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Protesters suing city over warehouse raid

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Former **protesters** and others **arrested** in **the** Philadelphia police raid on **the** so-called puppet **warehouse during** last year's Republican National Convention filed a damage suit against **the city** yesterday in federal court.

"We filed **the** suit on behalf of **the** named plaintiffs who **were** here in Philadelphia to exercise **their** First Amendment **rights**, to demonstrate **their** political views at **the** site of **the** Republican National Convention," said lawyer Paul J. Hetznecker, who defended **the** puppeteers as **their** cases moved through **the** courts.

Hetznecker said that although only 10 people **were** named in **the** suit, others would be added.

The suit is **the** largest - at least in terms of numbers of defendants - of many court actions filed against authorities for **their** handling of **the** demonstrators. Last week, two of **the** alleged "ringleaders" who **were arrested**, John Sellers and Terrence McGuckin, also filed suits.

The warehouse incident occurred last Aug. 1, when police, accompanied by Department of Licenses and Inspections officials, entered **the** building in **the** 4100 block of Haverford Avenue and **arrested** about 75 people. **They were** charged with misdemeanors, but none was convicted.

Police said **they** had seized pipe, wire, and other items allegedly used to make "lock boxes" to link **protesters** in street blockades.

Almost 400 **protesters were arrested during the** five-day **convention**. Most cases **were** dismissed, although a few **protesters were** convicted on misdemeanor charges. Ten people **arrested in the warehouse** opted for an early deal that included six months' probation. **The** District Attorney's Office dropped **the** charges against **the** others.

It was subsequently revealed that **the** affidavits **the** state police used to obtain search warrants for **the warehouse** raid **were** based in part on reports from **the** Maldon Institute, a controversial research organization run by a former John Birch Society editor.

The suit was filed against Deputy Police Commissioners Robert Mitchell and Sylvester Johnson, Deputy L&I Commissioner Dominic Verdi, L&I Commissioner Edward McLaughlin, 10 unnamed police officers, and **the City** of Philadelphia.

The complaint was filed by Ryan Cooper, Matthew Hart, Brad Johnson, Jennifer Kates, Jessica Mammarella, Milan Marvelous, Angela Modugno, Beth Pulcinella, Gwen Witherspoon, Erik Woodworth, and Spiral Q. Puppet Theatre Inc.

City Solicitor Kenneth I. Trujillo would not comment on **the** specifics of **the** lawsuit. Speaking about **the warehouse** incident, he said: "I think that **the** conduct of **the** Police Department was exemplary and many people consider it to be **the** epitome of restraint. Nothing that I've seen and none of **the** lawsuits that have been filed to date give me any concern as to **the city's** liability, and we will defend them vigorously."

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Inquirer staff writer Linda Harris contributed to this article.

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