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U.S. is importing more than cars from Japan

LR police will try koban in Hollinsworth Grove

BY SHAREESE HAROLD

Little Rock is trying a Japanese approach to police work.

The city's first *koban*, Japanese for "police box," is being tested in the Hollinsworth Grove public housing complex this fall.

This 18-month project combines police work with social services experts who run programs aimed at curbing crime. If it works, the city's other public housing communities could get *kobans*.

Little Rock is one of seven U.S. cities that won a \$45,000 grant from the Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation to open a center that provides police protection and programs like job training and tutoring.

Kobans, introduced to North America after a group of police chiefs visited Japan, have been used in Philadelphia and San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Little Rock Police Chief Louie Caudell was introduced to the concept on a 1994 trip to Japan. The city applied for a grant to fund the project, which requires input from the housing authority, the Police Department and a nonprofit agency.

Community-Oriented Police Program officers Charles Nellums and Ann Blackman traveled to Puerto Rico last week with the Rev. William Rufus, to learn how *kobans* work. The Eisenhower Foundation paid for the trip and the training workshops.

The three will run the *koban*, which is to open by Nov. 1. It will operate from a 6-bedroom apartment converted into an office and computer training center for Hollinsworth Grove residents.

The Little Rock housing authority donated the apartment, the city donated the officers and the grant is paying Rufus' salary.

Rufus, administrator of the project, plans to expand the social service programs at the Tomberlin Community Development Center to the *koban*.

"It's not just a police station or a substation," said Rufus, who grew up in a Magnolia public housing complex.

He said he understands the needs of the residents, whose area has one of the lowest crime rates among Little Rock's government housing developments.

"This is your *koban*," Rufus said. "The Hollinsworth project is about to make history in Little Rock. We're taking back what belongs to us, our children and our community,"

The officers who now ride bicycles through the streets of this community as COPP officers stationed at the Sixth Street alert center, will patrol exclusively in the housing complex once the *koban* opens.

The city will place two more COPP officers at the alert center,

Nellums explained the difference between his duties as a community based officer and what will he'll be expected to do as a *koban* officer.

"We might have to work with children who have been kicked out of school or help run a child care center for teen-age mothers who are looking for jobs," Nellums said.

"The *koban* allows us to interact more with families. We'll be like social workers and law enforcers."