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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR ERIC ADAMS DISCUSSES COORDINATED EFFORTS
THAT STOPPED POTENTIAL ATTACK ON JEWISH COMMUNITY**

Deputy Mayor Philip Banks III, Public Safety: Thank you. Good morning. Thank you for joining us today. My name is Philip Banks III. I'm the deputy mayor for public safety. Thank you for joining us today to hear about the coordinated efforts by law enforcement at the city, state, and federal levels, to prevent attacks on the Jewish community this past weekend.

Teamwork. Something that the mayor has been stressing since day one of this administration. Can you imagine what we can accomplish if we work together as a team? Today, you are seeing an example of that teamwork. Multiple entities coming together in a short period of time to coordinate, communicate, develop, and implement their plan, a plan that saved lives. Teamwork.

I'd like to start by thinking all of those standing behind us today, including representatives from the NYPD, state police, the FBI, the Joint Terrorism Task Force, the MTA, the MTA Police Department, the Manhattan District Attorney's Office, the Office of the Prevention of Hate Crimes, and the Community Security Initiative, as well as numerous Jewish organizations, including the United Jewish Association, Federation of New York, Central Hatzalah, and the Flatbush Shomrim Safety Patrol.

We also have numerous, several religious leaders from the Jewish community here, including New York City Council Member Eric Dinowitz, who is the head of the New York City Council Jewish Caucus. We have Rabbi Liebowitz, Rabbi Steinmetz, Rabbi Miroznick, Rabbi Rothman, Rabbi Fink, Rabbi Tesser, Rabbi Heinz, and Rabbi Berish Freilech. Without further delay, I'd like to introduce the mayor of the City of New York, Mayor Eric Adams.

Mayor Eric Adams: Thank you, deputy mayor, and I too join ... I'm not as tall as you, so I'm going to move the stand over. I too join the deputy mayor in acknowledging the work of our partners. This past weekend, both the police commissioner and I were notified of a credible threat on Jewish New Yorkers and immediately communicated with our teams to take appropriate action.

The potential attack on Jewish New Yorkers, because of that coordination, was averted. It was due to heroic actions of the MTA Police Department Officer Ryan Fackner and Officer Conor Colasurdo. Both responded appropriately based on the information that was disseminated, and the dedicated efforts of the men and women who we are here today. The leadership is

represented throughout those who are standing by. Both officers arrested two suspects at Penn Station on Saturday morning after one of the suspects was flagged by making antisemitic and threatening posts online, including references to perpetrate an armed attack on a synagogue.

Thanks to the exceptional investigative work of the FBI and NYPD Joint Terrorist Task Force, the NYPD Intelligence Bureau, and the MTA Police Department, the suspects were apprehended before they could act on the alleged plan to murder members of the Jewish community in our city.

This was not an idle threat. This was a real threat. After arresting the suspects, law enforcement officers recovered a Glock semi-automatic firearm, a ghost gun with an extended 30-round magazine and laser sight, a large hunting knife, a black ski mask, and a Nazi arm band. A Nazi arm band, in New York City, in 2022. Think about that for a moment.

Over 77 years ago, after allied soldiers liberated Auschwitz and exposed the full extent of the horrors of the Holocaust. Hate is on the rise in America, a dark cloud over our nation. It has become normalized by politicians and celebrities, amplified by social media and cable news, and weaponized by the easy availability of guns in this country. This was a ghost gun. That adds to the already over-saturation of guns in our city and cities across America. This is a toxic mix with frightening implications for our society.

From the massacre of Black shoppers in Buffalo to the killings at an LGBTQ+ nightclub in Colorado Springs over the weekend, we see communications and communities across the nation being targeted for their race, their beliefs, and their way of life. This hate cannot be allowed to take hold and build and gain further ground. America must defeat the rising threat of domestic terrorism. It is real. It is here. And we must have a formidable approach to it, and we must reject the hate and division that drives it.

