

NYPD teams to tackle guns

Adams, commish to put more cops in violent areas

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The NYPD will roll out hundreds of officers in small teams next week — a key component of a strategy by the mayor and police commissioner to stem spiking gun violence that has wracked a pandemic-wary city, officials said.

Nearly 500 officers are in the final stages of training before they fan out in groups of about a half-dozen in some of New York City's high-crime neighborhoods and public housing areas, officials said.

"It's time we stop just praying for victims of gun violence but actually turning our pain into purpose," said Fabien Levy, a spokesman for Mayor Eric Adams, who "has made clear that his top priority is public safety. We need to remove guns from our streets, protect our communities, and create a safe, prosperous, and just city for all New Yorkers, and the NYPD's Neighborhood Safety Teams will be laser-focused on doing just that."

Unlike previous anti-crime units, the strategy developed by Adams and Police Commissioner Keechant Sewell will have the teams wearing special

NYC REPORTED CRIMES

Figures are year to date

| | March 8, 2020 | March 7, 2021 | March 7, 2022 |
|----------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Total major felonies* | 18,211 | 14,086 | 20,454 |
| <i>Change from March 8, 2020</i> | | -22.6% | +12.3% |
| Total homicides | 51 | 55 | 67 |
| <i>Change from March 8, 2020</i> | | +8% | +31.3% |
| Shootings | 126 | 173 | 192 |
| <i>Change from March 8, 2020</i> | | +37.3% | +52.3% |

* Major felonies include homicide, rape, robbery, felony assault, grand larceny, auto theft, burglary

SOURCE: NYPD
COMPTON REPORTS

jackets clearly identifying them as police officers.

"We are going to focus on individuals who continue to pull the triggers in the city," said NYPD Chief Michael LiPetri, head of crime control strategies. The teams will concentrate in areas of the city responsible for 80% of gun violence, he said.

The spike in shootings and other crime in the pandemic's second year flummoxed former Mayor Bill de Blasio and his hand-picked police commissioner, Dermot Shea. The new year brought a new mayor and a new police commissioner but no letup in surging crime.

Major felonies plummeted nearly 23% in the first year of the pandemic lockdown but have climbed by 12% since then. The latest NYPD statistics show that while total serious felonies — including bur-

glary, homicide, robbery and grand larceny — dropped from 18,211 in early March 2020 to 14,086 in March 2021, a 22% decrease, by Sunday, those offenses had bounced to 20,454, a boost of 12.3% over the same period two years ago.

However, shootings and homicides alone never decreased during the two-year COVID-19 period, and instead have continued to rise so far this year by 14.3 and 1.5% respectively over 2021.

Since 2020, homicides are up by 31.3% and shootings have risen by 52.3%, according to the NYPD.

"It is not acceptable to see the increases we are seeing," Adams said earlier this week during an appearance on Fox 5. "We are going to get this crime under control like we did COVID."

But, he cautioned, the NYPD

must proceed carefully when it rolls out the special crime teams.

"We have to get this right," Adams said on Fox 5, "and I continue to say this over and over again: If you have people expeditiously in specialized units without a very thorough, well-organized training, you are really going to exacerbate the problem."

Some law enforcement officials and criminal justice experts said the anti-crime deployment can't come soon enough, placing some of the blame for the crime spike on loosening COVID-19 safety protocols. It will also be a major test for Adams and Sewell, they said.

"There is no other way to look at this number than to be alarmed and it is certainly increasing pressure on the mayor to achieve results," said Richard Aborn, president of the nonprofit Citizens Crime Commission of New York City, of the latest NYPD crime data.

Just as concerning, said Christopher Herrmann, a professor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice who worked for years as a crime analyst supervisor for the NYPD, is that three months in to 2022, he sees few reasons to be optimistic.

"What is really disturbing to me is we are [starting] the month of March and these numbers are still going up," Herrmann said.