

# Transcript: Mayor Eric Adams, DOC Commissioner Louis Molina Announce Over 2,700 Weapons Recovered From Rikers Island

June 22, 2022

**Mayor Eric Adams:** I just want to take my hat off to the boldest, the men and women of the Department of Correction. As long as I can remember in my time in law enforcement, this has been an agency that has been ignored, has been an agency that every day, in spite of all of the negative news, they come every day, they do the job, they hold it down. They have been calling out for years of saying, "We need help. We need help. We need help."

**Mayor Adams:** The problems that they have been facing did not start in 2022. In fact, it had started generations ago. What we're seeing, the erosion of our correctional facility, is a complete neglect of the men and women who serve here every day. They come in, they deal with some of the most dangerous people in our city. When a person commits a crime, a homicide, a rape, a robbery, they do not go back to their block, they go back to a cell block. And they have to ensure that person does not harm another inmate, harm a staff, or, in some cases, harm themselves.

**Mayor Adams:** Instead of us lifting them up, we do just the opposite. We tear them down over and over again. But I'm here to say to the men and women of the Department of Corrections, this mayor is not going to tear you down. I acknowledge your job. I acknowledge what you do. And I'm saying thank you for what you do. The job you are doing, people don't want to do, yet you do it every day. As I walked through the facilities and saw how you continue to evolve, I'm more solid in my belief we picked the right person to be the commissioner of the Department of Correction. I want to thank Commissioner Molina.

**Mayor Adams:** This administration has gone through so many challenges since January. From fires, to loss of officers, to violence, to COVID, to economic strife, our economy, but the crisis we are facing here is one of our largest crises. We could easily

throw up our hands and say let the federal government take over. We could have easily done that, but no, we know we are better than that. We know that we can fix this problem. All we ask is to give us the opportunity and the resources to carry out this function and for all of our partners to do their job; unbottlenecking the court system; making sure those who are committing crimes are going through the process and having laws that not only protect citizens, but protect those who are carrying out the job of protecting us.

**Mayor Adams:** We do want to acknowledge the recent deaths in the Department of Correction, but let's look at each individual death and find out what happened. It blew my mind to learn out of 5,000 prisoners, they have over 140 something thousand cases of people getting medical treatment. Think about that number. By the time they get here, their preexisting conditions, their health crises, mental health illnesses, all of the things that people are facing, at the worst end of their lives, are discovered when they come here. 5,000 people. Over 140,000 medical interactions. That's an amazing number to look at and examine.

**Mayor Adams:** I saw that today as I walked through and talked to people in custody and in correction. Some of the young people who are in the Peace Center, how they wanted to sit down and say, "We want to interact, to learn more." I will be back here to sit down and speak with many of them. I can learn so much from the inmates that are going to be returning home. I was here last week, I believe, at a graduation ceremony. It probably was last week. When you're the mayor, my life is like a dog's life, one day is many days. Seeing these graduates, touched by the principal of the school, watching all these layers of these officers and what they're doing.

**Mayor Adams:** Walking through the first facility with the warden, you can generally care. I see she cares. These officers, they care about these inmates and ensuring that they can get something out of here. Instead of doing time, that they can learn during this time, so they don't continue to work.

**Mayor Adams:** We know that we're not where we want to be. It's a lot of work in progress, a lot that we have to do, but at the heart of that is doing something that must be done. Keeping our place safe starts with this. Look at this. This is only an example – this is an example of what they retrieve. Look at these pieces, look at these shanks. This is what they come to work to experience every day.

**Mayor Adams:** The weapons you see in front of you are small samples of 2,700 different weapons. We were able to recover these weapons because Commissioner Molina came in and resumed the tactical search operation that had been previously suspended. We stopped the tactical search operation that allows us to retrieve this because those who are not protected inmates were the loudest. As politicians normally do, they succumb to the loudest and say, "We are going to stop doing these searches and allow people, from the time we suspend it, to carry these weapons." Not me. Ignore the noise and get the job done.

**Mayor Adams:** I thank the units that carried out this function. Because of not only the search procedure – many people talk about the officers that are out, how about focusing on 1,400 officers returning to work under the leadership of Commissioner Molina and his team, they're back. Those who are out legitimately, they have a right, if they're injured and out sick, to be out. Those who are abusing the right to be out, we're going to focus on them, but that is not the entire population that is out. Some have been injured, attacked, out sick from COVID. For a long time, Rikers was ignored. When people were asking for masks, PPEs, and other resources, we ignored Rikers Island. Some people have legitimate reasons that they're out, and we will distinguish between the two.

