

Eric Adams Reigns Over a Run of Scandal Not Seen Since Boss Tweed

THE CITY - Greg B. Smith and Yoav Gonen

<https://www.thecity.nyc/2025/12/24/eric-adams-scandals-boss-tweed-corruption-indictment/>

The mayor's corruption indictment capped a string of criminal charges, FBI raids and abrupt resignations that destroyed his popularity and took down his crony-laden palace guard.

In his twilight days at City Hall, Mayor Eric Adams has doubled down on attacking his corruption indictment, dismissing it as “lawfare” brought by a Biden administration angry at his criticism of policies he blamed for triggering a flood of migrants to New York City.

He has repeated his mantra that the media unfairly focused on the indictment, which a federal judge was forced to void after the Trump administration dropped the case, while ignoring accomplishments like more affordable housing, reduced crime and fewer homeless sleeping in the streets. That record, he asserts, makes him one of the city's most successful mayors.

But by any number of telling measures, Adams' four tumultuous years at City Hall could generate a highlight reel of notoriety that would surpass that of any mayor of the 20th and 21st centuries. The never-ending stream of investigations and indictments made Adams a standout.

“There is nothing in the annals of New York political history quite like the scandals that enveloped Adams and his administration — and that's saying something,” said Terry Golway, author of “Machine Made: Tammany Hall and the Creation of Modern American Politics.” “Adams' indictment, in my view, moved this scandal beyond anything in the 20th century. You have to go back to the mother of all New York scandals, the Tweed Ring, to find a comparison.”

The City

That notorious episode in New York City history featured rampant corruption committed by William “Boss” Tweed and his cohorts and included the indictment in 1871 of A. Oakey Hall — the only other mayor in city history to be indicted.

Tammany was a political machine, and its systematic looting of taxpayer dollars was sustained by a loyal team of ward heelers plucked from working-class neighborhoods. Adams’ approach was far more familial, putting friends, relatives and a score of longtime cronies — some with questionable resumes and little experience running municipal government — on the city payroll at generous salaries and in positions to wheel and deal at taxpayers’ expense.

All have maintained their innocence.

But the inner circle’s own words — either caught on wiretaps or asserted in legal documents — chronicle this distinctly Adams style of doing business, with money-driven transactions often at its heart.

Four years of Adams’ leadership led to a prosecutorial assault on City Hall unequalled in New York history: Investigations by three sets of prosecutors assisted by the FBI and city Department of Investigation (DOI), with 20 individuals charged, including Adams. A dozen more had their phones seized by law enforcement, and at least four probes are still underway.

And the scandal that ensnared the mayor himself underscores what’s different about this electoral era. His campaigns exploited an \$8 to \$1 public match by the city on small campaign donations — intended to reduce big-money influence on elections — through illegal fund-raising ploys that led to his indictment, multiple investigations and the conviction of an aide. (Spokespeople claimed that Adams was unaware of the schemes.)

Meanwhile, having won election in the era of Black Lives Matter with the pitch that he could deliver both safety and justice, the former cop fixated on the police department and gave

The City

retired NYPD friends wide-ranging power over public safety matters. His old cop cronies took over leadership at One Police Plaza and ran amok.

As news of the growing number of investigations spread, so did Adams' penchant for forgiving friends for just about everything, which might not have been read as a signal to tighten the ship.

"People have a tendency to, when accusations are made, to say, 'You know what? The pressure's hot, you need to just get rid of a person.' I just don't operate that way," Adams told reporters in July 2024, when a longtime associate he made a "senior advisor" was hit with a fourth lawsuit alleging sexual harassment and retaliation.

Combined, all these factors begat a remarkable string of scandalous spectacles that sent his popularity plummeting:

FBI agents confronting the mayor on a Greenwich Village street after a speaking engagement and seizing his phones inside his city vehicle.

FBI and DOI agents criss-crossing the city on a September morning to simultaneously seize the phones of Adams' police commissioner, schools chancellor, first deputy mayor and deputy mayor for public safety. In subsequent weeks, the same scenario played out with a half dozen more senior aides.

And finally, the watershed moment: Adams himself, smiling and waving, strutting up the imposing gray granite stairs of the federal courthouse in Foley Square to face his indictment on bribery and campaign finance fraud charges.

