

Transcript: Mayor Eric Adams, Gun Violence Prevention Task Force Co-Chair A.T. Mitchell Appear Live on Fox5's "Good Day New York"

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Rosanna Scotto: The mayor and the gun violence czar are with us this morning on Good Day New York. Thank you so much for being here.

Mayor Eric Adams: Thank you. Good to speak with both of you and the audience.

A.T Mitchell, Co-chair of the Gun Violence Prevention Task Force: Yes, good morning.

Scotto: Morning. Mr. Mayor, what do you think about this gun legislation in D.C.? Is it enough? And as we know, the people who are shooting guns off in our city. They're not getting legal guns.

Mayor Adams: Well said. I take my hat off to Senator Schumer and the 10 Democrats and Republicans. You heard me say it over and over again, that there are many rivers that feed the sea of violence, particularly gun violence in our city and our nation. And this is just damming one river, we have so many more rivers to dam and if we don't, we are going to see the continuation of this violence. As you pointed out at the opening of the show, you had a person shooting in broad daylight. The days of waiting for darkness to carry out these dangerous acts are over. Too many guns on our streets. Too many dangerous people returning to our streets after shooting guns. And just the willingness to shoot without fear of reprisal or repercussion from the criminal justice system.

Scotto: Mr. Mitchell, you got your hands full. As you know, shootings are up. People feel unsafe in New York City, but sadly your reputation precedes you. There's been a lot

of talk about your past and financial irregularities with the nonprofit that you run. How do you overcome that and get people focused back on gun safety?

Mitchell: Well, by just focusing on, like you said, on gun safety. Continuing to do the work that we've been doing on the ground is how we remain focused.

Mayor Adams: One thing you said that I wanted to just point to – shootings and murders are down. Our Neighborhood Safety Teams partner with the Crisis Management Team, we are beginning to see some of the results of really, the systems that we have put in place and that I talked about for years and A.T. is a crucial part of this.

Scotto: I agree, but the last two weeks or something, we've seen like crazy things happening, like in Brooklyn, Coney Island, where four to eight men are outside, actually with guns drawn, firing in the air, firing at each other. That kind of stuff doesn't make people feel easy.

Mayor Adams: What you just pointed out is so crucial to this part of what we're attempting to do, because as we bring down the actual crime, we also have to look at these high profile issues that really, these issues are having our city on edge. So, it's a combination. We're going to bring down the actual crime and then we have to create the environment of omnipresence of police officers, as well as going after those high profile issues. No one wants to see someone shooting in the air, shootouts on our streets. So, that is part of what we are up against and that's why the Crisis Management Team, partnering with our agencies, our deputy mayors, and having a holistic approach to fighting violence, is why we are moving in this direction.

Bianca Peters: Yeah and Mr. Mitchell, part of Mayor Adam's holistic approach is appointing you as gun czar, but why do we need a gun czar? Let's get down to the nitty gritty. What are you going to actually do to bring that gun violence down?

Mitchell: Well, part of it is by being able to sit alongside the mayor and the other high level officials here at the table, talking about the solutions that can be actually used in those neighborhoods where the unfortunate gun violence is taking place. Our goal is to get to them before they actually begin shooting and that's what we look to do going forward.

Mayor Adams: And it's intervention and prevention. Remember, I've been saying that for a long time. Intervention, prevention. Intervention is what my police officers and our police officers are doing every day. Now, let's talk about the prevention. We see the profile of those who are committing crimes in our city, foster care, drop out of foster care without support, homeless without support, dropping out of school without support, dyslexia without support. All of those elements that are feeding the crime in our city, by having someone like A.T. Mitchell and other Crisis Management Teams coordinating with all of our city agencies, HRA, DOE, NYPD, this is a unique way of having talent on the ground, doing what they do, coordinating with the resources of the city so we can prevent and deal with those who are committing crimes now in our city.

Peters: Yeah mayor, I mean, intervention, prevention, such key parts, but I think you're also missing another bigger part of it, which is after one of our viewers, we tweet them out ... we ask them to tweet us actually, every show, giving us questions. Sandro asked something saying, "Guns on the streets is a big problem, but I think criminals back on the streets is an even bigger one. I feel the two go hand-in-hand. I don't think you can fix one problem without fixing the other. Bail reform needs to end." What is your response to Sandro? And he probably has the same sentiment as so many viewers.

Mayor Adams: Well, first of all, I am not the choir, I wrote the song. I've been singing that song for a long time now, and I'm glad that New Yorkers are listening to this chorus and we're now no longer singing off key. All across the nation, people are saying, "This is what this guy has been telling us." And it's more than just bail reform. We need to be clear on that. Yes, we should give our judges the discretion for dangerous people. But we have to look at our court system, it's bottlenecked.

Mayor Adams: Judges need to use the power when they have it to hand down sentences. We need to look at the laws that allow guns to continue to be in our streets and in our city. And so, if we just zero in on one aspect of the river of giving judges discretion, we're going to miss the totality of how we move to rid our streets of this violence we're seeing. And the increase in robberies, increasing grand larcenies, the paper plates, the illegal paper plates on vehicles. This is a holistic approach of solving criminality in our city.