**Mayor Adams:** You see that a lot of these weapons that you have in front of you are made from plexiglass and other building materials taken from the jails themselves. People use the eroding facilities as to become a weapon factory, to attack other inmates and officers. The number is often ignored – that over 80% of the attacks here are on other inmates. Those who are dangerous don't stop being dangerous because they come to Rikers, they continue to be dangerous.

**Mayor Adams:** I'm here to tell you that the era of neglecting our jails for political reasons, that era sunsetted on January 1, 2022, when I became the mayor of this city. We're going to be focused and not going to let people wander the streets of our city with dangerous weapons like these, and they can't do it on Rikers Island. Tactical search operations work and we're going to continue to do them.

**Mayor Adams:** Since we resumed tactical search operations in February, slashes and stabbings have declined by 63%. When you saw those slashes and stabbings going up, they suspended the searches. We have ex-commissioners that are criticizing this commissioner. What did you do when you had the job? You're telling us everything we are doing wrong. What did you do right? We decreased slashings by 63%. Assaults on

staff resulting in use of force are down 30% compared to the same six months of the period last year. Use of force is down 27% as compared to the same six month period last year. This is proof right leadership can turn the corner and we have the right leadership in Commissioner Molina.

**Mayor Adams:** We're seeing progress. It's not only that we're saying we're seeing progress, the federal judge said it. He said we're moving in the right direction and we have the right leadership. That's what the federal judge said. Everyone was calling, "Take Rikers away. Take Rikers away." An independent person that viewed our plan and our operation and our progress stated, "They are doing the right things to move it in the right direction," and we're going to continue to do that. We're seeing progress, and that progress is going to continue to materialize.

**Mayor Adams:** The plan includes an interagency task force designed to give our jails the support they need and stop having the boldest do this on their own. Rikers is all of our responsibility, the Department of Education, probation, housing, all of us are responsible for what happens here on Rikers Island. That is what we're saying to our city. We will hold people who possess weapons and contraband and commit crimes in our jails, they will be held accountable. Since January 1st, we have rearrested 121 people in custody for crimes committed. I want to thank Darcel Clark, the Bronx district attorney, for being a partner on this.

**Mayor Adams:** Rikers Island has become a waystation, not the last stop, and we know that. We must give people the protection of the law as we enforce the law. Enforcing the law is not only on our streets, it's inside our facilities that we're housing those who have committed crime or are accused of committing a crime. We must do more and we know that, and we will continue to do more.

**Mayor Adams:** We are focused on the root causes of crime. That is why we want schools, graduation – walked into one facility where they're teaching welding and how to be a mechanic. We don't want these young people and adults to continue to come back into our society. That is the holistic approach that we are facing and what we are doing. You've heard me say it over and over again, there are many rivers that feed the sea of violence. We have to dam each one of them. This commissioner is doing his job of damming the rivers that allow people to return to violence. That includes those who are here with learning disabilities. First mayor in history that will be testing inmates for dyslexia. It is predicted 30 to 40% of the inmates here are dyslexic. We're not waiting

until they come back home, we're testing them here in Rikers to give them the support that they need.

**Mayor Adams:** I am truly pleased of what I am seeing and what I saw today. I will be back here over and over again, to make sure that this is part of our overall plan of supporting these men and women. This is one of the toughest jobs in this city, if not the toughest job in America. These officers were doing 12 hour tours, they were doing triples. Triples. Not seeing their families. And every day they pick up the paper and they hear how bad they are. How we treated Rikers Island and the men and women who are here, we should all be ashamed of that. And it doesn't lose sight on me. Look here, predominantly Black and brown, who are the inmates? Predominantly Black and brown. Overwhelming number of predominantly women in a dangerous environment. Got to think about that for a moment. I see it, and I know it, and I'm saying to you, you're the boldest, and you're one of the best law enforcement entities we have in this country. I thank you for doing your job, and doing this life-saving work. And this is a mayor that acknowledge you, and I am not ashamed of you, I am proud of you. Keep doing the job you're doing and we're going to be there to do it with you. Commissioner?

