

Transcript: Mayor Eric Adams Conducts a Series of Interviews

May 19, 2022

8:00 AM - Appears Live on PIX11's Morning Show

Hazel Sanchez: A week of horrific gun violence across New York, starting with the massacre in Buffalo and followed by two fatal shootings in the Bronx.

Dan Mannarino: And so we are joined and kicking off this hour with a big interview, Mayor Eric Adams is joining us live from City Hall to discuss a whole host of topics a lot to get to. Mr. Mayor, thanks for being here.

Mayor Eric Adams: Thank you, Dan. Good morning, Hazel. It's good to speak with you.

Sanchez: So Mr. Mayor, let's begin with this increase in gun violence, right? Just last night, Mr. Mayor, an EMT shot by a patient inside of an ambulance on Staten Island, an 11 year old girl shot and killed in the crossfire earlier this week in the Bronx. So I guess the question is, mayor, are the tactics currently in place working or are there new avenues to visit here? Your thoughts?

Mayor Adams: We'll continue to evaluate, shift, move resources where they are needed, but you are right. From Buffalo to Buffalo Avenue in Brooklyn, all across this country. I spoke with the mayor of Atlanta yesterday when he was in New York, same thing, guns, guns, guns. And we clearly felt our plan that we would be out of this peak of violence by now, but the flow is endless and that is why we continue to say, we have dam every river.

Mayor Adams: The flow of guns on our street, we've moved 2,600 since I've been mayor or more yet the flow continues to come. Younger and younger – a young child brought two nine millimeter guns to school the other day in their book bags. These guns are endless on our street. I've never witnessed anything like this before in my professional career.

Sanchez: Yeah. And we're just a few days away from Memorial Day. You expressed concern in recent weeks with the history of crime rising specifically during the summer months as people go outside. So what are the current steps that aren't being rolled out, at least, not yet to prepare for this?

Mayor Adams: The police commissioner is rolling out and continuously implementing her summer plan because summertime, more people are out, more events. That's what we have witnessed, historically an increase over the summer. But we are really, as I stated, we are civilianizing, moving officers from those desk roles that they've played, moving them to patrol. Even when you look at our parade routes, I was on the parade, AAPI parade this last weekend, we are moving officers. Limiting the number of doing those parades, those peaceful parades, to patrol in the dangerous locations.

Mannarino: Mayor, last time you were right here on PIX11, you discussed some kind of technology to be put in areas like subways, right? To help with this rise in gun violence. Have you zeroed in on what exactly that technology may be, and is there a rollout of that technology to help with what we're seeing play out on the streets?

Mayor Adams: Well, we have to get it right. I'm always using new technology and looking for new ways to implement violence and keep the city safe. We are now testing some of that technology right now, but we have to be sure that it's doing the job that it claims it could do. And that's what we're doing right now. And as soon as it's ready to hit the streets, we're going to do that. I feel urgent to get it out, but we must get it right on constitutional grounds as well as safety.

Mannarino: What is that technology? Can you give us an inside look at what it may be?

Mayor Adams: It's a technology to identify people that are carrying guns and is mobile in the process to do so. There are several manufacturers we are looking at. Once we pinpoint the one that passes our test, we'll be able to roll it out and implement it.

Sanchez: So all of this, Mr. Mayor, happening the same week of this mass shooting in Buffalo, so heartbreaking what happened out there. Governor Hochul, she was on PIX11, demanding social media platforms be held accountable. Now, you've been calling for that since the suspected Brooklyn subway shooter, Frank James, allegedly posted racist rants online. But social media's been around and unregulated for a long time. So what kind of change can you see happening?

Mayor Adams: Hazel, that's a great question. Yes, social media has been around for a long time, but look at what we are showing now on social media. We should be using artificial intelligence to identify words, identify phrases, to immediately remove and censor some of this information. We did it to Donald Trump in Twitter. He was dangerous to the country.

Mayor Adams: So why aren't we doing it to the everyday people who are using and is dangerous to our neighborhoods and communities? The type of violence that's being promoted on social media is beyond anything I've ever witnessed before. Particularly in some of the drill music that actually taunts and threaten people. There's a direct correlation. That's the type of social media monitoring we believe the social media companies should do.

Mannarino: Right. So what is the kind of action that can be taken then? Because I know you've talked about the drill music for quite some time, right? And the governor earlier this week said she wants to get in a room and have some kind of round table discussion with the leaders of these social platforms while keeping in mind first amendment rights, because it's a slippery slope here. So how do you see it playing out?

