the beginning of what the turnaround needs to be in Rikers, decades of ignoring Rikers Island, not bold enough to give the support to the boldest to do their job.

But as I say over and over again, there are many rivers that feed the sea of violence and we need to look upstream to dam those rivers, and that's what we're doing. Not just about intervention, what we do every day, but what are we doing with prevention? We must continue to address the prevention safety as A.T. Mitchell would say, just as we do precision policing, we need to do precision resources. That's what we have done with this administration, including connecting those at risk of gun violence with job training, placement through organizations like BlocPower. We must continue to build out everything from education to summer employment. Close to a hundred thousand summer youth were employed this year. Never been done before in history. Doing what we've done on Fair Futures. What we are doing about investing in education with our young people in foster care. Young people at risk must have a chance to get on the right path and that's what we going to continue to do. This is a fundamental aspect of our public safety.

So just to round up 2022, so many gains as public safety, there are areas where things have not improved as much as we wanted, such as the number of hate crimes in this city. There are many rivers again that feeds the hate crime, particularly antisemitism, attacks on our LGBTQ+ brothers and sisters, our Muslims community, our AAPI community, and all of our communities experienced this hate that has become pervasive across our entire nation. While there are upward trends throughout the nation, we're saying in New York, hate is not going to live here. And in 2023, we'll have a comprehensive approach building on our Building Bridges initiative and dinners around the city, building bonds through dinners of having people interact with each other, our public education system with Chancellor Banks and making sure we mobilize our city agencies to fight hate crime. We're not going to try to cover up those actions by not reporting them correctly.

I thank the commissioner for placing new leadership over at the Hate Crime Unit to send the right message of what our focus would be. So as a man, a former police officer, I know how devastating hate crimes could be. The number that was brought to my attention today, one of our numbers that's significant, one person has committed 35 hate crimes. To stop the plea bargaining of those who commit hate crimes, that's the message we need to send. So going forward in 2023, we will build out what is working and continue to innovate. That includes the next phase of our Neighborhood Safety Teams. These officers are doing an excellent job because of their ability to

operate self-like. We saw what happened with the arrest of the burglar with Robert de Niro's home. Look at the record of the person who was arrested. Anytime people say, "Why am I talking about recidivism?" Look at the record of the person who was burglarizing the home of Robert De Niro while he was home with his family. Look at her record. This is what we are talking about.

Also, I want to thank the police commissioner and her CompState Community Forums is something that she is putting in place. This is going to identify collaborative solutions to keep our communities safe. It's a smart idea and it engages our community. So you're going to hear more about what we're doing during our State of the City Address next month, and we're going to continue to engage New Yorkers at every level on the issue of public safety. We believe it's important. And over the past year, we have seen an unprecedented level of coordination and community input. You see it on our monthly meeting with our five district attorneys, the summits we've had on public safety, how we brought in the elected officials, community and faith leaders together with local, state, and federal law enforcement. These summits have gone well and we want to continue to do them. Our round tables are allowing people to have a seat and a voice at the table.

So my message today is to every worker, every employee, every person that use our subway system, to every correction officer working a double shift to support his or her family. I'm saying, I hear you. To the first responders putting their lives on the line, I hear you. To the families of those lost to gun violence that I met with last week, I hear you. The victims who seek justice, I hear you. The lawyers and judges who work so hard to deliver justice, I hear you. And to the young person in need of a second chance, a new life, I hear you because I was you. That is why as the mayor, I'm saying to you, "I see you. I see all of you." This team behind me is committed to make 2023 an important year. You heard me say before, I believe strongly this is my Aaron Judge year, and so I'm going to do everything possible to continue to bring home the victories for New York City. Welcome to any questions at this time.

Deputy Mayor Banks: Before we go to questions, we just want to acknowledge the incoming chief of staff, Camille Varlack. (Applause.)

Question: Mayor, what's your reaction to the first cannabis dispensary opening up, and do you think the first legal one in and of itself will reduce the illegal ones that continue to operate?

Mayor Adams: Well, first of all, the first one that's open, I think it's a joint.

Thank you very much. Emotional intelligence. Remember we started out with that? You know that? You're such a kind and generous person. Oh, DJ. Thank you, DJ.

We think that's the perfect balance. A lot of people don't realize the illegal smoke shops are drivers of crime also. We've had a series of people who have been targeting these illegal smoke shops that are sprouting up all over our city. And we think the legal cannabis industry is going to balance out the illegal. And then our coordination, we are going to zero in on them to make sure they don't sprout up all over the city.