**Commissioner Louis Molina, Department of Corrections:** Mr. Mayor, thank you for your continued leadership and support of this department. I want to thank our uniformed staff, without their support and dedication to their jobs, what you see before you couldn't have been done. Not only did we seize over 2,700 contraband weapons, but we also seized over 400 different types of drug paraphernalia and narcotics that tries to get into our facilities. So every day our men and women in uniform are doing everything they can to make this place safe, and they're led by the men and women you see behind me, our wardens and acting assistant chiefs, in order to be able to get this work done. But in addition to our uniformed staff, I want to also shout out our non-uniform staff. Our program staff, and our contract [inaudible] providers are engaging with the people in custody, our credible messengers. It is a holistic approach in order to get individuals not to respond violently to issues of conflict. And I also want to thank you faith-based leaders. We've increased our interaction with our faith-based community so that they're in here and they're interacting with persons in custody, but they're also interacting with our staff too because this work is not easy. So thank you for coming today and giving us an opportunity to share a lot of the work we have done here to make progress today.

**Mayor Adams:** You can stay here. Do you have any questions on topic?

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, I have two questions for you. You talked about progress and you talked about the judge's decision to approve the Rikers Action Plan, which was done around June 14th. Since June 14th three people have died either in custody or have recently been in custody. Do you say that that is progress? That's the first question. Two, is with the EMTC, the intake facility, last week I believe, a Board of Correction member had raised some questions about the conditions in EMTC and intake saying there were plenty of men, I believe, around the facility, that people were screaming, people were urinating. Is that the kind of conditions that you saw?

**Mayor Adams:** First let's deal with the first [inaudible]. You said seven people have died?

**Question:** Three.

**Mayor Adams:** Three people have died.

**Question:** In the last-

**Mayor Adams:** Right, so we should look into each death because if you have preexisting conditions. Remember, 5,000 people, over 140,000 hospital rooms or medical procedures, from dental to other procedures. By the time people reach Rikers, their health, it has deteriorated and they come to these facilities. Now, you telling me that three people were stabbed, three people were murdered, now we talking about a different conversation. So let's look at each individual and find out, out of those 5,000 people, three have died, let's find out why they died, because Rikers didn't give them heart disease, if that's the reason they died. Rikers didn't give them diabetes, if that's the reason they died. We look at the number, "Hey, three people died," but why did they die? What conditions did they have before they came to Rikers Island? The headline does not tell the story.

**Mayor Adams:** We walked through the intake area, and when you see the large number of people who are coming in, and those who are leaving, when you see that combination. And we continue to evolve to get the product that we want. Speaking with the warden that was over there it was clear of her focus on what needs to be done. She has, I believe, it was an 89%, or a high level of those who received the necessary medical treatment that they deserve, and getting people to the facilities that they need. Commissioner, you want to talk about the intake?

**Commissioner Molina:** I mean, we made a lot of vast improvements in our intake, especially since the situation as it was pertaining to last year. So we're moving a lot of individuals in. Just to put it into context, calendar year to date, we've had over 8,900 admissions that have gone through that intake facility, so we're managing and we're blending housing units and we're making sure that we're allowing people to received the medical care that they need in a timely fashion, so that they can be placed in other facilities in the Island.

**Mayor Adams:** You know what, Courtney, what I learned, which was like an awakening for me as I walked through, we often think of hospitalization. 140,000 people on medical treatment. We also think of people's intake and outtake. We think of this as, "Okay, we just have the smooth transition of moving bodies around." No, you're moving dangerous people around. This is not just, okay, you at Walmart and you in line, they're going to move you to the next cashier. No, you have to be very careful, very strategic, and always be focused on, "I have a dangerous person that committed a violent crime." Because you get here, it's not that you shoplift, it's not that you stole a bicycle, because you're going home from the precinct. To get here you committed a dangerous crime, and they have to stay focused as they meticulously move people from one location to the other. They have to lock down areas, they have to keep prisoners moving, they have to be on their [inaudible], Ps, and Qs. This is not just moving bodies around, this is moving some of the most dangerous people in our city around, and there's an art to do it correctly, and that's what they're doing.

**Question:** Looking at this, the immediate question that comes to mind is, what's the condition of this facility that allows inmates to fashion a piece of plexiglass, break it apart, and turn it into a weapon? And second question, is it still a top priority moving as quickly as possible to close this complex entirely?

