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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR ERIC ADAMS HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY ON TRIP TO
EL PASO**

Mayor Oscar Leoser: Well, good afternoon, and thank you all for being here. But really, I want to thank Mayor Adams from New York. They came to El Paso to see what we're dealing with, what we're doing and how we do it. And meeting with him last night from the airport, we started at 10:15 last night and went down to the airport and kind of looked at where our asylum seekers had been sleeping, where we had 400, 600, last night we had 37. So it's important. I showed them the (inaudible) where we had the people sleeping there.

And also, we went to Sacred Heart and we got out of the car and walked around there, and then we walked around the area and we got out at the Greyhound station where our numbers have gone down by 80 percent. And we don't have anyone at the Greyhound station, but I showed them where they were and where they've been. So, it was really important.

I'm going to come back and talk in a little bit because I think it's important that we hear from Mayor Adams, because we have a lot of things in common and we have a lot of things that we've talked about that we really believe that making things, and changing some things will make a big difference. But I'm going to allow him to really talk about those things because, like I said, we've had the president, we've had eight senators and now we have the Mayor of New York coming down here and seeing how we do it.

And we talked about in December, we had over 54,000 people coming to our country through El Paso and how that's a federal issue, and how we talk about that the immigration process is broken and that we need to continue to find a way of really not putting a Band-Aid on it and coming with a solution. Because we need to be able to change the narrative that's going on in our country. And I'm going to step back now at this point and allow Mayor Adams to talk about some of the things that I believe that him and I have a lot in common and have the same beliefs. Mayor Adams.

Mayor Eric Adams: Thank you. Thank you, mayor. Thank you. You spent so much time. You have been really humble with your time and your team for joining us last night, greeting us at the airport and showing us that good hospitality, that is clear, this city knows all too well. I'm here joining my team, my commissioner, Office of Immigrant Affairs, my commissioner of NYCHA,

my chief of staff. I know you joined us also with your chief of staff and my deputy chief of staff, to come here and see firsthand.

Clearly the numbers that you have witnessed over the last few months were different from what's here now because we have a pause, not a period. We're not at the end of the sentence of the migrant assignment seeker issue. We have a pause because what's being played out in the Supreme Court and what's being played out, really on how we're going to take the next steps forward. The real question becomes what are we going to do in this moment? The pause we're seeing directly here in El Paso is not the pause we are seeing in New York. Last week we received 3,100. A week and a half ago we received 3,100 migrant asylum seekers and in one day, over 800, close to 840 asylum migrant seekers in one day. That is a record in our city. It clearly states that even while this conversation is taking place across the country on what is going to happen with the Supreme Court's ruling and decision, it is still impacting New York City.

New York City has become the river and many rivers are coming from all over the country and they're going directly to the City of New York, and it's impacting our cities. I want you to be clear on two things as we go through the observation and our purpose of coming here today. One, there is no country that is more humane in treating the asylum seekers and those who are migrants. No country is more humane and that humanitarian action is dealt with, really through the NGOs, through the professionals who are at the borders, through the mayors across the cities, the various professionals who have come up, city workers who have come up across our city and really understand how important it is for us to be humanitarians when we look at this issue.

Second, no city deserves this. El Paso does not deserve this. Chicago, Washington, Houston, Los Angeles, New York, no city deserves what is happening. This is a beautiful city and what has happened over the last few months undermine this city and what is happening in Chicago right now, in New York and Houston and Los Angeles and Washington, our cities are being undermined and we don't deserve this. Migrants don't deserve this and the people who live in the cities don't deserve this. We expect more from our national leaders to address this issue in a real way. We still have over 26,000 people still in our care. We're at the highest level of care and people who are in the care of the City of New York, in history. We give more than just a bed as we saw here. It's not just a bed to sleep, it's food, it's healthcare, it's education, it's services, much needed services. Many people will come here to our country, are coming without any basic needs being supplied. Children need education. Healthcare, when I walk through some of the centers, seeing the healthcare and the support that's being provided.

What is our ask today from the national government? We need clear coordination. That was the impetus behind my visit here. Several months ago when we started to see the flow come from Texas and other parts of the country, we realized that there was a lack of coordination on the city levels. After seeing those 3,100 come to our city, I knew it was time for me not to try to handle this problem from the city, but to come and to interact with the mayors across the country. This has fallen on our cities and I am now going to coordinate my mayors across the entire country to say, how do we respond to this directly? I will be in Washington, D.C. this week speaking to the American Conference of Mayors, and AMA, African Mayors Association, and we are going to raise this issue and how do we approach it, to come up with real coordinated efforts to put in place and an agenda to address this issue.

