

Transcript: Mayor Eric Adams Holds Press Conference at Lincoln Hospital

May 11, 2022

Police Commissioner Keechant Sewell, Police Department: We're here to update our fellow New Yorkers on an officer involved shooting here in the Bronx. Tonight, we are extremely fortunate that our officer is here at Lincoln Hospital, recovering after being shot by a dangerous criminal who should not be on the streets of the Bronx or anywhere else. Our two officers were patrolling in uniform in their police vehicle near 3822 3rd Avenue when they observed a male on the east sidewalk of 3rd Avenue. One officer exited the vehicle, approached the male and he immediately began to run. With the officer on foot and his partner still in the vehicle, they chased the male to the vicinity of Bathgate Avenue and Claremont Parkway. As the male continued running north on Bathgate Avenue, there was an exchange of gunfire between the officers and the suspect. During the incident, one officer was struck in the left arm and the male was struck in the head. The male subject, who is 25 years old, is currently in critical condition. A nine millimeter Glock was recovered near him.

Commissioner Sewell: I want to thank Dr. Raja and the entire team here at Lincoln Hospital for taking great care of our officer and for their constant support. Before the mayor speaks, I have to commend our courageous officers. This is what we ask them to do. And they're on the streets every day and night, risking their lives on behalf of New Yorkers. Mr. Mayor?

Mayor Eric Adams: Thank you so much, commissioner. Now, let me share part of what the commissioner did not share. This is what we're dealing with, a perpetrator with multiple arrests, multiple arrests. The last arrest, criminal possession of a weapon. How was he found to have been carrying the weapon? He jumped the turnstile in the subway system and had the weapon on him. The firearm was found when he committed a crime of jumping the turnstile in our subway system. Here's the problem. The arrest was March, 2020, and for 20 months after the arrest, he remained on the streets. He finally pled guilty December, 2021. So you're asking yourself, "He pled guilty in December, 2021. Why wasn't he in jail?" He was still out waiting to be sentenced. The sentence

was pushed off for five months and then you know what else happened? It was pushed off again. People want to ask why am I cracking down on fare evasions? That's why. People want to ask why we're conducting 300,000 stations inspections. That's why. People want to ask, why are we pushing for reform? That's why. This is what we are up against.

Mayor Adams: Tomorrow, the commissioner and I are going to announce actions we believe need to be taken to deal with this real issue that we are facing. And I just met with Officer Vargas. And here's the very interesting aspect of this. Our city is divided. The overwhelming number of New Yorkers are the good guys. A small number of violent people are the bad guys. Officer Vargas' father-in-law is a police officer assigned to the neighborhood safety team going after guns. Officer Vargas is a police officer going after guns. You have family members in this city that are saying, "We're tired of living in violence." And they're up against those who believe we should be spending our attention protecting criminals. Who the hell will protect the innocent New Yorkers in this city? That's the question we have to ask ourselves.

Mayor Adams: It is time for us to stop spending our energy protecting people who are committing crimes and violence. This person has an extensive arrest history. He has made up his mind he was not going to stop until he took the life of an innocent person. I'm tired of the complaints about the officers who are doing their job. We put these officers on the frontline, father and son on the frontline. And these officers, being on the front line, we're spending more attention critiquing their actions. Let's critique actions of those who are committing the crimes in this city. That's what we should be critiquing. That's where my attention is. Not only what type of uniform our police officers are wearing, I'm focused on those who are carrying guns, particularly in this borough.

Mayor Adams: The number of shootings that we are responding to every night is despicable. But everyone is looking at the attention that what we are doing to stop fare evasions where people are carrying guns. To stop people who are discharging weapons on our streets with no regard for the innocent people of this borough and of this city. The gun arrest was in Brooklyn. The shooting tonight was in Bronx. The number of times that we have to respond to these shootings, New Yorkers deserve better. We took 2,600 guns off our streets and the shooters of those guns are back on our streets, just like this person here. Under normal circumstances, you will see a decrease in crime in the city. But the same criminals are continuing to come out in our streets, committing violence over and over again. The city deserves better.

