

Crime trends down in county

Crime & Criminals - 2000
Property crime, violent crime generally follow long-term fall

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SANTA CRUZ » Despite some big crime headlines last year, there were fewer reported violent crimes and fewer property crimes in most areas of Santa Cruz County in 2013 compared with 2012, according to an FBI report released this month.

The FBI's Crime in the United States, compiled annually from law enforcement agencies, shows a roughly 4 percent drop in crime nationally. That drop follows an 11-year downward trend in the U.S.

In Santa Cruz County, overall crime also has been sliding since at least 2006, according to the FBI. In 2013, there were fewer violent crimes in all Santa Cruz County law enforcement jurisdictions except the Sheriff's Office compared with the prior year.

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The Sheriff's Office reported a 3.9 percent increase in violent crime in 2013 compared with 2012. That category includes rape, robbery, assault, homicide and manslaughter.

Property crime also dipped in all Santa Cruz County jurisdictions except Capitola, where it rose 10.9 percent in 2013 compared with 2012, according to the FBI. Property crimes include burglary, theft and vehicle theft.

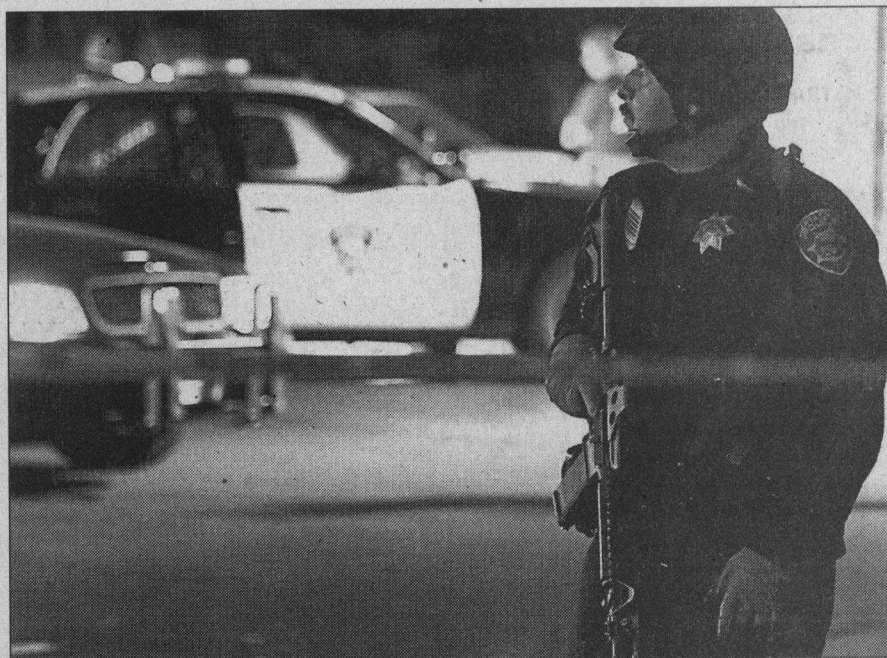
Capitola Police Chief Rudy Escalante noted that Capitola is a small city in the county with fewer crimes than other cities in the county. So the percentage change in crime can seem large, when in reality property crimes rose from 541 in 2012 to 600 in 2013.

"The numbers can be misleading for a smaller agency," Escalante said. In the longer term, he said, "I think we're trending down with the county and the state and the nation."

For Santa Cruz, which has struggled with one of the highest property crime rates in the state among medium and large cities, property crime decreased 11.8 percent in 2013 compared with 2012.

"The community deserves a lot of the credit," Santa Cruz Deputy Police Chief Steve Clark said Monday. "We have a more engaged and aware community."

Clark said several factors contributed to the improvement, including more organized neighborhood groups and residents who cleaned up the San Lorenzo River levee and made it less at-



SHMUEL THALER — SANTA CRUZ SENTINEL

A Santa Cruz police officer has his weapon drawn as he patrols the crime scene of a rolling gun battle on Mission Street in August 2013.

Online: To view the FBI's Crime in the United States 2013 report, visit santacruzsentinel.com and click on this story.

tractive for criminals.

More officers on staff also helped, Clark said, as well as a predictive policing program that put officers in areas of the city more likely to have vehicle burglaries and other thefts based on crime history. Some violent crime in Santa Cruz in 2013 included the fatal shootings of two police officers, detective Elizabeth Butler and detective Sgt. Loran "Butch" Baker, as well as what police called a "rolling gun battle" on Mission Street in August that killed 31-year-old Alejandro Garcia Sanchez of Watsonville.

In Watsonville, where reported violent crime fell 6.7 percent and property crime fell 17.4 percent in 2013 compared with 2012, Police Chief Manny So-

CRIME TRENDS VIOLENT CRIMES

City	2012 to 2013	2006 to 2011
Capitola:	-19.1%	-29.8%
Santa Cruz:	-6%	+7.9%
Scotts Valley:	-31.3%	+18.8%
Watsonville:	-6.7%	-20.6%
Unincorporated:	+3.9%	-4.6%

PROPERTY CRIMES

City	2012 to 2013	2006 to 2011
Capitola:	+10.9%	-72.6%
Santa Cruz:	-11.8%	+10.8%
Scotts Valley:	-11.7%	-2.8%
Watsonville:	-17.4%	-26.6%
Unincorporated:	-1.9%	-26.4%

Source: FBI

lano said his agency's efficient use of resources helped bring those numbers down.

"Collaborations with the community, allied agencies and our commitment to youth are also to be credited," Solano said when the agency reported its numbers to the FBI in the spring.

Although there have been five homicides in Watsonville in 2014, in 2013 the city's rate of 4.6 violent crimes per 1,000 residents in 2013 was the lowest in the past decade, Solano said. Similarly, a rate of 25.5 property crimes per 1,000 people in 2013 in Watsonville was the lowest in a decade.