

City police will join multi-group task force

State, county, municipal law enforcement organizations comprise new investigative body

By Chris Sykes
Staff Writer

Acting Essex County Prosecutor Carolyn Murray and state Attorney General Paula Dow have announced the creation of a countywide investigative task force that will include police officers from Orange.

Capt. Kevin Sooy represented the Orange department during Tuesday's press conference in Newark. Sooy said a detective has been assigned to the task force to guarantee the city has a presence in the crime-fighting collective.

"We do have a detective assigned there, Detective Peter Cassidy," Sooy said. "Director John Rappaport is confident we will be able to achieve great success working with the Prosecutor's Office and the Sheriff's Department and the other municipalities engaged in this endeavor. Our

detective is an employee of the OPD, but he has been assigned to the county for a specific period of time."

Murray said the new task force will be staffed by 29 officers from the Essex County Prosecutor's Office, the Essex County Sheriff's Office and the Newark, East Orange, Irvington and Orange police departments. In addition, she said the State Police will provide assistance, and several suburban towns will assign officers one day a week during the summer months to give officers experience in investigating major crimes.

Murray said detectives assigned to the task force will investigate homicides, suspicious deaths that require a response, police-related incidents involving death or serious bodily injury, and other violent incidents. While the task force is similar to what

her office already does when it investigates homicides, Murray said it will be different.

"Our goal is to avoid duplication and to put together the most efficient and effective crime-solving team," Murray said. "Given current economic realities, we believe a coordinated approach will best serve the people of this county."

Dow, a former Essex County prosecutor, said she has a good working relationship with the Essex County departments. Because of that, she continued, creating the task force was an excellent decision.

Dow said Tuesday's announcement was the culmination of more than 10 years of planning between the police departments in Essex County. She said crime in the modern age has no borders, so police also have to operate without borders.

"When murders occur, or when criminals

threaten our residents with repeated carjackings or other serial crimes, this task force will respond. It will bring the unified resources of the participating agencies to bear with a consistent and cohesive approach to investigations," Dow said. "In doing so, the task force will free officers to engage in additional crime-suppression activities, such as targeted patrols."

Rappaport, who did not attend the press conference, issued a statement regarding his department's inclusion in the task force.

"It is an honor and a privilege for the City of Orange Police Department to be invited to joined the Essex County Prosecutor's Office Homicide Task Force," Rappaport said. "I am confident the men and women assigned from the Orange Police Department will do due diligence in performing their duties."