



Public Safety Speech [AS PREPARED]

December 20, 2021

I am here today to talk with you about the state of public safety in Chicago. I know that people are scared and emotions around public safety, and specifically gun violence, including car jackings are running high. And yes, we will end the year with homicides and shootings in a place that no one, including me, wants to see. I know that people for whom violence is a daily concern are particularly stressed, and that more recently, violence is creeping into other neighborhoods that have not been historically burdened by violent crime.

As the Mayor of this City, I want to assure you that from day one of my time as Mayor, public safety has been, is and will continue to be my highest priority. Keeping you safe is my priority; not one of but the first and primary priority. I wake every morning with this as my first concern and I push myself every day and all involved to step up and do more and better because we cannot continue to endure the level of violence that we are now experiencing.

This is not an academic exercise for me. I feel the urgency every day. It is heart wrenching to hear the cries of the survivors who have had a loved one felled by gun violence. There are no real words of true comfort or condolence to give mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers who are traumatized after they have lost a loved one – often in a brutal and frequently totally random way. “Senseless” doesn’t come close to describing or fully capturing the agony these families experience and the burdens they are now carrying. And for those families that were already suffering and burdened before the violence came to their doors, what we often see is that the families and individuals start to unravel.

I carry the echo of sobs and deep despair of those victims and survivors with me every day. I will never forget them because we owe them our unrelenting commitment to not just find, prosecute and incarcerate the perpetrators of the violence against them, but to proactively and relentlessly bring peace to our city once and for all, so no one else has to suffer like they are. And that is precisely what we have and will continue to do.



I also recognize, as all of us must, that violence and crime are the manifestations of deeper problems. They are the offspring of poverty and neglect and the psychological trauma that comes with it. It is the kind of poverty and neglect that too many communities – like Garfield Park and others on the South and West Sides of this city – have endured for decades. I have and will commit every bit of law enforcement muscle to fighting this fight. But I also know that lasting peace and safety will only come to this city when the underlying root causes of violence and crime are also addressed once and for all.

As a city and as a society, we have the capability and obligation to do both – increase law enforcement and address these root causes.

I think it is important to share with you some context in which this fight is taking place. Nationally, almost every major and mid-size city in the country is experiencing similar challenges with violence. New York will end the year with 464 homicides and Los Angeles with 382. Cities like Atlanta, Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, St. Louis, Denver, and even cities that rarely experience violent crime, like Austin, Texas – all of us for the last two years have been experiencing historic highs in gun violence that is tearing us all apart.

I fully recognize that it is cold comfort to the victims and survivors here in Chicago and our residents who live with this fear that we are part of a national wave of crime. I get that. But this national context is important because it gives us opportunities to not only share best practices, but also to partner with others to address this problem so many cities are experiencing at the same time.

I want you to be clear eyed and recognize that there are no simple or easy quick solutions to the challenges we are facing. The problems are multi-dimensional and decades in the making. If the solutions were easy, we would have already executed on them.

But we must do better in immediately and in the short term to take control back from the violent criminals who are preying upon us and making us less safe.

ILLEGAL GUNS



There is no doubt that our common enemies are illegal guns and the violent people and gang members who use them without any regard for the sanctity of our lives – the precious lives of children, youth, our elders and other innocents.

Our city is simply awash in illegal guns, and sadly has been for years. There are many reasons for this that set us apart from other cities in the country. And the resulting harm is showing up on our streets, in emergency rooms, morgues, and funeral homes every day. And it is threatening not only our residents, but our police officers as well. 69 police officers have been shot at or shot this year alone, the most in almost a decade. This includes Ella French, who paid the ultimate price when she was killed in the line of duty.

This must end.

To address this problem of the volume of illegal guns, the Chicago Police Department has reinvigorated dedicated gun teams and continues leaning into our partnership with the ATF, other federals, state and county law enforcement and federal prosecutors. They are seizing guns, systematically debriefing arrestees to find the source of the guns, running traces, signing up confidential informants, and doing everything possible to be proactive in this fight.

This work is paying dividends. The CPD is on track to seize 12,000 illegal firearms off the streets of our city this year which will be another record, topping last year's record of 11,128. And again, the CPD will seize more illegal firearms off our streets than New York and Los Angeles combined. This is very dangerous work as Ella French's murder made plain. Despite the danger to themselves, our officers – the gun teams, district patrol officers and others – have been heroic in continuing to take these weapons off the street.

These gun teams have also been very active in seizing expired Firearms Owners' Identification Cards or FOID cards and guns from individuals in Chicago who no longer can legally possess guns. Year to date, the CPD has recovered 429 FOID cards. The CPD has also traced over 20,000 guns. This work is important and another vital tool in keeping our streets safe from illegal guns.