Mayor Adams: Well, we are doing that now, and I am going to join the governor in that round table. I have been speaking about this since we discovered what some of the drill music was actually doing. My conversation with YouTube and others, the goal is that you can use artificial intelligence to identify phrases and words that are associated with violence, and you can remove it and not allow it to continue to remain up on platforms. We heard the terrorists in Buffalo stated he didn't get that hatred from his family, he got it from social media. It is really endangering our children, our young people, our community, and we need to be honest about it.

Mannarino: While we're on the topic of Buffalo too, there was this issue with the red flag law that has played out throughout New York City and whether or not it should have been looked into closer since the suspect had previously been arrested. Are you revisiting and taking a look at red flag laws right here in New York city and how that plays out in investigations?

Mayor Adams: It's so true. And this is so important, Dan, that when we talk about modifying or tweaking laws, we're not talking about going against reform or going against any mechanism that give people constitutional rights. We're closing loopholes.

For instance, young man we arrested that jumped the turnstile, he had a loaded weapon with bullets inside.

Mayor Adams: We found out that he could not be treated at the same level as a person that was carrying the weapon because the bullets were inoperable. He didn't know they were inoperable. He thought they were operable. And so when we don't treat these crimes the way they should be treated, we are having loopholes that dangerous people are allowed to use.

Sanchez: Yeah, well, clearly we are so desperate for solutions to this gun violence. And we know you don't have a lot of time, Mr. Mayor, so we want to pivot to some other hot topics. One being the new legislative maps, which have created an open seat in the 10th district, your predecessor Bill de Blasio, he's forming an exploratory committee for this area. So your reaction, do you think he should run?

Mayor Adams: Well, that's just wonderful about this great country. Everyone should have an opportunity to present their case in front of the people, and that people make the decision who's going to represent them in Washington and the council as a mayor. And so I believe everyone has a right to make the determination and present their case to the people.

Mannarino: Mayor, we only have 20 seconds left. So I just want to get you quickly on COVID right now. You said yesterday that you were not really going to be implementing a mandatory mask mandate. Briefly, is there a number or a case number that you would want to see a mask mandate?

Mayor Adams: I say this over and over again, Dan, is pivot and shift. COVID does not play by rules. We must understand that we can't be stringent. Our hospitals are sending a clear message, they have this managed, under control of the number of deaths, the number of hospitalizations. We are not going to fight an old war with the new tools we have for the future war, and we are doing that with the great coordination of our health professionals.

Sanchez: All right, Mr. Mayor, thank you again-

Mayor Adams: Thank you.

Sanchez: ... for your time this morning. We appreciate it.

Mayor Adams: Thank you.

8:10 AM - Appears Live on FOX 5's "Good Day New York"

Bianca Peters: Well, despite the city raising its COVID alert level to high, Mayor Eric Adams says it is not the time to panic yet.

Rosanna Scotto: All right. The mayor does not want to issue more mandates. He says the city will move forward despite new variants.

Scotto: He's joining us right now. Mayor Eric Adams, nice to have you back on Good Day, New York.

Mayor Adams: Thank you. Good to see you ladies. Good morning.

Scotto: So everybody's concerned. Mask mandates, lockdowns. What are you going to do? Because it seems like the city has jumped very quickly to this high alert from two weeks ago.

Mayor Adams: Well, first, I think it's crucial that we are not going to fight the war of the past as the war of the future. We have the tools and it's clear those tools are showing that our hospitalizations, our deaths are under control.

Mayor Adams: I speak with my medical team every morning, and it's about not panicking, it's about being prepared with our antivirals readily accessible, delivered to your home if needed, testing. We're going to put over 16 million tests to people at home. If you are diagnosed, people are staying home. This is the way we have to start looking at living with COVID.

Scotto: I agree with you. Let's talk about the mask mandates, which we've gotten so much feedback this morning from so many parents who say, "When are you going to

take the kids' mask mandate away?" Because we're like the only country who's doing this right now.

Mayor Adams: Well, you know, the medical professionals in my morning briefings, they are analyzing the data every day. They're looking at what we are doing now, continuously urging all New Yorkers to wear masks, indoor settings, transportation, any place where they're unsure or wherever their comfortability is. We don't want to shift away what has been working and managing these cases. And there will come a time when we're able to take it off, not only our babies, but we'll be able to normalize living in this city.

Scotto: When will that happen, Mayor?

Mayor Adams: Well, you know, COVID has a mind of his own. Let's be clear on this. This is not a virus that plays by any set of rules, and I would do a disservice to this city, as we try to recover economically and health wise, if I give a prediction or something that's unpredictable. COVID is not predictable, and smart leadership, analyzing information daily, actually twice a day, and then make the right moves, and when we are comfortable and my doctors say, "Eric, this is the way to do it," that's what I'm going to go by.

