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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR ERIC ADAMS APPEARS LIVE ON PIX11's "PIX11 MORNING NEWS"

Craig Treadway: All right. Well, a New York City bus driver is being hailed a hero this morning for his quick response, which allowed riders to escape after his bus was hijacked by an armed man in Queens.

Hazel Sanchez: Yeah, it's the latest in a string of violent incidents on subways and in buses in recent weeks. It has commuters feeling very unsafe despite the city's new subway safety plan to add more cops and cameras underground. Mayor Eric Adams is joining us this morning to discuss the reality of public safety and what's being done to protect New Yorkers. Good morning, Mayor Adams. Thanks again for being with us.

Mayor Eric Adams: Good mornings, great to be on with you.

Sanchez: Yeah, we have a lot to cover this morning, so let's jump right into it. There have been nine murders on the subways so far this year, and it seems that no matter how many more cops you throw into the mix, it's not really a deterrent to the people committing these violent acts. In fact, this morning we had breaking news: another attack at a subway station in Harlem. So what's the next move?

Mayor Adams: Well, when you do an analysis that we have done, we did several phases of our subway plan, and started on January 6th of making sure that we deal with the actual violence and how people are feeling on our system. That was a combination we wanted to address. That's why we removed the encampments. We zeroed in on those with mental health issues and illnesses. And nine, I should say, four out of the nine homicides that you talked about dealt with people who had mental health illnesses. And that is our primary focus at this time. When you look at the six felonies we have a day on our subway system with 3.5 million riders and see how the police have responded to it, you realize these officers are clearly been proactive. 750,000 subway inspections, 5,000 people arrested for serious crimes, 19,000 people ejected because they were violating transit rules. 75,000 summonses dealing with those who are doing those things that they should not be doing in the subway system. And I have a thousand new officers we put there. Officers are on the trains, new initiatives.

And the real comparison is 2019, the last time we had real subway riderships. Our index crimes are actually lower than 2019, 2018, 2017 and 17 percent lower than the last 10 years. Officers are doing their job. We're going to continue to zero in on that dangerous crime.

Treadway: Mayor, you've been riding the trains recently. You've been speaking to a lot of commuters, including celebrity commuters like our own Hazel Sanchez. What are they telling you about their concerns about the subways?

Mayor Adams: Well, it's interesting. When I'm on the system, I'm hearing people are saying thank you. They're saying, "Eric, we see that there's less homelessness on our subway system. We don't see the encampments. We are seeing police officers. We're hearing the announcements when police officers are on the tracks. They're telling us when we are at a station that has a transit district." I'm hearing New Yorkers saying thank you. You see you have responded to the actual crime on our systems and the feeling we were having because what we were hearing all the time about crime in the subway system. Again, we got 3.5 million riders every day in this city. And those six felonies that we have a day, we're going to get rid of them as well. But this system is operating, cleaner. It is operating without the homelessness that we witnessed in the past because we're not ignoring that and we are going to deal with those with mental health issues that are dangerous to themselves and others.

Sanchez: Yeah, I was just going to ask you, the people that responded to seeing you in the subway system say maybe that was a good day, but we are still seeing a lot of people that are homeless in the system, a lot of people that seemingly are not in control at all. So how are you going to increase the outreach to those folks?

Mayor Adams: Well, I don't announce my arrival in the subway system that I use a lot. I don't say which stations I'm going to so that people can sort of put their best face on that our employees and police officers. I get on the train often and I walk through the station. I don't just get on the train and ride from one location to the other. I walk through many stations and I spend one or two hours down in the system. I see the visual appearance of our system. And remember, I'm a former transit police officer. I patrolled the system in the eighties and I know what it's like with a system that's out of control.

But we are now moving to a phase where we are continuing to partner with mental health professionals, training our police officers, beefing up our homeless outreach unit and going to Albany next year to ask them to assist us with more teeth in Kendra's Law. And the governor just announced those 50 new psychiatric beds are going to be extremely helpful. So we can give people the care they need if they can't take care of themselves or they're harmful to others.

Treadway: Alright. Well, Mr. Mayor, we have seen an increase in rape, robberies, and grand larceny across the city. Notwithstanding the subways, violent attacks, they're on the rise. Wednesday night, comedian Chris Redd who impersonates you on Saturday Night Live was attacked in the East Village on the way to a gig at the Comedy Cellar. I mean, what's the city's public safety strategy as we head into this busy holiday season because this is a concern?

