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F.B.I. Says Serious Crimes Continue to Increase

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 29—

Statistics released today by the Federal Bureau of Investigation showed that the volume of serious crimes reported to the police continued to rise during the first nine months of this year.

The figures disclosed that about 4,426,000 major crimes were reported throughout the country from January through September of this year. This is an increase of about 250,000 over the number of major crimes reported during the same period in 1970. Almost as many crimes as were reported during the entire year of 1968.

However, Attorney General John N. Mitchell noted in a press release that the increase was only 6 per cent above the 1970 total for the first nine months, and that this was the smallest percentage increase in five years.

Decline in Capital

Mr. Mitchell also said that the number of crimes actually decreased in 52 of the nation's 156 cities with populations of more than 100,000. He stressed particularly a 14 per cent decline in reported crime in the District of Columbia—the only area under the direct jurisdiction of the Federal Government.

The political sensitivity of the crime figures has become increasingly apparent as the 1972 Presidential campaign nears; President Nixon will undoubtedly be reminded next year of his 1968 campaign pledge to enhance law and order.

The figures released today indicate that both the Republicans and the Democrats will be able to draw ammunition from the statistics.

They showed that the volume of crime has risen during the Nixon Administration to the extent that about 4,426,000 crimes were reported during the first nine months of 1971, which is almost as many as the 4,466,000 that were reported during all of 1968, the last year of the Johnson Administration.

Violent Crimes Up

Moreover, the number of violent crimes — the "street crime" that generates much of the public's concern — increased by 10 per cent during the first three-quarters of this year, while the number of property crimes increased only by 6 per cent.

Of the crimes classified as violent, robbery was up by 12 per cent, murder 10 per cent,

aggravated assault 8 per cent and forcible rape 7 per cent.

The record for the property offenses was much better. The number of burglaries increased by 7 per cent, larceny by 6 per cent, and auto theft by only 2 per cent.

Although the crime rate is still rising, the rate of increase has been slowing down lately.

Mr. Mitchell noted in his press statement that the 6 per cent increase in the 1971 January-September period over that for the same period in 1970 compares with a 10 per cent increase for the same period in 1970 over that for 1969, an 11 per cent increase in 1969 over that for 1968, a 19 per cent increase in 1968 over that for 1967, and a 16 per cent in-

crease in 1967 over that for 1966.

Some statisticians have criticized the Administration's emphasis on the decline in the annual percentage of increase by noting that, as the crime total grows, a small percentage of increase can mask a large increase in the number of crimes.

However, the 25,000 increase reported today does represent a less precipitous rise, in absolute terms, than those experienced in recent years. In the analogous periods for the last two years of the Johnson Administration, there were increases of about 400,000 each year.

Crime experts differ on the significance of the decline in

volume of reported crimes in some cities, as noted by Mr. Mitchell.

Some authorities agree with the Nixon Administration that its increase in financial aid to urban police forces and courts is having an effect, along with increased professionalization of many big-city police departments.

Other experts note that the populations of many big cities are declining, and add that big-city crime may have shifted to the suburbs and rural areas.

Today's report said that the crime rate was up by 11 per cent in the suburbs and by 6 per cent in rural areas, compared with 3 per cent in cities with populations of more than 250,000.