This time, thanks to thorough coordination between multiple agencies at numerous levels of government, we were able to avert this threat. Law enforcement was able to prevent an attack like the shocking stabbings that took place at the rabbi's home in Monsey, New York during Hanukkah in 2019. But it's clear, there's others who share antisemitic beliefs and hateful ideas. We must and will be vigilant in the weeks leading up to Hanukkah and this holiday season. And the NYPD will do its part. I want to say thank you to everyone that's here that participated in the coordination over the weekend and the coordination during this holiday season.

Now I'm going to salute the leadership of Commissioner Keechant Sewell for a quick action and coordination without the men and women of our Police Department to avert this threat. There are a lot of critics out there, but I hope today they can and understand what the NYPD does every day for the city of New York. Protecting communities, families and New Yorkers of every faith from the violence as some want to inflict, keeping our Jewish communities and other communities safe in the face rising threats and antisemitism, getting dangerous weapons off our streets, and fighting the rise of violent domestic extremism in this country.

As the mayor of the largest Jewish community in the United States, it is my sacred duty to protect Jewish New Yorkers and this entire community from antisemitism and bigotry. And in my administration, we know this is one of our highest priorities is to protect all New Yorkers from violence and crime. We will continue to be vigilant and protect the communities involved

in general, but specifically the Jewish community, with every resource that's necessary, because hatred and antisemitism would not take foothold in our city.

No one should feel threatened walking down the street or traveling on the subway. No one should ever feel threatened walking into their synagogue or place of worship. We're going to fight the rise in antisemitism and extremism and continue to support our law enforcement communities. Again, we want to thank all who were involved. Thank you very much.

Deputy Mayor Banks: Next, we'll hear from the commissioner of the City of New York, Commissioner Keechant Sewell.

Police Commissioner Keechant Sewell: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Good morning. Thank you all for being here. In addition to our partners, I am pleased to be joined by Deputy Chief John Hart of our Intelligence Bureau, who was a big part of this investigation from the very beginning. The focused collective efforts of the NYPD and our partners were able to uncover, investigate, and most importantly, stop a threat to our Jewish community. This was an urgent multi-agency operation to address danger that was developing in real time.

This is a clear example of public safety being a shared responsibility. It takes all of us working together to effectively safeguard the people we serve. And these partnerships that we are highlighting today are at the heart of that effort. We have to remain vigilant and monitor threats of any kind, symbols of hate written online or posted on social media every day. The job of the NYPD and our colleagues here is to put public safety first and protect the people of this city. We coordinated with our partners, we communicated, organized and established a plan, and the result was a high level of committed collaboration that averted a threat of targeted violence. It is important that our communities know and we will never tolerate hate or violence in New York City. We will use our resources and partnerships to stop, investigate, arrest, and hold accountable anyone who threatens the safety of the people of this city. Deputy Mayor Banks.

Deputy Mayor Banks: Thank you, commissioner. Now, we're going to hear from Mike Driscoll, the assistant director of the FBI's New York field office.

Michael Driscoll, Assistant Director, FBI New York Field Office: Good morning. Thank you all for coming. I appreciate the invitation from the mayor's office and the police commissioner to speak to all of you today. On Friday evening, the FBI and the Joint Terrorism Task Force received information regarding an individual believed to pose a physical threat to an unidentified synagogue. With a significant sense of urgency, members of the JTTF set about identifying the individual or individuals involved. As you have heard, we, along with our law enforcement partners, began an investigation of one possible subject, Christopher Brown of Aquebogue, New York. And then during that investigation, a second individual, Matthew Mahrer of Manhattan was also identified as an associate.

Through close coordination with law enforcement across the region, both Mahrer and Brown were located Friday night and taken into custody. At the current time, we have no information to indicate there is any continued threat to the Jewish community or to any community here in New York associated with this case. Both subjects are both facing state charges. No decision has been made yet regarding possible federal charges. That investigation continues.