Mayor Adams: And remember what I stated when I was running, this city was being ravaged with gun violence. And despite the small number of people that didn't understand the power of having an anti-gun unit, I pushed forward with that. I was clear that we needed to deal with gun violence in the city. And we did that. Double digit decrease in homicides, double digit decrease in shooting victims, over 5,000 guns removed from our streets. The anti-gun unit in a combination with local police patrol, we drove down those violent gun crimes and now we're zeroing in again on those other major crimes, robberies, assaults, grand larceny, grand larceny autos. And you're finding that there are small crews and repeated offenders. Some of these people that we are arrested, they are arrested 30 and 40 times for crimes. We must zero in on those repeated offenders, the small number of people committing a lot of crimes in the city that they're dealing with, and some of the anxiety that New Yorkers are seeing.

So Chris Redd must be safe, but also the everyday school teacher and police officer and parent must be safe. And we're going to make sure we do that. The police commissioner is focused on that, and that's what I'm focused on.

Sanchez: Yeah, like you were mentioning, we've had a few attacks at schools recently. Let's switch gears a little bit. You just made an historic appointment yesterday by naming Laura Kavanagh to the new FDNY commissioner. So what set her apart from the other candidates that you saw?

Mayor Adams: We just saw her level of poise and dedication and commitment that she brought to the FDNY, our bravest. And we looked and did a national search through Deputy Mayor Phil Banks, and we looked over all the candidates. And as I stated yesterday, I kept coming back to Laura Kavanagh. I was with her side by side during some of the most horrific moments in my administration, as early as it is, from the fire in the Bronx, we lost many New Yorkers, to the death of firefighters during my time in office. And she constantly showed the the poise, the ingenuity, as we move our Fire Department, using new technology for the many things that the Fire Department is currently doing. And not only putting out fires, but addressing the other aspects of that agency. And she was just the right person at the right time. I was happy with her abilities and skills.

And she's also a woman. We made history. We will continue to shatter the glass ceiling. My five women, deputy mayors, my woman that's the police commissioner, and now my firefighter, head of my Fire Department, Laura Kavanagh. We are... continue to shattering those historical glass ceilings for all groups. Korean Americans, first Korean American that's a commissioner of Small Business Services. First Latino that's a commissioner of the Department of Corrections. We are shattering the myths that we can't find good people in all parts of this city.

Treadway: All right, well Mr. Mayor, turning to the city's migrant crisis, at a press conference early this week, you said the number of buses with asylum seekers has dropped. So how many buses with asylum seekers have arrived this week? And talk about the plans if those numbers jump again, and the fact that you're going to be getting some help from the National Guard.

Mayor Adams: Well, we're using every tool that's possible. I have experienced and had to navigate through crises as a law enforcement officer, so I understand that you must be prepared

and not panic. And that's what we did. The reason we did not see children and families sleeping on our streets in this city when we received 21,400 migrants and asylum seekers here and absorbed the large number of students into our educational system is because this administration has shown we respond to crises well. We did it with COVID, we did it with monkeypox, we did it with polio. We're doing it with crime and now we did it with the migrants. We put out a clear message to the city and state what was needed and what we were doing. The president heard us, he had a decompression strategy on the borders. We heard from the mayor of Texas, El Paso, who stated he was no longer going to send buses here. We saw the buses trickle down to, I believe, we received one or two this week from other parts of the bordering states. And now we must deal with those who are here.

But clearly we need national immigration policies. You can't have individuals come to a country and cannot work for six months when they're capable to do so and we have an employee shortage in many places. And so I believe that we are going to manage those who are here, not only to give them a place to sleep, but education, food, clothing, and all the things we do for everyday New Yorkers who are in need of city services.

Sanchez: Mr. Mayor, we've unfortunately run out of time, but I do need to ask you if the numbers continue to stay down, would you close that tent city in Randall's Island?

Mayor Adams: Well, we had to open 55 emergency shelters, two HERRCs, one for families, and one we opened on Randall's Island. And yes, if the numbers stabilize, we are going to be able to close that down.

That is going to save money, and that was insurance. I tell people all the time, you don't buy car insurance and complain that you didn't have an accident at the end of the year. We had to have the insurance with that unstable situation of potentially receiving over a hundred thousand migrants in our city. We were prepared.

We did not panic. And I want to take my hat off to the men and women, both in the community-based organizations and nonprofits and the city workers.

Sanchez: All right. Mayor Adams, thank you again for all your time this morning.

Mayor Adams: Thank you.

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