**Mayor Adams:** Second question first. We're going to follow the law. The law states that Rikers can no longer be a jail. My opinion does not matter, that's a law, and I'm going to always follow the law. Shanks are not new, shanks are not only in Rikers, shanks and the ingenuity of creating weapons is probably as old as prisoners have been. Using the erosion of this facility to create weapons and the creativity of those who want to do harm in prison is not a new phenomenon. As long as I can remember, and every time I visit a correctional facility, from Attica, off the coast of San Francisco, you see the same things. But the ability to be strategic and go in and find them, remove them, and hold people accountable is what we stopped doing over the last couple of years because of outside noise. That noise has been shut off. This commissioner is going to have the

complete trust in me to do this job, and that's why we received 2,700 weapons that could have harmed an inmate or a member of this facility.

**Question:** Yes, for the commissioner. Could you describe your tactical search operation? What does that involve? And what do the officers do?

**Commissioner Molina:** Sure, so it's leveraging not only security staff that works within the facility, working with the warden, they're working in coordination under our acting assistant chief of security. We use special search teams, special response teams, as well as our emergency service units, and we go to the various housing units and we search individual's property. We search cells, we search individuals, and we remove contraband weapons or contraband narcotics that are in these facilities.

**Question:** Are they hidden strategically? Where do you find them?

**Commissioner Molina:** We find them sometimes in cell areas, sometimes we may find them in corridors, sometimes we may find them on individual people as we're searching individuals randomly. We also do a lot of interdiction. Stuff sometimes comes through the mail as well. Sometimes when visitors are coming in. That's not specifically to our tactical search operations but it speaks holistically of what we're doing in order to make sure that we see anything that may enter our facility that could put people in danger.

**Mayor Adams:** I remember West 4th Street as a transit cop. This guy just came home and he showed me a – I don't know if you want to call it a trick or whatever, but he said, "Search my mouth." And I looked in his mouth all around, looked at his gums all around. He said, "Do I have anything?" And I said, "No." He said, "Pfft," he pulled out a razor. The creativity to harm people is what they deal with every day. Where they secrete weapons is beyond your imagination, and you could use your imagination because nothing is off limits. And that's what they're up against every day.

**Question:** Yep, Mr. Mayor, so our reporting shows that two of the deaths, one was an overdose and the other a man hung himself. And it looks as if staffing shortages may have kind of exacerbated the damage they were able to do to themselves. In terms of the staff that are not here, what are you going to do to bring them back and make sure that posts are staffed appropriately so that something like that does not happen?



**Mayor Adams:** Well, number one, any death is a death we think is unacceptable. When you come here with mental health illnesses, we should have the staff doing the inspections. When someone died from suicide, they look and see and conduct an investigation to determine if someone did not carry out their role to make sure that post was inspected. There's a thorough investigation. Also, remember, there was a law passed. The attorney general has an obligation to investigate this, and she's started an investigation as well as the investigation that's come from the facility. 1,400 since January have returned to work. 1,400. Those that are still out, if they're out for legitimate reasons, we are going to make sure they receive their necessary medical care that they deserve. If you are attacked in your home because of that, then we're not going to demonize you because you did your job. That is just not right. Those who are not following the rules and procedures, they will be held accountable. And that is part of what the commissioner is doing. But let's not overlook the fact – since January, 1,400 have returned back to work. And the City Council made the decision, they did not want any new correction officers. That was part of the process in the budget.

**Question:** How many corrections officers have quit since January?

**Mayor Adams:** Have?

**Question:** Have quit, have retired?

**Mayor Adams:** Do you have the number?

**Commissioner Molina:** Yeah, approximately I would say between retirements and resignation, approximately 500.

**Question:** You're saying that the City Council, Mr. Mayor, did not authorize additional officers. Do you think they should've hired additional officers? And Mr. Molina, do you believe you need additional officers?

**Mayor Adams:** Yes. I think that when you look at what these officers are going through, doing triples... What we want to do when it comes down to those dangerous inmates. There's a portion of people who are here that they want to serve their time, they want to go home. But you have a portion of inmates that are dealing with real mental health illnesses. Some of them are just extremely dangerous, and if we can't properly separate

that population and properly make sure they have the right supervision, then that can create a dangerous environment. So I personally believe we should have increased the numbers that the commissioner said he needed. But there's a negotiation that takes place with the City Council, and we're willing to negotiate. But even without, we are not going to give up ensuring that the location is safe.

**Question:** How many officers... As a follow up, Mr. Molina, how many additional officers do you think that you need to make Rikers safe?

**Commissioner Molina:** Well, I believe that the number of officers that we had asked for, that number was little over 550, was what we needed to advance a lot of other progressive strategies that we wanted to do to manage the people in our population.