But more can and must be done and that requires additional resources and help from our federal partners. CPD always needs and works with our partners at all levels. I must again publicly thank the U.S. Attorney's Office, federal law enforcement agencies like the ATF, DEA, FBI and others; the state police led by Director Brendan Kelly; and the Sheriff's Department led by Sheriff Tom Dart, and particularly the sheriff's police led by former CDP Deputy Chief, Leo Schmitz. Their assistance has been invaluable.

Despite all of these efforts by the CPD and its various law enforcement partners, illegal guns continue to be readily available in Chicago. We have no gun stores in Chicago as you know. We know that the guns come from elsewhere – across the border from Indiana, and other states, sold on marketplaces like Facebook and other social media platforms, and through the use of straw purchasers. We must shut down these sources of illegal guns which are bringing devastating harm to our city.

That is precisely why, for example, earlier this year, we partnered with Everytown Law to sue Westforth Sports, Inc., a gun dealer in Northwest Indiana. We brought this lawsuit because Westforth repeatedly sold guns to straw purchasers, which resulted in Westforth being the top out-of-state supplier of crime guns recovered by the CPD. We will not rest until we get the court to hold Westforth accountable for the harm that it has done in Chicago.

The flow of illegal guns over our borders continues to be a problem. Even in the absence of federal movement on common sense gun control measures like universal background checks, the federal government is uniquely qualified to help cities like Chicago address the scourge of gun violence.

Over the summer, President Biden instituted a comprehensive strategy on gun crime, including a multi-agency "strike force" in Chicago and other cities. That renewed focus was welcomed and helpful and has resulted in enhanced collaboration with the ATF, which led to more Task Force Officer positions. We must build on those efforts though additional help from the federal government. That's why I have formally asked the Attorney General of the United States, Merrick Garland, to:



- With all deliberate haste, detail ATF agents to Chicago for six months so that we can increase the number of gun investigations and gun seizures in Chicago; and
- With those agents, we also need increased federal prosecutors to handle the new cases that will be generated. My request includes additional prosecution resources as well.
- Send additional federal marshals to Chicago to assist the Sheriff and the CPD to find and bring to justice the thousands of individuals wanted on warrants for violating conditions of release or other court orders.

We need these additional resources well in advance of summer. As part of this request, I have also called upon the federal Department of Justice to convene multi-jurisdictional task forces to stop illegal gun trafficking across state lines from southern states like Mississippi, up the interstate, through Indiana, and over the border to Chicago. Only the federal government has the resources and reach to make a meaningful dent in illegal gun trafficking across state lines. They must do more and we are ready willing and able to work in further partnership in this crucial work.

I spoke about this need on my recent trip to Washington and I will continue working with our federal partners to make this happen.

We must also address the rise in ghost guns. Ghost guns can be bought online by anyone with the means to pay. They have no serial numbers, are untraceable, and can be assembled at home. Last year, in 2020, CPD seized 130 ghost guns. This year that number has increased to 444 ghost guns seized to date, and CPD believes this is the tip of the iceberg. And to be clear, these are not just handguns. They are assault weapons too. Ghost guns are an emerging danger and we need to act now to stop their flow into Chicago and across our state. Just a few weeks ago for example, Chinatown resident Woom Sing Tse [SEE] lost his life to a perpetrator who used a ghost gun. That's why we will be working with our partners in Springfield to pass legislation that addresses this growing menace.

I want to remind you that anyone who provides information about the location of illegal guns that leads to a seizure and prosecution will be eligible to receive up to



\$15,000. We have a million dollars set aside. We are serious about this and we need your help.

VIOLENT, DANGEROUS OFFENDERS AND ELECTRONIC MONITORING

I said that the common enemy is not just illegal guns but the violent criminals and gangs that use them.

Right now, today, there are too many violent people walking our streets and wreaking havoc in our neighborhoods. You have heard me and the Superintendent talk about the issue of the number of violent, dangerous people out on electronic monitoring. I know no one who believes that our communities are safer if murderers, attempted murderers, rapists, or car jackers are placed on electronic monitoring, or EM, and essentially free to go about their businesses after they are charged. Of course, they are entitled to a presumption of innocence and their day in court. Those rights are sacrosanct under our Constitution.

I am also not saying that non-violent offenders or poor people should be held in custody pre-trial. I do not believe that Cook County jail should be a debtors' prison.

