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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR ERIC ADAMS APPEARS ON CBS 2'S "THE POINT WITH MARCIA KRAMER"

Marcia Kramer: The other day, Mayor Adams described himself as the pilot of the airplane known as New York City, insisting that the passengers, city residents, should be cheering for him to land the plane. He's here to talk about his plans to arrive on the tarmac with his swagger intact. Mr. Mayor, the other day you described the de Blasio administration as leaving this city in, I quote, in total disarray. What did you mean by that?

Mayor Eric Adams: Yeah, and we need to be clear. Bill has been amazing. He has been a constant advisor, consultant. Michael Bloomberg, former people from Giuliani's administration. You think of Joe Lhota and others. But when you have a group of people who have intentionally been antagonistic... Looking at Department of Correction. You have people from the former administration that's leading the charge of receivership. They had Department of Correction. You have people in administration that attacked the success of my deputy mayor of Health and Human Services around Covid. When they had it, we were supportive. And so, it is an administration where some people in our administration — because many are still with us — that have done things like the Department of Correction. They left it in disarray.

Kramer: So, let's talk about each one of these things. When you inherited the Police Department, what did you find? Was it in disarray?

Mayor Adams: Morale was low. Police officers felt as though they did not get the support that they deserve. Every time their faces was placed on social media, it seemed like everyone turned their backs. When I went into those roll calls, when I talked to the police officers, they said, "We want to do our jobs, but it just appears as though whenever we do our job, people take a snippet and make it seem like we did something wrong." We have to change that direction.

Kramer: So, what about the Department of Homeless Services? How did you find that? Was that in disarray?

Mayor Adams: We're spending too much money in homeless shelters. We have to move people into permanent housing. And the former Commissioner Banks is a good friend of mine. He gave us a lot of advice on what we had to do. The systemic problems in starting that administration, it was generational. And we have to confront them head on.

Kramer: Yeah, but as I recall, Mayor de Blasio had numerous plans to deal with the homeless problem and he never dealt with it. So did you find that you had to then rewrite the book on how to deal with it?

Mayor Adams: I think every mayor... Homelessness is a generational problem that I don't believe we successfully faced it head on. Because oftentimes, we live in the whirlwind. And to take on these big problems, you're really exposing yourself. I'll never forget when I sat down with the team and stated that we were going to take on mental health illness in our street. People said, "Eric, that's suicidal." But I said, "I didn't come here just to kick the can down the road. We have to face these tough challenges."

Kramer: So how did you find the Department of Correction when you took over? Was that in disarray?

Mayor Adams: Yes, it was. It was a mess. And I'm surprised when I hear the former commissioner who had it critique and talk about receivership, talk about everything that's wrong. I have the first Latino commissioner, Commissioner Molina, who has been unbelievable. And that's why the judge stated, "There's no reason to move to receivership right now. They're moving in the right direction." But it was a mess and has been a mess for many, many years.

Kramer: So what other problems left over from the de Blasio administration did you find that gave you specific headaches and were in disarray?

Mayor Adams: Well, I think it goes far beyond just one administration. I want to be clear on that. You had people in the former administration... Many, I kept on board with me. They continue to serve with me. I look at Dawn Pinnock at DCAS, she's doing an amazing job. I look at what the mayor has done. Being a mayor is a challenging job. The worst thing could happen while you are a mayor is to have the previous administration, members of that administration who just came out of the hot seat. They know how difficult it is. But they're standing, and standing, and standing there, constantly being antagonistic.

Kramer: So, you want them to shut up?

Mayor Adams: I want them to go to another career. They served their time for eight years, now go to another career. Or come with some real advice like the mayor has done and former mayoral administrations are doing now.

Kramer: So Mayor de Blasio left you holding the bag when it came to Rikers, saying that it had to be closed in 2027. Is that even doable? I mean, take a look. The community jails that you have to build will only hold 3,300 people. Rikers is expected to have 7,000 inmates next year alone. Where will you put them if you have to rely on the community jails, which you could only hold half the inmates that you have?

