

Police harassed couple after complaint, suit says

By Matt O'Connor

Tribune staff reporter

A South Side couple filed a federal lawsuit Monday alleging their apartment was ransacked by Chicago police days after they lodged a complaint with the department about the conduct of officers.

The lawsuit filed by Harold Mayfield, 27, and Latrisha Gross, 23, said their home in the 7700 block of South Sangamon Street is near "a high rate of drug activity."

That has forced them to call police "on numerous occasions," according to the lawsuit.

But to "make matters worse," officers who work surveillance in the area "regularly and unjustifiably harass and humiliate" the couple, the lawsuit alleges.

The officers regularly stopped Mayfield and Gross when they left their home and forced them to the ground at gunpoint in order to conduct searches,

the lawsuit said.

The harassment had grown so severe that relatives have been subjected to similar conduct and refuse to visit the couple's home, the suit said.

Mayfield and Gross filed a complaint with the department's Internal Affairs Division in October, the suit said.

Five days later, the suit alleges, six to 10 police officers kicked in the back door to the apartment and rushed in with guns drawn.

The officers "tore plaintiffs' home apart, dumping boxes of food down the sink, turning over furniture, breaking personal belongings and tearing pictures off the wall," the suit said. The couple later learned that the search warrant "contained neither a matching name nor physical description," the suit alleges.

Jennifer Hoyle, a spokeswoman for the city's Law Department, said she hadn't seen the lawsuit.