By the time the mayor's chief liaison to the Chinese community offered a reporter for THE CITY \$300 stuffed into a potato chip bag, months after Adams got his charges dismissed, it was an absurd coda to four years of chicanery.

The City

No city administration since the Tweed era reaped a fallout of this scope. It included a wave of tainted resignations that included those of his police commissioner, schools chancellor and first deputy mayor, and his closest aide and confidante. Two of his top lawyers stepped down when he declined to heed their anti-corruption advice. Four deputy mayors left after Adams got the Trump Justice Department to withdraw his corruption case in exchange for his cooperation in the administration's deportation campaign — a transaction they felt left him compromised.

Voters recoiled, too, and Adams' public approval ratings plummeted, ultimately dooming his campaign for reelection.

It's a Family Affair

As the scandal spread, the resulting indictments and lawsuits depicted Adams' associates playing by their own rules, ultimately investigated for or charged with taking steps to get what they believed was theirs to take while they could.

"I have to get mine. Where are my crumbs?" Timothy Pearson, a former NYPD colleague Adams assigned to monitor migrant shelter contracts allegedly complained when he wasn't cashing in on one of these multi-million dollar deals, a coworker related in court papers.

"I'm not playing. Your sister has to be rich!" Chief Advisor Ingrid Lewis-Martin proclaimed in a secretly recorded phone conversation as she described how a developer she'd allegedly assisted with building inspector headaches was going to finance a Chick-fil-A franchise for her son.

Lewis-Martin, the wife of one of Adams' police pals of decades ago, was his closest aide. She had been at his side seemingly forever, working as a state Senate staffer, then a senior aide when he was borough president and as a consultant on his campaigns. He anointed her "chief advisor," an ill-defined role that ultimately paid \$287,000 a year and allowed her to intervene on behalf of campaign donors and others, including some now under indictment, charged with bribing her to arrange favorable treatment from a wide variety of city agencies.

The City

Former Mayor Eric Adams advisor Ingrid Lewis-Martin spoke at her lawyer's Midtown office about being at the center of a public corruption investigation, Dec. 16, 2024. Credit: Ben Fractenberg/THE CITY

Jesse Hamilton, once Adams' Senate chief of staff and then his handpicked successor for his Brooklyn Senate seat, got a job that ultimately paid \$213,000 a year overseeing the city's leases of private office space.

Winnie Greco, who had joined Brooklyn Borough Hall as a volunteer Asian community "ambassador," was elevated to a paid job in a similar role once Adams became mayor. She was close with Lewis-Martin, who frequently referred to Greco as "sister" and a member of the family. At one event attended by Greco's mother, she invoked family once again as she called Adams to the stage: "I have the pleasure of introducing Winnie's mom to her son," she proclaimed.

Greco's two homes in the Bronx were raided by federal authorities in early 2024, simultaneously with a Queens mall where she had hosted numerous fundraisers for Adams and whose employees were listed as making dozens of small donations that Adams' campaign used to obtain matching funds.

The family affair became more apparent from there. A sister-in-law, Sharon Adams, snagged a \$150,000 job (since raised to \$176,000) at the Department of Education, while her husband, Adams' brother Bernard, briefly got a \$242,000 a year job as a "security advisor." That paid position was nixed after the Conflicts of Interest Board ruled the appointment violated city anti-nepotism rules.

Adams' domestic partner, Tracey Collins, got a promotion at the Department of Education and a \$46,000 salary bump six months after he took office, followed by a \$31,000 hike a year later. She retired in 2024 amid a probe by the Special Commissioner of Investigation in response to claims her gig at one point became a "no show" job.

The City

A 911 dispatcher, Lisa White, who had done work years ago for Adams' group 100 Blacks in Law Enforcement, and whose Brooklyn apartment Adams listed as his address while in the state Senate, got a fivefold salary spike when she landed a \$241,000-a-year (since hiked to \$285,877) deputy commissioner job in the NYPD.

The mayor also rewarded former colleagues at the NYPD, starting with Pearson, an ex-cop he put in a \$243,000-a-year job overseeing contracts for migrant shelters. Pearson had zero prior experience with that kind of work.

And Adams' close ties to another NYPD colleague, Philip Banks Jr., factored into his appointment of Banks' son, Philip Banks III, as the \$287,000-a-year deputy mayor for public safety, despite the younger Banks' history as an unindicted co-conspirator in an NYPD bribery scandal. The mayor also named another Banks brother, David, schools chancellor (final annual pay \$415,000), and David Banks' then-financée (now wife) Sheena Wright as first deputy mayor (final pay \$314,000).

