



Constitution discarded by police and city during FTAA trade summit in Miami

By Adam Hurter,
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The American Civil Liberties Union and numerous activists are already threatening lawsuits against the Miami Police after demonstrations outside the meetings for the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) Nov. 19-21 were met with a state of unofficial martial law characterized by extreme police brutality, "disappearances" of activists, beatings in jail, and the stealing of video cameras of independent journalists.

"Downtown Miami seemed like a third world dictatorship," said Ed Hale, Miami resident. "A virtual army of 2,500 police used every brutal and sneaky tactic in the book to defend the corporate profit interests that are at stake in the FTAA against diverse demonstrators whose only crime was telling the truth about the global corporate takeover."

Thousands of unionists, including two thousand steelworkers, were also met with police repression during a permitted demonstration, and many were arrested.

Another tactic employed by police was to attack independent video journalists. According to numerous journalists, their cameras

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Why did people protest?

The Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) was an effort started by U.S. President Clinton to expand the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) to every country in Central America, South America and the Caribbean, except Cuba. Negotiations began right after the launch of NAFTA in 1994 and seem to have ended for the time being with a scaled-down deal reached in Miami.

The FTAA's goal was to erase "trade barriers" between its member nations. Such "barriers" include laws regarding minimum wage, maximum hours, environmental pollution, and food safety. The winners in such an arrangement: wealthy corporate executives; the losers: everyone else, in all walks of life.

People who protest the FTAA and other forms of corporate rule believe that another world is possible, in which people are more important than profit.

Illegal arrests, police infiltration, "disappearances," and severe beatings of prisoners made Miami look like a Latin American dictatorship



A female activist, bleeding after being shot with a rubber bullet in the back of the head by police without warning on Nov. 20. (photo by Matthew Davis, FTAAIMC.org)

Torture and sexual assault in Miami jails

From San Francisco Bay Indymedia:

The activist legal team Miami reported a total of 273 arrests related to the FTAA protests. Lawyers in Miami who have spoken to those released from police custody confirm the following:

- Five confirmed reports of sexual assaults inside Miami jails. Three were women and two transgendered. There was one instance of anal rape with a nightstick and one instance of forced fellatio.
- Dozens of confirmed reports of beatings by police inside jail. One man was hospitalized in Miami with a brain hemorrhage. There is at least one other confirmed report of serious head injury.
- At least two male activists were locked in small, dog-kennel size cages while in police custody, where they were denied use of a bathroom and were forced to expel their bodily wastes inside the cages. A high-pressure hose with freezing water was used on the men and pepper spray within inches of their eyes.
- As of Nov. 25, 12-15 activists were still in jail, being held on bonds of \$2,500-\$10,000.

For photos, audio, video and first-hand accounts from the Miami protests, visit <http://www.ftaaimc.org>

The corporate system exposed itself in Miami. The FTAA is part of a strategy by global elites to create a new world order, an economic system run by multinational corporations, acting in their profit interests, and backed by military and paramilitary operations funded by taxpayer money. This is what we saw in Miami. The fact that the elite went to this extreme end of repression shows that the new world order leaders are desperate and scared, and that this blossoming movement against the corporatization of the planet is a serious threat to their plans. The Empire is crumbling. It is becoming a matter of what we build in its place. (Adam Hurter)



Police attack non-violent protester on Nov. 20. (photo by anonymous poster to FTAAIMC.org)

“They hate us for our freedoms’ your leaders said about the rest of the world but it’s a damned lie. We hate your leaders for the way they treat those of you who have the courage and dignity for speaking out against injustice.” (foreign protester in Miami)

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were targeted and stolen by suspiciously sophisticated muggers: “On November 29, between 6:00 and 7:00 pm, after taping illegal police actions, I was approached by two clean-cut individuals with stun guns, then two kids came over with guns and mugged me, then the guys with stun guns came back and took my camera,” said Brandon Jourdan, a video journalist with the Independent Media Center. Reports of stolen video cameras were also filed by Ohms Media, Free Speech TV, and PBS. The PBS reporter had

interviewed a local resident who said that police were instructing locals to rob protesters.

Activists declared a victory regarding the outcome of the talks, which is being dubbed “FTAA Lite.” While agreement was reached that a very rough framework would be advanced by January of 2005, the thorough and overarching corporate freedoms sought by the U.S. -- freedoms which would have sparked a rapid expansion of corporate power in this hemisphere -- were thankfully denied by wiser, more careful nations.

Miami shows us the future of the U.S. -- Martial Law

“After last week, no one should call what [Police Chief] Timoney runs in Miami a police force. It’s a paramilitary group. Thousands of soldiers, dressed in khaki uniforms with full black body armor and gas masks, marching in unison through the streets, banging batons against their shields, chanting, ‘back... back... back.’ There were armored personnel carriers and helicopters... Miami Mayor Manny Diaz called the police actions last week a model for homeland security. FTAA officials called it extraordinary. Several cities sent law enforcement observers to the protests to study what some are now referring to as the ‘Miami Model.’” (Jeremy Scahill of *Democracy Now!*)

What is the Miami Model? It is several things: extremely violent police response to nonviolent demonstrators, corporate reporters “embedded” behind police lines, the arresting and harassing of “non-embedded” independent journalists, mass arrests and an arsenal of “non-lethal” weapons. Most significantly, though, it represents the next step in the criminalization and repression of dissent that is occurring in the United States right now.



Miami Police draw their weapons on peaceful protesters on Nov. 20. (photo by Tiros, FTAAIMC.org)

Newsmax.com reports that General Tommy Franks, who led the U.S. military operation against Iraq this year, says that if the U.S. is hit with a weapon of mass destruction that inflicts large casualties, the Constitution will likely be discarded in favor of a military form of government. With each escalation of police force against protesters at demonstrations, as happened in Miami, the groundwork for that martial law is made more solid. Those who ignore these signs, or who believe police lies about “violent anarchists” will not be spared the repression of such a military government.