

## Training Exercise in Chinatown Leads to Arrest of Pickpocket

(June 27) It was an LAPD training exercise that turned into the real thing. And resulted in the arrest of an alleged pickpocket in Chinatown.

Earlier this month, Officers Refugio Garza, Lorena Alcaraz and George Oto of the Transit Bus Division's Pickpocket Detail were training two officers from the LAPD's Airport Crimes Unit. They chose Chinatown as their training area in response to complaints that pickpockets were preying on elderly residents.

Just before noon, June 13, the detail noticed suspicious behavior by a man waiting with other passengers at a bus stop at Broadway and Ord Street. The suspect carried a newspaper in his left hand and a brown plastic bag in the other. He boarded a Line 81 bus and sat near the rear.

The three Pickpocket Detail officers, posing as passengers, also boarded the bus. Alcaraz sat directly in front of the suspect with her purse over her shoulder.

### **Removed a wallet**

"As the bus traveled westbound on Ord Street, then northbound on Hill Street," said an LAPD report, "the suspect reached over the seat and removed a wallet from Alcaraz' purse. The suspect immediately (concealed) the wallet...and exited the bus...."

Officers arrested Steve Megliorino, 32, and charged him with grand theft. Police said he had prior arrests for grand theft, robbery, assault with a deadly weapon and vandalism.

Formed in April, 1999, to concentrate on the identification, apprehension and prosecution of professional pickpockets who prey on Metro riders, the Pickpocket Detail has arrested 17 pickpockets and 16 sexual predators. The team has become the LAPD's experts in pickpocket-related crimes and has trained officers from other divisions.

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