All of these loyalists got hefty pay raises while they were on the city's roll, with many seeing big bumps just before they were forced to resign after having their cell phones seized and homes raided by law enforcement.

Contracts, Leases and a Porsche

And what did these Adams loyalists seek to get in return?

Indicted twice by Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg, Lewis-Martin was charged with bribery after allegedly intervening on behalf of mayoral donors. Prosecutors charge that businessmen she assisted with building inspection problems helped her son buy a Porsche. They also alleged a soundstage operator, Broadway Stages, arranged to get her a part in a TV show after she killed a community-supported bike lane on heavily trafficked McGuinness Boulevard in Brooklyn that they contended would slow down their trucks hauling movie set equipment.

The City

The businessmen and the co-owners of Broadway Stages wound up indicted along with her.

Lewis-Martin took a trip to Japan last year with Hamilton, the protege Adams put in charge of the city's \$1 billion property leasing program. Also on the trip: a real estate broker who advised Hamilton on leases, a lobbyist who'd recently schmoozed Hamilton for a client and an Adams fundraiser.

Lewis-Martin, Hamilton, the broker and the fundraiser had their phones seized by law enforcement when they arrived at JFK from Japan. Handing over her device, Lewis-Martin blurted out, "So you're the ones that have been listening to my phone," prosecutors alleged.

Ultimately Hamilton and Tian Ji Li, the Adams fundraiser, were indicted along with Lewis-Martin. Hamilton is also under investigation by DOI for allegedly trying to steer a city lease worth \$60 million to a donor to Adams' legal defense fund.

Adams' ties to his old NYPD mentor Phil Banks Jr. entered the narrative early on the morning of Sept. 4, 2024, when the FBI and DOI showed up at the homes and confiscated the phones of his sons, Deputy Mayor for Public Safety Phil Banks III, and his brother, David, the schools chancellor. That morning they also took the phone of another son: Terence Banks.

Soon it emerged that investigators were looking at potential influence-peddling involving Terence, Philip III and David. Terence had set up a consulting firm for clients trying to win city contracts.

In an interview with THE CITY, Philip Banks III admitted talking with Terence about one of the consulting clients, a tech firm that landed a pilot program testing out a "panic button" app in select public schools that could lead to a potentially lucrative contract.

The City

Another client of Terence Banks appears to have reaped more immediate benefits, THE CITY found: David Banks, appeared in a promotional video for the firm, which then won \$2 million in no-bid contracts from the agency his brother ran, the city Department of Education. David Banks' attorney responded to THE CITY's inquiry about this by stating, "We are not commenting on this story at this time."

The investigation into the Banks brothers appears to be active. Witnesses were interviewed by prosecutors this fall and one of Terence Banks' clients who had his phone seized the same day as the Banks brothers was recently indicted on unrelated charges of corporate malfeasance.

Then there's the mayor's first buildings commissioner, Eric Ulrich, who resigned just 11 months into Adams' first year at City Hall. Ten months later, Ulrich was indicted, charged with taking cash to pay off gambling debts and accepting discounted rent and free Mets tickets. In exchange, he allegedly did favors for a real estate developer and the owner of a Brooklyn tow truck firm who co-hosted a big fundraiser for Adams' 2021 campaign, among others. (Ulrich, the developer and the tow truck owner have all denied wrongdoing. Their cases are pending.)

Between the tow truck owner's fundraiser and the public matching funds it generated, Adams' campaign obtained \$373,000. It was part of a dash for cash that played a key role in many of the investigations that came to overshadow his mayoralty, including the one that ultimately resulted in his indictment.

Dash for Campaign Cash

In 2021 Adams was able to obtain \$10 million in public matching funds in a race where he ultimately prevailed by a mere 7,000 votes in the ranked-choice Democratic primary. The city Campaign Finance Board signed off on this huge public subsidy, but only after repeatedly raising questions about suspect donations that his campaign declined to answer.

Just 18 months into his tenure, those concerns spilled over into public view with the July 2023 indictment of another of the mayor's cronies, Dwayne Montgomery, a former NYPD

The City

deputy inspector Adams knew. Montgomery ultimately pleaded guilty to scaring up a score of illegal straw donations — big contributions funneled into small-dollar donations in order to qualify for public matching funds.

