

Giuliani Criticized for Amadou Diallo Shooting

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Description

Mayor Rudy Giuliani faces a political nightmare in New York City after four white NYPD officers fire 41 shots and kill an unarmed black man named Amadou Diallo. The four officers indicted for second degree murder are acquitted of all charges. This interview includes a follow-up live interview with Mayor Giuliani.

Keywords

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CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE

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Transcript

Giuliani Criticized for the Amadou Diallo Shooting

MARIA SHRIVER, co-host:

Four white police officers here in New York City were charged with murder Wednesday for the February shooting of an unarmed black man. The incident has cast a harsh spotlight on the Big Apple and its successful and ambitious mayor. NBC's Rehema Ellis reports.

REHEMA ELLIS reporting:

He was riding a wave of success, with New York City shaking off its violent image, boasting about a steady drop in crime for several consecutive years. But for Rudolph Giuliani, who has been considering higher office, the last seven weeks have been a political nightmare.

Daily, bitter demonstrations of outrage, after four white New York City cops from a special plain-clothes unit fired 41 shots killing an unarmed black man, Amadou Diallo. Wednesday, the four officers were indicted for second-degree murder. Headlines screamed of trouble for the police department, and the mayor, a supporter of tough policing was put on the defensive. Giuliani called for protesters to be patient and let investigators do their job. But it got worse. Former Mayor David Dinkins, a prominent New Yorker, joined with the demonstrators and was arrested.

Mayor RUDY GIULIANI (New York City Mayor): I can figure out when politicians are doing publicity stunts, and you can too.

ELLIS: That electrified the protest. Criticism spread across ethnic, social, and economic lines. Giuliani was blasted for being insensitive to minorities' concerns about police brutality.

Reverend AL SHARPTON (Protest Leader): He's feeling the pressure. I think that we're winning. And I think that his testiness is the testiness of someone that clearly underestimated what a sustained movement would do.

Mr. MITCHELL MOSS (New York University): But he didn't express himself sufficiently, and as a result people thought that he was approving of what the police did, even though I don't think he was.

ELLIS: The mayor softened his tone, and for the first time in more than a year, met with elected black officials and announced changes for the police.

Mayor GIULIANI: It might be that I made a mistake in not being more open to meetings like this. I think these were--this was a very very useful meeting.

ELLIS: But the damage is done. The mayor's approval ratings have plummeted.

Ms. MICKEY BLUM (Blum & Weprin Polling): He's reached an all-time low. This is the first time there's majority disapproval, and this drop has been across the board among all racial groups.

ELLIS: Aggressive policing had been accepted by many New Yorkers because crime was going down. But the shooting of an unarmed man brought the whole system under fire, and the impact is likely to be felt by New York and the mayor for a long time to come. For Today, Rehema Ellis, NBC News, New York.

MATT LAUER, co-host:

And here with us this morning is New York's mayor, Rudolph Giuliani.

Mayor, good to have you here.

Mayor RUDY GIULIANI (New York City): Good morning, Matt.

LAUER: Let me give you a chance right off the bat, anything you--you disagree with strongly from that piece?

Mayor GIULIANI: Sure. Sure, I do. I think, first of all, from the very beginning of this incident, I've expressed sympathy and remorse, and we've made changes as a result of what we've learned from the shooting. The thing that has been declared insensitive is the fact that I've pointed out, that this does not reflect the overall record of the New York Police Department, which has, I think, as acknowledged in the piece, the best record in the country of reducing crime. But what is not acknowledged is, it has an even better record of restraint. It's among the most restrained police department in the country. And over that period of time that crime has been reduced 50 percent and homicide 70 percent, and the largest beneficiaries of that, people in the minority communities of the city, the police department has become even more restrained. Police officers in New York City use their weapons 62 percent per capita less often than they did five or six years ago. It's that second...

LAUER: But when a tragedy...

Mayor GIULIANI: ...it's that second part that's declared as insensitive. But if you don't state the second part, then you have an entire police department that is condemned for the alleged acts of a few people which, of course, haven't even been tried yet.

LAUER: ...but when a tragedy occurs--and we all agree, this was a huge tragedy...

Mayor GIULIANI: Absolutely. Absolutely.

LAUER: ...an unarmed man being shot 19 times. Forty-one shots fired.

Mayor GIULIANI: Absolutely.

LAUER: And people are outraged and they go to police headquarters and they protest. To call those protests "a publicity stunt," and in one other incident "silly," you know has to just outrage people.

Mayor GIULIANI: But you got to understand the signs that were being carried in the protest and the shock that it created in the New York Police Department. It doesn't get the same sort of coverage that the

protesters get. They're carrying signs saying "NYPD equals KKK." They were carrying pictures of police officers dressed up as Nazi officers.

LAUER: So you were saying their analogies were silly, not the actual event of them walking to police headquarters and protesting the tragedy?

