

Producer sues city over lead ball fired by Miami police

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MIAMI - A documentary producer wounded in the head by a mesh-covered ball of lead pellets sued the city and police Thursday, claiming police turned downtown Miami into a "war zone" during street protests against an international free-trade gathering.

The sack, about the size of a pingpong ball and fired by police officers, lodged under the skin of Carl Kesser's right temple and required a three-hour operation to remove, his attorneys said. The videographer said his forehead is partially paralyzed and he is still in therapy because he cannot fully open his mouth.

Kesser said he wasn't an angry protester, an agitator or an anarchist, but police "had one mission, one mind-set, one tactical goal:" clear the streets no matter how much force it took.

The Circuit Court lawsuit backed by the American Civil Liberties Union is the latest targeting the city's response to demonstrators during the Free Trade of the Americas meeting last November. One challenged city ordinances enacted to mute dissent, and protesters have filed at least two others over police tactics.

Kesser announced the lawsuit while sitting in front of blowups of his bloodied and swollen face and an X-ray with the embedded ball highlighted in white along with his tooth fillings. He said he had been taping to make a promotional video promoting Miami's bid to become the FTAA headquarters.

Robert Brown, Kesser's attorney, said he contacted the city months ago about resolving the damage claim and filed a notice of plans to sue but received no response.

Miami City Attorney Jorge Fernandez said his office policy does not allow him to comment on pending lawsuits.

"Clearly the city of Miami police department brutalized Carl Kesser in the way they brutalized the First Amendment," said the ACLU's John De Leon. The organization received 150 complaints of police abuse, false arrest and illegal searches and plans to pursue other lawsuits.