THE CITY soon discovered that during the 2021 runup, Adams' Asian community ambassador Greco had arranged big-ticket fundraisers that included straw donors such as restaurant workers and other low-wage earners who said they'd been reimbursed by their boss for their "contribution" or in some cases said they didn't know their names were being used.

After being tapped to join the Adams administration at a salary that would grow to nearly \$205,000, Greco began to take advantage of her prominent post, THE CITY found. She landed her niece a job as the mayor's scheduler at an annual salary that grew to \$137,000.

A businessperson told THE CITY Greco requested a \$10,000 donation to a nonprofit she oversaw as the cost of entry to a free event at Gracie Mansion featuring Adams. A former Adams campaign volunteer said Greco required him to perform unpaid renovation work at one of her two homes in The Bronx in exchange for securing a job in the administration.

Greco resigned months after her homes were raided by the FBI and DOI, but she returned as a volunteer for Adams' 2025 re-election bid. In August she offered the potato chip bag stuffed with cash to a reporter for THE CITY outside a campaign event in Harlem. The Brooklyn U.S. attorney's ongoing investigation includes the alleged potato chip bribe attempt and the earlier fundraising activities.

Saying "I can see how this looks strange," Greco's lawyer maintained it was nothing more than an innocent expression of friendship and gratitude common in Chinese culture.

Donors appeared to get good returns on their investments in Team Adams, according to prosecutors and reporting by THE CITY and other media outlets:

The City

Migrant shelter contracts, including a deal arranged by a donor that netted him a \$1.2 million referral fee. A billionaire Wall Street building owner snagged a \$60 million city lease. The soundstage operator got the bike lane whacked.

One hotel developer and Adams donor, Weihong Hu, was indicted in February in an alleged kickback scheme that netted her business lucrative government-funded shelter contracts in exchange for millions in bribes paid to a nonprofit executive. THE CITY had previously reported that Hu and her family and associates were at the center of a straw donor scheme in which they reimbursed at least three Adams donors for \$2,000 contributions to his reelection effort.

Hu later called on some of Adams' closest allies to get city inspectors off her back and secure a break from zoning rules to get around a requirement to build affordable units. The Campaign Finance Board is continuing to investigate Hu's role in fundraising for Adams.

And when prosecutors unveiled Adams' indictment on Sept. 26, 2024, they alleged he'd accepted \$120,000 in free airline upgrades from individuals tied to the Turkish government in exchange for resolving fire safety issues at the new consulate in Midtown and other Turkish government requests. It caught headlines, but the bigger prize was his solicitation and acceptance of illegal straw donations — including some financed by the Turkish government — that helped him gain crucial matching funds he aggressively sought during his 2021 run.

When the Turkish consulate asked Adams — then the Democratic nominee — to smooth out Fire Department resistance to approving a fire safety system for the consulate's new headquarters, prosecutors said he intervened with the then-FDNY commissioner who'd asked Adams to keep him on. When Adams' aide told him the Turkish backers who'd arranged the illegal donations made clear that he owed them, she said he responded, "I know," prosecutors alleged.

When he asked for more matching funds for his 2025 reelection bid, the Campaign Finance Board denied his request and soon after warned him it was considering clawing back the \$10 million it had signed off on in 2021.

The City

A Scandalized Police Department

About once every generation, the police department undergoes a monumental corruption scandal. Few of them directly involved the commissioner or other members of the department's brass, or former law enforcement officials granted sway over the department.

Adams, who rose to captain in a 22-year NYPD career, put hand-picked appointees in all these positions. Together, they established a kind of cowboy culture.

In it, internal misconduct charges against cops were summarily dropped, top brass engaged in a shoving match at the New York City Marathon finish line, sexual harassment charges emerged against ranking law enforcement officials, a top chief took to social media to berate officer holders he disagreed with, and policing turned more aggressive through a special unit that engaged in latter-day stop-and-frisk tactics and high-speed car chase in which numerous people were injured, sometimes fatally.

Edward Caban, the son of an old Adams police friend, was advanced by the mayor from a dead-end policing role in Brooklyn. The mayor put Pearson on the payroll of the nonprofit Economic Development Corporation — which allowed Pearson to continue collecting his NYPD pension.

In virtually every case, the appointments generated investigations of corruption, abuse of power, or outright brutishness.

