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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR ERIC ADAMS APPEARS LIVE ON CNBC'S SQUAWK BOX

Andrew Ross Sorkin: Welcome back to Squawk Box this morning. Time now for our Squawk newsmaker of the hour. New York City Mayor Eric Adams here to talk about the return to work in the city, fighting crime, and even killing rats. Mayor Adams, it's great to see you this morning. We're all trying to get back to work and we've had a number of executives in New York talking about more folks getting back into the office. Still lots of work to go. But one of the issues that they continue to talk about, as you know so very well, is the issue of crime in New York. And I wanted to start there in terms of how you are thinking about crime. There were some comments that you made recently saying you think it's been overplayed. The New York Post this morning, I don't know if you saw, they put you on a unicorn horse this morning, or unicorn, unicorn horse, fantasy land they said. I don't know if you saw this. But I think executives and employees are thinking about this as a real issue

Mayor Eric Adams: And this is how we have to approach this when you talk about public safety. I learned from my days of policing during the early, mid 80s, early 90s, is that you have to deal with actual crime, which we are dealing with in the city, but you also have to make sure people are feeling safe because you don't have to be a victim of a crime, but if you're watching someone that's dealing with mental health illness, that is loud and disruptive on your subway system, you feel the anxiety.

And so we know we have real crime to deal with. That is why I focus on gun violence. We have witnessed a substantial double digit decrease in homicide, decrease in shootings. We have a record high of gun arrests. We moved over 5,000 guns off our streets. We're really in the subway system, a thousand new cops — we want the omnipresence. So we're going after those violent individuals and we know we also must make New Yorkers feel safe while we deal with the actual numbers.

Sorkin: Mr. Mayor, how are you feeling about that? I take the subway, I'd say on average, probably close to three times a day these days, just because it's so efficient. But I also have moments where I see people out there and I'm thinking, "Oh, this is not a good situation" and I sort of edge one way or the other.

Mayor Adams: And that is so important what you're saying because when I'm in the system, and I am in the system a lot, the subway system, and I notice if someone is disorderly, someone is

loud, they did not have to do something directly to me, but I'm feeling anxious because I just read about someone being shoved on the subway track. So that's an anxious feeling that I am having. That is why we are having a major summit this weekend with everyone around the criminal justice and mental health issues where even those who criticize our policies will be there, those who are in support.

We must approach this in a unified way to deal with the mental health issues that people are facing, which you're seeing a large number of some of the violent acts that are happening because of those small number of people with mental health issues. We must deal with the actual crimes. The city must be safe, but we also must make sure that people are not feeling that anxiety.

Joe Kernen: Mr. Mayor, as a former policeman, I know you've probably kicked this theory around again and again, the broken window theory. There's something to it obviously, that if the small things get overlooked, if there's cashless bail, if people, they get arrested, they're out immediately because there's no room or it's a minor crime, that's sort of what gives everyone the feeling that there's no consequences. Do you think something needs to be done in terms of the bail reform? Even Letitia James is now conceding maybe that there should be some reform at this point or prosecutors seen as way too lenient. I think you need to start there. I don't think you can just say, "Well, it's media's covering all these things and it just seems worse than it actually is."

Mayor Adams: Well, listen. You are 100 percent right when you talk about, you use the term broken windows, I'm a big believer in quality of life. Let's look at some of them. Number one, the overwhelming number or the large number of paper plates, stolen plates that were on our roadways, no one looked at. Many of the people who had these cars that were not authorized were committing robberies and other violent acts. We zeroed in on them.

We zeroed in on the illegal dirt bikes that were being used to do robberies and violent crimes. We removed thousands off our streets. We are zeroing in on those who are fare beaters. Many of them were not paying their fare and they were committing robberies and other violent crimes on our subway system. We're going after those quality of life crimes, going into stores, stealing things, walking out.

But once we make the apprehension, because arrests are up in this city. In the subway system, we have a 47 percent increase in arrest year over year. Officers are doing their jobs. But once we apprehend people, we must send a strong message in our criminal justice system, it won't be a catch repeat action that's taking place right now. And we're hoping that's what the summit this weekend is able to accomplish, how do we deal with this bottleneck? How do we deal with dangerous people still on our streets?

Sorkin: Mr. Mayor, also wanted to talk about this issue about immigration and the tent cities that have gone up around the city, how you're going to deal with that. One of your colleagues was caught on camera, I'm sure you saw it, saying what Governor Abbott was doing has proven effective. "It's flooded our city, going to make Biden look bad. I don't know that Eric Adams is capable enough to navigate it." What was your reaction to that?

Mayor Adams: Well, first of all, he was a low-level staffer. He was not included of any of our planning. His role was just to go to events and determine what time I should arrive. And so it's unfortunate that he was taped by an unethical group and there's not much you could say into that. But let's look at the facts.

The facts is we had an unprecedented influx of migrant and asylum seekers. We were prepared, we didn't panic. We put in place a multi-level plan. Number one, we made sure that everyone came here, we fulfilled our legal and moral responsibility to ensure that we had no children sleeping on our streets. We accomplished that. We also sent out a message to the White House that we need to have a real decompression strategy. They put that in place.

We saw a decrease in the number of buses. We went from 10 buses a day to we're now down to two. We also got a message from the mayor of El Paso who stated he would no longer be sending buses here. We put in place a real strategic plan that showed our capability and our success in the process, just as we did with COVID and Monkeypox and all the other crises that this city has had to face and we were successful here and we're going to continue to do so.

Becky Quick: Mr. Mayor, just speaking with people who have been looking at the budget and trying to figure out how ends are going to be met. Look, we got 20 billion dollars in stimulus funding and pandemic funding that came from the federal government and that's been able to prop up a lot in New York City. When that money runs out, what happens? Because there were some programs that were expanded on the basis of that money as if it was never going away, things like pre-K. What do you do at that point and what kind of hole is that going to leave in the budget?

Mayor Adams: I am so glad you raised that because many people believe that 20 billion dollar influx was going to remain throughout our days in office. That's not the reality. We have a real fiscal cliff. We potentially could have a 10 billion dollar budget deficit and I'm not going to wait until the money runs out before we have a response. We're doing just the opposite.

We introduced what's called a PEG, a program to eliminate the gap. Every agency in the city is looking at how to be fiscally responsible. We're looking at how to get a better product out of taxpayers' dollars. That is why we're making these tough decisions now so we could be prepared in the future to protect pre-K, to protect many of these programs we have.

Listen, let's be clear. There was a lot of, I would like to say fat in our agencies, and we're trimming that fat and we're doing without layoffs and without decreasing the services of our city.

Sorkin: Mr. Mayor, we want to thank you for joining us, and as you know as a New York City resident, I am rooting for this city. So thank you. I appreciate it.

Mayor Adams: Thank you. Thank you. Take care.

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