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Tensions High Before Staten Island Death in Chokehold *Incident Occurred in High-Crime Area That Leads in Complaints Against Police*

By PERVAIZ SHALLWANI and SEAN GARDINER

The Staten Island neighborhood thrust into the spotlight when a man died after a police officer subdued him with an apparent chokehold is in a precinct that has historically seen tension between the police and residents.

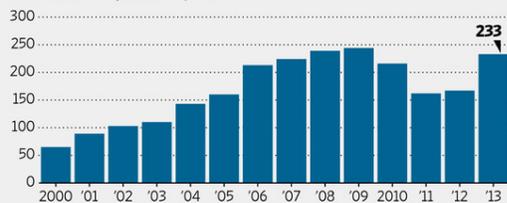
The 120th precinct, comprised of neighborhoods that make up the northeast corner of the island, is where Tompkinsville Park is located, a high-crime area that drew the attention of two plainclothes New York Police Department officers on Thursday.

When the officers allegedly saw 43-year-old Eric Garner selling untaxed cigarettes individually, they confronted him.

Police Misconduct Claims

The Civilian Complaint Review Board investigates allegations of excessive or unnecessary use of force by police officers. One example is the chokehold, a tactic that officers in the 120th Precinct apparently used on Eric Garner.

Chokehold complaints citywide:



Top precincts by number of civilian complaints:



Source: Civilian Complaint Review Board
The Wall Street Journal

The incident eventually escalated, and when Mr. Garner refused to be handcuffed, an officer placed him in an apparent chokehold, according to a video of the incident posted on the Internet.

Mr. Garner, who complained while being subdued that he couldn't breathe, was pronounced dead an hour later. The NYPD prohibits chokeholds.

North Shore neighborhoods see a high number of interactions between residents and police, said **Abraham Unger, director of urban studies at Wagner College** in Staten Island.

The precinct is a leader when it comes to the use of the controversial stop, question and frisk tactic, and is also a leader in civilian complaints against police, according to the NYPD and the Civilian Complaint Review Board, an independent agency that reviews complaints about department employees.

The precinct had the third-highest use of stop-and-frisk citywide from Jan. 1, 2013, to March 31 of this year, police statistics show. While stops have fallen dramatically over the past two years—in the

precinct and the rest of the city—the most recent numbers for the first quarter of 2014 show the 120th precinct led the city with more than 700 stops.

In 2013, the precinct was designated by a federal judge as one of five citywide in which officers should be equipped with body cameras as a part of a future pilot program.

The precinct was selected because it had the highest use of stop-and-frisk in the borough.

And from 2009 to 2013, the precinct had the seventh-highest number of complaints in the city, according to the CCRB.

The most recent NYPD crime records, from Jan. 1 to July 13, show that the precinct leads the borough in crime, including homicides, shootings and grand larcenies.

Authorities and residents said the 6-foot-3, 350-pound Mr. Garner came in regular contact with police near Tompkinsville Park.

The incident surrounding his death is under investigation by Staten Island District Attorney Daniel Donovan, the NYPD Internal Affairs Bureau and the Fire Department of New York.

Officer Daniel Pantaleo, who applied the alleged chokehold, has been stripped of his gun and badge and assigned to a nonenforcement role during the investigation.

A second officer has been placed on administrative duty. Four paramedics employed by Richmond University Medical Center, who arrived to aide Mr. Garner, have also been placed on modified duty.

On Monday, the hospital said the four were prohibited from responding to 911 calls while FDNY's Office of Medical Affairs conducts its investigation.

"Internally, the hospital is evaluating the case," it said.

Civil-rights leaders on Monday again called on federal prosecutors in the U.S. Eastern District of New York, which has jurisdiction over Staten Island, to open an investigation into the case.

A spokesman for U.S. Attorney Loretta Lynch said she "is closely following investigative developments in this tragic case."

The most recent case of police misconduct prosecuted in the Eastern District occurred in April 2011 in the 120th precinct and involved an officer named Michael Daragjati.

Mr. Daragjati pleaded guilty to willfully violating the civil rights of a man who was arrested when he complained of being roughly frisked. Mr. Daragjati didn't find anything illegal on the man, according to court records.

Mr. Garner's death also has placed an increased focus on the police's alleged use of chokeholds.

Since 2009, the CCRB has received more than 1,000 chokehold complaints. Ten of those cases investigated by the CCRB have been found to be merited and turned over to the NYPD.

In all 10, the CCRB recommended that the officer undergo an administrative trial.

In four of those, the NYPD either docked vacation days or gave the officer instructions on the proper procedure. In three others, the NYPD was unable to prosecute, according to the CCRB. Three of the cases are still pending.

Police have responded to nearly 650 calls as of last week to address conditions that range from violent crimes to quality-of-life issues in the area surrounding Tompkinsville Park, police said.