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All aboard: French police officers assemble at the entrance to the Metro Red Line Hollywood/Highland Station while touring the Metro Red Line on Thursday. The officers are in Los Angeles to participate in a 10-day exchange program with Southern California law enforcement agencies.



Photos by Ned Racine

French Motorcycle Officers Tour Metro

By NED RACINE

(Jan. 11, 2007) Thirty-eight French motorcycle officers rode the Metro Red Line yesterday as part of a 10-day exchange program with Southern California law enforcement agencies.

"What we expected for this visit in general and especially today is to see how you deal with a lot of topics that we are very interested in, because we face quite the same situation in Paris and France," said Nicolas de Leffe, Police Attaché at the French Embassy in Washington, D.C.

"They have the same worries and problems we have," said Lt. John Bayless, Sheriff's Transit Services Bureau (TSB). "Basically, it's about [using] best practices for crime solving, terrorism, graffiti and training issues."



LASD deputies accompanied the French officers to a briefing at Metro Headquarters and a ride on the Metro Red Line to Hollywood. Duane Martin, Blue Line Division Transportation Manager, (center) led discussions of cross training between Metro and LASD.

Twenty-four Sheriff motorcycle deputies, most from the TSB, accompanied the French officers on their tour.

Duane Martin, Blue Line Division Transportation Manager, told the French officers that having a close relationship between Metro Operations and Metro's security personnel "is paramount to operating a safe system." He stressed the continual training among Metro Operations and the Sheriff's Transit Services Bureau.

The French officers, who had been selected for the exchange program two years ago, also questioned Davide Puglisi, Red Line Division Transportation Manager; and Abdul Zohbi, a Systems Safety manager in Corporate Safety, during a meeting in the Windsor Conference Room. Zohbi answered questions in French.

Questions from the Frenchmen touched on the level of safety within the Metro System, why the Metro Rail system was not larger, how the Metro Red Line was constructed to survive earthquakes, Metro's anti-terrorism measures and how Metro encourages Los Angeles County citizens to ride public transit.

"I thought we had a big system, but they asked why our system was so small!" Bayless said. "The people we move in a week, they move in an hour."

Before riding from Union Station to the Hollywood/Highland Station, the



Several French officers inspect an Arwen rubber-bullet rifle.



French officers go Hollywood on this Metro Red Line ride.

French delegation watched Sheriff's Deputy Rich Faulk demonstrate the explosive-detection skills of canine deputy Deborah, a Belgian Malinois.

Several French officers fired an Arwen rubber-bullet rifle at a firing range. Particularly impressing the French was a Transit Services Bureau supervisor response vehicle.

Vincent Messenger, leader of the motorcycle officers, thought the tour was valuable, even though policing transit systems is not part of his everyday duty.

"I think its an advantage, not only for a motorcycle officer, but for any police office to know how we work from one county to another." In France, Messenger, who was visiting the United States for the first time, supervises 300 officers, including 250 motorcycle officers. He was struck by how modern the Red Line appeared.



Nicolas de Leffe, Police Attaché at the French Embassy in Washington, D.C., center, observes as LASD Deputy Rich Faulk demonstrate the explosive-detection skills of canine deputy Deborah, a Belgian Malinois.

"We have in Paris, especially, a very huge transportation system," said de Leffe, who found the Red Line particularly clean and its stations particularly large. "We have problems of safety, and we're always interested in seeing how other . . . friendly countries deal with that, manage that."

"We have 14 or 15 [rail] lines, and we have 360 stations inside Paris," de Leffe explained. The Paris Metro's first line was completed in 1900.

The French officers have also shadowed the work of the Beverly Hills Police Department, Los Angeles Police Department and Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. The French officers will assist the Beverly Hills Police Department during at the Golden Globe Awards Jan. 15.



Going global: Security concerns guide efforts of international cooperation as Metro officials, French police and Los Angeles Sheriff's Department converge for a photo in front of Metro Headquarters.

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