

Mayor Eric Adams, NYPD Hold a Briefing on the Subway Shooting in Sunset Park

April 13, 2022

John Miller, Deputy Commissioner for Intelligence and Counter Terrorism, Police Department: Good afternoon. I'm John Miller, deputy commissioner for intelligence and counter terrorism of the New York City Police Department. With me, Police Commissioner Keechant Sewell. Chief of Detectives James Essig. Breon Peace, the United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York. Mike Driscoll, the assistant director in charge of the FBI's New York office. John DeVito, special agent in charge, ATF.

Miller: These are the partners who have been working with us from the first moment of this incident and we have important information to transmit today.

Miller: First, I would like to go to the mayor, live from Gracie Mansion.

Mayor Eric Adams: My fellow New Yorkers, we got him. We got him. I cannot thank the men and women, the New York City Police Department, enough, as well as our federal agents, our state police, our first responders from the 911 operators to the various men and women from our medical professions. We got him. As said to New Yorkers, we are going to protect the people of this city and apprehend those who believe they can bring terror to everyday New Yorkers.

Mayor Adams: And I want to thank everyday New Yorkers who called in tips, who responded, who helped those passengers who were injured. 33 shots but less than 30 hours later, we are able to say we got him. Thank you, commissioner, for your leadership and job well done.

Miller: And now police commissioner of the City of New York, Keechant Sewell.

Police Commissioner Keechant Sewell, Police Department: Good afternoon everyone, and thank you for being here. I am truly fortunate to stand here among these extraordinary investigators and federal partners to make this announcement. Moments ago, Frank Robert James was stopped on the street and arrested by members of the New York City Police Department. Officers in response to a crime stoppers tip stopped Mr. James at 1:42 PM at the corner of St. Mark's Place and 1st Avenue in Manhattan.

Commissioner Sewell: He was taken into custody without incident and has been transported to an NYPD facility. He will be charged with committing yesterday's appalling crime in Brooklyn. I want to commend all of the investigators and analysts who took part in this all hands on deck investigation. Literally hundreds of NYPD detectives worked doggedly during the last 30 hours to bring this together. They did so in tandem with a vast number of our law enforcement partners including those from the FBI, NYPD joint terrorism task force, the ATF, NYPD Crime Gun Intelligence Center, and the regional task force led by the United States Marshall Service.

Commissioner Sewell: We hope this arrest brings some solace to the victims and the people of the City of New York. We used every resource at our disposal to gather and process significant evidence that directly links Mr. James to the shooting. We were able to shrink his world quickly. There was nowhere left for him to run.

Commissioner Sewell: I'd like to turn it over to Chief James Essig for details of the investigation.

James Essig, Chief of Detectives, Police Department: Good afternoon, everybody. I'd like to update the public on yesterday's incident on the subway in Brooklyn on a Manhattan bound N train. Through the course of this investigation, we developed additional information and evidence. Mr. Frank James, our person of interest now became a wanted individual for yesterday's horrific incident.

Essig: Mr. James is a male, 62-years-old. He is known to us and has ties in Wisconsin, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York City. His arrest history in New York is nine prior arrests dating from 1992 to 1998. Those include possession of burglary tools, four times. Criminal sex act. Theft of service, two times. He was arrested on a New Jersey warrant. He also has a criminal tampering. He has three arrests in New Jersey in 1991, 1992 and 2007.

Essig: They are for trespass, larceny and disorderly conduct. So yesterday, we recovered video of him prior to the incident entering the King's Highway subway station. He has the same black cart that he has later recovered on the crime scene. The pictures are to my right over here.

Essig: This station is three blocks from where we recovered the U-Haul truck that he rented in Philadelphia. The key to that truck was recovered at the crime scene. This jacket, the distinctive orange jacket, was also recovered as well as his construction helmet he was wearing and we recovered that in a garbage bin in transit. We believe, but this is still early in investigation, that after firing his weapon 33 times at innocent New York City subway riders, Mr. James boarded an R train that had pulled into the station, went one stop up and exited at 25th Street station. We also have a picture of that.

Essig: The gun used in this, a nine millimeter Glock, which was recovered at this crime scene was bought, was purchased by Mr. James in 2011 in Ohio. We tracked Mr. James and his last known whereabouts was 7th Avenue and 9th Street in Park Slope, entering the subway. Minutes ago, thankfully, NYPD patrol officers from the 9th Precinct responded to St. Marks and 1st Avenue where they apprehended him without incident.

Essig: This case was quickly solved using technology, video canvassing, and then getting that information out to the public. So I can't speak highly enough of the partners we had. The FBI, Mike Driscoll. ATF, John DeVito. US District Attorney from Eastern Breon Peace, and the coordination within the detective bureau. Tommy Gallardi from Intel, our transit bureau, our patrol services bureau. Phenomenal job less than 30 hours later to arrest this individual.

Essig: So with that, I'd like to turn it over to Breon Peace.

[...]

Miller: Mike.

[...]

Miller: Okay. We're going to be in that. We've told you almost everything we have to say, able to answer some very limited questions.