**Mayor Adams:** Hold on, this is so important because idealism collides with realism. The commissioner comes in and he states, "Here's some creative things we want to do." Like the Peace Center. "Here's some creative things we want to do so we can start allowing those who are here to go and become productive citizens." But in order to do that, you have to have officers to make sure that this environment is safe. So on one end, we have the idealism of saying we want to try to do something different with the inmates, but on the other end, you can't have more officers to make sure that they're safe in the environment. So they're actually hurting some of the initiatives that Commissioner Molina is trying to do to create the release of inmates so they'll be prepared to be active citizens. They think they are hurting law enforcement by saying, "No new officers." But no, you are hurting what you're actually saying you want this commissioner to accomplish.

**Question:** Mayor Adams, and for you, Commissioner Molina, it had been reported that there has been a delay, I believe, in transferring OBCC, from DOC, to DCAS. You know what the letters mean. Can you talk a little more about that plan, why there is a delay? And any more on the Renewable Rikers plan and the future of the island here?

**Commissioner Molina:** Yeah, so there's not a delay. We are not in a position to transfer OBCC to DCAS. Population estimates that were made under the prior administration, that we would only have 4,000 or less people in custody, have not borne out. We have an average daily population of approximately 5,500 people, today our census is about a little over 5,600, so it would not be logical for us to have a facility

transferred over to DCAS when there's a possibility that, in the future, we may need that capacity.

**Mayor Adams:** Nobody had budget cuts, but can I have some water? Thank you.

**Question:** I have a question for the commissioner. Can you tell us the number of correction officers that are still refusing to come back to work not because of any illness or injury? And what measures do you have to bring them back to work?

**Commissioner Molina:** So we have a number of measures. We have a health management division that monitors people that are out sick. I would say that the number of people that are out sick has reduced significantly from where we were last year. That reduction has been over 40%.

**Question:** How many are there out now?

**Commissioner Molina:** I would say a number of people that were out sick today is somewhere around 900.

**Question:** Today? 900?

**Commissioner Molina:** Yes.

**Question:** Were out sick. And that's 40% less than...

**Commissioner Molina:** It's more than 40% less of what it was last summer, when I believe it was over 2,000.

**Mayor Adams:** And refusing to come to work is different from you can't work at this time. You had better be clear on that.

**Question:** But they're out sick, you're saying, but you don't...

**Commissioner Molina:** Well, I mean, a doctor is making a medical decision that this person is unavailable to go to work for medical reasons and we have a health management division that reviews these charts and, in many cases, concurs with this individual's injuries.

**Mayor Adams:** Hold on... Because this is a misnomer that every correction officer that is sick is faking. That's not true. Some of these officers have been assaulted. Some of them have legitimate issues from COVID. Some of them are sick. People get sick. And so this misnomer that, "Okay, the correction officer is home sick. He doesn't want to come to work." No, people get sick. People get assaulted. This is a job where you are assaulted. And so what the commissioner has done, he has sent out a clear message, that's how we got the 1,400 back, if you are faking sick, that's not acceptable. But if a doctor is saying, "This person can't come into work." We're not going to allow an officer to come into work that legitimately can't, and I don't think that's a message that has been clearly sent. People automatically believe because they're out sick, they're faking being sick. That's just not a reality. This is a dangerous job where there's a lot of assault, where people are dealing with some serious medical issues. Nolan?

**Question:** I was wondering if you could break down those statistics a little bit more. Of the 900, approximately how many of them will have their cases reviewed by the medical board and how many of those reviews actually confirm what they're telling you that they are actually properly out sick?

**Commissioner Molina:** So we can follow with you with some numbers if you like. I don't know of those numbers off the top of my head from memory. I mean, the number changes every day. There are individuals that may not feel well for a couple of days like in any other job and they call in sick and there are others that have other long-standing medical issues that we're ongoing and evaluating to determine their fitness for duty, and we also must remind ourselves that we've just gone through a global pandemic and the uniform staff and the non-uniform staff that work here didn't have the luxury of teleworking from home in order to manage this very volatile and violent population.

**Question:** Do you have an estimate of how many people are actually properly sick versus those who are faking it?

**Commissioner Molina:** So I don't have any evidence, right now, that anybody's faking it. We have medical doctors that'll deem the individuals that are sick, so...

**Mayor Adams:** Hold on... because this is really interesting. This is the only occupation where we're asking, "Hey, are your members faking sick?" We're not asking for anyone else. We're not asking NYPD, we're not asking H + H, we're not asking school teachers. We're not asking anywhere else. The only place that we're asking, "Hey, your members are faking." I mean, that's not a pattern to you all? Something's not wrong with that? The most dangerous law enforcement job, the question we're asking is that, "Are your members faking?" I have never heard that asked of any other city employee, but we're asking the men and women from Department of Correction.