When I stepped off the plane last night and I saw in the airport those who were preparing to fly to other locations, it showed the seriousness of the moment, as many of them had to sleep in the environment that this mayor and all who are involved tried to make as comfortable as possible. They should not have to do that and that is my clear message today. My message is coordination with all who are involved on the multiple levels that we need to deal with this crisis that we are facing. This was a learning experience. It was a clear observation on how some of our partners here, particularly Sacred Heart, who have shown a heart and how they are using the various faith-based leaders and institutions to have a decompression strategy, something that our federal government and our state entities are failing to do.

One of the most significant conversations that I had was with a gentleman who came from Colombia, five days traveling here, trying to get to Canada, not having any real direction, but some of our partners that we see here on the ground, we're able to give him some of the support and information he needs, so that he's able to get the help that he needs and reach the destination that he's trying to reach. This is a man-made crisis, that is going to take men and women across this country to solve and I'm going to extend my hand to the mayors across this country to say together, we did not create this problem, but together we will find solutions, but those solutions must be implemented by the federal government. I'm extremely disappointed of what we have done to the cities of this country and the impression that we are not seeing the level of urgency of getting this issue resolved. I see the urgency. Mayor, you see the urgency as well. Another eight mayors across this country witness the urgency that we are facing.

I want to now turn it over to my commissioner of the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, who is a Dreamer, who came to this country with his mother seeking the same dream that many of our migrants and asylum seekers are attempting to pursue now. He understands clearly the impact of being denied and the impact of not having the right information, the right support. We've always been a city where the Statue of Liberty sits in our harbor, where we know what it is to come here and try to pursue the American dream and that dream should not turn into a nightmare because the lack of coordination that we are seeing on the National Level. Commissioner.

Commissioner Manuel Castro, Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs: Thank you Mayor Adams. I first want to say that it's incredibly telling of our mayor, Mayor Eric Adams, of his care and compassion for the immigrant community in New York, but elsewhere as well, to appoint a Dreamer to be the Commissioner of the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, someone who crossed the Mexico border, who's had those experiences and that could relate to the immigrant community in New York and to now those arriving to New York City. I want to thank Mayor Eric Adams for this role. It's been emotional, very impactful for me to be here and to witness the work that's happening and to be able to visit the border myself.

I want to share the mayor's message in Spanish, so we are able to communicate to our Spanish speakers in those communities who will be watching this message today... (speaks in Spanish).

Mayor Leeser: And again, Mayor Adams, thank you again. One of the things that... And I'm going to go through a couple things real quick, that we met with Ruben Garcia with the Annunciation House. We went through Sacred Heart Church. We met with OEM and (inaudible) Andrew Gonzalez, and we went to the county processing center. We drove Saturday night, we were down at the border and we actually sat there and I showed him the pictures of how it was months ago. On December 15th, we had almost 2,600 asylum seekers come across the border to

El Paso. And we averaged 1,800 a month during the month of December. So again, he was able to witness and see that. And then from there we ended up at again, Sacred Heart. One of the things that was really impactful, he sat there and conversed with some of the migrants and he asked him and he asked him to point blank.

He says, "How many of y'all are looking for work and how many of y'all are willing to work today?" I can tell you that there wasn't one hand that didn't go up. And then they all started cheering because they're here looking to go to work. They're here wanting to go to work. And then today we went to the tent out in 54, which is... I know y'all had a preview of it. It's incredible that what they were able to build in 20 days. And I told the mayor today that we witnessed that it will withstand a wind storm, but also the process and all the men and women of the border patrol. And when we were talking to them just recently, they told us that they didn't get to spend any of the holidays with our families, but they're dedicated and committed to working and protecting our community and doing their job.

And then we drove, we went on Fonseca and went on Barker Road, and then we drove up the river. We went actually on the opposite side of the fence and drove all the way down. So you could see we were within probably 10 yards of Mexico, and he had the ability to see that. So we did a lot in the few hours really, he was here less than 24 hours. But we didn't stop because it was important to see how our community is dealing with a crisis that we need to work together as a community. And I've always said that this is bigger than El Paso, this is bigger than the United States, and it's a United States problem, but it's also the way we're going to be able to solve it is working together and unite one voice. And that's what Mayor Adams was talking about. And we were able to show that in our community when we were the worst city in COVID when I took office. And we were able to unite and talk with one voice to become the best city in America.

