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Biden pushes for police funding, more social workers with New York City mayor Adams

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NEW YORK, Feb 3 (Reuters) - U.S. President Joe Biden on Thursday called for greater investments in local police departments alongside social services in a visit to New York City aimed at projecting a united front against gun violence with Mayor Eric Adams after a series of violent crimes that have rattled the city.

Biden and U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland made the trip in the wake of the funerals of two city police officers who were fatally shot last month while responding to a 911 call.

The police killings are part of an overall surge in gun violence in U.S. cities, including Philadelphia and Chicago, since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020.

With more guns than people, the United States is by far the [most heavily armed](#) society in the world and sales to first-time buyers [skyrocketed](#) in 2020.

"We can't expect you to do every single solitary thing that needs to be done to keep a community safe. It's time to fund community policing to protect and serve the community," Biden said.

The White House and Democrats are pushing back on Republican accusations that the party is weak on crime before critical midterm elections in November. [read more](#)

"We're not about defunding we're about funding," Biden said, explicitly rejecting the "defund the police" idea pushed by some Democrats after the 2020 killing of George Floyd, and adding he was asking for more funding for communities and community police.

U.S. President Joe Biden speaks at an event to reignite the 'Cancer Moonshot' initiative with a goal to reduce cancer death by 50 percent over the next 25 years, in the East Room at the White House in Washington, D.C., U.S., February 2, 2022. REUTERS/Cheriss May

Biden touted the administration's five-part plan unveiled in June that sought to stem the flow of firearms and invest in police resources. He also announced new efforts, such as targeting gun trafficking from southern states to the U.S. Northeast and getting repeat gun offenders off the streets.

"This doesn't violate anybody's Second Amendment right," Biden. "There's no amendment that's absolute. You couldn't buy a cannon when this amendment was passed. There's no reason why you should be able to buy certain assault weapons."

The Justice Department also announced new efforts to crack down on so-called ghost guns, unregistered and untraceable homemade weapons that can be made with a 3D printer.

From January of 2016 to the end of 2020, there were 23,906 suspected ghost guns reported to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, including 325 used in homicides, or attempted homicides, a senior administration official said.

Biden first traveled to New York police headquarters to join a meeting of the gun violence strategic partnership, which meets five days a week to share intelligence and develop plans. He will then go to a school to meet community leaders to talk prevention.

Biden's visit to the country's biggest city will be his first since Adams was sworn in as mayor at the beginning of the year. A former police officer, Adams centered his campaign on improving public safety, and spoke enthusiastically about working with Biden.

"The president is here because he knows what the American people want: Justice, safety and prosperity," Adams said, adding he shared the sentiment.

There is a reason "they call me the Biden of Brooklyn" Adams said, pledging to stand "shoulder to shoulder" with the president.

Reporting By Jarrett Renshaw; Editing by Heather Timmons and Alistair Bell

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