

'IMMIGRATION RAPIST' HUNTED

COPS SAY HE TARGETS ILLEGAL ALIENS

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Body

QUEENS DETECTIVES, who in less than two years have nabbed six serial rapists who stalked the borough, said one vicious predator is still at large and tops their most wanted list.

The gun-wielding rapist, who has posed as an immigration agent, may have struck as many as eight times in northern Queens since May 1994, police said.

He carries a black handgun and at times flashes a badge. He appears to target women he suspects are illegal aliens and who are reluctant to cooperate with law enforcement, authorities said.

"He's our top priority because he's the last one . . . the one who hasn't been arrested yet," said Sgt. Joanne Smith, acting commanding officer of the Queens Special Victims Squad, which has led most of the successful rape investigations.

Another detective said: "He's the last of the big, active rapists in Queens."

Police previously said the predator labeled the immigration rapist attacked five women in 1994 and 1995 in Corona, Elmhurst and Astoria.

Based on witness accounts and physical descriptions, they now suspect the same man is responsible for three additional attacks this year in Corona, Woodside and Flushing, police said.

In two of the cases this year, the rapist identified himself as a police officer including one attack in which he used the ruse to get into a Flushing apartment and rape a 13-year-old girl.

His last attack occurred July 1, police said. He gained entrance to a 31-year-old woman's Corona apartment by claiming he was a repairman sent by the building superintendent, police said.

Once inside, he pulled a gun and identified himself as an immigration officer, apparently to intimidate her, police said.

He then raped the woman, who is Mexican, police said.

In some attacks, police said, the rapist tied up his victims with duct tape.

Police described the rapist as Hispanic, in his late 20s to late 30s, 5-feet-9 to 6 feet tall and 200 to 250 pounds.

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Hoping to break the case, Queens Special Victims Squad detectives have distributed police sketches of the rapist to officers in all Queens precincts. They also have turned the sketch over to the media, and to shopkeepers to post on their windows.

At any given time, as many as six detectives are actively working the case, questioning victims, looking through records for convicted sex offenders who might fill the bill and doing other investigative work, police said.

Detectives have been thwarted for a number of reasons. The rapist at times wears gloves and police have been unable to lift the attacker's fingerprints from crime scenes. And victims who are illegal immigrants have been reluctant to turn to law enforcement, fearing wrongly they might be deported. Police have had to reassure victims that crime victims will not be deported.

Anyone with information should call (800) 577-TIPS (a police line with bi-lingual operators and possible reward money), or the Queens Special Victims Squad at (718) 520-9277.

Graphic

POLICE SKETCH of the 'immigration rapist' suspect.

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