Question: I was hoping to hear from Commissioner Sewell about... I know she hasn't spoken yet, and this is such a pivotal press conference about crime, about what your plans are for the future of NYPD in the next year, about what you would like to see the department do. And I don't know what kind of work you would be doing moving forward, especially with the expansion of the Neighborhood Safety Teams.

Mayor Adams: We'll turn over to the commissioner, but let's be clear that what we have done historically that was wrong, when we thought of public safety, we only thought of the NYPD. And we placed everything on NYPD. A cat up the tree? Call the cops. I'm going through a divorce? Call the cops. That's all we did was call the cops, call the cops, call the cops. That's why we brought on board a person that is going to tell every other law enforcement entity in this city you are all part of the game. So that we can allow the commissioner to do the focus that she's doing, but this is a team effort. Everyone that's behind me is part of team public safety. Commissioner.

Police Commissioner Keechant Sewell: Sure. So thank you for that question. So when we began last year, the mayor made it clear that our initial focus was public safety, and we tackled that head on. We realized we had to deal with the crime that was happening in our streets and the fear in our communities, and we set forward to put a plan in place. The trends that we're seeing are not happenstance, they're a result of deployment strategy and the fine work of the women and men of the NYPD.

We expect those trends to continue, but there's a lot more work to do in the NYPD. We're not spiking any balls here. We recognize that there are some work we want to do inside the NYPD, some strategies we want to implement, some restructuring of the police department as well. We want to continue to reach out to our communities. And as the mayor stated, this is a holistic approach to public safety. We work in conjunction with our partners in government, and our community partners as well. So as we all know, we've lost some talent in the NYPD, but there's a tremendous amount of talent as well in the NYPD. So we are going to continue to increase our recruitment efforts, and make the NYPD bigger and better.

Question: Is there anything you can say about restructuring in the NYPD that can be sometimes a little (inaudible)?

Commissioner Sewell: Certainly. We've talked about this a number of times over the course of the year and the results of our review for civilianization and being able to identify efficiencies within the Police Department and eliminate redundancies.

Question: Mayor or police commissioner, can you elaborate on what phase two of the Neighborhood Safety Teams looks like?

Mayor Adams: The phase two?

Question: You mentioned earlier that you were going to be rolling out phase two of the Neighborhood Safety Teams?

Mayor Adams: Yes, yes. We're going to do it in our State of the City. In State and City, we're going to roll it out.

Question: And then secondly, what progress have you made on the change for involuntary hospitalization of homeless folks? Can you elaborate along where that's at?

Mayor Adams: Yeah, and I'm going to do this every time someone asks me that question. I think you guys and ladies falsely reported our story and gave the impression to New Yorkers that whoever's dealing with a mental health illness, they're going to be rounded up and placed in a mental institution. That is not what we said, we were very clear. The small body of people who have reached a point that they cannot take care of their basic needs and they are in danger to themselves. That's a small pocket of people, and we're going to get it right.

The first phase is to make sure we train all the personnel of giving them clarity. We want to give them clarity. But we didn't start doing that. The Police Department, our outreach workers, they were all doing this already. But while we were out there, because this is an on the ground team, we noticed that there was a lack of clarity. We cleared up that lack of clarity. And right now, we are still out there doing that job every day. But we are going to make sure that people have the clarity to zero in like the ones I saw in the subway system the other day, on those who we should be engaging more. And if they are in danger to themselves, they should receive the assistance that they need. And we are finishing up the training, we want to make sure people are well trained, any questions that they have so we can execute this correctly.

Question: When's the training ending?

Mayor Adams: We'll let you know when it ends.

Question: Mayor (inaudible), any new (inaudible)... Commissioner Molina had expressed the concerns this week or recently about the size of the population of Rikers Island in relation to the plan to close it. Do you think closing it is a good idea to start with, and is there a mechanism in place to keep it open? My understanding was that it was done in a way that it couldn't be undone. So is there a mechanism to keep it open if the population doesn't go down sufficiently?

Mayor Adams: Well, I think what Commissioner Molina stated, which I really commend him on cause oftentimes, people are trying to be politically correct instead of just saying the honest truth. The numbers now are too high, the criminal justice system is too bottlenecked. And if we are stating that... We are going to follow the law, a law that we didn't create, a law that did not have a plan B. And if we are stating that right now the prison population is already at a certain level that's beyond what it can hold.