Mayor Adams: Great question. There should have been a plan B. We can't be so optimistic that we're not realistic or idealistic that we're not realistic. Judge Lippman and the entire team that came up with the plan, from my understanding, they wanted to build those jails to hold 5,000 people. They realized where the numbers were, and now that we look at it, we're already over the 3,000 amount. We're talking about \$10 billion.

Kramer: So, what are you going to do? I mean, are you going to basically get the City Council to agree to postpone the closing of Rikers? Because where are you going to put these people?

Mayor Adams: We're engaged in conversations right now.

Kramer: More jails?

Mayor Adams: We're engaged in conversations right...

Kramer: Staten Island gets one? I mean, what?

Mayor Adams: We're engaged in conversations right now. My chief counsel, Brendan McGuire, is leading a small working group to see what are our steps forward and what are the plans B? Because let's be clear, if...

Kramer: So, you need a plan B?

Mayor Adams: We better have a plan B. If plan A states that you have far too many people who cannot fit in the current system, we can't say, "There's no more vacancies." Those who are dangerous to society, they must be incarcerated until they serve their time.

Kramer: So, here's the question. By saying they're going to close Rikers at this date certain 2027 when you know you're going to have more people that fit in the new jails that you're going to have, aren't you telegraphing a message to the bad guys that they won't go to jail? That they'll be on the street because there's no room at the end?

Mayor Adams: Well first, it is not my message. I have to follow the law. Right now, there's a City Council law. We will follow that law. And if there are other plans we have to do, such as a plan B, we are going to institute that because the city must be safe.

Kramer: So, where do you see a plan B going?

Mayor Adams: Well, there's a number of things that we're looking at. And we are going to present it to Adrienne Adams, the speaker. Then she can put it in front of her colleagues. They're going to look at the real numbers on where we are. And not only that, Marcia. Again, \$10 billion. The cost of building the jails have increased astronomically. And we have to take all of this into consideration.

Kramer: So some people think that what you should do instead of building these community jails that nobody wants anyway, is to take some of the space at Rikers... It's a big space. And build a new jail there.

Mayor Adams: We're hearing a lot of ideas. And I'm the type of person that I would like to listen to all ideas, but we must follow the law. There was a law passed in previous administration...

Kramer: So, at what point do you say we can't do it?

Mayor Adams: I have to follow the law. Now, I know you want me to always follow the law.

Kramer: Well, you know... So I do want to talk to you about a big crisis the city's facing, it's the migrants. You've talked about the need to spread the number of asylum seekers around the country. Would you consider talking to Governor Hochul and asking her maybe we should spread them around the state? Because there are plenty of places, Utica for example, that could welcome migrants and have jobs for them.

Mayor Adams: No, so true. And we have engaged in that conversation. And I want to be clear, we've done our job. Over 36,000 migrants and asylum seekers are in our city. Not only housing. Food, clothing, the children are being educated. You don't see people sleeping on the streets that are migrants, because there are beds there. But this is wrong. It's wrong what's happening in El Paso, Washington, Houston, Chicago. I spoke to Mayor Lightfoot the other day. This should not be happening to our cities. The national government must do their job.

Kramer: So there's another problem with the migrants here in New York City. You have a hotel, the Stewart Hotel, on 31st and 7th, I believe. Where today... I mean, on Friday, as we're taping the show. There's a sign up that says, "We have no more room here. Go to the Bronx." But the migrants just got here. They don't know where the Bronx is, and they're walking around the street.

Mayor Adams: Right.

Kramer: What are you going to do about that?

Mayor Adams: No, any migrant... All first responders, all our personnel, they're clear that if someone comes here as a migrant... It used to be that you only came through the Port Authority. Now we're finding that they're coming in through other ways. They're directed to an intake center. They're given the necessary information on how to navigate the city with the systems from the city. So, we're not leaving anyone on their own.

Kramer: They're on the streets right now as we speak. They're wandering around.

