

Sharpton

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month in a case that from the start ignited protests and spurred criticism of police tactics. One of the officers fired 31 shots, emptying his clip two times in a few short seconds.

Sharpton has said Wednesday's "pray-in" protest was a preview of potential future demonstrations designed to paralyze the city.

"We're going to keep coming until we get federal indictments. It's wrong," said Frank Rodriguez, a military veteran who brought a homemade model of the shooting scene to the Brooklyn Bridge rally, which began outside police headquarters in downtown Manhattan.

U.S. attorney spokesman Robert Nardoza said the case was under review, but he declined further comment about a possible federal case.

Sharpton, shooting survivors Joseph Guzman and Trent Benefield, and Bell's fiancée, Nicole Paultre Bell linked arms as they blocked a street at the Brooklyn Bridge's base. They were trailed by at least 200 demonstrators who knelt down in prayer in the road and



Nicole Paultre Bell holds her daughter Jordyn during a recent press conference concerning Jordyn's dad, Sean Bell.

counted from one to 50 in a stark reference to the barrage of gunfire that killed Bell. Some carried signs proclaiming, "We are all Sean Bell."

The protests were carefully orchestrated: Organizers circulated sign-up sheets for those willing to be arrested and issued instructions on how to behave when arrested. They also were advised not to volunteer if they had warrants out for their arrests or other pending legal issues.

The arrested protesters were expected to be issued tickets for misdemeanor offenses and released within a few hours, police said.

On the opposite side of

lower Manhattan, an ethnically diverse crowd of about 80 demonstrators chanted, "We're fired up — we won't take it no more," and held hands as Rev. James E. Booker Jr. blessed the crowd.

"Don't let Sean Bell's death be in vain," said Booker, pastor of St. John A.M.E. Church in Harlem.

After marching to the Holland Tunnel behind a "Stop the Brutality" banner, the protesters blocked two entrances to the tunnel as some sang the civil rights anthem "We Shall Overcome." Demonstrators who moved to the sidewalk applauded each time one of their fellow protesters was ar-

rested. Drivers waited patiently. "I disagree with doing anything illegal, but, hey, this is what makes America great," said Aaron Hanson, a passenger in a car waiting to get into the tunnel. "If this is what people really need to do to make a statement, it's what they should do."

A few miles uptown, some protesters were arrested after blocking traffic into midtown Manhattan on the Queensboro Bridge, while about 200 people rallied near the entrance to the Triborough Bridge in Harlem.

A heavy police presence initially stood by during the demonstrations, allowing the protesters to march unimpeded to the bridges and tunnels where they stopped traffic. Mayor Michael Bloomberg had pledged to "make sure that everybody's rights are protected and that the law is obeyed."

The racially polarizing case has raised questions about police use of deadly force in minority communities. Bell was Black, as are two of his friends who were wounded in the shooting; the officers were Black, His-

panic and White.

Bell crossed paths with the undercover detectives as he was leaving his bachelor party with friends.

The officers testified they feared for their lives after Bell and his friends got into a testy exchange with another patron and appeared to be going to retrieve a gun; Bell's friends testified the detectives fired wildly and without warning at Bell's car. No gun was ever found.

State Supreme Court Justice Arthur Cooperman, who heard the case after the detectives waived their right to a jury, said he found the testimony of the officers more credible than the version of events offered by the victims.

Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly said Wednesday that the police department was continuing to examine the possibility of disciplinary action against the detectives.

Probe possible?

By Cyril "Josh" Barker
Special to Sentinel-Voice

NEW YORK (NNPA) — Rev. Al Sharpton met with a congressional delegation after a weekend of rallying and protesting following the April 25 Sean Bell police killing verdict. The next step: strategic planning and federal charges. The verdict acquitting all three NYPD officers charged in the death of Sean Bell has prompted some governmental officials to step in. The seven-member delegation included Rep. John Conyers from Michigan, Rep. Charles Rangel and Congressman Gregory Meeks.

The group of congressional leaders, along with Sharpton, Nicole Paultre-Bell and the Bell family, came together to discuss the launch of a federal investigation into whether New York police officers violated the civil rights of Sean Bell. The meeting took place at Congressman Meeks' offices in Queens. Afterward, the delegation went to Club Kalua, where Bell was killed.

Sharpton said he plans to write a letter to U.S. Attorney General Michael Mukasey and his assistant for civil (See Probe, Page 10)

Video shows Philadelphia officers abusing suspects

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Fifteen Philadelphia police officers have been taken off the street as authorities investigate a video showing three suspects being kicked and beaten by a half dozen city police.

A spokesman for Mayor Michael Nutter said the mayor stands behind the police department but that his initial impression is that the video does appear to show the officers overstepping their authority.

"At a glance it does appear to be a bit beyond the pale," Doug Oliver, a spokesman for Mayor Michael Nutter, said Wednesday. "Officers are not allowed to operate outside of the law."

The police department identified the 15 officers who were involved in Monday night's arrests in the city's Hunting Park section, where police had been investigating a triple shooting, Oliver said.

The three suspects in the incident were charged with criminal conspiracy, aggravated assault, simple assault and reckless endangerment, according to court officials.

The confrontation came two days after a Philadelphia

police officer was shot to death during a bank robbery.

The tape shows about a dozen officers gathering around a vehicle and pulling out three men. About a half-dozen officers hold two of the men on the ground.

The officers repeatedly kick both of those men and strike at least one of them with a baton.

The officers throw punches too. The third man is kicked and winds up on the ground.

A half-dozen police officers kicked and beat three men pulled from a car during a traffic stop as a TV helicopter taped the confrontation. The video, shot by WTXF-TV, shows three police cars stopping a car.

"On the surface it certainly does not look good in terms of the amount of force that was used," Police Commissioner Charles Ramsey said. "But we don't want to rush to judgment."

The officers were responding to a report of a shooting nearby, police said. It was not immediately clear what preceded the confrontation.

Ramsey said Philadelphia

officers have been on edge since Saturday, when Officer Stephen Liczbinski was fatally shot with an assault rifle after a robbery.

Police fatally shot one of the robbery suspects; another was arrested Sunday and a third man is still being sought.

"There is also a lot of heightened emotions since Sgt. Liczbinski was murdered on the streets just Saturday," Ramsey said.

Liczbinski was the third officer slain on duty in the city in the last two years.

Attorney D. Scott Perrine, who represents the three men seen in the video, said that as terrible as the officer's death was, it does not excuse such actions by police.

"We don't take into consideration the emotions of police officers when it comes to the discharge of their duties. ... Your emotional state, being tired, doesn't justify what's on that video," Perrine said.

He said one of his clients suffered a welt on his head the size of a baseball and one of his legs was seriously injured; he didn't know the ex-

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just being a mom
is reason to celebrate

Here's to you, Mom. Celebrating the way you laugh, the way you smile, and the way you hold it together for all of us, without missing a beat.

happy mother's day.

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