I want to thank the many law enforcement partners for their assistance in this matter and for helping to quickly ensure that the safety of our city was preserved. The JTTF and NYPD Intelligence Bureau were in close coordination throughout the investigation, and I'm grateful for NYPD's partnership and collaboration. I also want to highlight the outstanding work by the MTA Police in support of this case. Port Authority Police, likewise, were extremely helpful in the safe resolution of this matter. And most importantly, I want to thank the members of the public for the information already shared in this case. If anyone else has information regarding these individuals or any threat to the Jewish community, I would ask that you reach out to the FBI or NYPD as soon as possible. This is still very much an active investigation. The FBI can be reached at 1-800-CALL-FBI. The support of our community partners and private citizens is crucial to preventing violence in instances like this. The old adage of see something, say something remains very, very true and extremely important. So, again, thank you all for being here today.

Deputy Mayor Banks: Thank you, Assistant Director Driscoll. Next, we're going to hear from the Manhattan District Attorney Al Bragg.

Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg: Thank you, deputy mayor. Thank you, mayor, commissioner, director, and to all of our law enforcement partners. Local, state, and federal agencies working collaboratively, swiftly stopped a horrible threat. The NYPD, the FBI, the Task Force, the MTA, and members of my office, the Manhattan District Attorney's office, worked together to intervene, execute search warrants, and ultimately have two people arraigned in Manhattan Criminal Court. While we can't get into the specifics of the matter, as it is an ongoing investigation and I can't go beyond the court filings, the allegations in the court filings are stark. Possession of a firearm, a high capacity magazine, an eight inch long military style knife, a swastika arm patch, and a Twitter posting about shooting a synagogue. The Manhattan District Attorney's Office will be using the full resources of our counter-terrorism program and our expanded hate crimes unit for accountability and justice in this matter. We do not tolerate illegal guns in this city, we do not tolerate hate and antisemitism in this city, and we do not tolerate violence in this city.

Deputy Mayor Banks: Thank you, district attorney. Next, we're going to hear from the CEO of the MTA, Janno Lieber.

Janno Lieber, Chair and CEO, Metropolitan Transit Authority: Okay. Thank you, Mayor Adams, thank you, Police Commissioner Sewell for all you do every day, every day to keep New Yorkers safe. And to our MTA men of the hour, MTAPD officers Ryan Fackner and Conor Colasurdo, two dangerous, hateful individuals are now in custody because of you and your quick action on the intel developed by the JTTF and the NYPD. The story could have ended in tragedy, but thankfully did not. Attacks like the one that were planned by these individuals are especially repugnant to New Yorkers who treasure diversity and tolerance as central to our city's history and to our identity right up to today.

And this is a little personal for me. My father came to this country in 1941 as a refugee from Nazis and lost his mother, my grandmother, and other relatives in the Holocaust, so you can imagine my reaction when I heard from City Hall late Friday night that there were people with Nazi swastika arm bands using our MTA transit system — which I'm privileged to oversee — using our transit system en route to planned attacks on synagogues. Imagine.

Thank goodness the law enforcement agencies represented here today are among the very best at intelligence gathering, and thank goodness they've already developed incredibly effective procedures for coordinating action on intelligence. This is how it should be, agencies working together smoothly to keep New Yorkers safe. I speak for Governor Hochul as well when I extend thanks to everybody in the law enforcement community who was involved with this, especially, as I said, the MTAPD officers, Fackner and Colasurdo. The governor would've been here today herself except, as everybody knows, she's grounded in Buffalo due to the epic snowfall. I know that there's nothing more important to Governor Hochul and to all of us here than safety.

In light of this incident and the attack in Colorado Springs on the LGBTQ nightclub, the governor has directed our state police who are represented here today to increase surveillance and protection for communities, like the Jewish community, that are at risk of hate crimes. That's an action that was already be taken. We will continue to work closely with our partners at the NYPD, the state police, and all local and federal law enforcement to keep our people safe. The MTA has never had a better relationship with City Hall and Albany, and that's because of the leadership at the top, Mayor Adams. Thank you for and your Police Department for everything you are doing to keep New Yorkers safe.

Deputy Mayor Banks: Thank you, CEO Lieber. Our final two speakers represent our Jewish community who are very vital in stopping this potential attack. First, we'll hear from Eric Goldstein, the CEO of the United Jewish Association Federation of New York.