But if you are charged with killing someone, trying to kill someone, taking a vehicle at gun point, rape, or violence against someone in your home or theirs – for those people, I absolutely believe they should be locked up, pending trial because they are a demonstrated “real and present threat to the physical safety” of people and community, as defined under Illinois state law.

Right now, Cook County criminal judges have let almost 2,300 offenders with these charges back onto our streets, in our neighborhoods, on our blocks. It defies common sense, it is not safe, and this practice must be stopped immediately. We are in crisis and state law explicitly requires judges to consider community safety in making individualized bond decisions.

The cumulative effect of having almost 2,300 violent, dangerous offenders on the streets has reached a tipping point. Too many of our neighborhoods are up for



grabs. Too many people are being murdered by offenders out on electronic monitoring. In 2021 alone, for example, well over 50 people have been arrested for a shooting or murder while on EM. This includes the shooter of seven-year-old Jaslyn Adams, who was eventually arrested while wearing an ankle bracelet. How many more have to die before there is an end to this dangerous practice of letting violent, dangerous offenders out into the very communities in which they are alleged to have caused harm – often without meaningful supervision, or in the absence of any meaningful interventions?

Our residents, and particularly our victims and survivors are also entitled to live in peace, and without fear of retaliation.

And those very individuals themselves become targets for retaliatory, street justice. The bottom line is that the Cook County criminal courts' current practices around electronic monitoring and violent, dangerous offenders makes our residents less safe, totally erodes confidence in the criminal justice system, is a slap in the face to victims and survivors and sets those violent offenders up for possible retaliatory street justice.

Electronic monitoring was supposed to be paired with community supervision, and primarily for non-violent offenders. In Cook County, there is virtually no supervision, nor any mandated community interventions. The Cook County electronic monitoring system is fundamentally broken in a way that is making our city unsafe. The County Courts need to get the balance back and reserve electronic monitoring for only non-violent offenders.

But until that time happens, I am calling for an immediate moratorium on electronic monitoring for offenders where the lead charge is murder, attempted murder, aggravated gun possession, felons in possession, sex crimes, illegal gun possession, vehicular carjacking, kidnapping or attempted kidnapping or other crimes of violence. I will be sending a formal moratorium request to Chief Judge Timothy Evans, the Criminal Court Presiding Judge, and Presiding Judge responsible for pre-trial release.

This is not about finger pointing or shifting blame. We all have a role to play and we all must be accountable. Further, we need to work in concert with our County



partners and I have repeatedly demonstrated my commitment to doing just that. There are many issues on which we can and must collaborate.

But for well over a year, the Superintendent and I have been raising the red flags on the EM program directly with our County Court partners without any changes. The pre-COVID EM numbers were around 1,200, the overall number now is almost 3,400, with this category of violent, dangerous criminals accounting for much of this increase.

The time for talk is over. We need concrete and definitive steps to be taken. We all are accountable and need to accept that responsibility, and as a city we cannot make progress on combatting violence in our neighborhoods if the County is not doing its part. They must be our partners in this effort since the County, not the City, controls the criminal justice system in Cook County and the courts have exclusive jurisdiction of EM decisions.

GANGS

Now, let's talk about our fight against gangs. We also need to continue striking consistently hard blows against gangs in our city. Not only are gangs a major source of violence in our neighborhoods, they prey upon our most vulnerable residents. I have spoken to residents, like a group of moms in Little Village who told me recently that they literally live in daily fear of gangs in their neighborhoods.

Also, in too many neighborhoods, gangs are targeting young boys with promises of wealth, an easy life, a sense of purpose and belonging. These can be and are very seductive to a vulnerable child.

Gangs are also exploiting those who are vulnerable to drug addiction with increasingly lethal drugs laced with deadly cutting agents like fentanyl. In 2020, there were 1,300 opioid-related deaths in Chicago, a 50 percent increase over 2019. While the final numbers are not in for 2021, deaths from opioids overdoses continue to be a significant problem, particularly in neighborhoods like the one we are in, West Garfield Park.



No gang member in this city should ever rest easy. People must also stop shielding them. We need to bring them to justice. As Father Mike has said, our faith must overcome our fears. There are people in our city right now who know the identity of shooters who have killed or harmed. I beg you to come forward. We need you to break your silence.

I also know from my experience as a former federal prosecutor, and a defense attorney that there are many young people in the life that want out. And for those people, we need to extend our hands and give them an off ramp. That's in part why we have invested so heavily in street outreach. One of the great values of the individuals who work in the streets is their ability to reach these young men and women and help them leave their high risk and often violent lifestyles. We want to continue bringing these folks home.

