



Long Branch cop charged with groping woman after bar bash celebrating police promotions

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A Long Branch police officer was charged Friday with criminal sexual contact and harassment for allegedly groping a woman last week after a party celebrating new and promoted cops.

Officer Patrick Joyce Jr. was suspended without pay following the allegation, which triggered an investigation by the Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office.

The alleged incident took place on Feb. 1 at Jack's Goal Line Stand, a sports bar in Long Branch that had closed for part of the evening to host the party, and reopened to the public at 9:30 p.m.

About an hour later, Joyce "inappropriately touched a 21-year-old woman without her consent," according to court records.

Joyce and a Long Branch Police official did not immediately return requests for comment.

This is not Joyce's first criminal charge. In 2010, after an off-duty fight outside a Neptune Township nightclub, he was charged with aggravated assault, and later pled guilty to simple assault, according to court records.

He has also repeatedly been at the center of violent encounters.

While on-duty from 2012 through 2016, Joyce used restraints, pepper spray and other types of force more than almost any other New Jersey cop, according to The Force Report, the most comprehensive statewide database of police force in the U.S.

Out of more than 17,000 officers who reported using force over the same period, only four used more force than Joyce.

At least 10 people he detained were later hospitalized, according to police records, and Joyce reported that he was injured six times.

He was also commended in 2017 and 2013 for tracking down or disarming potentially dangerous suspects.

Joyce's first court appearance for the new charges is scheduled for March 15, according to a statement from the prosecutor's office. He could spend up to 18 months in prison if he is convicted of criminal sexual contact, and up to 30 days in jail if he is convicted of harassment.