



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
NEW YORK, NY 10007

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 27, 2015

CONTACT: pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov, (212) 788-2958

**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: DA VANCE, MAYOR DE BLASIO, COMMISSIONER BRATTON
ANNOUNCE INDICTMENT OF GUN TRAFFICKERS FOR SELLING LOADED HANDGUNS,
ASSAULT WEAPONS, AND AMMUNITION**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Thank you very much, commissioner. Thank you.

Well, commissioner and district attorney, I want to commend you and thank you – thank your teams for the extraordinarily good work done here. I know this is difficult work putting together these cases, but I want to say to my fellow New Yorkers, look at what this work has yielded – the work of the district attorney’s office, the NYPD, getting all these dangerous weapons off our streets – painstaking work, difficult work, but absolutely necessary and worthwhile. So, I commend both of you and your teams for what you’ve achieved. It’s clear that we would not be standing here, except for the extraordinary collaboration between the district attorney’s office and the NYPD. And one thing that we all have to appreciate about Commissioner Bratton, he is one of the great innovators in policing and he has talked consistently about what can be achieved when different agencies actually work together and what kind of results we can get from teamwork. This is an example of it and under his leadership that teamwork with prosecutors all over the city has deepened.

I want to commend all the men and women of the NYPD and of the district attorney’s office who took part in this effort. As you’ve heard, some of them you’ll ever get to meet and their identities have to be protected, but we thank them. We know the work is not easy. We know it’s dangerous, but what they have done has undoubtedly saved the lives of their New Yorkers.

Now, we want to be very clear, this is one set of arrests, one victory. There’s going to be more because this work will deepen. So, the message to anyone trafficking in illegal guns is – the full force of the NYPD, the full force of the district attorney’s offices will come down on you. We are going to increasingly find those who are trafficking any illegal guns. And look at just what has been achieved here, 70-plus weapons in the impact of this extraordinary operation. Others who think they will get away with it will find just how good the NYPD is and just how good the district attorney’s offices are, and many more guns will come off the street.

We believe in supporting this work fundamentally. As the commissioner said, we are adding the resources to allow the NYPD to do more and more work to undercut illegal guns. It means more officers, means more training, it means more technology. Some of the things that we put into place, the new equipment available to our officers, the smartphones, the tablets in the patrol cars, technologies like SpotShotter, all are going to help in the effort to track down illegal guns, all will make a difference. And there’s been a focused effort in 17 precincts in particular to reduce gun violence – 17 precincts where we’ve had higher levels of shootings – and those focused efforts are having a very positive impact. We’re proud of the fact that as we address, in a focused fashion – again, this is part of the signature of Commissioner Bratton, the focused strategic efforts where the need is greatest – that goes back to what he started with CompStat – we’re doing it now to address gun violence, and it’s working.

We are having this conversation against a very, very painful backdrop. We are all feeling the loss of Officer Holder. It is something – I’m talking to people all over the city who are feeling a sense of mourning that we’ve lost such a good man, and he died protecting all of us. What adds to the pain of that loss is that these guns are so

available and that it is a national problem, because, as the district attorney said, this is a state blessed to have strong regulations on firearms. This is a city blessed to have the finest police force in the entire country. The state and the city are doing a lot of the right things, and yet we find ourselves constantly challenged by the massive flow of guns from around the rest of the country and from the lack of any meaningful regulation nationally.

We have to put this in perspective. We talk about the Iron Pipeline. We've seen the human consequence of the Iron Pipeline – we've lost police officers, we lost parents, we've lost children because somehow this country still tolerates the notion of the free flow of guns. And we know for a fact, that the gun that killed Officer Holder originated in South Carolina. We keep seeing this pathway illustrated over and over again – a gun from South Carolina kills one of our finest here on our streets. I don't have the illusion of saying today because it should end, it will end easily, but I want to commend the district attorney for what he's doing with prosecutors, because this is one of the ways that things will change. The voices of prosecutors raising up around the country, saying we can't continue this way, the voice of police leaders – there's more of a consensus than ever before, and it should not be another death of a police officer to change our policies or another horrible campus massacre to change our policies. We have to call for change now. And I know, again, people look at the current political environment in Washington and think it's impossible. We've seen some stirrings on some other fronts lately, some beginnings of bipartisanship. I know this is a tough issue, but we have to call for the change to protect our people, protect our communities, protect our police officers alike.

I want to remind everyone, if we don't make these changes, who will get these guns? Hardened criminals? People with mental illnesses? People who are a threat to themselves and others? It's as simple as that, and more families will be torn apart – apart.

