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## **Panel hears of police violence**

**Members of the AFL-CIO union tell a citizens' panel that Miami police broke promises and used force during the Free Trade Area of the Americas meeting last November.**

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A woman in a red blazer and black high heels hunkers behind a posterboard while a line of police officers in riot gear fire non-lethal weapons in her direction.

She pleads for help and says she is shot in the head. Another man staggers across the jam-packed Miami street while blood drips down his face.

Those were among the jarring images shown to Miami's Civilian Investigative Panel on Monday night, as union members, anti-globalization activists and civil libertarians sought to counter the police department's glowing report on how it handled November's free trade protests.

The civilian board, a 1-year-old independent panel, is investigating the security efforts and tactics by the Miami Police Department during the Free Trade Area of the Americas summit in downtown Miami.

Monday's meeting was the first after last month's three-hour presentation by Miami police officers, who testified that an internal study revealed the trade summit was an overall success.

### CHANCE TO REBUT

The meeting, at City Hall, drew about 60 people, many of them labor activists who wanted to rebut police statements that union members were the ones to blame for a bus fiasco that left dozens of elderly AFL-CIO members stranded at Bayfront Park.

Union members blamed the negotiation breakdown on police officers, who they said violated agreements and promises made to them. Police have said a melee on Biscayne Boulevard prevented them from allowing buses in safely.

"The Miami Police Department's performance before this panel was a farce," said AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka. "They used this panel as a public platform to whitewash their own record and twist the truth."

Speakers called on panel members to take action against the department, saying the panel has the power to make sure police violence and civil rights violations witnessed during the FTAA do not reoccur in the future.

"The city of Miami owes everyone an apology," said James Taylor. "This shouldn't happen in America."

The AFL-CLO presented panel members with a 15-minute video presentation on the protests, but it showed starkly different images than the 40-minute video by the police department.

While the police video showed protesters were the ones using violence, the ones by the union showed police firing less-than-lethal weapons at protesters running away from them.

#### **POLICE SILENT**

Police officials would not comment on the hearing.

The panel, which is in charge of investigating all police misconduct allegations, has said this is the last public hearing on the FTAA. It now will begin investigating individual complaints and determining whether any rules were violated.