

# DAILY NEWS

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## NEWS BRIEFS

### DA to Probe Six Deaths

Queens District Attorney John Santucci said yesterday that his staff was looking into charges by the Citizens Commission on Human Rights that six unex-

plained deaths have occurred at the Creedmoor Psychiatric Center in Bellerose.

Santucci said that the commission, reportedly affiliated with the Church of Scientology, had presented his office with some 180 pages of charges, the majority alleging patient abuse.

He said that while he understood that the Church of Scientology was opposed to the psychiatric treatment of mental patients, he felt obliged to study the commission's charges. "Some do not call for prosecution," he said. "Others call for more detailed study."

—Vincent Cosgrove

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## DA launches a probe of Creedmoor abuse

By AL SOSTCHEN

Queens District Attorney John J. Santucci is looking into nearly 200 possible incidents of patient abuse at the Creedmoor Psychiatric Center, including charges that six persons may have died under suspicious circumstances.

The prosecutor emphasized that the matter was in the preliminary stages and individual cases would be turned over to a grand jury if evidence of wrongdoing turned up.

At the same time, Santucci told reporters yesterday he had won a concession from

the State Mental Hygiene Dept. that could reduce the number of patients charged with homicide who are sent to Creedmoor, a low-security facility.

#### WALKING OUT

He also is working with Creedmoor officials to tighten security to prevent homicidal patients from walking out.

The DA said he had named Asst. DA Martin Bracken to look into charges of patient abuse over the past several years at the institution.

Of the six deaths involving possibly suspicious circumstances, two were pur-

portedly from drug overdoses, another involved a suicide or homicide, and the other three might have been accompanied by violence.

Santucci said that in the future no patients charged with homicide would be transferred from the Upstate Mid-Hudson Psychiatric Center, a high-security institution, to Creedmoor until his office had first been notified.

#### NO CHOICE

This would permit him to recommend which persons should be transferred to Creedmoor. At present, he said, the director of the institution had no choice but

to accept any patient transferred from Mid-Hudson.

"Some defendant patients," Santucci said, "pose real security risks at Creedmoor."

As for his efforts to provide greater security at Creedmoor, Santucci said, "I realize that patients have civil rights, but the civil rights of communities as well as those of patients have to be considered."

The complaints about abuses were made by individuals and many were lodged by the Citizens Commission on Human Rights, which is funded by the Assn. of Scientists for Reform.