

May 8, 2008

## NY governor vows to examine undercover police procedures

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Filed at 9:35 p.m. ET

NEW YORK (AP) -- Gov. David Paterson pledged to examine undercover police conduct on Thursday, a day after more than 200 people were arrested protesting the acquittal of three detectives involved in the shooting death of an unarmed man.

Paterson said he understood the activists' frustrations as he stood with the slain man's fiancée and the Rev. [Al Sharpton](#), who were among the demonstrators arrested while disrupting evening rush hour traffic. But the governor stopped short of endorsing their actions.

"No civil servant can condone civil disobedience," Paterson said, but he added: "They felt that they had no other choice but to take the action that they took, and I respect the decision that they made to take that action."

The governor's involvement was a measure of the emotion and unrelenting attention surrounding the shooting of [Sean Bell](#), who was gunned down hours before he was to be married in November 2006.

The gunfire stirred complaints about police tactics, and the acquittals on April 25 in state court prompted some activists to question the prospects of justice for minorities. Bell was black as were two of his friends wounded in the shooting; the officers are black, Hispanic and white.

Paterson, New York's first black governor, said Thursday he would explore undercover officer procedures, saying the advocates had suggested plainclothes officers should not suddenly "change the script" and act as police.

He also said he would consider potential statewide legislation compelling officers to take sobriety tests after some shootings, such as those in which police fire at people who prove to be unarmed. The New York Police Department last year began requiring such tests when officers kill or wound someone.

Sharpton and Bell's supporters are pressing for federal civil rights charges in the case. Sharpton -- who orchestrated Wednesday's protests at the Brooklyn Bridge, the Holland Tunnel and other major transportation arteries -- promised Thursday to stage another mass demonstration if progress wasn't made toward their goals.

The next protest would be somewhere in New York City within seven to 10 days, said Charlie King, acting national director of Sharpton's National Action Network.

Federal prosecutors are reviewing the case but declined comment Thursday.

Bell and his friends were shot as they left his bachelor party at a Queens strip club. The officers said they believed Bell and his friends were about to get a gun; no firearm was found. Bell's friends said the police shot without warning, which the officers denied.

Police Commissioner [Raymond Kelly](#) has said his department is considering disciplinary action against the detectives.

Sharpton, shooting survivors [Trent Benefield](#) and [Joseph Guzman](#) and Bell's fiancée, Nicole Paultre Bell, were released Wednesday about four hours after their arrests on disorderly conduct charges. Paultre Bell legally took her fiancée's name after his death.

[Copyright 2008 The Associated Press](#)

---

[Privacy Policy](#) | [Search](#) | [Corrections](#) | [RSS](#) | [First Look](#) | [Help](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Work for Us](#) | [Site Map](#)