Peters: Are there any, I guess, tangible numbers that you can hit to when you say, "Hey, we're comfortable enough to do that?" Because I think people maybe want to know that. Because I know COVID is up and down and there's a lot of things you have to kind of make decisions on at the time, but I think parents just want to know, when is there a threshold that we reach that's okay to take the masks off?

Mayor Adams: Well, you know what's interesting? I receive dual questions. I have a great deal of parents that say, "Eric, my child is in daycare. Please don't take their mask off." I have a number of parents that say, "Please let's take it off." COVID has caused a level of uncertainty, and no matter what you do, there's going to be a population in the city that's going to feel...

Peters: Certainly.

Mayor Adams: ...another way, another, passionately.

Peters: Yeah.

Mayor Adams: And so I must make the right decision based on my medical team. That's who I trust at this time.

Peters: Perfect. We do want to ask you, though, about crime. I mean, it just seems like we've never seen crime like this before. What is the biggest roadblock that you're facing right now in terms of getting the crime down?

Mayor Adams: You're right. In my professional career, I have never witnessed crime at this level, and the willingness to carry guns and the willingness to use a gun. We saw what happened to the EMT employee while having someone in the ambulance. They were shot yesterday, the 11 year old child, what happened in Buffalo. The willingness, the readiness and the availability of guns are unbelievable.

Mayor Adams: The real problem we're having, number one, we have a revolving door of criminal justice system. We calculated that, once you get the guns off the street and the dangerous people off the street, which we have been successful in doing, that we will really see a turn in crime. But too many of those dangerous people are back on the streets, and that is really an impediment, and the flow of guns.

Mayor Adams: And our court system are bottlenecked. We need to get these dangerous people through the system so they can serve time in prison if they're found guilty.

Scotto: Did you plead your case when you went to Albany this week? Are they listening? Do you think there's going to be any changes?

Mayor Adams: Well, my job is to present the facts, the data, and hope that my lawmakers will see that we are attempting to deal with this violence that has really engulfed our state and our country. That is my job. I did that.

Mayor Adams: And then I must return and put the right plans in place to ensure that my law enforcement and our Police Department are removing these dangerous guns off the streets, which we have. We have been doing our job. 2,600 guns or more, we've

removed since I've been mayor. That's an astronomical amount of guns to take off our streets.

Scotto: I know, but it doesn't seem like it helped anything. I mean, we're still dealing with crime. We have, like somebody said, 15 Buffalo shootings a week here in New York.

Mayor Adams: Well, that's the reality. New York is a huge city. And when you talk about bringing guns into a municipality, New York is one of the targets. And that's why we must look at our Port Authority. We're looking at using technology there that identifies guns, which we are looking to roll out as soon as we pass all of our tests. There's a real problem with ghost guns.

Mayor Adams: And as I stated, the law that's in front of the Supreme Court right now, the right to carry, these are real issues facing our nation. I have been talking about this for some time, and I'm hoping that all of us wake up and realize that we have a crisis, a gun crisis, in our nation.

Scotto: Mayor, before you go, your predecessor, Bill de Blasio, is thinking about getting back in the race and becoming a congressperson. What do you think about that?

Mayor Adams: A great country called America, where everyone has a right to present their case to the people, and the people will make the determination who they want to represent them, and I say that that's what he has to do, present his case to the people of the congressional district.

Scotto: Hmm. Okay. Will you vote for him? Oh, you're not in his district anyway. You're not in his district. I'm not going to put you on the spot like that, mayor.

Peters: He said, "I plead the fifth." Anyway, Mayor Adams.

Scotto: All right. Thank you so much, Mayor. We appreciate everything you're doing for our city.

Mayor Adams: Okay.

Scotto: All the best.

Mayor Adams: All right.

8:31 AM - Appears Live on NY1's "Mornings on 1"

Pat Kiernan: Mayor Adams is with me now to talk about the COVID trend and some other topics. Mr. Mayor, good to have you with us this morning.

Mayor Adams: Thank you, Pat. Good to be here with you.

Kiernan: At what point would you consider reinstating a mask requirement or maybe a capacity limit at city businesses?

Mayor Adams: Well, it really depends on what the medical team, in the morning, what we go over. I am just extremely impressed the way they have been correct on the trending, how we're moving, the indicators, because COVID is not stringent. It doesn't play by any rules. We must know how to pivot and shift. Based on their analysis in the morning, we're doing great with our hospitals, our deaths. We don't have people on ventilators. We're not going to fight the methods of an old war with this future war. That is what we're doing.