A racketeering lawsuit filed earlier this year by former interim Police Commissioner Thomas Donlon claimed that Adams' acolytes worked to amass power and prestige in what he described as "a coordinated criminal conspiracy" that included abuses involving promotions and appointments.

"Adams empowered individuals with known histories of abuse and misconduct while dismantling the careers and credibility of those who spoke out," the suit charged.

The City

A City Hall spokesperson dismissed the allegations as “baseless accusations from a disgruntled former employee.”

A week earlier, four ex-chiefs filed separate lawsuits alleging they were ousted for blowing the whistle on the assignment and promotion of unqualified cronies to vital positions and other issues at the department.

In January 2022, Adams named Caban the department’s first deputy commissioner despite a history checkered with misconduct. He then chose him as commissioner after his predecessor, Keechant Sewell, resigned in part because Banks, Pearson and other Adams cronies were undermining her authority.

Caban resigned in September 2024 after the feds confiscated his and his twin brother’s cellphones.

They were reportedly looking into allegations that the brother, James Caban, who was terminated from the NYPD in 2001 for threatening and wrongfully detaining a cab driver, was shaking down nightclub owners in exchange for hands-off treatment by the police department.

One Brooklyn bar owner who felt unfairly targeted by enforcement from the local precinct told NBC 4 in September 2024 that a City Hall aide close to Adams introduced him to James Caban, who asked him for \$2,500 to bolster his relationship with the precinct.

Attorneys for James Caban have denied he engaged in wrongdoing and attorneys for Edward Caban have said he’s not a subject of the federal probe.

One of Edward Caban’s most notable feats as a largely hands-off commissioner was his reduction or dismissal of penalties in dozens of police misconduct cases, including for

The City

officers facing serious consequences. He also fired two respected watchdogs within the department who had bucked the NYPD's stances on risk management and discipline.

When Jessica Tisch replaced Caban as commissioner in late 2024, she overhauled the department's Internal Affairs Bureau unit that investigates higher-ups, which multiple lawsuits have accused of running cover for those in power while targeting whistleblowers who brought legitimate concerns.

Under Caban was Chief of Department Jeffrey Maddrey, Adams' friend and the main axis of power at the department during much of the mayor's tenure, often relying on a trio of proteges — Kaz Daughtry, Tarik Sheppard and John Chell — who came with their own baggage.

Daughtry jumped seven ranks to go from detective to assistant commissioner under Adams, while Sheppard rocketed up to serve as deputy commissioner of public information, a role in which he allegedly threatened to kill Donlon during a scuffle over a photo-op at the NYC Marathon. Sheppard has denied that claim.

Chell, as chief of patrol, ran an under-the-radar unit known as the Community Response Team that became known for its aggressive policing and its penchant for dangerous vehicle pursuits. He ascended to the top uniformed posts under Adams despite a 2017 jury verdict in a civil lawsuit that found he had intentionally shot — and killed — an unarmed driver in Brooklyn and a disciplinary record that included attempted federal tax evasion.

Maddrey, like other high level Adams appointees, had early red flags in his career. He was charged with lying to IAB investigators about a physical altercation with an NYPD officer he was purportedly having an affair with, during which she allegedly pulled out a gun.

The charges disappeared under a plea deal that Maddrey's attorney negotiated with the department, according to the New York Daily News.

The City

In late 2021, he came under scrutiny after THE CITY broke the news that he had voided the arrest of a former police officer who was detained by police in Brownsville for allegedly chasing three teens with a gun.

A video investigation by THE CITY later laid out Maddrey's direct intervention in getting the officer released.

Despite significant evidence of misconduct, Adams repeatedly defended Maddrey as a good person and policeman. "People just adored him in Brooklyn North," he said in March 2023.

When Sewell moved to discipline Maddrey, Adams pressured her not to — which contributed to her decision to step down in mid-2023, a source familiar with her thinking told THE CITY.

Caban then dismissed the misconduct charge against Maddrey.

But his third major scandal would be his last.

In December 2024, Lt. Quathisha Epps filed a federal complaint alleging that Maddrey had coerced sexual favors from her in exchange for overtime. Epps was paid over \$200,000 in OT in fiscal 2024, city records show.

Maddrey submitted for retirement a day after Epps filed her complaint but Tisch suspended him without pay a few weeks later after the FBI raided his home.

