

# Holiday crime takes a dive in Santa Cruz

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SANTA CRUZ — Crime took a holiday in December, according to Police Chief Jack Bassett.

Robberies dropped 50 percent, burglaries 32 percent and thefts 23 percent in December as the overall crime rate in the city dropped 17 percent, Bassett said.

The crime rate for the entire year dropped 13 percent.

The Christmas season normally brings an increase in crime, especially burglary and theft.

The biggest factor in 1986, Bassett said, was aggressive narcotics enforcement, since a high percentage of burglars and thieves steal for money to buy drugs.

Santa Cruz Police made 94 narcotics arrests, primarily in the beach, mall and San Lorenzo Park areas, in December. That compares to 31 arrests in December 1985.

Bassett also attributes the decline to a higher profile by police on the

Pacific Garden Mall in December. At peak times, he said, there were five officers patrolling the mall. Normally there are two.

In addition, the Police Department contracted with a private security firm to patrol downtown parking lots. "The number of car clouts (burglaries) dropped to almost nothing," Bassett said.

Bassett said his department has contracted with private security several times last year for, among other things, events at the Civic Auditorium.

"That concept has work well. It's good economically and it's good operationally because it allows us higher visibility," he said.

Overall last year, crime in the city dropped 13 percent, Bassett said. Biggest drops were in homicides, down 75 percent; thefts, down 16 percent, and burglary, down 20 percent. Rape reports increased 50 percent, as did reports of aggravated assault.

Narcotics arrests totaled 800 in 1986, Bassett said.