We also must continue to do more for returning residents. As a person of faith, I believe in the power of redemption and as mayor I plan to provide even more focused support and resources so that people can turn their lives around. Our FY22 budget does just that. That is why we are working to continue coordination of resources for returning residents, have created a first ever mayor's office coordinator – all with a goal of making Chicago the Second Chance capital of the United States.

But for the hardened criminals, we must be unrelenting in holding them be accountable and make public examples so we can deter other crimes before they happen.

Here again, CPD has stepped up its fight against gangs.

To date this year, the CPD, along with its other law enforcement partners, has seized drugs with a street value of \$442,120,235, that's almost a half a billion dollars. And the CPD has also seized almost \$27 million in U.S. currency related to narcotics trafficking. These seizures represent the highest amounts in drugs and currency seized in recent years.

And we need to keep our foot on the gas.



That's why I will press the City Council to debate and then pass the Victims Justice Ordinance. Gangs are violent, dangerous and ruthless. They do not care who they hurt in their quest for money and territory. We need to not just seize their cash, but their assets as well. We need to take away the profit motive by depriving them of blood money, along with locking them up. This will not be the rightfully discredited forfeitures of the 1990s. We will also go after the leaders of these gangs – the shot callers and the ones who overwhelmingly profit from the carnage happening in our streets.

We will go into court, before a judge with a civil lawsuit where we will have the burden of proving that particular assets – cars, property, businesses – are in fact the proceeds of gang activity. The defendants will be represented and like in any civil case, a judge will determine if we have proved our case. And when we do, we will dedicate a portion of the proceeds to support victims, witnesses and survivors in Chicago.

In addition, the CPD will expand the number of officers committed to investigating gangs, as well as dramatically increase the number of homicide detectives, and reduce the current case load for these detectives.

Our homicide clearance rate is currently at 48 percent, which is up from an embarrassing 28.57 percent just a few years back in 2016. Improved, but not good enough. We need to hit 60 percent or higher in 2022 by increasing the resources devoted to homicide investigations, lowering caseloads, and continuing to build community trust. Additionally, the CPD must hold itself accountable for consistent improvement. To be clear, CPD detectives have solved more homicides this year, 374 and counting, than any other year in the last 19 years. We must build on that progress in 2022.

We will also dramatically expand the reach of cameras with license plate readers. This technology is a game changer. It was key to quickly solving the murder of Shaoxiong [shaow-shung] “Dennis” Zheng [juhng], the University of Chicago alumna a mere two days after he was killed. LPR technology has played a prominent role in assisting detectives in solving other homicides, violent crimes, carjackings and more. We will substantially expand our network of cameras and LPR technology in public spaces to help better protect our city.



Another significant tool that we have stood up is our Community Safety Coordination Center. We announced this initiative back in August 2021. We took a page from our success during COVID, when the whole of government mobilized to provide the resources needed during the height of that crisis. And the Racial Equity Rapid Response Team showed us that we could not adequately respond without sitting at the table with those most impacted to develop and implement strategies to bend COVID's death curve. Violent crime is not the same as COVID, but the lessons learned around collaboration and coordination, community engagement and how best to deploy resources and interventions do apply to the fight for community safety.

The CSCC right now is mobilizing the city's resources to increase safety in communities most impacted by violence, by following the lead of community leaders and organizations who have been fighting this fight on the ground day in and day out. The CSCC is about coordination, collaboration and using data to target resources where they are needed most, and to fill the gaps so that we are reaching those people and communities most in need.

The CSCC is the only such non-law enforcement municipal public safety tool of its kind in the country. It brings all of the elements of City government together in the same physical space so that our hardest-hit communities are able to receive coordinated resources. The CSCC has the potential, paired with proactive, Constitutional policing to be a game changer for our city.

I hope you can hear that we have been aggressively executing on a comprehensive plan, but no doubt, we will end the year far short of the expectations that we all had when the year began. That is a great disappointment to me personally, the Superintendent and all involved. No excuses. We must do better. We have taken stock, analyzed the data and will be making the necessary changes going into the new year. But be assured that none of us will rest until we bring peace to our city.

INVESTMENTS

I have talked at length about two of our common enemies – illegal guns, and the violent, dangerous people who use them against our residents.



But we have another common enemy. It is poverty and neglect. I say this often because I believe it to be true: neglect of people and places is simply not cost free. Many of the communities that are most plagued by violent crime also have high incidences of poverty, high unemployment, homelessness, drug addiction and other ills that tear away at the fabric of community. This is why we held the first of its kind poverty summit in Chicago in February 2020, right before COVID hit. We pledged then to eliminate poverty in a generation. The devastating impact of COVID on these poor and suffering communities made plain that we must accelerate our efforts and we have.

