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SB violent crime falls

City sees 24% drop in 2010

By Andrew Edwards Staff Writer

SAN BERNARDINO — Crime continued to drop during the first quarter of 2010, according to Police Department statistics that Mayor Pat Morris and Police Chief Keith Kilmer showed off at a Tuesday afternoon news conference.

Violent crime — murders, rapes, robberies and aggravated assaults — dropped by nearly 24 percent during the first three months of 2010 when compared with the same time period the previous year.

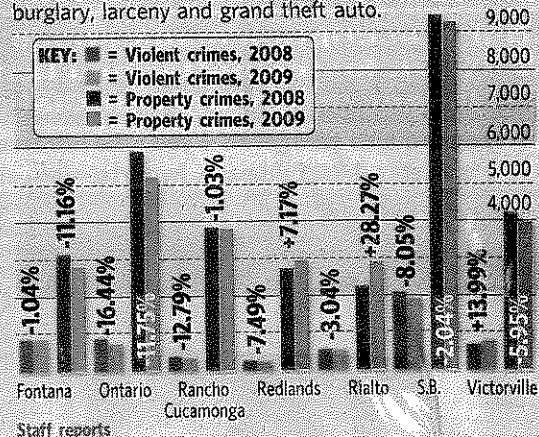
"That's frankly dramatic and I think that information needs to be shared," Kilmer said.

Property crimes dropped by about 9 percent,

FIGURES A5

Crime in San Bernardino County

Below are the number of violent and property crimes committed in selected San Bernardino County cities in 2008 and 2009. Violent crimes are murder, rape, robbery and aggravated assault. Property crimes are burglary, larceny and grand theft auto.



FIGURES

From A1 according to police.

Recent crime trends in San Bernardino follow a year when it and other San Bernardino County cities enjoyed crime reduction in the midst of one of the worst recessions since World War II.

How much the sluggish economy may hinder law enforcement and other city services during the coming years remains to be seen. San Bernardino faces a \$24 million deficit for the fiscal year beginning July 1.

City Manager Charles McNeely has so far released an early list of budget-balancing strategies that mentions across-the-board cuts, labor concessions that would require negotiations with city employee unions and tax measures that need voter approval.

Cuts alone, Morris said Tuesday, will not solve the city's money problems.

"It would cut the heart out of what we're talking about here," he said.

In 2009, San Bernardino's violent crime declined by a little more than 8 percent when compared with the previous year. That trend was mirrored in places like Ontario, Rancho Cucamonga, Rialto and Redlands, where violence also declined.

Of those cities, the steepest decline in violent crimes was in Ontario. Ontario's amount of violent crimes decreased by more than 16 percent over the course of 2009.

But not all cities experienced a reduction in violent crime. In Victorville, violent crimes increased by about 14 percent in 2009.

It's difficult to pinpoint the exact reasons why crime goes up or down in any city because violence can be the product of a wide range of factors including poverty, education, drug use or whether someone just snaps. Reduced crime during a terrible economy, however, is the kind of phenomenon that can defy widespread assumptions.

"The research shows that

when the economy's down, crime goes up. Not in this city. Not in this time," Morris said.

The mayor and police chief attributed lower crime to three factors: San Bernardino's police officers, improved relations between police and residents who report crimes and cooperation between the city and other government agencies and nonprofits.

Morris mentioned a number of organizations that participate in his administration's Operation Phoenix anti-crime program.

Those groups included Young Visionaries Youth Leadership Academy, Urban Youth Conservation Corps, the San Bernardino City Unified School District's police department, San Bernardino County Public Health and the county Housing Authority.

During the first three months of 2010, San Bernardino had six murders, compared with five during the first quarter of 2009.

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