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## Gap in patrols: Southampton chief warns about security after house break-ins

Southampton chief warns about security after house break-ins

By CATHERINE BAUM  
Staff Writer

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Friday, July 17, 2009

**SOUTHAMPTON** - Three daytime house break-ins in one week have Police Chief David Silvernail again calling to bolster his department's daytime staffing.

Silvernail, who has flagged daytime patrol needs in the past three annual town reports, said most house breaks in town occur during the day and go unsolved. They are an ongoing problem, he said, and are ordinarily committed by drug addicts.

"I think the people have the right to know how unprotected they are in town," he said. "We go through sporadic periods where we'll get hit with house breaks and right now they're starting up again."

He added, "We haven't had a lot of them this year, so to have three within a week's period is a concern."

### Tuesday arrest

Angel Villanueva, 32, of Holyoke, was arrested Tuesday in connection with two of the break-ins and an investigation is ongoing for a house break on White Loaf Road July 7. One common thread in each of the three break-ins is that the suspect rode a bicycle, though the bicycle reported Tuesday is different from the bicycle reported last week, according to Silvernail.

Villanueva was arrested on County Road at 2 p.m. Tuesday on charges of intent to commit a felony, possession of burglarious instruments, larceny over \$250, destruction of property over \$250 and two counts of breaking and entering during the day, police said.

Police responded to an alarm that sounded at a Middle Road home at 11:20 a.m., and searched the area with a canine for the suspect, who was described by witnesses, police said. Nothing was reported stolen from the Middle Road home, police said.

"Ordinarily the alarm scares the thief away," Silvernail said.

Police found Villanueva riding his bicycle on County Road and reported his sneakers matched the prints at the Middle Road home. Police found a pry bar, ski mask, gloves and two laptop computers in Villanueva's stolen backpack, police said.

Meanwhile, a Delisle Road resident reported coming home to a house break-in and finding that two laptop computers were missing around 2 p.m. Tuesday. Police identified the computers as the two in Villanueva's possession.

On July 7, a White Loaf Road resident interrupted a break-in, police said. The homeowner found a bicycle on the front lawn and reported missing gold watches, rings and foreign coins, police said. Silvernail said the suspect ran out the back door and abandoned his bicycle.

An investigation is ongoing to determine whether that crime was committed by Villanueva, who

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reportedly sold gold coins at a local pawn shop, Silvernail said.

Silvernail said the best defense to house breaks is an alarm system.

The department is expecting to hear in September about a federal grant that would cover wages of two full-time police officers.

"If we get that grant that will take care of the shortage here but in the interim we have just enough (people) to minimally staff most of the shifts and we have a number of shifts that are understaffed," Silvernail said.

The department has nine part-time and seven full-time officers, but is lacking day patrol officers, according to Silvernail.

"The public sees that (roster) and they say 'They've got 16 officers - how many do they need?'" Silvernail said. "They don't realize they're not all working at once."

*Catherine Baum can be reached at [cbaum@gazettenet.com](mailto:cbaum@gazettenet.com).*

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