

## Flag-Raising Symbolizes Debut of New Transit Police Force

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(May 1, 2003) With the raising of the American flag, this morning, MTA and the Sheriff's Department marked the debut of the nation's second largest Transit Police force.

The ceremony was a significant moment for those who saluted as the ensign was hoisted briskly above Patsaouras Plaza. The Sheriff's Department assumed sole responsibility for patrolling the Metro System under a new contract that took effect today.

The blue of MTA Security officers' uniforms was mixed among the tan and green uniforms worn by Sheriff's deputies in the honor guard – a fact that Transit Police Chief Dan Finkelstein said symbolized the “unified command of all MTA law enforcement and security.”

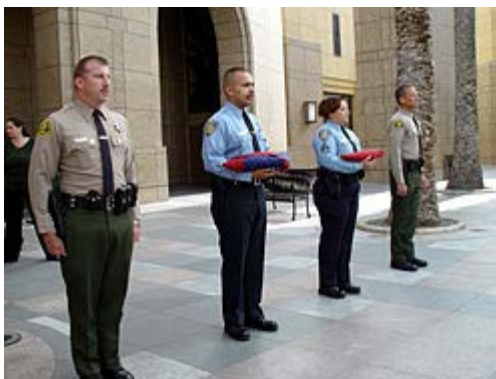
Finkelstein, a Sheriff's captain who started the Transit Services Bureau in May, 2001, now will serve as chief of a Transit Police force numbering 340 deputies, 105 MTA Security officers, 50 uniformed fare inspectors, as well as civilian staff – about 600 personnel in all.

### A 'seamless operation'

Finkelstein promised that the new law enforcement agency will be a “seamless operation” that will be more responsive to the security needs of MTA employees and Metro riders. The unified command and new technology will improve communications throughout the Metro system, he said.

Chief Michael Nagaoka, who represented Sheriff Lee Baca at the ceremony, noted that

PHOTOS BY BILL HEARD



An honor guard of Deputy David Wessol, MTA Security Officer Jose Ortiz and Senior Officer Loretta Ferem and Deputy Richard Faulk with the U.S. and California flags.



MTA Security Officer Jose Ortiz, right, and Deputies David Wessol and Richard Faulk prepare to raise the American flag over Patsaouras Plaza.



"This is a very historic moment," Chief Michael Nagaoka told the assembled law enforcement officers. He represented Sheriff Lee Baca at the ceremony.



Sheriff's Capt. Dan Finkelstein, MTA's new Transit Police chief, addresses a mixed contingent of deputies and MTA Security officers.

MTA's law enforcement contingent is the largest under his field operations command, which includes seven Sheriff's stations and a bureau that serves nine community colleges.

With the Sheriff's Department now responsible for security on the Metro Red Line and other Metro lines within the City of Los Angeles and other jurisdictions, Nagaoka said his department has "a unique opportunity to provide security services on a countywide basis."

"Each deputy will be an ambassador of MTA," he said. "We want them to be responsive to the riders."

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