

Officers Ready

Criminals: No Olympic Gold

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The five working girls sashayed into hotels across the city, surveying the pickings, getting chummy with bartenders, bellhops, desk clerks and anyone else who might be able to help them earn some quick, illicit cash.

The women were doing advance work for an event that promises prostitutes a bonanza bigger than that of any convention—the Olympics.

While hopping from hotel to hotel, the seductively clad women were approached by low-level employees who, in hushed tones, offered to line up tricks and tip off the women whenever a cop or security guard was around. Some demanded kickbacks of money or sex.

What they got was caught.

The five women were undercover Los Angeles police officers, and their nightly rounds are part of a broad pre-Olympic crackdown on prostitution that will continue through the Games. Moreover, the prostitution task force is just one component of an extraordinary law enforcement machine that has revved up statewide to root out an assortment of garden variety crooks expected to flock here with

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CRIMINALS: Officers Form Giant Crime-Alert Network for Olympics

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the huge Olympic crowds.

The task force already has logged nearly 400 arrests, mostly of street-walking prostitutes. The sting operation run by the undercover women officers, however, was aimed at hotel workers. City and county prosecutors are considering criminal charges against 30 of the employees, mainly bartenders, for pandering and encouraging prostitution.

The suspects work in some of the city's finest hotels, including the Biltmore, headquarters for the International Olympic Committee during the Games, the Sheraton Universal, the Ambassador, the New Otani and the Hyatt Wilshire. Police said hotel management cooperated with the investigation.

Once the Games begin July 28, police predict that violent crime will ebb, as it did in Munich and Montreal, because of the heavy presence of uniformed officers in and around competition sites. But authorities are bracing in a big way for an influx of prostitutes, pickpockets, credit card thieves, assorted con artists and hotel burglars.

To combat these professionals, who scout the world for easy marks at international gatherings, a crime-fighting project of proportions "absolutely unprecedented in the history of law enforcement in the United States" is now in place, boasted Cmdr. William Rathburn, LAPD's top Olympic trouble-shooter.

Simply put, California has become a sprawling Neighborhood Watch program.

More than 170 police agencies, for instance, have teamed up for the first time to create a crime alert network stretching from the Oregon state line to the Mexican border.

Around the clock, these police departments will channel information on crime patterns and specific offenses to the main Olympic security command center in Los Angeles. That data will then be disseminated throughout the state.

Moreover, nearly 700 hotels, some as far away as San Francisco and Las Vegas, have formalized their own grapevine to swap information such as upswings in room break-ins and descriptions of suspects.

Not to be forgotten are Southern California's famed amusement parks: Disneyland, Knott's Berry Farm, Magic Mountain, Marineland, Sea World and the San Diego Zoo. They, too, have agreed to keep each other on top of the latest crime problems in their parks.

In Anaheim, home of Olympic wrestling, the Police Department went so far as to buy a computer, which it has hooked up to printers in security offices at Disneyland, Knott's and major hotels. Thus, at the push of a button, crime flashes can be transmitted to these tourist retreats.

A printer also was installed at the Anaheim Yellow Cab Co., which plans to broadcast the bulle-

Olympic Briefs

- **Romanians Arrive:** Almost the entire Romanian Olympic team—including 127 athletes and about 50 officials—arrived in Los Angeles on a special flight of the Romanian state airline, Tarom, and was greeted by several high Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee officials. The team was processed through customs and the LAOOC's Arrival Center in 90 minutes and taken to the Olympic villages at USC and UC Santa Barbara. The Romanians got a specially cordial welcome as the only Warsaw Pact team to be coming to Los Angeles in the wake of the Soviet boycott. A two-man advance party arrived here last week to participate in the opening of the USC Olympic Village.
- **Smog Plan Revised Again:** Officials of the South Coast Air Quality Management District reconsidered plans to limit an appeal to business and industry to help clean the air during the Olympics by voluntarily limiting emissions. Last week, officials said the appeal would be made to 4,000 businesses in the four-county South Coast Air Basin. On Tuesday, the district said the appeal would be restricted to 1,500 firms in Los Angeles County. Now the district said it will return to the original plan and extend the appeal to businesses in Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino counties. Those firms total about 2,300. The sum, officials said, is the correct number of firms with plans to reduce emissions during a second-stage smog alert.
- **Baltic Groups Lose Bid:** Spindulys, Perkonitis and Kivikasukas—American organizations respectively of Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian folk dancers—failed to win an order in Superior Court forcing the Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee to include them in Olympic Opening and Closing Ceremonies. The LAOOC had offered to let the dancers appear under the Soviet flag, which they refused to do, but not as representatives of the former Baltic states that are not recognized by the International Olympic Committee.

tins to drivers, who will provide still more eyes and ears for the police.

Some measures are being taken to keep cabbies honest, too. The Los Angeles Department of Transportation, for example, has doubled its field enforcement staff to make sure drivers do not gouge or refuse short-distance fares. Any driver caught doing so could have his license yanked.

An estimated 650,000 visitors are expected to converge on Southern California for the Games, and the most glamorous events will be in the city of Los Angeles. On most days, the Los Angeles Coliseum alone will be jammed with 90,000 spectators.

Crowds like that are a magnet for unsavory sorts, a number of whom, authorities said, have put in a little training at the Democratic National Convention in San Francisco before heading south.

For pickpockets, Los Angeles will be "heaven," said Lt. Fred Reno of LAPD's bunco squad. Reno said the department has learned from informants and loose-lipped suspects that 300 to 400 pickpockets may be on their way.

Ready to greet them is Reno's Olympic-inspired Pickpocket Task Force, a collection of plainclothes detectives and officers brought together late last year to work the crowds in and around Olympic sporting venues.

Like the prostitution task force, the pickpocket squad has made several trial runs, its first last January, when 2,000 football fans swarmed the steps of City Hall to hail the newly crowned Super Bowl champion Los Angeles Raiders.

Although a contingent of 15 officers scored only one arrest,

Reno said it apparently was enough to deter the suspect's light-fingered compatriots. Reno noted that not one personal theft report was received by LAPD, a rarity given the size and raucous nature of the crowd.

Since identifying a pickpocket is 90% of the game, Reno said, the task force has assembled a 33-page roster of professional pickpockets, complete with mug shots, finger prints and vital statistics. Two hundred copies will be distributed to officers at venues and to police stations across the city.

An integral part of the Olympic crime suppression effort is public education—teaching people how to protect themselves.

Tens of thousands of flyers and pamphlets on crime prevention have been distributed by officers to dozens of foreign consulates, hundreds of hotels and all the major rental car agencies, where they will be attached to rental contracts.

Airlines are running police-written articles on crime prevention in their flight magazines.

Slickly produced posters depicting anti-crime tips and emergency numbers will soon begin appearing in every Rapid Transit District bus in the city.

In Anaheim, hotel television sets will program a law enforcement short on how guests can avoid becoming crime victims.

This week, a six-state educational campaign was launched by banks, retailers and police to curb during the Games what they contend is an epidemic of credit card fraud and theft. Printed forms with tips on how to avoid these crimes will be distributed in motels and hotels throughout California, Nevada, Oregon, Washington and Hawaii.