

(Mount Clipping in Space Below)

Chicago cops suspended in probe of brutality

Associated Press

A high-ranking Chicago police officer and two of his detectives were suspended for 30 days without pay pending a police board hearing after they were charged Friday with using excessive force.

If the police board sustains the charges, the three could be fired, the Chicago Police Department said in a statement.

Cmdr. Jon Burge, 43, who heads the department's Brighton Park unit on the South Side, was named in charges by the city's Law Department after an internal investigation, the police department said.

Police spokeswoman Tina Vincini said union rules prohibited her from identifying the two detectives suspended along with Burge.

The charges follow an investigation launched in response to allegations that Burge and others tortured suspects in police custody.

Burge and three detectives — Robert Dwyer, Peter Dignán and Charles Grynhard — are named as defendants in a lawsuit accusing them of torturing 12 suspects in custody between 1982 and 1987.

The lawsuit accuses police of a pattern of brutality including shocking prisoners with electrical devices, beating them, denying them food and placing plastic bags over their heads in efforts to gain confessions.

The lawsuit was filed last month by Gregory Banks, who contends he was tortured into falsely confessing a murder. The lawsuit seeks \$8 million dollars in compensatory damage and \$8 million in punitive damages, said attorney Flint Taylor.

Banks was convicted in 1983. But the Illinois Appellate Court threw out the conviction in 1989, saying police had punched him, kicked him and placed a plastic bag over his head to obtain an involuntary confession. The murder charge was dismissed in 1990, and Banks was freed after spending seven years in prison.

Amnesty International, the human rights organization, singled out Banks' case in a letter to state officials last year asking for information on allegations of brutality in the Chicago Police Department.

Officials with Amnesty International could not be reached for comment on the officers' suspensions. A telephone message left at the organization's Chicago office was not immediately returned late Friday.

Burge also has been the target of a federal brutality lawsuit by convicted police murderer Andrew Wilson, who alleged he was tortured by electroshock by Burge and other officers while in police custody in February 1982.

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