Mayor Adams: We have to commend these officers. In spite of the criticisms, in spite of the attacks, in spite of all the naysayers, in spite of all the things that are thrown at them, they continue to do their job. They continue to respond. This father-in-law and son, they were on the streets. In spite of everything that we do to stop them from doing their jobs, they're still doing their jobs. And I want to thank them for putting themselves in harm's way. For we go after the small number of people who have made up their minds, they have no regard for the people of this city. It's time for us to start thinking about the innocent people of this city. We're tired of these press conferences late at night, talking to officers and family members who are the victims of these shooters.

Mayor Adams: We need to support our police officers. We send them out to do a job and that job was carried out tonight. And Officer Vargas and his partners, they served us with the level of dignity that we deserve to give to these men and women who put on this uniform and run towards violence, not away from violence.

Commissioner Sewell: I'll turn it over to Chief of Detectives James Essig for details.

Chief of Detectives James Essig, Police Department: Good evening, everybody. With me is the Chief of Bronx Detectives, Timmy McCormick. So at approximately 10:45 hours, members of the Patrol Borough Bronx Public Safety Team exchanged gunfire with an armed perpetrator. These are the preliminary details. Two members of the Bronx Public Safety Team patrolling in uniform in an unmarked police auto observed a male just south of 3rd Avenue and Claremont Parkway. They exited the vehicle and approached the male. As they approached the male, the male fled on foot with both officers in pursuit. They went westbound on Claremont and then northbound on Bathgate, an approximately one and a half block chase. The male then turned on the officers and fired two shots. The officers returned fire, striking the male. The male was taken to St. Barnabas Hospital and is listed in critical condition. A nine millimeter Glock 48 was recovered on the scene, pictured right here. It was stolen out of Richmond, Virginia, June 14th of last year.

Chief Essig: The perpetrator is known to us as Rameek Smith, a male, 25 years old. He gives an address of 1540 Castleton Avenue in Staten Island, which is a homeless shelter, but he has family with addresses nearby in the Bronx. His arrest history includes a July, 2016 robbery in Staten Island where he pled guilty and received five years on probation. While out on probation in March of 2020, he gets locked up with the possession of a weapon in Coney Island at the Mermaid Avenue Subway Station. He

was evading the fare and a .32 caliber handgun was recovered off his person. That case is still open. He pled guilty in December of last year and was released on his own recognizance and he has a June court date and he's awaiting sentences. Our officer, thankfully, was taken to Lincoln Hospital where he's expected to make a full recovery. Pat Lynch? With that, I'd like to turn it over to Pat Lynch.

Patrick Lynch, President of the Police Benevolent Association: I agree. We spend our day answering questions, but I have a question. What will it take before our legislators realize they made a mistake? When will they start speaking for the people on the street? When will they give us the resources we need rather than pat us on the back? We spent the morning up in Albany, as we stood in solemn prayer, to put the names of 49 police officers who gave their lives in the line of duty for this city and this state and we had legislators patting us on the back. When will they stop patting us on the back and help us take our streets back? We are in a crisis. We need help now. First thing you're taught in the police academy, when you pull that trigger, that round goes someplace. It hits something. It doesn't stop until it hits or kills somebody.

Lynch: The perps don't care where that bullet rounds. Today, it landed on a police officer. Tomorrow, will it be your child at the bus stop? Will it be you going to work? Will it be you standing on your stoop? Now we have to have a real discussion. Not a nonsense discussion, a real discussion, where all the stakeholders sit down and have a realistic conversation to help us do the job. You know what I want to see? I want to see a renaissance of the city again. I think we can do it if we start tonight.

Question: [Inaudible].

Chief Essig: We're not going to comment on his medical history.

###