Kiernan: But there has been a shift in the sentiment of a lot of people in that they're over it or they're not as concerned about it. At some point as the mayor, you have to look at it and say, "Am I going to put in a mask mandate if people are going to ignore the mask mandate?"

Mayor Adams: We saw what happened in Canada with the bridge. People need to really believe and understand when you are stating that you are at a dangerous level, that you are actually at a dangerous level. That is what I want to make sure New Yorkers know. We put in a guide on when we are going to shift to high, medium, or low. Based on that guide, we are going to make those calls on what to do. My hospitalizations and my deaths are low. That means that New Yorkers have learned how to do the right things and live with COVID. We have antivirals. We're going to put

over 16 million tests so that if you find yourself to be positive with COVID, you're staying home. We're doing the right things as New Yorkers.

Kiernan: Mayor Adams, as you know, there's a New York Times front page story today about your chief of staff, Frank Carone. The focus of that story is on a company called BolaWrap, which makes a device that you've said you're really impressed with that restrains somebody who's trying to run from police. You demonstrated this device when you were at Borough Hall in 2018. At the time of that demonstration, were you aware that Carone had invested in the company?

Mayor Adams: No, not at all. Remember, Frank was not my chief of staff at the time. He was in private practice. There were a number of companies he was affiliated with. I had no idea. I discovered this after we had a terrible incident where someone lost their life. I looked at this and saw it. It's a tool that could really prevent some of the deaths that we have witnessed with police, and particularly those who have dealing with emotional illnesses, interaction. But think about this for a moment, Pat, throughout the years, I have been bringing out new technology of cameras on tasers, cameras on guns, of using drones. This is what I do. My responsibility is to find technology to keep people safe. This was a new technology. I was impressed with it. It was up to these law enforcement officials to determine if they want to use it or not.

Kiernan: How can we be assured, as the public, that there's not an improper investment that somebody at City Hall isn't going to profit from something that they know that the city is about to invest in or technology that you're impressed with? Have you talked to Carone about this?

Mayor Adams: As government officials, we recuse ourselves if we are the mayor of the New York. The agencies determine what technology they're going to use, even this technology that we're looking to identify guns. Now imagine me saying, "No, we're not going to invest in technologies that could identify guns because someone is an investor in that technology." That just doesn't make any sense. Good technology that saves lives, I have an obligation and responsibility to bring it forward to the agencies to make those determination. That is what we did. I had no idea that Frank was an investor in any company. I was focused on saving the lives of New Yorkers.

Kiernan: Sure, and I understand that. I think the point though is that there need to be protocols in place, on the government level, to ensure that people don't have the

opportunity, that they are separated and they're government activities from what you're promoting, what you're interested in.

Mayor Adams: There are. We go beyond that in City Hall. Remember, Frank was not a governmental employee. We go beyond that. We have a conflict of interest board that reviews the actions. Frank has gone beyond that to make sure there's no appearance of improprieties. This is not something that is taking place right now as the chief of staff and as a governmental employee. He was not a governmental employee. He was in private practice. We have to be really clear on that. Right now, as the mayor, we go beyond what is required to do so. That's really commendable on his part.

Kiernan: Mayor Adams, one final question. Here a couple of days ago, you were up in Albany. You have, as mayors have before you, been asked to explain why it is that schools should remain under your control. Where is that process now? Will that be wrapped up before the end of the legislative session?

Mayor Adams: Yes, I believe it is because it sunsets during this legislative session and I believe it is. I did my job. My job is to sell my case to the lawmakers. Now, they go back and deliberate. It was some great conversation. It was actually good to speak to some of my colleagues one-on-one to hear their concerns. We shared our concerns. Many of them believe we are going to continue to move the school system in the right direction. We've already done some amazing stuff. Think about that. Dyslexia screening for every child, investment in scholarship funds for children, what we're doing about summer youth employment. With only five months in office, we have just moved this conversation to the right direction. We want to continue to do that, and mayoral accountability will allow us to do it.

Kiernan: Mayor Eric Adams, thank you for spending some time with us this morning. We appreciate it.

Mayor Adams: Thank you.

8:45 AM - Appears Live on CNN's "New Day"

John Berman: New York City is now at a high COVID-19 alert level. That's according to health officials. Both infections and hospitalizations are rising in the city, yet the mayor of New York says he will not reinstate mask mandates at this time. And joining us now is the mayor of New York City, Eric Adams. Mr. Mayor, thank you so much for joining us. It is being...