Eric Goldstein, CEO, UJA-Federation of New York: Thank you very much, deputy mayor. And let me begin by thanking Mayor Adams. The Jewish community could not have a better friend. I want to also acknowledge the incredible work of NYPD, the FBI, MTA, and our own community security initiative. Thanks to their collective expertise, commitment, and cooperation, what might have been the next Pittsburgh or Poway synagogue massacre was averted. Specifically this past Friday, our community initiative professionals shared a lead with NYPD and FBI New York, and they immediately sprung into action. Within hours, their efforts led to the apprehension of two dangerous, fully armed men preparing for an attack on our Jewish community. New York City is home to 1.6 million Jews, the largest Jewish population of any city in the world.

In 2018, in the aftermath of the heinous 2018 attack on the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh, we at UJA-Federation understood the need to invest in increasing security for the more than 2,000 vibrant Jewish communal institutions in New York. We launched the Community Security Initiative with JCRC New York, headed by Mitch Silber, the former head of NYPD Intelligence. Mitch and his now 12 person team spend every waking moment working across the community to ensure our safety and they work hand-in-hand with the volunteers at CSS and our friends at ADL in this critical work.

Just this past Saturday, the director of the FBI said that the Jewish community is under threat, "From all sides," and that they quote, "Desperately need further support from law enforcement." Declaring that addressing growing antisemitism, is a national priority. Here in New York, we need to ensure that everything possible is being done to address the rising threat. That means every element of city and state government working in coordination, from intelligence and prevention to arrest and prosecution.

But let me be clear, the Jewish community of New York will continue to live proudly Jewish lives. We're immensely proud to live in this great City of New York and will remain vigilant and undaunted as we work together in the weeks and months ahead, to do all we can to ensure that antisemitism and hate have no home in New York and again, thank you Mayor Adams for your incredible work.

Deputy Mayor Banks: Finally, we will hear from Steve Weill from the Flatbush Shomrim Safety Patrol, which was vital in getting the word out during Shabbat about these two suspects.

Steve Weill, Flatbush Shomrim Safety Patrol: Good morning, thank you all for coming. Just two quick points I want to make. The first is that when we talk about teamwork with the community, the teamwork did not start this Saturday night. This teamwork did not start a week ago or two weeks ago. Probably a week after the mayor took office, he came to Brooklyn, he sat down with us, he sat down with Hatzalah, he sat down with Shomrim. And he has a deep understanding of what we do and he definitely reached his hand out and said any help that we will need at all, at any time, he will make every resource available and we've had many, many antisemitic attacks that have happened.

Not everything hits the news, but in each case, somebody from the mayor's office was involved, gave us guidance. The Police Department got involved and this is an unprecedented relationship that we have right now with the mayor's office, the Jewish community and the Police Department. And the information that flows, it's incredible that we can get such sensitive information and that they can have the trust in us, to relay that to the community in a calm manner and a professional manner.

My second point, which is just to talk about the actual incident. On Friday night, I got a call from the Inspector Richie Taylor and he advised me that there was a credible threat to the community. Within minutes, we came up with a plan that we were going to implement at 6 a.m., just in case. We didn't want to alarm the community, but we put a plan in place where hundreds of trained volunteers would reach all the synagogues and all the houses of worship in the areas and warn them. But we waited because we figured the agencies that are standing right here know who these suspects are and hopefully they will apprehend them by then and we would avoid alarming the community. And that's exactly what happened. I just want to say thank you again to the mayor and to the Police Department for all their support and we consider ourselves eyes and ears of the Police Department. We get a lot of sensitive information, which we pass on, and this teamwork is really what makes New York a special place. Thank you.

Deputy Mayor Banks: Thank you Steve. Now we're kicking to Fabien for on-topic Q&A.

Mayor Adams: And we just want to just keep in mind, this is an active investigation and we're not going to go into the details of any investigation. And my staff just updated me, the gun that we had was a serial hidden — serial number, but it wasn't a ghost gun. Let's open for any on-topic. Take a few on-topic.

Question: Governor Kathy Hochul says that she's providing resources to communities to help combat any potential threats, like state police. Are you guys working with her and what does that look like here in New York City?