Mayor Adams: Yeah. And you're going to find... No matter how perfect a system is, there are going to be some outliers. 36,000 people came here, over 24,000 are still in our care. And we have really provided a safety net for those numbers. And so those who are walking around, they will stop and speak to someone and they'll be directed to the right location.

Kramer: You going to send any more people there to try to help them out?

Mayor Adams: That's the goal. And the goal, we're going to continue to do that. But let's keep in mind, we also have a homeless population. The individuals who are helping our migrant and asylum seekers, they're part of the infrastructure, the safety net, of our city. We're stretched far beyond our imagination.

Kramer: All right. We're going to be right back with more with Eric Adams, mayor of the City of New York.

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Kramer: We're back with Mayor Eric Adams after his first year in office. So New York City's retirees are not happy about a bill in the City Council that would privatize healthcare. They say it's bait and switch, that they were promised certain things when they became city workers, and now they're being taken away. And they're also mad at you for supporting the bill. Why the change?

Mayor Adams: You know what's really important? I'm one of them.

Kramer: But you're going to have your... So you're going to curtail your own health benefits?

Mayor Adams: I first want to say my health benefits is their health benefits. So whenever I do anything around healthcare, around pension, we're talking about Eric. And what happened, I don't think we did a clear explanation of what this new plan is. It is not a bait and switch. It is not going to take away. They still are going to have the same benefit.

Kramer: But they have to pay more money.

Mayor Adams: No. No, it's not. That's why we must do a better job. We've allowed the narrative to be hijacked by those who wanted to scare our retirees. We're not going to do anything that's going to hurt the quality of healthcare of our retirees. That's why the City Council really looked at it. They wanted all these questions answered. They're going to receive the quality healthcare that they deserve because it's so important. You don't want your healthcare changed, and we are not going to allow that to happen to our retirees, because I'm one of them.

Kramer: So in talking about crime and the court... So I wonder what your take is about the move by the progressives in Albany to derail the governor's nomination of Hector LaSalle to be the chief judge of the State Court of Appeals. They object because they say he's a former prosecutor and they don't want somebody who's a former prosecutor to be in charge of the State Court of Appeals. How do you feel about that?

Mayor Adams: I don't believe we should broad brush any professional. You have great prosecutors. Look at what Eric Gonzalez is doing in the District Attorney's Office in Brooklyn, Darcel Clark, what she's doing, and other DAs that are doing. So being a former prosecutor does not mean that you are going to be against the rights of people.

Kramer: So are the progressives doing something wrong now by trying to block his appointment?

Mayor Adams: Well, some folks say progressives, I think there are people who are far, far left of even progressive. I consider myself to be progressive. I think that we should allow the process to take its course. There's a process in the Senate that allows us to hear, question and make the determination. Let's let it take his course.

Kramer: So do you think the governor should dig in her heels or pick someone else?

Mayor Adams: No, I think she should. She put someone forward. It's a historical moment, a qualified person that happens to be Latino. We should allow the process to take its course, let him show his record and answer the difficult questions.

Kramer: So are these people who you described as not even progressive, but really far to the left, have they made it more difficult for you to try to reduce crime in the city?

Mayor Adams: No. We're going to, as we see, we're trending in the right direction. The first half of the year was challenging. We were inundated with guns, with those who were committing so many quality of life crimes that led to higher crimes, to the second half of the year. Police Commissioner Sewell has done an amazing job with her entire team. We are trending in the right direction. We're going to continue to do so. Now, do we need to fix our recidivism problem? 1,600 people, roughly, our repeated offenders, yes we do. We must go back to Albany and come up with real ways to identify how do we get the reform we wanted and the safety that we need.

Kramer: But see, here's the question. We have a lot of people that you described as beyond progressive, really far to the left in Albany and also in the City Council. If you take a look at the last election, the electorate was more to the middle. They weren't really on the fringes on the left. Do you think we're going to see a situation where people like yourself, like the governor, are going to back candidates who are more middle of the road against these progressive incumbents?