We're saying, "Hey City Council, you guys and ladies need to go back and look at this." What do we do if we close Rikers, spend \$10 billion, and we still don't have the population down to where it's supposed to be? What do we do? You can't say, "Okay, you committed a homicide, no vacancy in our jails." So we are concerned what happens with the next level of this.

Question: But is there any way to undo that plan?

Mayor Adams: We're looking at any way to keep our city safe, and to make sure dangerous people don't remain on the street. And we are going to engage with everyone that's in play. The vision of closing Rikers is an admirable vision. To get it right is a safety vision, and I have to get it right.

Question: Mr. Mayor, so last week you had a summit with DAs and other individuals, representatives of the retail industry and you talked about a citywide strategic prevention plan. What's the latest with that plan? And also, Politico reported that you met with Governor Kathy Hochul last week to talk about your strategy for the legislative session when it comes to combating crime, recidivism, et cetera. Did you talk about a plan to combat retail theft with Kathy Hochul?

Mayor Adams: Okay. Deputy Mayor Banks and Brendan McGuire, the counsel, they looked over that entire summit, which was a brilliant idea. We brought in retails, law enforcement, the whole team. AG Letitia James, all of our DAs... Bless you. All of the team came together, and I thought it was really commendable that they realized the importance to do so. And so Deputy Mayor Banks can go through it. My conversation with Kathy, you ladies and gentlemen know my rules, my private conversations are private conversations. But we are both in alignment with the recidivism issue that we are facing.

Deputy Mayor Banks: When the mayor directed this summit, he made it very clear he wanted his administration to be there, he wanted elected officials to be there, he wanted representatives from the retail theft, and he certainly wanted representatives from the social agencies that could give help. When we talked about retail theft, we talk about the person who is a substance abuser, who maybe is stealing out of some form of chemical dependency or need, and then organized theft where people are going in to steal.

So we all sat there out at breakout tables, and we all came up with ideas, suggestions, creative solutions, and we're going to be in the process of taking that together. So this is going to be a plan that is not, one, a New York City strictly administrative plan, this is a plan that everybody's going to have a part in crafting the solutions. We're compiling it now, it's going to go out to the principals. We're going to finalize it, and then we're going to have a creative strategy to make an indent into...

Question: What do you think that that solution would be as...

(...)

Mayor Adams: We know you want off topic, Bernadette.

Question: Commissioner, is there any way you could quantify how much the newly reconstituted Anti Gun Unit early this year contributed to the reductions you guys had in shootings and murders? How much did they contribute? Can you put a number to that?

Commissioner Sewell: So I can tell you how many gun arrests they've made, I can tell you how many weapons that they have seized, but we can't quantify what they have prevented. Their work is extraordinary. We have about 200 members in the Neighborhood Safety Teams. They're out there in a modified uniform, pretty much stopping vehicles actually dealing with the worst of the worst. So while they've taken almost 500 guns off the street, they've made probably about 1,800 arrests. I think their contribution's significant, and we're looking forward to continuing that program.

Question: Hi. Mr. Mayor, you mentioned working with Albany for legislation to increase penalties for reckless drivers. What legislation is that exactly?

Mayor Adams: Well, it's a combination. Even when I was in the Senate, this is not a new conversation for me about going after reckless drivers. If you look at when I was in the Senate, I introduced legislation around hit and runs. First of all, we weren't properly investigating hit and runs. And then when someone carries out a hit and run, they make a judgment call. Do I stay here because it's only a minor infraction, or do I stay and fill out a report, see the case of this person?

And so we need to look at those repeated reckless drivers, those individuals who create a homicide or vehicle assault. We want to look at all the things that are making it not a deterrent to drive recklessly, to drive under the influence, and create the havoc that we're seen on our streets. Particularly those who are habitual speeders, that is what we're seeing in a problem on our highways. Habitual speeders, reckless drivers.

Question: Mayor Adams, for the next budget cycle, will you consider reversing some of the cuts to agencies that would be supporting the NYPD in their mission?

Mayor Adams: I'm not sure if people realize it, but we have a fiscal crisis, and every agency is important. There's not one agency that you can point to and say is not important. It was a difficult job for my deputy mayors to have to go to their agencies and say, "We have to do another PEG." But we were hit with a serious crisis, not only the pandemic but the influx of migrants. And if we're not fiscally responsible, we're not going to have the resources we need to run the city.

