

[Metro.net](#) (web)

Resources

► [Safety](#)

► [Pressroom](#) (web)

► [Ask the CEO](#)

► [CEO Forum](#)

► [Employee Recognition](#)

► [Employee Activities](#)

► [Metro Projects](#)

► [Facts at a Glance](#)
(web)

► [Archives](#)

► [Events Calendar](#)

► [Research Center/ Library](#)

► [Metro Classifieds](#)

► [Bazaar](#)

Metro Info

► [30/10 Initiative](#)

► [Policies](#)

► [Training](#)

► [Help Desk](#)

► [Intranet Policy](#)

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Weapons drawn, Sheriff's Transit Services Bureau deputies approach a Metro Rail car during a counter-terrorism exercise. TSB will get more resources under a recently announced reorganization of the Sheriff's Department. Photo courtesy of LASD



Sheriff Gives Transit Services Bureau More Responsibility, Resources

- Reorganization to improve terrorism prevention and response
- Sheriff's bomb squad will relocate to Gateway Building

(Jan. 6, 2005) Sheriff Lee Baca has announced a reorganization of his department that will give Metro's Transit Services Bureau (TSB) more responsibility and more resources to protect public transportation from potential terrorist threats.

TSB, under the command of Transit Police Chief and Sheriff's Cmdr. Dan Finkelstein, has been reassigned to the Sheriff's Homeland Security Division.

"This new organization will improve the coordination of information and more directly involve those law enforcement personnel...in our overall counter-terrorism strategy and preparation efforts," said Baca.

In the reorganization, which was effective in November, Finkelstein will report to Chief Sandra Hutchens, head of the Homeland Security Division, while continuing also to report to Deputy CEO John Catoe.

"Having the TSB units under the Sheriff's Homeland Security Division ensures shorter lines of communication and provides for better prevention of and response to any terrorist event or natural disaster," said Finkelstein. "It will make our operation seamless."

Bomb squad coming to Metro

Among other changes, the reorganization will relocate seven or eight members of the Sheriff's Arson and Explosives Detail in the TSB offices on the Plaza level of the Gateway Building.

"Deploying the bomb squad from here will shorten response time, especially for the Metro Red Line," said Finkelstein. "I also want bomb squad members to be a part of the terrorism awareness training for Metro personnel."

TSB also will play an enhanced role on the multi-agency Terrorism Early Warning (TEW) group, the primary intelligence gathering organization in Los Angeles County.

Baca, along with Finkelstein and Paul Lennon, Metro's director of Intelligence and Emergency Services, heads for London on Saturday to participate in a forum on counter-terrorism, community interaction and building relations among first responder agencies.

Exchange with British Transport Police

In addition, Finkelstein and Lennon will meet with British Transport Police executives to discuss an officer exchange program that could bring several Transport Police officers here in the late spring to train TSB deputies in counter-terrorism and send several deputies to London for training.

Finkelstein said he and Lennon have discussed the plan with a representative of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and with the deputy consul general at the British Embassy in Los Angeles.

"Ultimately, if we see a benefit from this and can get the funding, I'd like to have a British police officer come here for several months to train our deputies and send a deputy to London for several months of training," said Finkelstein.

Coincidental with the Sheriff's announcement, DHS has announced that \$765 million in direct funding will be provided for high-threat urban areas as part of the 2006 Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI).

Much of the funds will be used to enhance the security of public transportation and the ports in Los Angeles County. UASI provides resources for the unique equipment, training, planning, and exercise needs of select high threat urban areas.