



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Malcolm Smith

State Legislators Convene Emergency Citywide Summit In Response To Recent Shootings

MALCOLM A. SMITH May 31, 2008

Governor David Paterson, Congressman Charles Rangel, and State Senate Democrats joined citywide officials in crafting Operation SNUG to address gun violence

(New York, NY) State and local elected legislators today joined law enforcement officials and community leaders for an emergency meeting in Harlem to discuss strategies to "stop the violence" following a rash of neighborhood shooting incidents across the city that left several dead and many wounded.

During the past three months there have been several dozen shootings taking the lives of several teenagers and left many wounded. The meeting was called after the random shootings in Harlem, the Rockaways, Jackson Heights, Prospect Heights and Bedford-Stuyvesant.

State Senate Democratic Leader Malcolm A. Smith (D-St. Albans) said that the Summit was especially necessary because "we are losing a battle much greater than any one official."

"We as public officials, clergy, and community leaders must take a more aggressive approach to coming up with solutions to stop the growing gun violence on our city streets," said Senator Smith, one of the event's organizers.

Law enforcement officials presented crime status reports on recent shooting incidents and steps being taken to stop the violence. Officials and community leaders exchanged ideas during the roundtable

discussion and developed an immediate action plan.

Participants in today's roundtable discussion announced the creation of 'Operation SNUG', the word 'guns' spelled backwards.

This initiative will consist of:

S treet intervention and stopping the violence

- violence interrupters
- support for police and law enforcement

N ational state local funding support

- funding for all alternatives
- legislation that can help implement solutions

U se of celebrities and centers

- public relations and materials
- existing community centers, new bunkers and community offices

G angs, guns, gainful employment

- real-world gang awareness and prevention initiatives
- connections to employment and economic alternatives

There will be four meetings held to follow up on the initiative's progress, one for each point.

Governor David Paterson said, "Gun violence is one of the most serious issues facing our city and state. Innocent lives - too often children - are ended because of trivial disputes and carelessness. I applaud

Senator Smith for bringing together some of the leaders in the fight to get gun off the streets and out of the hands of criminals."

Meeting organizers included Senate Democratic Leader Malcolm A. Smith; State Senators Bill Perkins(D-Harlem), John Sabini (D-Jackson Heights), Eric Adams(D-Brooklyn), ranking member of the Crime Victims, Crime and Correction Committee; Assemblymen Keith Wright (D-Harlem) and Darryl Towns (D-Brooklyn), leader of the New York State Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic and Asian Legislative Caucus.

In Brooklyn, 44 shootings within the past three months occurred in the Brooklyn South division of the Police Department officials said, including at woman being shot in the hip. In that case, police arrested and charged an unidentified 32-year-old man.

"The recent escalation in the number of shooting incidents impels responsible legislators to promulgate an action plan to combat the scourge of gun violence," said Senator Adams. "The voices of our constituents call for the prevention of such tragedies; in my own district there has been impassioned outcry from all ethnic and economic groups."

While police have made some arrests, several murder suspects remain at-large because witnesses have refused to come forward.

Senator Adams said that it was "imperative" for elected and community leaders to collaborate on reaching solutions "to make our city a safer place."

"The criminals who wound and murder our fellow citizens make a mockery of our outrage over the Sean Bell shooting and cripple our efforts to prevent a repetition of the terrible incident," said Senator Adams, a retired New York City Police Officer. The bullet from an illegal weapon pierces not only the flesh of our loved ones, but the emotional body of our family as well. Even the substance of the larger community is wounded. We must protect our citizens from the disastrous effects of gun crimes."

In Far Rockaway, one week after teenagers Brandon Bethea and Tyreece Johnson were fatally shot in two separate incidents, eight individuals were wounded during the Memorial Day holiday weekend in Harlem.

Senator Bill Perkins (D-Manhattan) said: This latest explosion of gun violence reminds us that we must be vigilant in getting guns off the street and out of the hands of the wrong people. We have to focus on finding, arresting, prosecuting and convicting those responsible for brining and distributing these guns in our communities. We have to cut off the supply. It is going to require all of us- growing problem. We need more police protection without harassment. We need more training, education, and employment opportunities. We have to provide parenting, social and anger management skills. Something we all can do is...-WHEN WE SEE A GUN, WE HAVE TO CALL 911. These are some of many measures that need to be taken if we are going to seriously put an end to gun violence."

Charles Fisher, chairman of the Harlem-based Hip-Hop Summit Youth Council, Inc. said that his organization has partnered with corporations and media outlets "to implement initiatives to address the drugs, illegal guns, and growing gun violence that is plaguing our communities."

"With the closing of youth centers, along with gas, food, unemployment, and foreclosures on the rise, it's going to be tough on us all for a while, especially our youth and young adults," Fisher said. "We have to let our youth know that we are serious to help stop the violence."

The citywide Summit in Harlem follows a similar meeting at the Redfern Houses community center in Far Rockaway several weeks ago where Smith, Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly, Queens District Attorney Richard Brown, Assemblywomen Michele Titus (D-Far Rockaway), Audrey Pheffer (D-Ozone/Rockaway Beach), City Councilman James Sanders (D-Far Rockaway), and community leaders met to construct a plan to stop violence in the area. The group's action plan included securing public funds to put up video surveillance cameras, opening up the shuttered community center, and putting additional police manpower on the streets.

Also in attendance at today's meeting were: Congressmen Charles Rangel (D-Manhattan) and Gregory W. Meeks (D-Jamaica/Far Rockaway); Assembly Member Herman D. Farrell, Jr (D-Manhattan); Council Members John Liu (D-Flushing), Inez Dickens (D-Manhattan); State Committee Member Theresa Freeman; New York Police Department Chief Raymond Diaz, Manhattan North and Chief Thomas Dale, Queens South; Marques Claxton, 100 Blacks in Law Enforcement; Anthony Miranda, National Latino Officers Association of America; Norman Siegel, Civil Rights Attorney; Charles Billops, Grand Council of Guardians; Jean Corbett Parker, Harlem Mothers SAVE; Dr. Candice Kane CeaseFire Chicago; among others.

Additional statements were issued:

"The rise in gun violence is devastating communities around our city," said City Council Speaker Christine Quinn. "With crime going down across the board citywide, it's completely unacceptable that neighborhoods in Queens and Brooklyn and parts of Harlem are being left behind. It's time for officials at every level of government to come together and figure out how to make these tragic incidents as rare as possible."