Bloomberg Attacks Stop-And-Frisk Reform, Media Coverage #stopandfrisk

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Mayor Michael Bloomberg has lashed out at critics of the New York Police Department's stop-and-frisk tactics, including mayoral candidates, who he said are playing politics and undermining law enforcement.

During a speech to an audience of NYPD leaders today, Bloomberg took umbrage at two bills proposed by City Council members that seek to increase oversight of stop, question and frisk, directly tying the program to the city's record-low crime rates and ongoing counterterrorism efforts.

The outgoing mayor also took grave offense with some of his potential successors and their willingness to make the city less safe by supporting "politically driven legislation."

"My message is simple: stop playing politics with public safety," Bloomberg said to an audience of NYPD leaders. "Look at what's happened in Boston. Remember what happened here on 9/11. Remember all of those who've been killed by gun violence — and the families they left behind. We owe it to all of them to give our officers the tools they need to protect innocent lives or people will needlessly die and we'll all be responsible."

Calling the police department officers "first preventers," the mayor argued that the numbers used to argue against stop-and-frisk prove the need for the practice. Bloomberg defended the program as a deterrence against gun possession and crime, and that the movement to end stop-and-frisk would turn the clock back on the city's low crime rates.

"It's hard to believe," he said, "but the NYPD is under attack, probably because this is an election year."

Bloomberg, who has often linked the city's economic viability to crime reduction during his term, again emphasized that public safety is key to New York City's success.

"The question is not whether the NYPD can continue driving crime to new record lows," he said. "The question is whether elected officials and special interest groups will allow you to. Will they trust you and will they have your back? God help us if they don't."

Bloomberg focused his attack on two pending bills, both part of the Community Safety Act to task sponsored by Brooklyn Council members Brad Lander and Jumaane Williams. Bloomberg has previously said the bill to create an independent monitor over NYPD would have a chilling effect on policing, but today provided clearer examples of the type of chaos he thinks such a bill would create with a "rival power."

"With confusion comes deadly consequences to our police officers and to the public that they are sworn to protect," he said, adding that the the bill could hamper the department's counterterrorism operations by scaring other law enforcement agencies from discussing classified information.

The mayor also criticized a bill that would expand on a the city's law against racial profiling by allowing residents to sue the city. During her own speech on public safety, City Council Speaker and Democratic mayoral hopeful Christine Quinn has similarly hesitated on the bill, despite her support for the independent inspector general bill. Quinn has since said she would allow both bills to go to a vote despite her reservations.

Bloomberg then took clear aim at the "special interests" behind the legislation, lumping politicians motivated by an election year with media and advocacy groups. He likened the attacks on NYPD from groups including the Center for Constitutional Rights and the New York Civil Liberties Union to the National Rifle Association's attacks on gun control advocates.

"We don't need extremists on the left or the right running our Police Department – whether it's the NRA or the NYCLU," Bloomberg said.

Minutes after the speech, NYCLU responded to the mayor's criticism on social media, defending its work on stop-and-frisk.

Dear Bloomberg, here's a graphic response to your graphic description of the NYCLU earlier today. Sincerely, NYCLU. ow.ly/i/20u28

— NYCLU (@nyclu) April 30, 2013

The mayor further argued that advocates for police reform and the media have been complicit in ignoring the loss of life in the same minority communities that are hardest hit by crime.

Invoking the case of 17-year-old Bronx resident Alphonza Bryant, who was shot and killed last week, Bloomberg accused The New York Times of selective outrage. The Times, which has published multiple editorials opposed to stop-and-frisk, has been silent on the case.

"Do you think that if a white, 17-year-old prep student from Manhattan had been murdered, the Times would have ignored it?" Bloomberg asked before answering his own question. "Me neither."

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Stop and Frisk

stop-and-frisk