**Question:** The previous administration...

[Crosstalk]

**Mayor Adams:** Hold on, let Nolan finish. Go ahead, Nolan.

**Question:** No, no, no. Mr. Mayor, I apologize. The previous administration alleged that COBA had engaged in a sickout, hence the question. Do you disagree with that assessment?

**Mayor Adams:** Yes. I think the previous administration, on every level, did not support the Department of Corrections. And some of the comments I heard from previous administrations of what these men and women represent, I thought it was not a true account of these men and women. And I believe that if someone does a sickout, I know for years, these officers have been saying, "This place is dangerous." They've been saying it for years. "This place is a place that's about to blow up." For years, they've been saying that, and I don't think previous administrations have acknowledged what these officers have been saying. But even if they did do a sickout then, we should not be asking the question of them that we have not asked for others. "Are y'all faking being sick?" This is the only city agency where that question is being raised.

**Question:** [Inaudible] you in your face [inaudible].

**Mayor Adams:** Oh, no, no, no, they're going to come to you in a moment so you'll be alright.

**Question:** Commissioner, do you have a daily average [inaudible]?

**Mayor Adams:** Hold on, let [inaudible] finish, go ahead.

**Question:** Do you have a daily average for the number of officers that are out sick?

**Commissioner Molina:** A daily average, we can get it to you, but I would say it's around 900 a day. So that number has started to creep down under 1,000, or where it was last summer which was significantly over 2,000.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, just off-topic...

[Crosstalk]

**Mayor Adams:** [Inaudible] go too off-topic. You know we don't like people standing behind, that's why y'all [inaudible].

**Question:** Thank you. Mr. Mayor, we reported yesterday that the DOC didn't count the death of Antonio Bradley, an inmate who died after hanging himself in a Bronx holding cell. He was not counted because he was released on compassionate release while he was in a coma from that hanging attempt. Do you agree with that decision not to count him as an inmate death or do you think that almost has the hallmarks of a cover-up?

**Mayor Adams:** He died inside? He died inside the facility?

**Question:** He died at a hospital after hanging himself in a holding cell. He was not counted as an inmate death because he was, quote unquote, "released on compassionate release" while in a coma.

**Mayor Adams:** Okay. What I was told from my days of policing, where the person died is how you're supposed to record it. And if that's a violation of a law or rule, we'll correct that. But of my understanding, if I got someone on the street that was still alive and they were shot, they were still alive and they died in the hospital, that's what you count to where he die. So I don't see that as a cover-up or a violation of any rule. If it is, we would definitely correct it. But on my understanding, it's the place of death is where a person died.

**Question:** But just from your own point of view, do you think that's the proper way of counting it? He hung himself while he was in custody and that he died when he was, quote unquote, "not in custody" because he was released on compassionate release. Do you think that's a reasonable way of counting a death?

**Mayor Adams:** Yes. A person could be shot on Bedford Avenue, but die in a hospital. You would count where they die. And so if that violates some rule, we will correct that, it won't happen. But until then, of my understanding, that is where you account the place of death. I don't think people are trying to distort or change the numbers because the numbers are what they are. If someone dies in the facility, the commissioner's not going to try to cover up. The numbers are what they are and that's what we feel. Let the numbers be reported. If we had X number of suicides, those are the numbers. There's no reason trying to hide it. You know and I know you can't hide from the press. So what they are, what they are. He died in the hospital. That is what the numbers are.

**Question:** Oh, I didn't... Okay. [Laughter]. I didn't actually have one, but I kind of do. All right, you had 1,400... Can you just clarify these numbers? Because you said 1,400 people came back to work, but then you said 900 is down by 40%, which that does not... Can you just sort of clarify, because I don't think those numbers add up. And then are you saying that it's your position at this point that everyone who was out sick, that that is legitimate in all of those cases and you're not seeking to enforce anymore, the way the past administration was, the potential abuses.

**Mayor Adams:** No, you want to?

**Commissioner Molina:** Sure, sure. So, one is we could follow up with you and get you the exact numbers of where we were at this time last year of the number of people that were out sick. Where we have been today, I can tell you that that decline has been over 40%. And individually and totality, when we count officers, captains and various ranks, over 1,400 people have come back to work. But the majority of that has been officers, and I've also signed off on nearly 1,000 disciplinary cases. In some of those cases, it was abuse of sick leave. So we will hold people accountable. If we suspect that there's some level of medical incompetency taking place, we will take action against that individual, but that is not the majority of the people that are out sick.

