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Yesterday, Mayor de Blasio hosted two conference calls with the Commission of Religious Leaders of NYC and the de Blasio administration's Clergy Advisory Council to discuss the shooting at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, SC on Wednesday night – including the importance of mutual support and community healing during this difficult time, and the City's efforts to heighten security around houses of worship in the city as a precautionary measure following this tragedy. Transcripts of these calls are included below:

RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS CONFERENCE CALL WITH COMMISSION OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS OF NYC (CORL)

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Thank you very much, Marco.

Look, I want to thank everyone for gathering together. With CORL, we've gathered together in times of crisis and challenge. We obviously look forward to meeting very soon – and I know Marco is working out that date – to talk about ways we can work together on an ongoing basis, you know, on positive things and challenges alike. But, you know, we gather at this moment in an atmosphere of crisis that's afflicting our fellow citizens in Charleston, but it feels to so many people in this city like it's right next door because it was so horrific.

This attack – you know, inside a house of worship, so many people lost – is just deeply affecting people in this city. It's affecting me and Chirlane and so many people at City Hall. And I won't – I won't go into all of the prisms through which we could look at this, but I will say it's impossible to look at this without realizing that there are huge issues we have to address as a society in terms of racism, in terms of gun violence, in terms of mental health.

There are so many urgent, troubling questions that this shooting raises – and a loss of nine people in a house of worship should shock us all into action and recognition.

And, you know, obviously, first and foremost, we have to think about the families. Our prayers are with them. And we have to think about any way we can comfort them. And they were, of course, a part of the AME family – the African Methodist Episcopal Church, which I know is grieving all over the city and all over the nation.

Chief Waters will speak in a moment about some of the efforts of the NYPD, which we're very thankful for, to protect and reinforce houses of worship in this environment – obviously, there's been a particular focus on AME churches.

But Emanuel in Charleston was a particularly historic church. It was one absolutely synonymous with the fight against slavery and for Civil Rights – oldest AME church in the south. When we first heard the reports, it was horrific enough that this happened anywhere, but the more we're learning that this was in a church so synonymous with the fight for freedom and the fact the church that had been burned down at one point by white supremacists trying to repress the actions of that church. So it takes on so much meaning. And those stories

we've heard so far of the people lost, including the pastor, are deeply affecting, because these were true leaders.

So just in terms of the things I think that CORL could be particularly important in helping us with at this moment – obviously, spreading the word – you'll hear details from Chief Waters, but thank God there is not an immediate threat – but we – we definitely need to get people vigilant for any kind of copycat activity, and spreading the word about what's being done to protect churches, and spreading a message of vigilance. This is absolutely, you know, a dynamic where people, if they see something, they need to say something too – to their clergy, to us, to the police. People need to be notified.

And clearly, at the same time, a moment where we have to say that we do not accept hatred and bias and biased violence of any kind in New York City, and that we will continue to follow up aggressively any time we see any indication of it, which is one of the hallmarks of this city.

So I want to just get us together like this, all, to hear from Chief Waters, and then any thoughts people have on how to appropriately spread a message of consolation and vigilance at the same time – or any other things that people would suggest that we do or anything we can do to help you in this moment we'd like to hear.

With that, Chief Waters, thank you very, very much for joining us, and we appreciate your effort every day, and the men and women who serve under you. And please give us a sense now of how the NYPD has reacted to this tragedy.

Chief James Waters, NYPD Counterterrorism: Well, thank you very much, mayor.

Yes – first, as soon as we became aware – we follow the news, like the many people, 24 hours a day – and so we followed the intelligence in many different ways – first, on the classified side, with our partnerships with the federal government, Department of Homeland Security, as well as our own capabilities here in the city with the Intelligence Bureau and the Counterterrorism Bureau in an unclassified setting. So we looked at that intelligence – we were looking to see if there was anything posted – and we follow social media because it informs and directs us at times.

Absent any threat to any church here in the New York City area, I – at my direction, I deployed our Critical Response Vehicles to locations in Manhattan – in some of the AME churches in Manhattan immediately this morning. So as the sun was coming up, those officers were deploying to churches in Manhattan.

We have an additional program [inaudible] Counterterrorism Bureau, called the Counterterrorism Officer Program – a force-multiplier, if you will, of officers that are trained in counterterrorism, but work in regular precincts each and every day, responding to police calls – they don't – they're not assigned to me, but they work for me at certain times. We mobilize – and this is just what the program is for – we mobilize those individuals and then we put them out in roving vehicles, where they were able to go to different churches in the other four boroughs of this city. The CRVs covered Manhattan. The CTO program covered the remainder of the four boroughs.