And we're going to be smart. We're going to do an examination, we're going to make some difficult calls. There's some places we're going to say let's think differently about, and that's what the team is going to do. There's not a one size fits all. But we have a real economic crisis, and I have to navigate us through that crisis with our team. And it's not pretty navigating through a crisis where you're dealing with a economic challenge of this proportion. But we're going to do it, and we'll be fine in the process.

Question: Hi Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Adams: Yes.

Question: So you cited the crime data, saying the commissioner thinks we're going in the right direction, getting better. But there are much worse numbers out there than the year to date, (inaudible) seven majors except for murder are all up.

Mayor Adams: Commissioner?

Commissioner Sewell: So I think we are trending in the right direction and rolling 28 days, we're actually down in every major crime category except for grand larceny auto. And we think we're going to finish up... Actually, I know we're going to finish up the fourth quarter strong.

Mayor Adams: And you can't overemphasize. That's why the commissioner did that press conference a few months ago. We can't overemphasize the repeated offenders. There's just a small number of people, around 1,694 people, who are just wreaking havoc on our city. And they are over and over again. The person that broke into Robert De Niro's house, that's just one of many. They are just out there. Grand larceny is what's really killing us. And these folks are just saying, "We're going to keep doing grand larceny." They believe our criminal justice system is a joke. And they just repeatedly are committing the crimes, going to court, getting released. On their way home from court, they're doing another grand larceny. You have to be frustrated if you are a law enforcement officer and you see the person you just locked up and you lock them up again for grand larceny. Look at the numbers. Grand larcenies are killing our stats in this city. Go ahead.

Question: Oh yeah. What's some of the rethinking that you might have to do with budget cuts impact the HRA and that whole pipeline of SNAP benefits and food stamps?

Mayor Adams: We are not looking to do anything that's going to impact those New Yorkers who are in need. Our budgetary decisions must take into account those New Yorkers who are struggling right now. That's why we fought and got the Earned Income Tax Credit increased. That's why we got the childcare monies and dollars put in place. When you look at our direction and administration, it's focusing on New Yorkers who are in need. And we're not going to do anything that's going to impact them.

Deputy Mayor Banks: Thank you.

Mayor Adams: Thank you all. Please stay to help me with the rest of them.

Question: Hi mayor.

Mayor Adams: What's happening?

Question: Good to see you.

Deputy Mayor Banks: When is y'all Christmas party?

Question: Our Christmas passed already. You missed it. Yeah. I'll let you know next year. You may know that Speaker Adams is not entirely happy with you. We just heard from her that she's

upset that it seems like you're negotiating the budget through the post editorial board. She says deep cuts to Council members' discretionary funds would be very detrimental to the health and safety of New Yorkers. What's your response to that?

Mayor Adams: I was asked a question that I answered and it's not negotiating the budget. I'm pretty sure they're asked questions and they answered them. We had two days of hearings for asylum seekers, two days of hearings. The Council, to me, they have made it clear that this is the top priority in the city. And I'm hearing people are saying, "Give free telephones, free Metrocard, free this, free this, free, this free." Everyday New Yorkers don't have free telephones. Everyday New Yorkers don't have free Metrocards. Everyday New Yorkers are not given free places to live.

So when the Council stated and some of the members are stating that we need to give everything free, I'm saying, "You guys have a half a billion dollars in discretionary dollars. If you really feel as though we should be given free, then can you voluntarily give us 50 percent of what you're doing so we can do this together?" That's my statement to them. So it's not negotiating the budget. It is stating that I'm hearing from my Council persons all the time that we need to give more free stuff away. This stuff costs money and I am not going to take away from taxpayers to go beyond what we have been doing, and we have been doing a lot.

Question: On an unrelated topic real quick. You had the COVID press conference yesterday saying winter's going to be challenging. Then we heard from DOE saying that the COVID situation room will be closing. Parents will no longer be notified of a positive case. How do you reconcile those two things?

Mayor Adams: I think it's extremely impressive what we did during COVID. I think we should go back and look at those stories, but a lot of people don't realize how much went into the planning of making sure that we had take home tests. I think we had an average of five million take home tests went to parents so they could test their children ahead of time. Our notifications were excellent. And so that team that orchestrated our success of keeping our schools open against everyone who was telling us to close the schools, we knew that was the safest place for our children. That team made a decision that they no longer need that room as part of their apparatus, and it goes with how we're better notifying people, how we're better communicating. But if it needs to be reopened, we'll reopen. We'll make sure that it's done, but they made that decision. I respect that decision.