Mayor GIULIANI: Well, imagine--imagine--imagine if David Duke came to New York City and some politicians got arrested behind banners with all kinds of racial slurs and horrible things said about them. You know, police officers are human beings too. And I have an entire police department of 40,000 to think about. And when public figures and public officials get arrested with banners "NYPD equals KKK"--also, Matt, since the time that Mr. Diallo was killed in New York City, 110 other people were murdered. And I have to give equal consideration to those 110. Their lives are important. And, also, I have to consider that in order to reduce that 110 murders, I need police officers to do it. I need the police officers to feel that...

LAUER: But just keep in mind those other...

Mayor GIULIANI: ...to feel that...

LAUER: ...110 people were not killed by police officers.

Mayor GIULIANI: But those 110 people were killed by other citizens of New York City, and I need police officers to interrupt that, to prevent that, and...

LAUER: But the polls have to be telling you something. People in this city--the citizens of this city are disapproving of you now in larger numbers than ever before. They're reacting to your handling of this tragedy. What did you do wrong?

Mayor GIULIANI: Well, I--you know, I think I don't judge things by polls. I've been the mayor for six years. I've been through very good things, very difficult things. I believe that I'm steering a very balanced course, of showing sympathy and concern, of making changes, of showing a great empathy for the people that are involved in a legitimate way.

LAUER: You know, that's not your reputation. You--this has dogged you for your entire administration.

Mayor GIULIANI: Well, you know, a lot--a lot of this has to do with the way coverage takes place. The second part of it is, I'm going to stand up for the police department. I'm going to stand up for the things that actually protect the lives of the vast majority of people in this city, including people who are African American, people who are Latino, people who are Asian. When I came into office, we had over 2,000 murders a year. Last year we had 629. And the majority of murders, unfortunately and tragically, take place in the poorer, minority communities of the city, and that's where the police department has saved the most lives. So this is a more complex picture than protesters can present or even sometimes the media can present in the selective way it looks at one thing or another.

LAUER: In very simple terms, though, would you at least admit that at times you have a difficult time connecting and communicating your concern for the people of New York?

Mayor GIULIANI: Everybody has a difficult time at various times. When there is--if--if the media had spent as much time on the Amy Watkins murder...

LAUER: But forget the media for a second...

Mayor GIULIANI: ...no, no, no, listen...

LAUER: ...what about you personally?

Mayor GIULIANI: ...but you've got to understand what you have to communicate through if you want a fair understanding of what happened. If you spent two months concentrating on just one incident, and you looked at just one side of it overwhelmingly, it's going to be difficult to communicate. But I look at it over the long haul. I look at it as--I look at the things that have been done to reduce crime in the poor neighborhoods of the city as well as all of the neighborhoods in the city. I look at the number of people that are off welfare now, 460,000, and the record growth in jobs last year, and where the beneficiaries of those jobs are. It's a more complicated picture than...

LAUER: You say you can't...

Mayor GIULIANI: ...can be presented if you focus on just one incident.

LAUER: You are not all that concerned about polls. But this comes at a difficult time because you are considering higher office. You've made no secret of the fact that you're--you're eyeing a possible Senate run for Patrick Moynihan's seat. So is the first lady. Let me give you a quick shot of a Web site that went up recently called HILARYNO.COM...

Mayor GIULIANI: Yeah.

LAUER: ...sponsored by friends of Rudolph Giuliani.

(Web site shown)

LAUER: This is a very unflattering portrayal in pictures and content of the first lady. Is this the kind of...

Mayor GIULIANI: Oh, it isn't at all--come on--unflattering.

LAUER: Oh, it is. Let me tell you about some of the things...

Mayor GIULIANI: It raises--it raises--it raises issues...

LAUER: `She's a carpetbagger.'

Mayor GIULIANI: Matt, it...

LAUER: `She failed in her health-care experience. She's used New York to set her sights on higher office.'

Mayor GIULIANI: All--all very fair...

LAUER: `She's unqualified to become a senator.'

Mayor GIULIANI: All very fair issues about somebody that's never run for public office, wants to run in a state that they have absolutely no connection to. If--if I were to go to Arkansas and attempt to run for the Senate, don't you think those issues would be raised? Because...

LAUER: Is--is this the tone of the campaign that we might expect?

Mayor GIULIANI: No, of course not. This is a--an attempt to gain some benefit from the fact that there are issues here, and this was the most successful political Web site in the history of the incident. It had--it had almost 300,000 people who came to it, and it developed 2500 volunteers. People I know that--there's a certain, like, aura here, but the reality is, let's just make it politics now. I go to Arkansas, I've never run for public office before, not a mayor, never run for public office before, have no connection to the state of Arkansas, don't you think the people in Arkansas and the other political figures in Arkansas would raise the issue that...

LAUER: OK.

Mayor GIULIANI: `Oh, my goodness, you're a carpetbagger.' Come on.

LAUER: I got to run.

Mayor GIULIANI: And to be this outraged by it is a little bit of an over-reaction, Matt.

LAUER: Mayor Giuliani, thanks for your time. We appreciate it.

Mayor GIULIANI: Thank you.