Maddrey has denied Epps' claims, saying they had a consensual office fling.

The City

Pearson, the mayor's longtime policing pal, was a chapter in himself. The mayor assigned him an amorphous role as senior advisor for public safety and COVID recovery in early 2022, but his impact was felt across multiple agencies — most notably at the NYPD.

He also played a heavy role in the city's response to the sudden arrival of tens of thousands of migrants.

In October 2023 he tried to barge into a migrant shelter in Manhattan and assaulted guards who asked him for ID, according to a dozen statements from witnesses at the time.

A report by the city's Department of Investigation later found that Pearson committed misconduct and falsely claimed that guards had assaulted him — which led to their arrest by police.

One of them claimed in a lawsuit that Pearson told her, “Bitch, do you know who I am?”

In March 2024, Pearson was the target of a suit by NYPD sergeant Roxanne Ludemann, who claimed that Pearson touched her inappropriately, made sexually suggestive comments and blocked her promotion after she declined to serve as his driver. Three of her colleagues filed lawsuits that backed Ludemann and claimed they were retaliated against by Pearson and NYPD higher-ups for speaking out.

Pearson has filed court papers denying the claims, and Adams stood by his friend unequivocally throughout the whole ordeal.

At various times he cited Pearson's service to the city as a police officer on 9/11 and his history of being a good friend to Adams even in tough times.

The City

“What I’ve learned in life is that a good friend walks in the room when others walk out,” Adams said in praise of Pearson amid the lawsuits. “Those in law enforcement, particularly officers of color, would tell you he has walked in the room at some difficult times.”

In September 2024, just days after Adams was indicted by the feds, Pearson resigned following an FBI raid of his Long Island home, where investigators seized cellphones, documents and cash, according to the Associated Press.

His attorney has said there’s no merit to misconduct allegations swirling around Pearson.

‘Extremely Trustworthy’

Some of Adams’ contributors and associates have faced serious consequences. They include Erden Arkan, a Turkish businessman who pleaded guilty to arranging some of the illegal contributions to the 2021 campaign. Mohamed Bahi, a mayoral liaison to the Muslim community, pleaded guilty to choreographing straw donations from a Brooklyn contractor with ties to the Uzbekistan government.

Another Adams community liaison, Rana Abasova, was fired from City Hall after it emerged she was the main conduit between his campaign and the Turkish government in the fundraising scheme sketched out by prosecutors.

But Adams — thanks to President Trump — skated. With his attorney ridiculing the indictment as “the airline upgrade case,” Adams got the Department of Justice to move to dismiss the case — in exchange, an official said, for his cooperation on the administration’s immigration crackdown. Noting that the Justice Department never assessed the actual merits of the case, the then-acting Manhattan U.S. attorney and several prosecutors handling the case resigned in protest. A federal judge reluctantly approved the dismissal, asserting, “Everything here smacks of a bargain: dismissal of an indictment in exchange for immigration policy concessions.”

Since then, the mayor has claimed he was deliberately targeted by the Biden Justice Department over his criticism of that administration’s immigration policies, even though

The City

the investigation by DOI, the FBI and the Manhattan U.S. attorney started in September 2021 — before the migrant wave and before he'd even won the general election.

As for any trace of self-reflection, in his recent radio and TV appearances the mayor has consistently insisted that none of this was his fault. The blame, he asserts, lies with some “people” he appointed to unspecified city jobs.

“I’m an extremely trustworthy person,” he said during a recent radio interview. “I believe that you should be the man or woman you say you are, and you should live up to that. And some people didn’t. And some people really disappointed me. They broke my heart, actually.”

He did not name names.

Eric Adams Takes His Place in History of Corruption-Scarred Mayors

THE CITY - Greg B. Smith

<https://www.thecity.nyc/2025/12/24/eric-adams-mayors-history/>

Where Eric Adams stands in the pantheon of New York City mayors will be for historians to decide, but in a single respect he joins only one other mayor, long forgotten: A. Oakey Hall.

Hall was the last New York City mayor indicted while in office, charged in 1871 with neglect of his official duties. He was supposedly on watch when Boss Tweed and his nefarious Tammany Hall cabal looted and pillaged what today would be untold millions of dollars through inflated city contracts and a remarkable variety of shakedown schemes.