**Mayor Adams:** We were clear, Erin, we are clear. It's because I don't want this to be distorted, we're not saying everyone that's out sick has a legitimate reason for being out

sick, but we're also not saying that everyone that's out sick is faking being sick. In all agencies, you have a small number of people who are using and abusing the sick policy. In every agency. We see it all the time. But the overwhelming number of city employees that are out sick, they are sick and we would like to give them the benefit of the doubt until an investigation determines that they are abusing the process as some are abusing the process, and that's what the commissioner stated. They're doing a review on that to make the right determination. But the numbers has substantially dropped under the commissioner's leadership.

**Question:** Just the number, commissioner, on the uniform workforce size?

**Commissioner Molina:** The uniform workforce size is about 7,000.

[Crosstalk]

**Question:** Oh, thank you. Just on the Rent Guidelines Board, could you just give me your thoughts on what happened last night? How you feel about how that translates into how we are as our economy right now?

**Mayor Adams:** Well, we heard of it at the very beginning of the year, we were talking about up to 9%. That was just really just unacceptable in thought, and we continued to raise our voice to share what our concerns were. We saw the numbers go down to, I believe, it's 3% and for one year, 5%... and was it 5%?

**Question:** 3.255.

**Mayor Adams:** Right, for additional years. Look, the system is broken. We witnessed renters having to deal with this trauma of financial trauma, but we also saw those small property owners, 15 units, 16 units, 9 units, of... They're hurting. Oil, water bill, taxes. So we had to find a medium. And what we wanted to do was also to use Albany as a way to put money back into renters' pockets. Earned Income Tax Credit, childcare vouchers. We knew that, based on what the Rent Guidelines Board was saying, that they was going to do an increase, so we had to find ways to put money back into the pockets of New Yorkers and not hurt any of those small property owners, which was my focus.



**Question:** And with all that, can you just talk about how much of a strain that could be on people that are just struggling to make end's meet as it is?

**Mayor Adams:** It is a strain. It's a strain on struggling small property owners, it's a strain on renters. We are all experiencing a strain right now, and so what I must do is find ways to alleviate that strain. And like what we're doing around how we're going to assist those small property owners and renters by utilizing our budget and utilizing the funding that's coming from Albany to offset some of the schools. It's a strain on all of us, all of us are under a strain. And this is a major concern for renters, and I respect that, that this is a concern for them.

**Question:** Mayor, I'm hoping you could speak about the transit officer who was attacked yesterday on his first solo patrol. I know you were talking about changing the rules a little bit, I was hoping you could go into detail. And if you're concerned at all about maybe the trend. This was the second day, are you going to maybe stop the solo patrols all together, or just make these fixes, like you were saying?

**Mayor Adams:** First of all, to that hero officer, I thank him for service. I thank God that he's okay and the bad guy's in jail, a person who has a history of assault. And I take my hat off to the commissioner. Soon as the incident happened, she reached out to me. I had a conversation with the president of the DEA and a conversation with Patty Lynch, and the conversation was really how do we reach the goal that we want? How do we get the omnipresence and how do we make sure that our officers are safe?

**Mayor Adams:** And we came with a real meeting of the mind of let's have the separated solo patrol stay in eyesight of each other. This would allow the immediate backup with the communications that we currently have, and I think there's something that many people are missing. I can talk with my union guys. Patty and I spoke last night around 10 o'clock at night. The DEA president, Joe, and I spoke late at night. These guys say that Eric is the support of law enforcement, and he's willing to listen. And the police commissioner, I spoke with her late last night, and we immediately said, "You know when we have to adjust, we're not going to be so rigid that we're not going to adjust to accomplish the task that we need." And I thank Patty, I thank Joe, and I thank the police commissioner for doing so. And most important, I thank that officer.

**Question:** Just to follow up on that, you talked yesterday about the deployment strategy of having one officer get on the last car of the train, the other officer get on the front.

That can't happen anymore. Doesn't this defeat a lot of the purpose of doing solo patrols?

**Mayor Adams:** No. We want to stay in eye distance, and you can accomplish that on eye distance. If that officer use it just tactically, if that officer is on the 2 train, and they're three cars apart, they can physically see each other through that door as they move through the train. It's important to keep moving through the train, to engage the passengers, and to see any conditions that needs to be corrected.

