State of Illinois
Illinois Department of Human Rights

ILLINOIS ACCOUNTABILITY COMMISSION

GARFIELD PARK
INVESTIGATION BRIEF
April 2026

INVESTIGATION BRIEF

Garfield Park Pursuit and Excessive Use of Force

Date: October 1, 2025

Location: Chicago, IL, West Garfield Park neighborhood, Intersection of W. Congress Parkway and S. California Ave.

Estimated Number of Agents Involved: Approximately 12-16

Categorization: Use of Excessive Force; Violation of U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Policy

SUMMARY OF EVENTS

On the afternoon of October 1, 2025, a federal agent placed an unnamed Black man in a chokehold after the man reportedly fled from the scene of a car accident following a pursuit by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agents. The two-car collision occurred at the intersection of W. Congress Parkway and S. California Ave in the West Garfield Park neighborhood on the west side of Chicago.

At approximately 1:56 PM, a CBP agent called 911 and reported that agents had witnessed a "robbery in progress" at a "little work site" committed by "two Black males."[i] The agent indicated that they did not see any weapons on the men and described one of them as wearing a white t-shirt. When federal agents approached the men, they fled in a white sedan. The white sedan then crashed with a black SUV. Bystanders assembled at the intersection and, at approximately 2:00 PM, witnesses reported seeing at least 15 federal agents attempting to secure the scene of the crash. Among the witnesses were members and employees of Equity and Transformation (EAT)[ii] and Westside Justice Center, whose offices are nearby. Some bystanders took pictures and recorded the federal agents as they directed traffic and detained the unnamed Black man who was suspected of being involved in the alleged robbery.

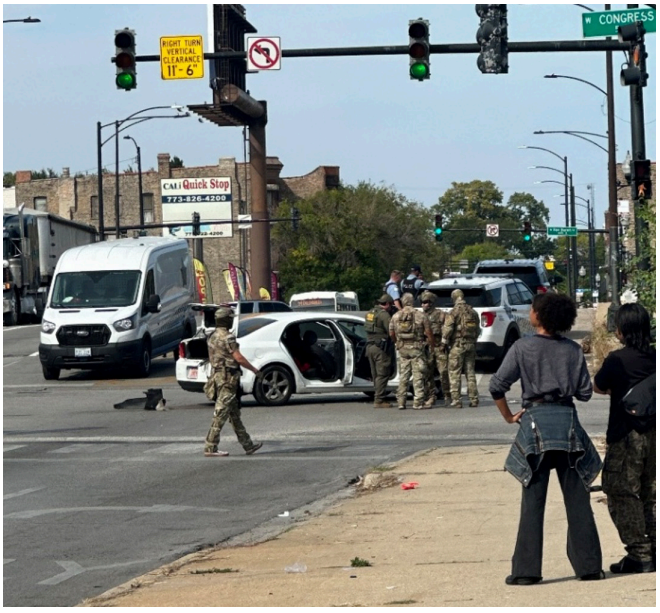

Image 1: In this picture, the white sedan with the doors open after occupants fled the scene is shown.[iii]

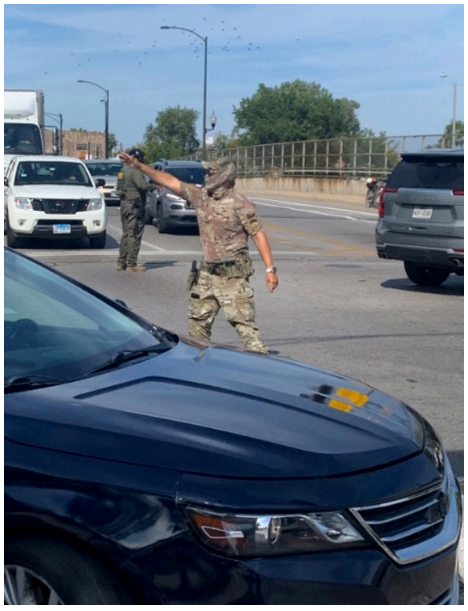

Image 2: In this picture, a CBP agent is attempt to direct traffic away from the accident.[iv]

One witness reported that immediately after the collision, multiple men exited the white sedan and ran in different directions. Two federal agents ran after one of the men who was wearing a white t-shirt. The man reportedly ran into a nearby gas station where the federal agents apprehended him and escorted him back to the scene of the collision. Video shows the man in the white t-shirt back handcuffed on the ground with his legs extended. He is surrounded by four federal agents. One of the agents kneels behind the man with his hands clasped around the man's neck and throat in what appears to be a chokehold.