Scotto: Mr. Mayor, are you concerned there are reports that over 500 cops are resigning and over 1,000 are retiring? Does that concern you?

Mayor Adams: No, it does not. New York City Police Department is an amazing career. I know it first hand and we are going to find young men and women who are going to want to be a member of the New York City finest. I also believe, and I stated this over and over again, we are not deploying our resources properly and the police commissioner and I, and her team, we are looking at the proper deployment of police officers. You're seeing a difference, parades. You don't see five, six police officers standing at the corner together. You're seeing us deploy our police properly and we're going to bring in. We got an amazing recruitment campaign coming in. This is a great opportunity to diversify the department. So no, people will always want to join the New York City Police Department. It's one of the best careers you could have in the city.

Scotto: So, Mr. Mayor, I know you released details about your new budget. Obviously, it's a little bit more than last year by a bill or so, but Bill Bratton, who was a former police commissioner twice here in our area, tweeted out yesterday, "The current staffing retirement crisis shows a sharp decline in officers to handle a growing workload, disorder and crime rate is in sharp contrast to the new record breaking city budget city officials are celebrating, which has no money for additional cops." Why not any more money for additional cops?

Mayor Adams: Well, Bill is, I believe one of the best law enforcement minds we have in the city – I have a deep level of respect for him. A couple of things. Number one, our budget went up because our – we collected more taxes than we thought we were going to have over \$2 billion. And so that increased the number. Then we went after those new needs because we didn't have those \$2 billion previously. We didn't spend it all. We put it into our reserves for the rainy days or the storms that are coming, but we also looked after some new leads, such as a park personnel to keep our parks clean. New Yorkers were talking about sanitation issues for the longest. Our streets were dirty. We're now able to compliment that. And at the same time, we're prepared for those real challenges, financial challenges that we are going to face.

Mayor Adams: We must first utilize the resources we have. I cannot emphasize enough, we were not deploying our police the way they should have been deployed. For example, when we had the assassination of two officers several years ago, we took our transit police and almost cut it in half by moving from single patrol to dual patrol. That was a substantial decrease that we were not able to put police throughout the transit system. We're going back to single patrol, what I did as a transit officer. And that is going to double the amount of coverage we can see. I'm going to deploy New York's taxpayers' money correctly, and by doing so with their Police Department.

Peters: I know you heard Rosanna bring up the budget. We do have to ask, I mean, there's a lot of people that are giving you some flack on the cutting of the budget for public schools, but you do have a response to that. Explain that as a bigger picture for us.

Mayor Adams: We did not cut the budget for public schools. We reallocated the money based on the student population. We lost thousands of students from the Department of Education and there's something called fair student funding. We're going to have 100% of fair student funding. Nothing is more dysfunctional than paying for something that when you decrease the numbers, you have to readjust on based on the number of students you have. Every student will have 100% of fair student funding, and we're using federal dollars to supplement the 250 million that people are talking about. And if the numbers go up, we're going to put more money into the schools appropriately. So this is not a cut and people should be honest. Some people who are talking about this are being disingenuous. This is not a cut. We are going to make sure every student have 100% of fair student funding.

Scotto: All right, Mr. Mitchell, what should we call you? Do we call you czar? I feel like we've kind of let you off the hook today a little bit.

Mitchell: Well, I'm the co-chair, alongside Deputy Sheena Wright of the Gun Violence Prevention Taskforce. And so that's my official title here at City government.

Mayor Adams: Notice he's with my deputy mayor. So this is the first time you're seeing a deputy mayor partner and a co-chair with one of the crisis management teams of fighters on the ground. This is a real statement to the city and all of my city agencies of this partnership, his years of experience, what he has done in this area. A.T. we call him all the time. I have known him for over 30 years of doing this work and we're going to listen.

Scotto: Well, I think we're looking forward to seeing some action from you, Mr. Mitchell. At the same time, I think people are concerned about your irregularities in the past. How do you want to relieve New Yorker's concerns right now?

Mitchell: I think I just want to be judged based on the action, the work that has already been done, and that's basically it.

Mayor Adams: And this is an administration of perfectly imperfect people. We're in a perfectly imperfect city of people. Look at my life. And I was very transparent on the campaign trail about being arrested, of being dyslexic, rejected. Now I'm elected. And so that's the American story. The American story is, you're not judged based on the worst day of your life. You're judged on the totality of your life. And his approach to sitting beside me, that is part of the American story. The bend in the road is not the end of the road, as long as you make the turn and we're making a turn today to deal with crime in our city.

Scotto: Well, we, as New Yorkers, we welcome that and we wish you the best of luck, Andre T. Mitchell-

Mitchell: Thank you. Thank you.

Scotto: The new gun violence czar, and the mayor of New York City, Mr. Eric Adams. Thank you so much.

Mayor Adams: Thank you. Take care.

Mitchell: Likewise.

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