**Question:** And if I could follow up on a separate topic real quick. You saw the report that there have been zero enforcement actions on the employer vaccination mandate since you took office. Just what is the purpose of having this rule still in place if there's no effort at enforcement whatsoever?

**Mayor Adams:** We always said we didn't want to penalize, we wanted to educate, and it's been winning. Our numbers are dropping. Our numbers are increasing of people going back to work, our economy is moving forward. I had a duality here. I wanted to do the right things so we don't spin backwards in COVID, but at the same time, I wanted our economy to come back. That's crucial, and we have been successfully doing so. The numbers are showing that the strategy we put in place is a winning strategy. We did not have to be heavy handed.

**Mayor Adams:** I met with my business leaders often, we had conversations around, this is what we need to do. Safe social distancing, put mask on, so we didn't have to go in and penalize. We had to continue the conversation, and we're winning. We are successfully navigating COVID. Today we announced the vaccine under five years old. I'm just really pleased what the team has done around COVID.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, your financial disclosure form that was released today says that you still own half of the co-op apartment on Prospect Place, which you said during the campaign that you had transferred ownership of that to the friends that you co-owned it with. So can you clarify, what is the status of that property? Do you in fact still own it, and why is there a discrepancy between those two reports?

**Mayor Adams:** Yes, still own it, and I think... Did you send off that release to everybody? You didn't get a copy of that?

**Question:** No, we all did, yeah.

**Mayor Adams:** Oh, okay. Well, [inaudible] another question, speak with them. We sent out the release, we explained it all. You guys know I'm not going to go over and over and over and over again, the same thing. He crafted a release, we'll send it to whomever didn't get it, please raise your hand, we'll make sure you get it.

**Question:** We didn't get it.

**Mayor Adams:** Okay, [inaudible] going to make sure you get it. Yes?

**Question:** So, Mr. Mayor, why did you sign a letter saying that you transferred the shares in the first place if the transfer didn't take place?

**Mayor Adams:** Okay. He's going to give you the release, then you could ask any question after that if you have any misunderstanding. They'll make sure you get it, they'll make sure you get it.

**Question:** Because you told my colleagues that you had sold it, there's some issue. Did you...

[Crosstalk]

**Question:** We also don't have our phones, we're not on the internet right now, so we can't see the release.

**Question:** Yeah, we don't have our phones...

[Crosstalk]

**Mayor Adams:** Don't say no. Nolan, don't say no. This is not your press conference, it's mine. I answered the question, and I'm not going to go back and forth. So don't say no like you control it, my press conference.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor...

[Crosstalk]

**Mayor Adams:** I already told you, get it from Fabien. [Inaudible] another question?

[Crosstalk]

**Question:** Yesterday you said that in the taxi accident, that the bicyclist ran the red light. Are you planning to do anything about enforcing rules for bicyclists? Because this driver has been vilified, and he apparently had the light. I don't know all particulars, but even in the police report, it said that the bicyclist ran the red light.

**Mayor Adams:** Yes. We are deeply looking at traffic enforcement that includes scooters, bicyclists, and cars, because everyone shares the road. And so we are sending a very clear message that... I'm a bicyclist, I follow the rules. We want everyone to follow the rule. And anyone who has been a critic of having bicyclists follow the rule, they need to look at the video to see that what appears to be going through the red light caused some of the actions that took place. So everyone must follow the rule, and we are going to enforce it equally.

**Question:** Just want to ask one more thing about solo patrols, Mr. Mayor.

**Mayor Adams:** Yes.

**Question:** The PBA president said from the beginning that he thought it was a bad idea to have solo patrols. Now an officer has been injured as a result of that. I'm just wondering what made you change your mind specifically? Was it this incident last night that you saw, that you realized your initial rollout of the policy was flawed? Can you let us know a little bit what changed your mind?

**Mayor Adams:** No, no, I am not rigid, and I am not a person that can't communicate. I communicate with my presidents of the PBA, of the DEA, of the LBA, of... I talked to everyone. And after the incident that happened last night and I communicated with the commissioner, I said, "Let's continue to evolve." I said this when we spoke yesterday, we're going to continue to evolve our transit safety plan. And I think nothing is worse

than a person that believes they have to be so rigid that they're not willing to see how to build a better mousetrap, and that's what I'm going to do. I have two goals, one omnipresence, we still have that. Number two, to make sure our offices are as safe as possible.

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