And in addition to that, I was in direct contact with the Chief of Department, and they put out a message, and they direct it at each precinct – use a RND – a radio car with two cops – to be considered the house of worship car as a designation for the day, where they would go from church to church and make a stop – perhaps knock on the door, talk to whoever was around – but mainly because we – absent any intelligence of any real credible threat here in the city – it is basically out there to let people know, if anybody is taking a look at any church, that the police are out there, we're paying attention. And it should – it should instill fear in the bad guys and confidence in the good, hardworking, church-going people that they should have confidence in the police – and I certainly have confidence in the counterterrorism program.

So with that – that program will continue. The deployments will continue for the foreseeable future. And we are – you know, as the mayor said, we’re always concerned about a copycat or someone that decides that, you know, the barbaric act that occurred last night somebody would think of trying to recreate that in our city – and we’re just not going to permit that to happen.

So I’m happy to take any questions, but, mayor, back over to you, Sir.

Mayor: Thank you very, very much, Chief.

RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS CONFERENCE CALL WITH CLERGY ADVISORY COUNCIL

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Thank you very much, Harold.

Well, I want to thank everyone for getting on this call on short notice and thank you for being a part of our ongoing efforts to work closely with the clergy on a host of issues. I’m sorry that our first discussion comes amidst this tragedy, but we thought it was very important to gather people quickly and talk about the situation.

I want to give a few updates and offer a few thoughts about things we can do – things we can do going forward. I just want to check – Harold, do you know if Pastor Walrond is on the line with us as well?

Harold Miller, Deputy Commissioner, Mayor’s Community Affairs Unit (CAU): Yes, he is.

Mayor: Okay. Pastor, thank you for calling in – I know you’re traveling and thank you very much for calling in. And let’s – I’ll turn to you right after I do this opening.

I don’t need to tell anyone what a – not only a tragedy this is, but what a painful, shocking, absolutely unacceptable dynamic this is. And it – there’s many, many things we can say. We can say a lot about what it says about the availability of guns and the way we treat guns in this country. We can say a lot about what it says, most likely, about mental health and the lack of mental healthcare coverage. And we can say a lot of things about racism in this country as a result, but I begin with the fact that this the kind of tragedy that, you know, is so, so profoundly troubling, because it is so rare that anyone would invade the sanctity of a house of worship and create such a murderous act. And so I think everyone here is feeling this deeply.

I think there is legitimate fear of any copycat attacks. The NYPD is on full alert and is reinforcing some key locations – and I’ll have more shortly on some of those that have been particularly reinforced. I know Allen AME is one of them, obviously, given its prominence and that it is also an AME church. But, you know, we’ve been very clear with NYPD that we want to make sure if there’s any – anything that would indicate a particular problem, that we want that reinforcement to be very visible.

Now, so far, thank God, there is no specific threat. There is no indication of a connection to something larger – as much as a very deeply disturbed individual. We’ve had no threats of copycats – copycat attacks – but we are very, very vigilant at this point and – forgive me, everyone – and we’re – Harold, we’re going to find a better conference call system in the future so we don’t have all the interruptions for everyone. But again, we have no indication of any copycat activity, but we want to take very seriously that danger.

So one of the things I want to ask of people tonight is to spread a message of vigilance. I don’t want to be alarmist. I certainly don’t want to give people undue fear but – but I think it is crucial – okay, I’m going to keep

trying to go despite these electronic interruptions – it’s crucial that we get a clear message out to people. If they have any sense of a specific danger, a specific threat, we want that reported to us immediately. Obviously each of you knows how to reach us here at City Hall, how to reach the Community Affairs Unit. Anything urgent and immediate should be reported to 9-1-1 right away. This is very much in the vein of if you see something, say something. We need to take that concept very seriously here.

So my message to everyone is, you know, we’re on full alert. We’re being very vigilant. I want your help in being vigilant and spreading a message of vigilance. If there’s any information that the city should have or the police should have, it’s crucial we get that right away – and obviously looking for any ideas from people about ways, both practical and symbolic and spiritual, that we should be responding to this horrific event.

Pastor Walrond, can you hear me?

Pastor Michael Walrond, Chair, Mayor’s Clergy Advisory Council: Yes, I can.

Mayor: Okay. I’d like to pass it to you now as chair.

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