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FBI: Violent Crime Up in El Paso

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EL PASO, Texas - The U.S. is getting safer, but the Sun City may be getting more dangerous.

According to preliminary numbers released Monday as part of the FBI's Uniform Crime Report, nationwide the number of violent crimes went down 1.4 percent from 2006 to 2007. Locally, though, violent crime in El Paso went up 6.28 percent in that same time.

"Although preliminary numbers show a rise in violent crime in El Paso in 2007, our community remains one of the safest in the nation," FBI Special Agent in Charge David Cuthbertson said in a written statement.

While El Pasoans reported fewer rapes and robberies last year, according to the FBI's new numbers, that couldn't make up for the surge in the murder rate. It was up 30 percent.

"Even though we're seeing violent crime go up, it's only from one year to the next -- so that doesn't make a trend," said FBI Spokeswoman Andrea Simmons.

Aggravated assaults were also up big last year.

Those are crimes that usually involve guns, knives or other weapons.

FBI officials said a simmering gang problem in the Sun City is probably to blame for that. They said especially in places like Segundo Barrio on El Paso's South Side.

"Gangs protect their turf through force and intimidation, which often results in aggravated assaults," said SAC Cuthbertson in a statement. "By the FBI taking on the leadership of a violent El Paso street gang, the Barrio Aztecas, we hope to see the number of murders and aggravated assaults in our city reduced."

These preliminary numbers only go through December 31, 2007, Simmons said, so they don't tell us anything about violence possibly spilling across the border from Juarez.

"The law enforcement community is working hard to ensure that the rise in violent crime in Juarez in 2008 does not translate to an increase in crime in our city this year," Cuthbertson said in a statement.

El Paso 2007-to-2006 Preliminary Crime Statistics Comparison

Source: FBI's Uniform Crime Report

OVERALL VIOLENT CRIME (includes murder, robbery, rape and aggravated assault): Up 6.28%

MURDER: Up 30%

AGGRAVATED ASSAULT: Up 13.76%

FORCIBLE RAPES: Down 14%

ROBBERIES: Down 6%

PROPERTY CRIMES (including burglary, larceny-theft and motor vehicle theft): Down 4.95%

MOTOR VEHICLE THEFT: Down 14.27%

ARSON: Down 12.9%

To view the complete Preliminary Uniform Crime Report, click [here](#).



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