Mayor Adams: I'm going to be clear. I'm going to back and support and put my energy behind candidates that understand that this must be a safe city and that's what New Yorkers want. And we must deal with our homelessness, our mental health, our housing, all of those issues are part of what makes this city function. And I'm going to support those who actually see the same thing. Now the voters will make the ultimate decision on who they're going to vote for.

Kramer: But that sounds like, I hate to say it, a threat that you're going to find people who may not be the people who are incumbents right now but who are going to see more your point of view and more middle of the road moderate.

Mayor Adams: No, it's not a threat. It's just being very clear of what...

Kramer: Yes it is.

Mayor Adams: ...What I've always done. Listen, there's some times I will endorse candidates and they won't get elected, there's sometimes I've endorsed candidates that were elected, and I think that it's up to the voters that make the final determination. I'm going to raise the issues. I'm going to tell the voters, "Here are the things that are important and who is getting in the way of those things," and then the voters will make that determination.

Kramer: But I reckon some of these people made it more difficult for your job, especially in the City Council.

Mayor Adams: I think so. I think there's some people... What's interesting, what I'm seeing in politics right now, Marcia, there's some people who have no desire of governing. They could care less in what they bring back to their districts. Their desire is to be at war. And so if you start out with the desire that "All I want to do is fight." Then you're not concerned about the resources

that are coming back to your districts. You're just concerned about, "How am I going to continue to be in the state of battle?" This is peace time as we bring home the goods to our districts.

Kramer: But you see, if you take a look at what's going on in Washington where you have the Republican Freedom Caucus enjoying the battle to prevent the speaker, and then you take a look at Albany where you have these so-called left of center Democrats who want to stop the governor's appointment of the judge of the State Court of Appeals, it's sort of the same thing only on different ideologies. Like they're in it for the, as you said, the battle. How do you stop that?

Mayor Adams: And that's what I've been saying over and over again. There is a co-conspirator of the far, far left and the far, far right. The far, far left supports no one should be arrested for carrying a gun. The far, far right supports everyone should be given a gun. And so we have the American people and the New York City public, we're in the middle of the battle of those two extremes. And they don't realize it, but they are the obstructionists that's in the way. Now it's time for us well-thinking moderate, progressive-moderate, those who believe that our cities and countries should move forward to get back our voice in our government.

Kramer: It sounds like a threat to me. But anyway, guns continue to be a problem in New York City, especially in schools. Now, when you took office, you said that you were going to have a pilot program to come up with a new way to.... Find a new magnetometer to find guns going into schools. I wonder where we are with that? It's a year in, where are we?

Mayor Adams: It has to pass the test. And what changed our dynamics so much was the Supreme Court decision that now everyone basically can get a gun. The default is get a gun until you can prove that they can't get a gun. That's changed, really, the dynamic.

Kramer: So are you still going to do this or are you going to...

Mayor Adams: We have less restrictive ways that we are looking at to determine if someone is in possession of a gun. We're still looking at this innovation because there's new stuff coming out every day. We're meeting with a group of high tech companies to look at some of the other methods we want, but we got to get it right. We can't do it just because it sounds good. It has to pass our smell tests.

Kramer: So we've got about 30 seconds left. This is really sad to ask this question, but are you worried about the city's finances?

Mayor Adams: Yes I am. We have a multi-billion dollar budget deficit and these asylum seekers, the issues we are facing can be anywhere between \$1 billion and \$1 billion and five. This is a real issue and it's going to impact every city service, and we must get the help from Washington. D.C.

Kramer: So will you be cutting police? Will you be cutting fire? Will you be cutting teachers? What are you going to have to do?

Mayor Adams: We're not at the point of pointing where we're going to have to nip and tuck and cut. But we do know this, every city service will be impacted if we don't get the help we need from Washington, D.C.

Kramer: Every city service?

Mayor Adams: Every city service.

Kramer: Less cops?

Mayor Adams: Every city service.

Kramer: Okay, we're going to have to leave it right there for now, but our conversation continues with the mayor right after the show on our streaming channel CBS News New York.

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