Over the years, we have literally spent billions of dollars in a law enforcement first and only strategy and barely moved the needle in making these very same communities safer. Law enforcement is key, but it cannot be the only tool we use.

Look at the history. The spiking violent crime we are now experiencing, we have seen this cycle before. In the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s during the crack epidemic – we have seen spikes, and troughs repeated over and over again, but never any extended period of safety and peace. The root causes were always poverty and neglect, but we historically always resorted to the blunt and often brutal tools of significant police force and mass arrest. We rarely if ever used targeted, data driven strategies. And the focus was not on root causes.

And where did we end up? Right back in the same old cycle again.

I believe that if we truly want to end the cycle of community violence once and for all, aside from holding violent, dangerous people accountable, we must get at the root causes of violence.

Ladies and gentlemen, decades of futility have proven that we simply cannot just arrest our way out of this problem. We can and we must invest our way out of this problem.

You see, if a child grows up seeing little to no opportunity around them, no positive adult role models, and the allure of the streets continues to speak to him like that siren song of lore, the child becomes a young person growing up without hope, and believing his destiny is preordained.



We have to fundamentally and permanently disrupt the pipeline of young men lured to the streets and show them, not just tell them, from the earliest stages of life that their lives have value, that we will be that village for them and their families and that their destinies are not preordained to mind someone's corner spot, jail or an early death.

As we reinforce that their lives have value, we must also be clear that their neighbors' lives also have value. Basic rules and agreements about how to live in a community, community norms, cannot be lost. We must teach our children love and compassion, empathy and that if you want something, hard work and sacrifice is how you get it. We cannot tolerate people taking what is not theirs.

We need to make a value statement of love for all of our children, regardless of the circumstances into which they were born. We must ensure that we truly have their backs.

Is this some radical statement? No, it is in keeping with a long tradition in our city, stretching back to the days of Jane Addams and before. Or more modern-day examples like the United Way, Boys and Girls Clubs, Catholic Charities just to name a few. We have always shown our hearts and our values and now more than ever we need to scale it up in a coordinated, data driven fashion.

This is why our FY22 budget will make \$1.2B in investment like affordable housing, economic development, mental health supports, addiction treatments and more. That is why, INVEST South/West, our signature economic development initiative is so important. That is why we will use ARP, the federal infrastructure monies, our capital plan and other resources to build a city that is equitable and inclusive for every person, in every neighborhood.

Our city needs to heal and we cannot get there unless we invest in our people – all of them. Some would not immediately associate these investments with public safety tools, but they are. Investing in people and places, uplifts lives, stabilizes families, and makes neighborhoods vibrant, and importantly safe. It will require the whole of City government – public health, social services, schools, parks, libraries and more.



It will require continuing and scaling our on-going work of engagement with essential community stakeholders like faith leaders, social services and health care organizations, block clubs, and just plain old ordinary people of good will who love their neighborhoods, love their city and want to roll up their sleeves in service of a mission larger and greater than individual pursuits. We must continue to use data driven strategies through the CSCC and listen to residents about their needs.

It will require the business and philanthropic communities to do even more.

Ladies and gentlemen, we need you.

No one mayor or police superintendent can do this alone. We need partners and partnerships that are broad and deep. I am talking not just about monetary investments, although those are important. I am also talking about investing your time and talent to the most urgent and noble cause of our time. We need an army of volunteers to serve.

In the short term, we must all invest our resources in the people and places that call our city home, while laying the groundwork for anti-poverty measures and community investments to tackle the root causes of violence in the long-term. In other words, there is immediate work to be done and we need you now.

CONCLUSION

Let me close with this. For me as a Chicagoan, and not just as Mayor, there is no greater or higher calling than to be relentless in our shared mission to bring peace to our communities. I need all of you to be on this journey with me. If you are a person of faith, when you humble yourself and ask for God's grace, ask for blessings for your neighbors too, whether you know them or not. We all need grace and respite from the trials and tribulations of today and the last 20 months.

As difficult as it has been, and it has been very difficult at times, as the dawn of a new year approaches, I always take this time to reflect and dream about what a new year will bring. I have tremendous hope in my heart in part because you have shown me again and again, your own resiliency and that quintessential Chicago



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toughness. There is no problem that we cannot tackle if we lock arms and do it together.

So with renewed faith and confidence and a commitment to address our immediate and longer term challenges around public safety, we cannot forget that Chicago remains and will always be a great city, a city we love and call home. God Bless You and Happy Holidays.