Question: This morning you gave yourself a B+ in your first year and it made me think, you've talked about how you're a mentor to many, Bishop Whitehead, the Petrosyants, I think I'm pronouncing right. As mentees, what kind of grade do you give Bishop Whitehead in light of the federal case against him now?

Mayor Adams: Well listen, first of all, I think that when you look at my work around mentoring and helping people, it's a fairly impressive one. Many of these young people have gone on to do some good things with their lives and I'm going to continue to do it. This is what I do and I'm not going to stop doing that. Matter of fact, I was criticized for sitting down with gang members when I was running for office to find out how to take guns off the street. This is what I do. And

so rating him, as you stated, I rated myself. If you want, he should rate himself. That's not my job to do, to judge others, especially since I'm perfectly imperfect.

Question: As a follow-up, I don't know if the (inaudible.) Have the feds spoken to you or reached out to you (inaudible) bishop? I know this was defrauding allegedly of thousands of dollars. I know he's spoken that he has a close relationship with you. I don't know if you've been in contact by the feds when they were investigating in court with the bishop since his arrest.

Mayor Adams: Let me tell you something, it is one thing I learned in the area of investigations, allow the investigations to do what they have to do. Stay out of it. I have no comments on the federal investigation. They're doing their job. I'm doing my job as mayor. Any question can go to the federal investigators.

Question: Mr. Mayor, Texas Governor Greg Abbott told me that they're coordinating with El Paso to send buses here to New York. Had a reporter at Port Authority today who said that some unaccompanied minors got off the bus. Were you aware of that ahead of time? And also what do you think of that? Has this ever happened before where unaccompanied migrant minors have come into the city? And yeah, just what do you think about that? Did you know?

Mayor Adams: Yeah, first, I didn't know and I'm not sure if that's legal. This is the first time I heard about it and I don't know if our team is aware of it, but I'm not sure if that action is a legal action, and we're going to explore that. I have been speaking with the mayor of Chicago, the mayor of Houston, and we have been collaborating on what our actions are going to be. And listen, I said this before and I'll say it again, no city should have the experiences. El Paso should not have to go through this. Houston, Washington, Chicago, New York. This should be a national response to this problem.

Question: Have you talked to the El Paso mayor?

Mayor Adams: I communicate with everyone. I have not communicated with him recently, but again, no city should be going through this.

Question: Mr. Mayor and commissioner, a number of police officers are retiring. I think there were like close to 2,000 just up from last year. What are you doing to combat that and keep officers on the job?

Mayor Adams: You're a little low.

(Crosstalk.)

Mayor Adams: Retiring? The commissioner could give her response. A lot of these are big classes, of my understanding. Second, this false story that people don't want to be police officers is just not true. And I want to thank the commissioner on how she looked at, she pinpointed, why are we not getting classes larger, and she saw that it had a lot to do with the examination, DCAS, not having the space to do so. She came up with a solution for that. People want to be cops and

they're going to continue to come on. Our goal is to increase the classes to match those who are leaving. But commissioner if you want?

Commissioner Sewell: Sure. So we'll be graduating a class of almost 600 hopefully by the end of this month and I plan on swearing in another 600 beginning in January. So while we do have some retirees, we are encouraged by the numbers that we're getting while we're ramping up post COVID for recruitment efforts.

Question: Mr. Mayor, you had said the name of the police officer, his last name who was shot in the foot.

Mayor Adams: Yes.

Question: What is his full name, first and last?

Mayor Adams: The commissioner will give it to you. I gave you his last name and they want to do their preliminary to make sure they notify who they need to notify. So I'll follow her lead on this.

Question: Mr. Mayor, at this point do you know how long the stay on Title 42 will last?

Mayor Adams: Yes.

Question: Will you tell me about your outreach to the White House seeing as you and President Biden are very much simpatico?

Mayor Adams: Yeah, and listen, I think the president has a good understanding of how this is a real issue. And I want to take my hat off to Senator Schumer who I spoke with yesterday, Minority Leader Jeffries, and how they dug in and we were able to get this omnibus bill. It has the money in it that we need, some of the money that we need of... This is a national issue. And that's my conversation with the president's team, that we need a national solution because it's not about just paying for what's here now, but how do we prevent? As Bernadette just stated, they're going to start sending more buses. We are at capacity. We have the highest number in our shelters in the history that we recorded of... In the last, I think four days, we had 800. We're averaging almost 150 to 200 a day. These numbers are alarming and we have to continue to do what is right. And we're hoping the White House hears us and we get this done.

###