

Transcript: Mayor Eric Adams' Interviews on CBS News' "Face the Nation" With Margaret Brennan

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Margaret Brennan: We turn now to the stunning increase in violent crime, and fighting that increase is one of the top priorities for New York City's new mayor, Eric Adams. Good morning to you, Mr. Mayor. Good to have you in-studio.

Mayor Eric Adams: Thank you. Good to be here.

Brennan: New York City, with the highest number of shootings in a decade, more than 40% spike in homicides over the last two years. You have some of the toughest gun laws in the country. Where are all these weapons coming from?

Mayor Adams: That's a great question. And in my conversation with the president and the chief of staff yesterday, we talked about just the flow of guns to our inner cities. A few days ago, I was in Chicago with Mayor Lightfoot, who took several thousands of guns off her streets last year. And here in New York, we're doing the same. We really have to have a combination. We have to stop the flow of guns, but we must also do the job of getting the guns off the streets that's on there now. And my anti-gun unit, they're doing that. Just a few weeks out, they removed over 20 something guns off the street. But here's the interesting number, 70% of those who were carrying the guns had prior violent offenses. So we need to combine that small number of people who are carrying guns with the large number of guns on our streets and get both off our streets.

Brennan: But you know that acknowledging that and having some of the toughest gun laws in the country will critics say, "Well look, it makes no difference if you have tight gun laws."

Mayor Adams: Well, I'd tell those critics, go visit that 13-year-old boy that was shot yesterday while sitting in the back of the car. We need to stop criticizing good, proper law enforcement with the proper proactive things to keep guns out of the hands of young people. And that's the combination that we're going to do.

Brennan: So why aren't the laws working?

Mayor Adams: For a number of reasons. We have a small number of gun dealers that are just skating the law. We're dealing with a problem with ghost guns. It's imperative that we come up with clear messages around ghost guns and the kits that assemble them. And I believe Washington is going to do that. Then we need to put money into the ATF so they can do the proper information sharing so we can identify the flow of guns in inner cities. And that is what we are doing in New York with our combined efforts of all law enforcement agencies.

Brennan: It sounds like you're expecting more executive actions or orders from the president to do this, because none of it's going to get through Congress.

Mayor Adams: Well, it's a combination. I think executive orders are crucial, but while we are waiting for the president and the White House to continue to do the good things they're doing, I have to do the things we must do on the ground in New York City, and that's what we're doing. My officers are stepping up with quality of life issues and we are zeroing in on dangerous gangs and zeroing in on those who are trigger pullers and carrying guns.

Brennan: I want to ask you about that. You called it quality of life, it's quality of life enforcement. You yourself have been quite critical of past mayors when they have used tactics known as like, broken windows, right, going after these sort of smaller-scale crimes. Quality of life includes, offenses that are precursors to violence, marijuana sales, public urination, things like that. Aren't these the same zero tolerance policies that in the past have been exploited and caused civil rights violations?

Mayor Adams: And I'm glad that you pointed out the history, because this is my history of fighting against heavy-handed and abusive policing. You can have the justice that we deserve with the safety we need. Here's what we're talking about when we say quality of life. Not allowing someone to go into a store, steal what they want and then walk out. Jumping the turnstiles, not paying your fair in the subway system. Many of the criminal

element, they are actually going into the subway system without paying their fare and committing crimes. We learned that during the mid 90s and early 90s. But also looking at just open drug use, injecting yourself with heroin in our parks in front of our children. Loud noise, just being disorderly. Some of the things we're doing around encampment, you don't have to use police to remove the encampments in our city like we're doing. We're doing a combination of social services, giving people the dignity they deserve. That is what we're talking about, cleaning our streets and making sure that we don't have a state of disorder.

Brennan: But all of what you're laying out, no one's for those things, but they're concerned that this is just dressing back up the broken windows theory. That you're doing the same things, but relabeling it.

Mayor Adams: Well, I think that is important for people to say, "Well let's look at who's implementing the proper use of dealing with quality of life, Eric Adams." I was a leading voice that testified in federal court about the overuse of police tactics. Now, I'm in charge of that police department and I know how we can run a police department with a great police commissioner, Commissioner Sewell, where we're going to make sure we don't have disorder in our city. Where we going to lawfully show people that this is a city where the quality of life is important.

Brennan: But you have said things like, you won't tolerate bystanders being on top of police officers to film their activities. Isn't the public reporting, eyewitness accounts like this, exactly what has stopped or at least laid bare violations, such as the killing of George Floyd? Isn't that kind of public reporting important?

Mayor Adams: Right. And let me tell you what I've done throughout my years. I've done something called, what to do when stop by the police, how to film police, how to do it properly. Nothing is more dangerous than if a police officer is fighting with someone that has a gun, and you have a person standing over him taping that interaction. That is extremely dangerous. That officer is not aware of who's behind him. Many days that I fought with individuals who were carrying weapons or knives, and I've had people stand over me with a camera. That is extremely dangerous, because you don't know what you have. So what we're saying to New York is, "Film." Eric Garner case, the young man filmed a safe distance away. He did not interrupt or interfere. That is how you film. You don't do it that endangers yourself or that police officer who's taking action.

Brennan: Mr. Mayor, thank you for your time today.

Mayor Adams: Thank you. Good seeing you.

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