So, I want to thank the commissioner, the district attorney for what they've achieved today. I want to thank them in the name of all the people who will be safer because these guns are off the streets. I want to assure you, we will expend every effort to get a lot more guns off the streets, and we won't stop fighting until we have the bigger changes we need in our country.

Thank you.

Unknown: We have time for some on-topic questions [inaudible]

Question: Are you looking [inaudible] or, at this point, is there any evidence that the suspect [inaudible]

Commissioner William Bratton, NYPD: Is the question that the firearm that he had – would it be – have been from these dealers? Is that the question?

Question: [inaudible] I know it came from out-of-state [inaudible]

Commissioner Bratton: The matter of the investigation of that individual and how he came to acquire the firearm – that's right now in the grand jury, if I'm not mistaken, Cy. So, I really can't speak to any of the specifics of that case in this venue at the moment.

Question: Commissioner, could you describe the tactics [inaudible] officers to get these guns off the streets. Where they undercover buys? [inaudible]

Commissioner Bratton: These were undercover buys. We've got an extraordinary group of young men and women – some not so young – that are out there every day. They're the ones that should actually be standing up here. We're telling their story, but they're the ones that really put themselves in harms way every day, and we cannot applaud enough the work that they do – getting these 74 guns off the street, rather than into the hands of individuals that unfortunately show no qualms about using them.

Question: [inaudible] gun takedown to the killing of a 16-year-old in Brooklyn, and how these guns make it into the hands of [inaudible]

Commissioner Bratton: The guns get into the hands of people in this city in many ways – they're sold like this, community guns – some of the gangs use community guns, where they pass the guns around. The case you're referencing in Brooklyn yesterday – as that case goes forward, one of the things we'll certainly try to do is ascertain where the firearm used in that incident – where that came from. They come from a wide variety of sources, but, the point is, the bulk of what we see in New York – weapons coming illegally into the city from other areas of the country, and principally from the south. Yes?

Question: [inaudible]

Commissioner Bratton: I'm sorry –

Question: [inaudible]

Commissioner Bratton: I'm sorry, I'm missing the last part of that question. My ears are all clogged up from the plane.

Mayor: The president's plan – is that what you're referring to? Under President Obama's plan – the 6,000 releases?

Question: [inaudible]

Commissioner Bratton: We had a lot of conversations with chiefs in Chicago around that issue. The president appeared with my successor, Charlie Beck, in DC just before the conference began about that issue. It's not 6,000 – it's 40,000 to 50,000. That 6,000 is just the first of 40,000 to 50,000 that are coming out in the next couple of months. The concern that I voiced in Washington DC is that with the current budget situation – the continuing resolution in Congress – the parole bureau cannot hire more parole officers. So, who's going to watch these people when they go out on parole? That's effectively what's going on – they're going to be out on parole. So, at the federal level, that's a concern about who's going to monitor them when they come out. And the issues also being quite frankly about the idea of a lot of people incarcerated on drug charges. Often times those drug charges are plead down from more serious offenses. So, you have to take a look at each and every instance, rather than generally – that a lot of people went away because of drug charges. Often times those charges that they actually serve time for were bargained down, or plead down from more significant offenses.

Question: [inaudible]

Commissioner Bratton: One of the things that we will certainly watch for is, on the federal level and at the state level, people are coming out of prison – looking to ensure that there's places for them to go, that there is appropriate monitoring, that they're not just being released into the streets. That is the concern. We talked extensively about it in Washington and Chicago. California's a mess with the proposition they have – Props 47. That state is heading for big troubles down the line with how they went about letting people out of their jails. I don't think we have anything of that type happening here. I think it's a more thoughtful process what we're going through.

Question: [inaudible]

Commissioner Bratton: I don't think so – that the idea in this city, for example – we've had the uptick in murders from last year's historic low. Shootings are down this year – so, this year, we're trending as you know towards the end of the year to probably the lowest amount of documented crime we've had in modern times. So, I'll speak to New York City. I'm not seeing an uptick in this type of activity, an uptick in the overall violence levels – just the opposite. And the good news is, in our case, unlike a lot of my colleagues around the country, we have a lot of resources that are going to be focused on this problem. We have in the academy thousands of

new kids that will be coming out before the summer next year. District Attorney Vance, through his efforts on forfeiture funds, we have a lot of money to focus on the technology that will help us deal with these issues. We are very fortunate in New York at this time in the public safety arena thanks to the mayor, thanks to the district attorney. We're well funded in terms of resources and personnel to deal with what is already a historic low crime problem.