Mayor Adams: Thank you.

Berman: ...recommended by health officials that people wear masks indoors, yet you are not mandating it. Let me put the question to you this way. Do you want people to wear masks indoors?

Mayor Adams: Yes, I do. I wear masks indoors and I'm encouraging others. And I'm also encouraging us all to use the tools that are available for this new layer of the war. We're not using old methods in an old war, masks, antivirals that are readily available in New York, tests, we're going to distribute 16 million tests so people who are diagnosed with COVID will stay home. These are all the new tools we have. We're going to put a million masks into our communities so that they will wear them. We're going to use all the tools so we can keep this city up and operating, but most importantly, safe.

Berman: Well, you're not really using all the tools, are you? Because you say you want people to wear masks indoors, but you're not going to require it.

Mayor Adams: Yes. Mandate. Mandate. New Yorkers have been responding. I'm really proud of this city. We've been responding with taking our vaccines, taking our booster shots, wearing the mask in our subway systems, calling the antivirals. We are doing the right things to keep deaths and hospitalizations at a manageable level. That's what my Health + Hospital Corporation is telling me and that's what my medical team is telling me. We're doing the right things. Let's be prepared, not panic, let's get this city up and operated. Another variant is maybe days away. We cannot allow COVID to control our lives. We need to be smart and responsible and that's what we're doing.

Berman: I get it. Look, I'm not saying you should or shouldn't have a mandate. I'm just curious about why not. If you think people should be wearing masks indoors, why you are not mandating it or requiring it.

Mayor Adams: Because I don't think we need to do that at this time based on the information from my medical teams. As these new variants come, we also have to build consumer confidence, I like to say, and we also need to know that we are using the tools that we have available that we did not have before. I remember at the beginning of COVID, watching the level of ventilators and hospitalizations and deaths. Because of the great discoveries and collaboration globally, we now have new tools. Let's use them and let's get our cities back up and operating.

Berman: It's a different time. There's no question. It's a different time than it was two years ago or even one year ago in New York City. Mayor, I want to ask you about the Democratic primary in Pennsylvania, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. John Fetterman has won the nomination for U.S. Senate there. And it's interesting, in the New York Times, one of your hometown papers, it commented, there was a quote comparing you to John Fetterman as a new type of Democrat that's progressive on some things, conservative on other things. What do you make of that comparison and why do you think it's being made?

Mayor Adams: Well, I believe that we are finding that the overwhelming of New Yorkers just want the basic things that they deserve. Safe streets, gainfully employment, educate the children, agencies in cities providing the services that taxpayers are paying for. And people want to classify me as a conservative or liberal. I just don't fall in those lines. I'm a New Yorker and American, and I want the best for the residents of the city and for this country, to be honest with you, because we're all in this together. And so people are going to try to classify me and that's just not who I am. I'm a blue collar ex-law enforcement officer that struggled with dyslexia, had my encounters with law enforcement. And I know that what I went through in my life, New Yorkers and Americans are going through right now and we need answers and solutions.

Berman: I do want to ask you about one issue that is very important to Democratic voters. It's important to all voters, in fact, and that is abortion. And the Supreme Court could very soon overturn Roe versus Wade in this country. You've been an ardent supporter of abortion rights. And I want to play an exchange where you talked about this. Let's listen.

[Audio plays]

Question: Mayor Adams, do you think there should be any one [inaudible] on abortion?

Mayor Adams: No, I do not.

Question: Non- [inaudible] of birth. Totally fine?

Mayor Adams: No, I do not think... I think women should have a right to choose their bodies. Men should not have that right to choose how women should treat their bodies.

[Audio ends]

Berman: Now it is interesting. A poll just came out this morning. NPR/Marist says, "The vast majority of Americans do not support overturning Roe versus Wade, but a majority, including a majority of Democrats does believe that there could or should be some restrictions, and when during a pregnancy that could be." You say no restrictions at all.

Mayor Adams: No. I say and I continue to say and I stand by this, women should determine what they're going to do with their bodies. I just believe it's unbelievable that men are making these determinations. Women should determine. The overwhelming number of people on the Supreme Court, I don't believe they can deliver a baby. So women should determine what they're going to do with their bodies. I strongly believe that and I'm not taking a Gallup poll to make that determination. It is something I believe from seeing the women who are in my life. My mother that passed away, my two sisters and others, they should make the determination of what they're to do with their bodies.

Berman: Mayor Eric Adams, I do appreciate your time this morning. Thanks so much for being with us.

Mayor Adams: Thank you.

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