So we're looking at doing the same thing with all the mayors that have united voice and go to Washington and say, this is what we feel we need to do and how we need to do it. But then it's going to take more than that. It will be a worldwide solution that will be able to help us move forward. And with that, again, I'm very, very thankful that you came here this evening, because I've had a lot of phone calls. And I can tell you, I've talked to governors from other states that I've talked to in the last week, and they're very amazed how the city of El Paso is able to deal with it and continue to deal with it and continue to function on an everyday basis. So again, mayor, I'm very thankful for you and your team to be here and our city staff for opening the doors and rolling out the red carpet for you to be able to see and hopefully be able to work together to come up with a common solution.

Mayor Adams: Thank you.

Mayor Leaser: With that, we'll take some questions.

Question: I have a question about coordination of government and other cities, we've also talked about electricity in regards to a projected cost of 2 million. In terms of the administration, how much are you seeking in federal dollars and having seen everything today, what are some of the services and resources (inaudible)?

Mayor Adams: Well, first, the Mayor Leeser and I started communicating over this crisis. And there are other mayors. I spoke with Mayor Turner in Houston, Mayor Lightfoot in Chicago, and throughout the last few months have been speaking with Mayor Bowser in Washington. What we want to do is... Starting with my trip this week to DC is to really coordinate all of our mayors for us to come together with a unified voice. This crisis had mayors pitted against each other, and that can't happen. No municipality should go through this.

And so we are not going to pit against each other. We're going to unite with one voice. A second, the federal government should pick up the entire course, what El Paso is going through and all of the other municipalities. And we need a real leadership moment from FEMA. This is a national crisis. FEMA deals with national crises. FEMA must step up and there should be one coordinator to coordinate everything that is happening dealing with migrants and asylum seekers in our country. We should not have to have a disjointed coordination. This is the job of FEMA. FEMA should step up and coordinate this effort.

Question: A couple months ago you had stated, or you had asked, (inaudible) migrants to your city, how do you feel now that you actually suffered some of what's going on in your city (inaudible) if it's a federal issue?

Mayor Adams: I'm sorry, what would I ask?

Question: So why would you ask El Paso elected officials to stop new migrants if it's a federal problem and also not their fault that (inaudible)?

Mayor Adams: No, we're we are clear and we're asking everyone that New York cannot take more. We can't. As we indicated one day, 830. 3,100 a week and a half ago. But you know what? El Paso can't take more. Houston, Chicago. Chicago, I spoke to Mayor Lightfoot. She has asylum seekers sleeping in the basement of her library. And so these cities can't take more. And I don't want El Paso to be put in the position that they can't take more. They should not be put in that position. And so I stand here next to my brother, mayor and stated, we are not pointing the finger at El Paso. We're not pointing the finger at Houston. We're pointing the finger where it should be pointed. And that's our national government, this is a national problem. We must have real immigration reform and we must immediately have a short term fix of making sure that the course of this does not fall on our local cities.

Question: You've been talking about the coordinated efforts that are needed. Can you tell me a little bit about what those conversations have been like with the Texas Governor Greg Abbott and have you had those conversations with him?

Mayor Adams: I would love to, as long as you let my person point out who to call next.

Question: Okay. I'm sorry about that.

Mayor Adams: That's okay. I think that what we are seeing when I saw the governor of Colorado do, that was wrong. Uncoordinated efforts to send buses to New York City. I saw Governor Abbott do the same thing. I think that when you look at cities, cities are closest to the problems. And when you look at cities, the answers are going to come from our cities and our

mayors. And I thought the behavior of both the governor of Colorado, who's a Democrat, and the behavior of the governor of Texas who's a Republican, I think they had a bipartisan disrespect for the cities, and it was wrong. It should not happen, and it should not continue to happen.

MaryAnn Martinez: Thank you. Mayor, MaryAnn Martinez with the New York Post. I have a couple, two questions. One is about, you're talking about (inaudible) taking more. I speak to a lot of migrants who say they want to go to New York. Some of them are going through the asylum process, and they have (inaudible) on their own. Others do not. There may be a lot of New Yorkers watching this on their news tonight, wondering what can do to stop them if they're clearly motivated to travel to New York. The other question is about the timing of this trip. You've got a lot of local reaction, people wondering why you are here, and the numbers have dropped off, saying that you were late to the party.

Mayor Adams: No, actually, first let me do the first question. We learned today, which was very informative, and that's why it was important to come here, that there are websites that are advertising that New York City, basically streets are paved with gold, that there's automatic employment, that you're automatically going to be living in a hotel. There's a conversation among those who are asylum-seekers and migrants who are getting given the false impression that, if you come to New York City, everything is fine.

We have to give people accurate information, and that is what some of the centers are doing here. They are truly explaining to people that this is what's happening in New York right now. New York, you go there, you are going to be living in congregate settings, that there is no more room in New York. That should be coordinated by our national government, not only done locally here by those NGOs, but it should be done by our national government. That is not happening.

