

CRIME

✓ County crime took a dive in 1988

By MARK BERGSTROM

Sentinel staff writer

3-1-89

SANTA CRUZ — The timing's not good, but the news is: Crime in the unincorporated part of Santa Cruz County dropped in 1988.

Sheriff Al Noren announced Tuesday that a preliminary report on crimes from the state shows that violent crimes, such as homicide, rape, robbery and violent assaults, fell 3.7 percent last year.

The news came at a time, however, when sheriff's detectives are

investigating three murder cases which occurred in the first two months of the new year.

The number of homicides dropped from 10 to seven in 1988.

Property crimes took a big plunge in 1988, dropping 21.3 percent. The biggest reason was a decrease in burglaries, from 1,445 to 1,132 cases.

"That's about one a day fewer," said Noren, believing tough enforcement by the county's Heroin Task Force may have played a large part in that decrease.

The county began the task force last year after receiving a state grant to take low-level sellers and users off the street. One of the predictions at the time was that the burglary rate could drop because many IV drug users commit burglary to support their habits.

Major crime statistics for 1988 were as follows (1987 in parentheses): Homicide seven (10), rape 32 (30), robbery 45 (55), assaults 202 (202), burglary 1,132 (1,445), vehicle theft 10 (seven), thefts 1,767 (1,728), arson 17 (36).