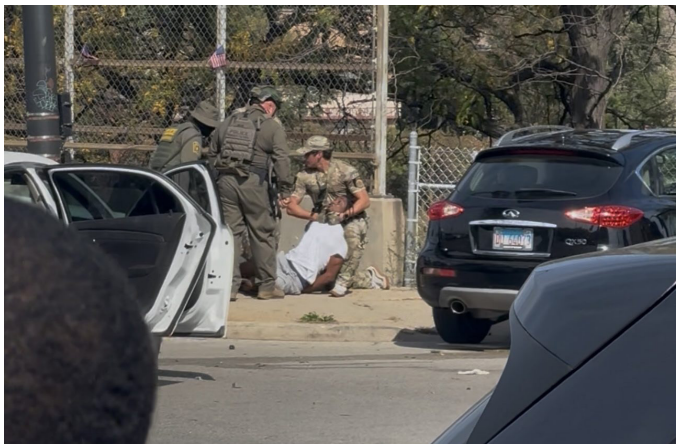

Image 3: This screenshot of a video shows one of the occupants restrained with his arms behind his body and CBP placing him in a chokehold.[v]

Video from a bystander indicates that the chokehold lasted for at least six seconds. Observers can be heard in the video shouting and asking why federal agents are choking him. When the federal agent releases his grip, the man shakes his head. Federal agents then placed the man in an upright seated position. The witness who observed the men fleeing the vehicle stated he then saw federal agents place the man in the backseat of an unmarked SUV. Federal agents detained the man until an officer with the Chicago Police Department (CPD) arrived and took custody of the man. The CPD officer detained the man in a CPD vehicle. The witness stated that CPD officers released the man within minutes after removing his restraints. According to the witness, the man walked away in a dazed state. He refused to provide his name and contact information to bystanders. According to the witness, the man did not appear to want any medical or legal assistance. To this date, the identity of the man is unknown.

Just before 6:30 PM, CPD released a statement to the press with additional details about its involvement in the incident.[vi] CPD stated that officers responded to the scene at approximately 2:36 PM for an auto accident with injuries. An unknown operator drove the white sedan and struck the black SUV driven by a 49-year-old female. The female driver sustained injuries to her shoulder, neck, and hip and was transported to a hospital in good condition. The driver of the white sedan fled the scene, and no citations were issued. CPD supervisors were notified on the scene that an individual was detained by federal authorities who "was possibly connected to the auto accident."[vii] After further investigation, CPD officers completed an Investigatory Stop Report, and the detained individual was released. CPD added that officers did not coordinate or assist federal authorities with immigration enforcement.[viii]

The day after the incident, a DHS spokesperson issued the following statement in response to inquiries from journalists with The TRiiBE, a local publication, regarding the use of force by federal agents:

> "This is FALSE, the man was not choked. Border Patrol witnessed what they believed to be a theft in progress. As they went to engage with the individual he fled in a vehicle and proceeded to crash into another motorist. Agents attempted to render first aid when the suspect started resisting. Again, we are urging the media to stop fanning the flames of division and stop demonization of law enforcement."[ix]

Commission Determination of Misconduct

Based on the information it has gathered, the Commission has determined that there is reasonable cause to believe that federal agents should be formally investigated for possible violations of agency policy, state and federal criminal laws, and individuals' constitutional rights. In particular, the following instances of misconduct should be investigated further:

- The Fourth Amendment requires that law enforcement officers use objectively reasonable force to conduct a stop or arrest. Force that is objectively unreasonable based on the totality of the circumstances is excessive. The man was handcuffed at the time of the chokehold, which decreased the threat he may have posed while he sat on the ground surrounded by four federal agents. None of the witnesses or bystander video indicated that the man was actively or violently resisting the agents.
- DHS and CBP policies on use of force prohibit federal agents from using chokeholds unless deadly force is authorized. Deadly force is authorized when the federal agent has a reasonable belief that the subject poses an imminent threat of serious bodily harm or death to agents or another person. As noted above, the man was handcuffed, unarmed, and did not appear to be violently resisting the agents when the federal agent applied the chokehold. Thus, the man likely did not pose a sufficient threat to justify the use of deadly force, and the unnamed federal agent likely violated agency policy. The federal agent also failed to report the chokehold as required by DHS policy.

Endnotes

i Tonia Hall, Listen to a Border Patrol Agent's Flustered 911 Call Following a West Side Crash, South Side Weekly/The TRiiBE, (Nov. 3, 2025), https://southsideweekly.com/listen-to-a-border-patrol-agents-911-call-following-a-west-side-crash/

ii According to a person affiliated with EAT, members had just returned to their office headquarters after canvassing the neighborhood passing out "know your rights" materials issued by the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights. Moments after members walked back into the office building, they heard a crash and commotion. Members walked outside and began filming, taking photographs, and implementing safe bystander protocols.

iii Provided to the Commission by M.W.

iv *Id.*

v Corli Jay and Tonia Hill, Video shows feds 'choking' a Black man in East Garfield Park, The TRiiBE (Oct. 2, 2025), https://thetriibe.com/2025/10/video-shows-feds-choking-a-black-man-in-east-garfield-park/.

vi Corli Jay and Tonia Hill, Video Shows Feds 'Choking' A Black Man In East Garfield Park, The TRiiBE, (Oct. 1, 2025), https://thetriibe.com/2025/10/video-shows-feds-choking-a-black-man-in-east-garfield-park/.

vii *Id.*

viii *Id.*

ix Tonia Hill, Security Guard Describes Federal Agents Chasing Black Man In East Garfield Park, The TRiiBE (Oct. 3, 2025), https://thetriibe.com/2025/10/security-guard-describes-federal-agents-chasing-black-man-in-east-garfield-park/.

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