

## **Force is with them Coney NYPD post targets rise in muggings**

Daily News (New York)

December 1, 2002, Sunday, SPORTS FINAL EDITION

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**Section:** SUBURBAN;; RUSSIAN BEAT

**Length:** 447 words

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### **Body**

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Facing a rising tide of muggings of Russian immigrants in Coney Island, police are moving to bridge a communications gap that can keep new arrivals from reporting crimes.

They've increased foot patrols, are working to recruit Russian-speaking cops - the 60th Precinct now has only one - and last week parked a large field command post bus in Coney Island's West End at Neptune Ave. and W. 33rd St.

"They won't come to the precinct, so we're bringing the precinct to them," said NYPD Deputy Inspector Charles Scholl, standing in the galley of the white-and-blue-decaled NYPD bus.

While the number of robberies in the precinct has dropped sharply in the last year - by nearly 11%, to 367 from 411 last year by this time - attacks on Russians, and particularly elderly immigrants who speak little if any English, have risen sharply.

While police could not immediately provide the number of reported robberies of Russian victims, Alfie Davis - a tenant leader in the Sea Rise Renting, a giant state subsidized housing complex across from where the command post was stationed - said there have been 42 attacks on Russians in the six-building unit since January.

"They've been robbed at gunpoint, had their arms twisted behind their backs and been accosted in the stairwells," she said. "One person's arm was broken."

Lucia Arany, a 32-year-old Russian immigrant who has lived in the complex for five years, said her 11-year-old son had been mugged and beaten in an elevator, and added that she knows several people who have been assaulted as many as three times.

Police post welcomed

Of the police presence across the street, Davis said, "We love the idea of close police surveillance. Hopefully, this will be a deterrent."

The cops said the rash of attacks is likely the result of a rapid recent increase in the number of immigrants settling in the many large public housing complexes in the area.

Outside the mobile high-tech police unit, Officer Alex Kats, the precinct's one Russian-speaking cop, was handing out brochures - "Holiday Safety Tips From the NYPD & McGruff" - that he had translated from English.

With a cold wind whipping around the tall buildings, there weren't a lot of takers, and Kats said he'd handed out fewer than a dozen brochures.

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It might not only be weather and language keeping immigrants from the stationhouse. Some say it's likely they avoid cops because of their experience with the former Soviet Union's notorious security apparatus.

"People are very apprehensive to speak to us," said Scholl, commander of the 60th Precinct. "They think they're going to come in and never come out," he said, indicating the command center.

## Graphic

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MATTHEW ROBERTS ON THE SCENE Police say Russian immigrants in **Coney** Island area hadn't been coming to local stationhouse to report trouble despite an increase in street crime, so they've set up this mobile command **post** at Neptune Ave. and W. 33rd St.

## Classification

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**Language:** ENGLISH

**Subject:** POLICE **FORCES** (90%); ROBBERY (89%); SURVEILLANCE (73%); PUBLIC HOUSING (72%); HOUSING ASSISTANCE (66%)

**Industry:** RESIDENTIAL RENTAL PROPERTY (72%)

**Geographic:** RUSSIAN FEDERATION (90%)

**Load-Date:** December 2, 2002