The scope of perfidy was breathtaking. Tweed himself was found to hold a secret interest in the quarry that supplied the marble that built the Tweed Courthouse — a wildly inflated boondoggle that sits behind City Hall as an unrivaled monument to political corruption.

Ward boss George Washington Plunkitt explained the Tammany mindset in his book titled “Plunkitt of Tammany” by insisting there was such a thing as “honest graft.” Or, as he put it,

“I seen my opportunities and I took ’em.”

The Boss died in prison. Hall, however, never did a day in jail. He went on trial three times: the first ended in a mistrial, the second in a hung jury and the third in an acquittal.

New Yorkers never got to see whether Adams could have been the first convicted New York City mayor, because the U.S. Department of Justice under President Donald Trump forced the dismissal of his case in exchange for his cooperation in the administration’s immigration crackdown.

In some ways, notes Terry Golway, author of “Machine Made: Tammany Hall and the Creation of Modern American Politics,” the potential for scandal in any mayoral administration exists simply due to the enormous size of New York City government, which now tops 300,000 employees and requires a \$116 billion budget.

“Some sort of scandal would seem to be inevitable. The question really is about culpability: To what extent was the mayor implicated in his administration’s scandals?” Golway said.

“Adams would seem to be as culpable as you can get, barring an outright conviction.”

(Adams pleaded not guilty to all charges before the Trump Justice Department moved to

The City

dismiss his case.)

Adams was charged with bribery and campaign finance fraud for allegedly soliciting and accepting illegal straw donations in his pursuit of \$10 million in public matching funds, but escaped thanks to Trump. Two other mayors were accused of perfidy, but escaped without charges.

Jimmy Walker, the impeccably dressed Tammany Hall mayor of the Roaring '20s who frequented speakeasies and courted chorus girls, was accused in an anti-corruption investigation of accepting thousands of dollars from vendors seeking city contracts. He called them "gifts" and was never charged. But Gov. Al Smith — a post-Tweed Tammany leader with a squeaky-clean reputation — told Jimmy his days in politics had run their course. Walker resigned in 1932 and fled to Europe with one of his chorus girl acquaintances.

In the 1950s New Yorkers witnessed the rise and fall of William O'Dwyer, a prosecutor who had brought down the mob world's assassination combine, Murder Inc. Elected mayor in 1945, O'Dwyer resigned on Sept. 2, 1950, nine months into his second term amidst a cop scandal involving organized crime. Investigators alleged payoffs to dozens of cops, and one cooperator claimed some of those payoffs wound up going to O'Dwyer. He was also accused of appointing friends of the suave gangster kingpin Frank Costello to city patronage jobs.

O'Dwyer denied wrongdoing and ultimately escaped accountability after President Harry Truman appointed him ambassador to Mexico. But a year later a fire union chief testified at a Senate hearing that he had made a \$10,000 payoff to O'Dwyer at Gracie Mansion. O'Dwyer denied that the payment was a bribe but a federal tax court later ruled he owed taxes on it. No prosecutor brought charges related to this finding.

By far the most notorious late 20th century City Hall scandal unfolded under Mayor Ed Koch, who was never personally implicated in any specific corrupt activity. Instead his reputation tanked due to his choice to allow the city's most powerful political machine strongmen to divvy up municipal agencies and install their cronies to run them.

They included Queens Borough President Donald Manes; Bronx Democratic Committee head Stanley Friedman; and Meade Esposito, the longtime boss of the Brooklyn Democratic machine. Manes ultimately fatally stabbed himself after being implicated in a wide-ranging bribery scheme. Friedman was tried and convicted as a participant in that

The City

scheme by then-Manhattan U.S. Attorney Rudy Giuliani. Esposito was later convicted in a separate payoff scheme.

Giuliani would go on to win City Hall in 1993, but his legacy would also suffer because of his choice of Bernard Kerik as police commissioner. After his tenure at One Police Plaza, Kerik pleaded guilty to a wide variety of crimes, including obtaining discounted bathroom renovations from a contractor and making false statements to the White House officials vetting his appointment as secretary of the Department of Homeland Security.

Giuliani's successor, billionaire businessman Mike Bloomberg, managed to get through two of his three terms unscathed by corruption allegations. His run of good luck came to an end in 2011 when the city's Department of Investigation and federal prosecutors announced indictments against several consultants hired to oversee the digitizing of the city's payroll system under a program dubbed CityTime. The scam ripped off taxpayers for \$600 million through inflated invoices and shell companies.

