

FREE TRADE AREA OF THE AMERICAS

Report stalled as police hold back on plans

January 3, 2005

Miami Herald

Miami's Civilian Investigative Panel, charged with investigating police abuse allegations, is still trying to get the Miami Police Department to release its complete Operational Plan for the Free Trade Area of the Americas summit held in 2003.

CIP Chairman Larry Handfield, a defense attorney, said the panel needs to review a total of 80 cases, including 18 involving protests against the FTAA.

Miami-Dade Circuit Judge Michael Chavies ruled on Nov. 2 that all the FTAA material requested from the police department should be turned over to the civilian panel.

The judge stated the "claimed exemptions made by Chief [John] Timoney were not valid," panel documents say.

However, the police department has since been granted a stay while it appeals the ruling to the state's Third District Court of Appeal.

Timoney told The Watchdog Report that the information the panel wants is not necessary for its FTAA review and might even compromise the effort.

He said he would not drop the appeal.

Handfield said he hoped the department would abandon its appeal so that the panel does not have to "sue a city agency just to get information that is needed so that we can do a closeout" on the matter.

The chairman said the panel's goal was to get an interim report on the FTAA cases out by February and "a closeout of the entire investigation by summer."

He said progress should be easier now that the panel has its own independent legal counsel.

It chose Charles Mays, a former city of Miami assistant attorney, for that job at its last meeting.