Mayor: Let me just add quickly – I think it's important to recognize further the success of the NYPD this year – gun arrests up seven percent this year to-date. So, what you're seeing here is part of a larger trend. NYPD is doing even more – it's been an extraordinary 20-plus years of progress. But on the specific issues of guns, even while we have really broken national policies that we're fighting against, gun arrests are going up consistently, and that's to the credit of the men and women of the NYPD.

Question: [inaudible]

District Attorney Cy Vance: To answer the first part of your question, the guns were purchased here in New York City by the principle defendant in the case, and who acted as a broker. So, those purchases are local.

Question: Commissioner, I'm wondering if you could update us on the hunt for suspects [inaudible]

District Attorney Vance: John, I'll answer that question, but I want to stay on-topic here. We also have a wake to go to.

Commissioner: We'll take two more of your questions please, or we'll be fighting traffic quite a while getting over there. One or two, please?

Question: [inaudible] could you just give us the range of charges against these defendants – just the maximum penalties.

District Attorney Vance: Yeah, sure. Two of the defendants are charged with Class B violent felonies, as I said which carry a maximum sentence of – of 25 years. The other four defendants are all charged with other trafficking felonies and so they – the lowest felony is a Class E felony, and I believe the maximum is three years. But these are all serious charges for serious criminal activity.

Question: As part of the investigation into the – how these [inaudible] may have come from whatever state they were purchased through [inaudible]

District Attorney Vance: It was – it is not part of our investigation. There will be a tracing that's going to be done as a result of a [inaudible]. They don't get traced in the middle of the investigation because that would alert potentially the purchasers of what's going on, but the ATF and I'm sure the PD in our office will understand where these guns came from and – and act on that information when we have it.

Question: Secondly, [inaudible] Judge McLaughlin. What are you asking for in bail and do you have shaken confidence in him given the terrible events?

District Attorney Vance: I don't have shaken confidence in Judge McLaughlin at all. I think he's as concerned about public safety in the City of New York as any judge I've seen. So I think he will – I don't know what our bail recommendations are going to be, they vary. One individual has no prior record and – and others are different, so they will vary depending up the ties to the community. But what I would say, in response to that good question, is what would help up in these cases if we were to introduce risk assessment tools in the bail process whereby defendants could be evaluated both from a scientific-statistical perspective about the likelihood of future dangerousness and the likelihood to offend while they are out – if they are out on bail. That would aid the judges, the prosecutors to make sure that their recommendations were as informed as they could be, and risk-assessment tools are used in more than 20 states around the country, and have proven successful, and are welcome by both prosecutors in the court.

Question: Can you tell us if the use of the Iron Pipeline has increased in recent years?

Commissioner Bratton: Sorry, I'm not hearing your –

Mayor: Is the use of the Iron Pipeline increasing?

Question: [inaudible]

Commissioner Bratton: As the mayor indicated that we have seen an increase in arrests this year for firearms out in the street, we've had a number of these cases that you've covered over the past year. So, the issue remains a significant problem and the reason it remains a significant problem is the easy and ready availability of huge amounts of firearms, particularly from down south. And our efforts up here are – we're trying to deal with it, but we have a spigot that's wide open down there and we don't have a national or local ability to shut that spigot down at the moment.

Unknown: Last one –

Question: Can you identify specific proposals or legislations that you think that can actually get passed in Congress [inaudible]

Commissioner Bratton: Personally, I have no faith in the Congress of United States on the issue at all – that they've been beholden to the NRA for most of my career in policing. I don't see any movement away from that stranglehold that the NRA has. However, as the mayor has indicated we need to still keep trying – still keep trying to chip away, because every time we lose a life, and in this case my mind is very much on the life of the officer we just lost. It's still amazes me of the insanity of the United States Congress, that they just don't get it. And I don't know why they don't get it, other than that they basically are constantly down there with their hands out to the NRA, looking for more and more money, and it's just insanity.

So I applaud the President's continued effort, and I certainly applaud the efforts of some Congress people. And we're fortunate in the State of New York that we have many of our Congress people who are not beholden to the NRA, who continue this fight. Certainly this mayor and I think all of our district attorneys are going to try to continue their efforts to try and move the ball down the court. But with this Congress, I wish I could be more optimistic, but there's not much to be optimistic in the US Congress, is there?

Unknown: Thank you.

Commissioner Bratton: Thank you all.

Mayor: Can't lose on that line.

###