Bloomberg — after first defending CityTime — finally admitted he'd failed to adequately keep an eye on the program.

Bill de Blasio also came close to indictment after the Manhattan U.S. attorney found evidence the mayor had solicited donations for a nonprofit he controlled from real estate developers, businessmen and lobbyists seeking favors from his administration. That included the owner of a restaurant operating on a city-owned barge on the East River trying to get out of paying thousands of dollars in back-rent he owed the city.

The restaurateur ultimately admitted he threw two free fundraisers for de Blasio and claimed when the mayor said he needed him to raise a certain amount, Singh said he could only do that via straw donors. Singh alleged de Blasio responded, "I don't want to know how you do it." De Blasio denied that claim.

In the end, the Manhattan U.S. attorney, Cy Vance Jr., declined to bring charges. Vance also demurred on another de Blasio effort involving fundraising aimed at switching state Senate leadership from Republican to Democrat. The DA determined that de Blasio's role in funneling funds violated the spirit of campaign finance rules — but not the law.

Use of Force By NYPD Officers Surged 20% Last Year

THE CITY - Yoav Gonen

<https://www.thecity.nyc/2025/12/23/use-of-force-nypd-2024-surge/>

Use of force by members of the NYPD surged 20% last year to 11,746 incidents — a record high since the department began detailed record-keeping on the issue in 2016, according to a police department report quietly posted online in recent days.

Roughly half the incidents of force occurred in response to crimes or violations in progress, which often result in arrests. Incidents involving people in mental or emotional distress and encounters with prisoners accounted for 14% and 7% of the total, respectively, according to the report.

The department recorded just over 260,000 arrests last year, the highest total since 2017, when there were 286,230 arrests. That year, however, there were 7,369 incidents where force was used — nearly 40% fewer than last year.

Data for the first three quarters of 2025 show that the NYPD was on track as of September to surpass the 2024 use of force numbers.

“The dramatic increase in use-of-force incidents in 2024 is an alarming yet predictable result of the Adams administration’s return to broken windows policing and aggressive tactics,” said Daniel Lambright, special counsel for criminal justice litigation at the New York Civil Liberties Union.

“This is the consequence of a mayor who has treated the NYPD as the default response to New Yorkers’ everyday problems, while consistently shielding abusive officers from accountability,” he added. “We urge Mayor-elect Mamdani to break from this reckless approach and chart a new course.”

Lambright noted that the increase in force incidents tracks with a record high number of use-of-force complaints filed with the Civilian Complaint Review Board.

Included in the incidents-of-force tally were 14 fatal shootings by officers, the highest number since at least 2016. This came despite a four-year low in intentional shootings by officers during a confrontation, at 28.

The NYPD report noted that nearly 44,000 arrests in 2024 were weapons-related, which

The City

was also the highest total since the detailed record-keeping began.

One police officer, 31-year-old Jonathan Diller, was fatally shot in March 2024 during a traffic stop that turned violent in Queens while six other officers were shot and injured. Nearly 6,000 members of the department sustained an injury during force encounters last year, of which 7% required treatment or admission to a hospital for an injury, according to the report.

Mayor Eric Adams has overseen a police department that on a number of fronts has gotten more aggressive, including with a surge in stop and frisk encounters and the launch of a specialized Community Response Team, which was given a long leash and a loosely-defined mandate.

During Adams' tenure the number of major crimes shot up by over 20% in 2022 before dipping by about 2% last year and by nearly 3% thus far in 2025. Among the major crimes, murders have declined significantly, as have shootings, while the number of rapes and felony assaults have been climbing.

Adams has described his approach as tough on crime, something he said has been essential to getting guns off the street and contributing to this year's crime decrease.

"I've always been tough on crime. From my days as a police officer, state senator, borough president, and now the mayor," he said at a campaign event in August. "And the results of that toughness have proven successful: 23,000 illegal guns removed off our streets, lowest numbers of shootings and homicides in the first six months of this year."

The NYPD report confirmed prior reporting by THE CITY of 25 deaths in NYPD custody last year and provided short summaries of most of the 12 deaths stemming from police car chases — though it excluded the pursuit death of a 15-year-old teen on an electric bike in Queens.

NYPD officials did not immediately return a request for comment and didn't respond when asked why the 2024 numbers were released so late in 2025.