

# PEOPLES' JUSTICE

For Community Control and Police Accountability

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## **NYPD Announces Operation Torch on Same Day Judge Gave a Pass to Cops in 50-shot Death of Sean Bell**

### **Peoples' Justice Denounces New Program**

*May 14, 2008, New York* – On Friday, April 25, 2008, the NYPD announced their latest effort in so-called “terrorism” prevention – Operation Torch. In this new federally-funded program, NYPD officers will be equipped with automatic assault rifles and bomb-sniffing dogs and will patrol subways and platforms. In addition, the money received from the federal government will be used to buy the latest in surveillance technology, including new surveillance cameras. Peoples' Justice – a coalition of grassroots groups organizing against police violence – issued the following statement denouncing the new program:

“The timing of Operation Torch, the NYPD’s latest operation, is glaring in its callousness. The same day that the three NYPD detectives responsible for firing the 50 shots that killed Sean Bell and wounded Trent Benefield and Joseph Guzman were given a free pass by Judge Cooperman, the NYPD announced it would put more guns – and more powerful ones – on the streets. These assault rifles are much more powerful than the standard NYPD semi-automatic pistol which was used to kill Sean Bell. We can imagine what would happen when these machine guns start being fired in a subway.

We question the NYPD’s assertion that this operation will be used to prevent terrorism and to serve and protect. While some tourists and wealthy New Yorkers may feel safer with police officers armed with machine guns, rifles, dogs and surveillance cameras monitoring our subways, New York communities that have been terrorized by the police certainly will not feel safer. Indeed, we feel more threatened and for good reason—the motto of the NYPD hasn’t been to serve and protect, but rather shoot first, ask questions later (and, we might add, then walk away unpunished). This is also yet another example of the continuing militarization of the NYPD – a disturbing trend that all New Yorkers should be concerned about.

We have also already seen the NYPD misuse money, technology, and weapons earmarked for so-called ‘anti-terrorism’ measures to further patrol in communities of color throughout the City and to fulfill illegal arrest and stop-and-frisk quotas and pad Compstat reports. Operation Atlas, for example, is described as an overtime program to enable officers to patrol likely terrorist targets. Instead, the NYPD has utilized Operation Atlas to assign overtime officers to housing projects in the Bronx, Brooklyn and Queens, as well as other locations. This has resulted in more stop-and-frisks, mostly of people of color, which in turn, has resulted in more incidents of misconduct and abuse.

Peoples' Justice denounces this latest operation by NYPD and calls for an immediate end to this and other initiatives that further militarize the police department.”

After the killing of Sean Bell last year, Peoples' Justice organized several demonstrations and a town hall meeting calling for police accountability. On Friday, April 25, after the verdict in the Sean Bell trial was announced, Peoples' Justice organized a rally that brought out more than 1,000 New Yorkers to Queens to protest the verdict. For more information, please visit [www.peoplesjustice.org](http://www.peoplesjustice.org).

**About Peoples' Justice:**

*Peoples' Justice is a coalition of NYC grassroots organizations that are working together to fight police violence. PJ includes: Audre Lorde Project (ALP); CAAAV Organizing Asian Communities; FIERCE!; Immigrant Justice Solidarity Project (IJSF); Justice Committee; Malcolm X Grassroots Movement (MXGM); National Hip-Hop Political Convention; and Nodutdol for Korean Community Development.*

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