Question: Could you tell us a little bit about the crime stoppers? There's been reports that he called himself in. Is that true?

Commissioner Sewell: There was a person who called crime stoppers. We're reviewing who exactly made that call.

Question: [inaudible] and is it clear yet what the motivation was for the shooting?

Essig: I think first and foremost, we were looking to get this guy off the street before he did any more carnage, brought any more carnage to the city. As to the investigation into the motive and to looking, scouring his social media, that's still part of the ongoing investigation but again, first and foremost, we wanted to take him off the street. The investigation is continuing into the motive, into his social media postings.

Question: You said Mr. James walked into a Park Slope subway station. What time was that and what was he doing in between then and when you guys caught him?

Essig: That was 9:15 yesterday. So the incident occurs at 8:24. So he leaves, he exited the 25th Street station house. Shortly after 8:24, the R train pulls in. We catch him next going into a Park Slope on 7th Avenue and 9th Street at 9:15 and then we grab him today. But we had literally hundreds of detectives out scouring video throughout the crime scene and beyond.

Question: And so this is 9:00 AM?

Essig: Excuse me?

Question: 9:00 AM that he goes into Park Slope.

Essig: Yes, that was him. Yesterday at 9:15.

Question: And do you have any idea where he was previously today? Any ideas on his whereabouts? Was he being tracked in any way? Did he say anything when he was arrested?

Essig: No. His arrest was just literally minutes ago so we haven't even... He's just arrived at the precinct shortly. As to his whereabouts, that's part of the investigation. Detectives are out going through video canvasses and we're going to backtrack that and that will take literally weeks.

Question: A two part question. The first is, did the NYPD previous to yesterday's attack had any complaint or did they look into any of the cameras being out? Not just at 36th Street but at 45th and 25th. And additionally, is there any indication that Mr. James was going to do any more attacks in New York City?

Essig: As far as him doing any more attacks, again, that's part of the investigation. Our main focus was to take him off the street immediately.

Question: Do you know how he purchased the gun if he had a criminal record?

Essig: You can't have a felony conviction to purchase a gun. So he had no felony convictions.

Question: Have the mayor's security detail been returned to its typical size and scope?

Press Officer: So we're not going to discuss that.

Question: Yes. Can you take us from the Crime Stopper tip to the arrest? What happened in between? How was he located?

Essig: The crime stopper tip today?

Question: Yeah.

Miller: Hey Julia, good afternoon. Crime stopper tip comes in. Reports that the male is in the McDonald's on 6th Street and 1st Avenue in the 9th Precinct down on the Lower

East Side in East Village. Officers respond to the McDonald's. He's not in the McDonald's. They start driving around the neighborhood looking for him. They see him on the corner of St. Marks and 1st and they take him into custody. No incident in taking him into custody.

Question: Do NYPD do an audit of cameras in subway stations just to make sure they're all working in the future so it would make it easier to catch a person who does something like this?

Miller: So the camera systems in the subway system are not NYPD cameras. They're owned and maintained by the MTA. We have access to them. We do regularly look and see which cameras are working, which ones are not, but the responsibility for those cameras belongs to the MTA.

Question: Are you going to make the officers who made the apprehension available? Are you going to identify them? [inaudible].

[...]

Question: Could you guys and chief, in any interviews that took place yesterday with any of the surviving victims, as well as people who are on the train, have you been able to glean anything about what he said or did on the train that yields a little bit more about his motivation, about what he intended to do?

Essig: We have witnesses on the train who said he was sitting in the back corner of the second car and he popped the smoke grenade and we have one witness who says, "What did you do?" He goes, "Oops" and then he pops it to... brandishes the firearm and fires 33 times. We are in the process and are asking for anybody's help who was on that subway train or on that platform, to reach out to the crime stoppers at 1-808-877-TIPS with any information. We're still looking for witnesses and anybody who has information, who was on the scene.

Question: Can you tell us anything more about the Glock that this guy used? We heard initially that it jammed. I know from what experts say that Glock's aren't supposed to do that. It's kind of the selling point of Glock's. Can you tell us a little bit more about the fact of the case or-

Essig: Well, our crime scene is still processing that scene. It to the lab and they'll give us a report. It's still very early in the investigation for that.

Question: [inaudible].

[...]

Question: Yes. Can we talk about his contact with social services or if he had any here in New York?

Commissioner Sewell: That's going to be part of the investigation as well. So we are not able to speak to that at this moment.

Question: So after his arrests in the nineties, did he disappear? Was he not in New York City anymore?

Commissioner Sewell: That's part of our investigation as well, Juliet. Thank you.

Question: Can I ask one more question of these 12?

Miller: Here then, the last, last question.

Question: Thank you. I'm wondering if there's... Do we have any motive in terms of Sunset Park? Why Sunset Park or was it random?

Miller: No idea. So just to close, we also want to acknowledge our partners. Sometimes [inaudible] partners in the media for putting all these pictures out. For spreading this story from the time we did the press conference yesterday. That was a critical effect on raising the kind of public awareness that as the commissioner said, was able to give him very few choices in terms of where to go. So we appreciate your efforts as well. Thank you very much.

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