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Sheriff's Sgt. Harry Drucker comments on the logistics of the plans for the Spring 2007 anti-terrorism exercise.



Law Enforcement Agencies Test Plans for Major Anti-Terrorist Exercise

- Exercise is scheduled next spring at USG complex

By NED RACINE

(Dec. 21, 2006) Previewing a major anti-terrorist exercise scheduled for spring 2007, law enforcement and transit authorities last week critiqued plans for a real-time test of security measures at the Union Station Gateway (USG) complex.

Held December 14 in the Metro Board Room, the critique gathered comments from local, state, and federal authorities to fine tune the spring 2007 exercise.

That event will be the first anti-terrorist exercise sponsored by the Security Task Force, a group of agencies and businesses concerned with USG security, since an exercise in July 2002, held in the shadow of the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.

Seeking to create realistic challenges to USG security, the exercise will attempt to "lock out" Los Angeles' downtown transportation center. This means screening passengers and pedestrians who enter the USG complex and searching automobiles that approach it. Authorities will also search luggage. Checkpoints will surround USG.

Because the Spring 2007 event is an exercise only, passengers and pedestrians using USG that day will be asked to comply with the searches. Those who do not wish to participate, will be offered other avenues into the complex.

"It is a daunting task for us to secure this premise because public transportation is an open door," said Lt. John Herrera, co-designer of the exercise with Lt. Leo Norton. Both are assigned to the Sheriff's Transit Services Bureau.

Photos: Ned Racine



Andy Hughes, Manager, Building Services; and Metro Transit Security lieutenants Rivers Jacques and Keith Bowlin discuss access to the Gateway Tower during Dec. 14's preparation for a Spring 2007 anti-terrorism exercise.

A grim scenario

According to the exercise's grim scenario, the Department of Homeland Security has raised its threat level to "red," following a coordinated terrorist attack on a commuter rail system somewhere in the United States. "Red" is the Department of Homeland Security's second highest threat level.

A "terrorist" team will try to penetrate security forces to deliver a mock explosive device to five critical areas inside USG.

"I know we've done exercises in the past, but you have to stay current; you're only as good as your last exercise," Herrera said. "It's been a while, so we want to see how well we'll do this exercise." One of the goal's of the Dec. 14 critique was to ascertain the number of personnel required for the spring 2007 exercise.

Norton, who has served in the Sheriff's Transit Services Bureau for 10 years, drew on the London and Madrid transit system bombings to create a scenario testing whether USG complex stakeholders are "capable of handing a situation similar to other bombings and terrorist threats."

Agencies attending the tabletop meeting included representatives of Metro Transit Security, Transit Services Bureau, Los Angeles Police Department, Transportation Security Administration, Federal Air Marshall Program, Los Angeles Fire Department, Orange County Transportation Authority, Metrolink, and Amtrak.

Herrera will adjust some plans based on the comments he heard during the Dec. 14 critique.

"We brought in all the stakeholders, and everybody had a say in how we were going to develop our game plan," Herrera said. "I had the overview, but then I had to fine tune it and that's where their participation helped me develop a better plan."

