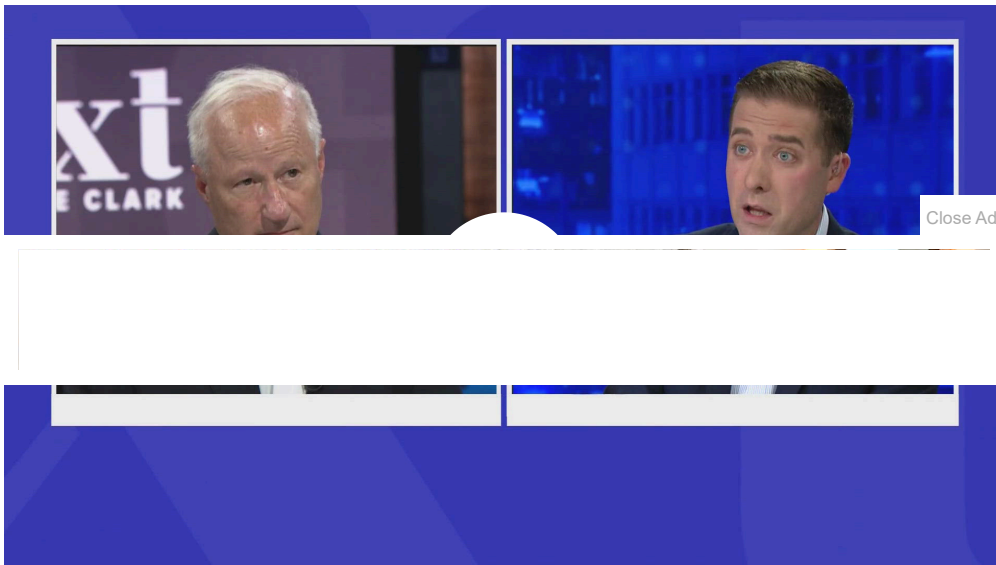


LOCAL POLITICS

Denver, Aurora mayors say exaggerated migrant gang coverage is creating 'hysteria'

Aurora Mayor Mike Coffman and Denver Mayor Mike Johnston responded to concerns about Venezuelan gangs after a video at an Aurora apartment complex circulated online.



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DENVER — A video showing people carrying guns in a hallway of an Aurora apartment complex is making the rounds on social media and conservative media outlets with the narrative that the Venezuelan gang Tren de Aragua is taking over the building.

In an interview Thursday with 9NEWS, Aurora Mayor Mike Coffman and Denver Mayor Mike Johnston said the situation is being exaggerated.

A former tenant of the apartment complex shared a video shot Aug. 18 with 9NEWS that shows people carrying guns at The Edge at Lowry on 12th Avenue and Dallas Street.

Police have had this video for days, and they have not said it shows members of the gang.



Credit: Edward Romero

A still image of a video showing people carrying guns at an Aurora apartment complex.

Coffman acknowledged that residents of two or three apartment buildings in the city are being intimidated by a Venezuelan gang but said that Aurora Police are handling the situation and making arrests. Police said the gang's activity is "isolated."

Denver and Aurora's leaders have said for weeks that Tren de Aragua is in both cities and that police are working to determine the extent of their operations.

On Thursday, after 24 hours of intense national media coverage, Coffman and Johnston said the exaggerated and inaccurate news coverage is creating risks and problems as their cities try to deal with the gang.

"It's overwhelming our 911 system, or our emergency call center, and so it's actually hurting our ability to respond to crime," Coffman said. "I would hope people would not do that. I think we're

in some sort of environment of hysteria right now over this. It's a real issue. It's being dealt with. It's isolated."

Republicans in Aurora, including City Councilwoman Danielle Jurisnky, have [claimed the city isn't telling the truth](#) about the situation. Coffman said not every situation involving Venezuelan people, like the [large gathering during Venezuela's election](#), is associated with gangs.

"It wasn't organized, and it had some detrimental effects," Coffman said. "And they somehow conflate that with gang activity."

Johnston said Tren de Aragua's presence in Denver is smaller than other criminal organizations in the city.

"The threat from TdA in Denver, it's smaller than many other organized criminal networks that might have been here for decades, the ones you know, like the Bloods or the Crips or others, and so we're monitoring it closely," Johnston said.

He said newcomers or Venezuelans are most at risk of being intimidated by the gang.

"We want to make it very clear: If you have the least bit of concern, call 311, call 911," Johnston said. "We do not ask for your citizenship or your status. You're at no risk of adverse action."

In a [Facebook post](#) Friday, Coffman says that video, which shows people carrying guns at the apartment, is of Venezuelan gang members. Police and a city spokesperson have not confirmed that the people seen in the video are gang members.

The mayors said Aurora and Denver need to work together to get a handle on gang activity in both cities.