So, a lot of people want to come to New York. We spoke to some people and said, "Why are you coming to New York?" "Because we saw you on TV. We saw your shows on TV." There's an image that, when you come to New York City, that automatically you're going to be in this great place where all the resources are available. We have to give people accurate information, and that should be done on a local level, that we have a real decompression strategy. People who have sponsors, family members, that won't go into our care systems, we are more than welcome to do so. But that should not come at the price tag of those New Yorkers.

Now, speaking to the late to the party, no, my team was here months ago. My deputy chief of staff, my OEM team, leaders of my team, they were here months ago, on the ground, doing an evaluation, communicating with the mayor, communicating with the city manager. We were here when this first came on our radar months ago, trying to speak with the federal government, telling them what needs to be done. We were here when this first got on our radar, trying to find out solutions. So I'm here physically after what happened a week and a half ago, to come down firsthand, to see for myself what I need to do as the mayor of the city, but this is not a new arrival for us. The mayor will tell you, my team was here months ago.

Question: Yeah. Now that you got a firsthand look at the migrant crisis, will you be making any changes in New York in regards to how you're addressing the crisis?

Mayor Adams: New York has been a place where the humanitarian response of the migrant crisis has been really something that's a symbol of what we are as a country. Making sure that people have a safe place to sleep, making sure they have medical care, food, clean clothing. Our volunteers, our NGOs making sure no one is without the necessary needs that they deserve. We've done our job. Now it's time for the national government to do its job.

Question: Tony with KTSM. Do you believe that this will strengthen the communication between New York and El Paso? Do you believe that it's strengthening the relationship we already have?

Mayor Adams: Yes. I believe coming here, speaking with the NGOs on the ground, speaking with some of the volunteers, speaking with the mayor, seeing firsthand... You cannot solve these problems from an ivory tower. You must be willing to go on the ground. That is who I am as a person. No matter what crisis we're facing, I believe that part of my role as the mayor is to go on the ground, and that's why I'm here in El Paso now, this beautiful city.

MaryAnn Martinez: If I may follow up?

Mayor Adams: Yes.

MaryAnn Martinez: Now that you've been here, seen things with your own eyes, you saw a lot of things that President Biden did not see when he was here, (inaudible). What is your message, or what sort of communication do you have with the White House about solutions moving forward?

Mayor Adams: I think it's more than just the President. Real, true immigration reform is going to come through the Senate, Congress, and the White House. If we just state, "Mr. President, what are you doing?" then we're not really responding to the crisis we are facing. The Senate, Congress, and the White House must all come together and deal with real immigration reform. But the direct needs right now, I believe that we must appoint a FEMA leader that is going to come in, look at this, and coordinate our response. It is wrong for El Paso to have a response, for New York to have a response. We cannot have these disjointed responses. We must have a coordinated response, and that must be held by FEMA. This is a national emergency and crisis that must be addressed that way.

Mayor Leeser: I'd like to answer a little bit of your question there when you talked about what the President got to see and didn't see. It's a little bit two different types of distance. The President actually met with the people on the front line. The President actually met with the Border Patrol, actually met with CBP, actually met with the NGOs, met with the people that actually are providing a service for the migrants. One of the biggest questions that he asked was, "What can I do to help you do your job? What do you need?" He knew the answer, but he wanted to hear from them.

So it was totally different, but yet very impactful. Everybody, including the eight senators, the President, and of course the mayor, got to see everything that we've been going through because they all got this binder, this binder that really shows everything that's going on in El Paso. So it's

really a visit that really was very impactful to the people in the front line, and also help them to get the resources they needed to continue to do their job.

Question: Are you going to continue to go to different cities if the busing continues to take to New York?

Mayor Adams: Your question was am I going to continue to go to different cities? Yes. I'm headed to Washington this week. I'm going to speak at the American Conference of Mayors. I'm going to continue to collaborate with those mayors who are directly impacted. And I'm going to call on my mayors that are not impacted to join us because today it's El Paso, tomorrow it could be their cities. I'm going to continue to get on the ground as much as possible to see what's happening in those cities and come up with a real, formidable plan that is coming from the cities to have the national government execute with our input. Thank you.

Mayor Leeser: Thank you. I do want to say one last thing, though. It's very important. What Mayor Adams is doing is uniting the voice of the mayors in the cities across the country because, now that the federal government has seen, now it's time for them to act. No doubt. Thank you.

Mayor Adams: Well said, well said. Thank you.

Mayor Leeser: Thank you all.

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