

'Ferguson Effect' making officers fearful

By Derek Hawkins, Washington Post

A Chicago police officer who was savagely beaten at a car accident scene did not draw her gun on her attacker – even though she feared for her life – because she was afraid of the media attention that would come if she shot him, the city's police chief said.

Chicago Police Department Superintendent Eddie Johnson said the officer, a 17-year veteran of the force, knew she should shoot the attacker but hesitated because “she didn't want her family or the department to go through the scrutiny the next day on the national news,” the *Chicago Tribune* reported.

Johnson's remarks, which came at an awards ceremony for police and firefighters, underscore a point law enforcement officers and some political leaders have pressed repeatedly as crime has risen in Chicago and other major cities: that police are reluctant to use force or act aggressively because they worry about negative media attention that will follow.

The issue has become known as the Ferguson effect, named after the St. Louis suburb where a police officer shot and killed an unarmed black teenager in August 2014. The shooting set off protests and riots that summer and eventually gave way to a fevered national debate over race and policing. Many law enforcement officers have said that the intense focus on policing in the time since has put them on the defensive and hindered their work.

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