Mayor Adams: Complete coordination with the governor's office. As we stated throughout the year, she has been an amazing partner, identifying the resources we need to combat all forms of violence. Thus far this year, we've removed over 6,500 guns off the street. This is one of them. This was a fully loaded gun and it's imperative that whatever resources we need, we communicate with the state police and she has been forthright, forthcoming in making sure we receive those resources.

Question: Do you have a specific number though? A specific number of state police who are here in the city to help with that?

Mayor Adams: Any given day, you see them taking the pressure off our New York City police personnel at the highways, dealing with other forms of law enforcement. And so the numbers could vary on who's exactly assigned in the New York City area.

Question: Could you walk us through the timing of when you received the tip, when you were contacted and, when the two men were apprehended and arrested?

Mayor Adams: I was notified immediately by the chief of the department. The FBI immediately when they determined that the threat was credible, it was sensitive information, they immediately notified our agencies and both the police commissioner and I were notified immediately. And the police commissioner directed the deployment of police personnel. Our number one priority was to apprehend the suspects as quick as possible.

Question: What time was that around?

Mayor Adams: It was probably some time... I didn't see my exact watch. It could have been probably 15, 20 minutes after the NYPD was notified. It was immediately after. It was during the evening hours. I know we were out at different events.

Question: Mr. Mayor, can you tell us anything about the location (inaudible)?

Mayor Adams: No, not at this time.

Question: Good morning. I wanted to ask, the two suspects, were they known previously to the FBI and NYPD and the second part is that they said that they were using Twitter to spread these messages (inaudible) white supremacist network on Twitter. Can someone speak about the role of Twitter and other social media sites spreading... This has gotten worse over the years or months, in terms of spreading this information, recruiting people, it seems and that sort of stuff.

Mayor Adams: Well, we're not going to go into if the individuals were known or not known. As the FBI and the DA office stated, it's still an active investigation and we don't do anything that's going to jeopardize that. But we will respond to the role of social media. We've talked about this often. The social media must become more responsible in the spreading of hate and organizing and allowing their platforms to be used as an organizing tool. We saw what happened in Buffalo. The individual involved was radicalized not by his parents, not by his family. They were radicalized by this new community that is really given life through social media. And it is time for social media to come to the table and reckon with the role that social media unintentionally is

playing in the spreading of hate and people are using their platform to organize these hate campaigns.

Question: Mr. Mayor, over the last couple of years, New York has consistently led the nation in antisemitic attacks. What exactly is the NYPD and City Hall doing to either update the NYPD safety plan or (inaudible) task force? What are you guys doing to update the (inaudible)?

Mayor Adams: Well one, what we're doing is what we did today and that's why we're here, is coordination. And dealing with specifically antisemitism is not just a law enforcement issue. We need to stop the feeders of antisemitism. That is why we've partnered with the ADL and other organizations, the Anti-Defamation League and other organizations to say, "How do we create environments where hate cannot grow in our cities?" We're doing it in the Department of Education, we're doing it in collaborations with some of the organizations that are mentioned here with partnership — Rabbi, the Board of Rabbis, Rabbis Potasnik and others. We know we have to stop the feeder of hate in our cities, in all the different groups in this city. And then we must have a real law enforcement response. The commissioner immediately put new leadership over at the Hate Crime Unit because we wanted to be clear that if there are those who are using hate to target people in the city, we want those cases investigated, we want the people apprehended, and we want to make sure that they're prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

Question: It would appear, mayor, that this was a very close call, the Jewish community here in New York. Can you characterize that for us?

Mayor Adams: We cannot take these cases lightly. Who would've thought what happened in Buffalo, an individual will take a weapon and walk into a supermarket. These are real threats, and we did not... I want to really take my hat off to the FBI, they did not take any chances here. They immediately notified the agencies in the city and allowed us to kick in gear the communication network that we've already had in place. That included some of the local security patrol, because we know during of Jewish religious observance, it is difficult to get communications out, and so to have the local security patrols able to put a plan in place to immediately notify before synagogues opened, that was a huge undertaking and something we can't miss. But to have a person armed, with have the means, the hate, and the desire to carry out a crime of this magnitude is serious. We averted that step.

