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California Highway Patrol Officer Jim Decello practices hiding from the on-bus camera at the Regional Rebuild Center.

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## **CHP SWAT Team Members Learn a Valuable Lesson at RRC**

By CHRISTINA ESPARZA

(April 12, 2002) A squad of California Highway Patrol SWAT officers stormed the Regional Rebuild Center, Wednesday — in hopes of getting a better understanding of the MTA's compressed natural gas buses.

Equipment maintenance instructors at the RRC taught the officers how to disable the CNG buses from the outside, how to hide from the bus cameras in case the bus has been hijacked, and where not to shoot.

"If they shoot in the wrong place," said Equipment Maintenance Instructor Ron Cotroneo, "it could become a catastrophic event."

Cotroneo has been training Los Angeles County Fire Department personnel on how MTA buses operate for about 15 years, but the SWAT team also should be trained in case a human needs to be battled instead of a blaze.

### **SWAT team is first on the scene**

"The SWAT team is usually the first on the scene in a hostage situation," Cotroneo said. "They need to know, one, how to disable the bus, and two, where not to shoot, should that become necessary."



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CHP Officers Armando Rios, left, and Jim Decello check the bus driver's screen to see if they can spot their supervisor behind them.

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Cotroneo said he might start training SWAT teams every month as more CNG buses are on the road. Just last month, in fact, this training would have come in handy.

"Some kid hijacked a bus and took off on a joy ride," he said. "For some reason he stopped, but the engine kept running until one of our guys went out there and turned off the switch on the back of the bus."

Officer Armando Rios said the training has been helpful.

"We have a better understanding of what obstacles we're going to face if someone hijacks a bus," he said. "This gives us hands-on training, which is always good."

"People would usually say 'Just shoot at the bus,'" Rios continued. "But we have more knowledge. Now we know what not



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CHP Officer Armando Perdomo learns to shut off an MTA bus from the rear engine compartment.

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to shoot.”

[Back to MTA Report](#)