Question: And if I could follow up also (inaudible) here, can you just give us a little more detail about the arrest and Penn Station, how that went down?

Lieber: The bottom line is that we were notified by the Police Department and by City Hall that this was underway, that this intelligence had been identified. And we put out through what they call a BOLO, Be On The Lookout, with a specific description of the suspects, notified based on the intel from the JTTF and the NYPD, notified our staff in Penn Station that they might be using the MTA transit system, especially the Long Island Railroad. And officers were deployed and ultimately acted on the description that had been provided through that BOLO, the Be On The Lookout information that came from NYPD and the JTTF.

Question: They had photos of the suspect?

Lieber: Yeah, they had full descriptions, and they were able to identify them from what they'd received from the other law enforcement.

Question: Mr. Mayor, you mentioned negative rhetoric by celebrities. In the past two days we've seen...

Mayor Adams: Hold on, hold on, hold on. Did you call in? Okay.

Question: You mentioned negative rhetoric by celebrities. In the past few days we've seen Kyrie return to the Nets, we've heard about Kanye being allowed to return to Twitter. Do you think either of these celebrities should have been allowed to return to the respective platforms?

Mayor Adams: I don't own these platforms, and I don't want to specify particular cases because it's broader than the specific case. Social media, intentionally or unintentionally, social media has become a platform that is assisted with the organizing and the growth of hate in our country and on the globe, and they need to become more responsible.

Question: Do you think it's dangerous for either of them to have returned to Twitter?

Mayor Adams: No, I didn't say that either, I said I was not going to do a specific case. I'm talking about social media. Because social media is being used as a tool to spread hate. The young man in Buffalo, he was not an athlete, he was not an entertainer. He had access to a gun, and he took the lives of innocent people in the supermarket. And so I think we need to focus on the larger issue, and that's social media.

Question: On social media, given what you just said, do you think it was a good decision that Twitter made to reinstate Trump?

Mayor Adams: I don't know. Mike, are you at the same press conference? That was the question he asked. I think I don't control neither of those platforms. They must reckon with the fact that their platforms are being used to spread hate and violence. It has left a point of just spreading hate, it is now being used as a tool to spread violence, and they need to reckon with that.

Question: You mentioned that leading up to Hanukkah, more will be done to secure Jewish places of religion and worship. What specifically will we see, increased presence, or what else is going to happen to protect these institutions?

Mayor Adams: Well, there's a combination of things we do around the Hanukkah season normally and around the holiday season. From securing safety of our parades, to securing our houses of worship. But when you have an increase in attacks, what we saw in Colorado with the LGBTQ community and what you're seeing with threats like this, we're always concerned about copycats. And so there will be an increased presence. And the police commissioner would put out some clear directives through the chief of department on how we're going to secure our synagogues and other houses of worship.

Question: Hi Mr. Mayor. I'm wondering if you may confirm a report that Matthew Mahrer is Jewish and the grandson of a Holocaust survivor?

Mayor Adams: No. That's part of the investigation and I'm sure the DA's office and others will determine how that plays into this whole encounter. Okay?

Question: Can we hear from the officers who were there, who made the arrest?

Mayor Adams: Come on, where's the officers? Come on down. Thank you officers. I hear you, I got you.

(Applause.)

Question: Can you tell us what happened?

Ryan Fackner, Officer, MTAPD: We were just on patrol at Penn Station, like everybody was just repeating up here. It was a Joint Task Force. They put out the BOLO for the individual, Chris Brown, and they said he might have been traveling to the subway to Penn Station to take the Long Island Railroad. We were up at 34th and Seventh, 34th Street and Seventh Avenue when we saw him actually walk in with his friend. They both walked in through the entrance, we followed him down the escalator, stopped him and made the arrest.

Question: Did they fight back at all?

Fackner: No, they were completely compliant... (Inaudible.) Mine? Ryan Fackner. Ryan Fackner.

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