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K-9 Officer Napoleon searches for his target while Metro Security Officer Gus Lozano watches for an alert from his partner.

*Photos  
by Henry  
Solis*

## Metro Hosts Canine Team Certification Exercise in Transit Environment

- Twenty-five canine teams earn narcotics and explosives certification

By NED RACINE, Editor

(Aug. 27, 2008) Six-legged teams trained in narcotics and explosive detection earned their California Narcotics Canine Association certifications on Aug. 19, as Metro hosted the nation's largest canine certification exercise.



K-9 Officer Barry enjoys his "toy" after his work is done. He wants to play with what he finds—in this case—a simulated explosive.

California Narcotics Canine Association (CNCA) requests that tests be conducted in as "real" a location as possible. Henry Solis, senior security officer and event coordinator complied, using the Metro Red Line Division 20 facility to present the teams with a transit-oriented testing facility.

Solis, who is also the officer-in-charge of Metro's K-9 teams, prepared a test course for the canines and their handlers that included two Gateway Division 10 local articulated buses, eight 48-

foot-long cargo containers, a mock rail car and several automobiles.

"They had an opportunity to be exposed to trains, buses and large containers," Solis said, noting that this was a rare experience for many of the canines. The canine teams also were tested on the search of a large building at Division 20.

This was the first time Metro hosted a canine certification exercise, and the event was attended by 25 canine units, including diverse law enforcement organizations such as Las Vegas Metro and the Fresno Probation Department.

Three of Metro's canine teams were being tested, including Solis and his black Labrador Nakita. Although CNCA certifies canine units for one year, Solis and Nakita test every six months to stay on the cutting edge.

"It's pretty intense," Solis reported. "If your dog has a false alert [indicating an odor that wasn't there], the canine and handler fail." Those failing teams must be retested in six months.

Jackie Higgins, Los Angeles Police Department, Explosives Ordinance Detection/Canine, encourages her partner to find the mock explosive



As part of the exercise, the canine units have seven minutes to search for narcotic or explosive odors. Odors might include heroin, cocaine, methamphetamine, marijuana, black powder and dynamite. No narcotic can be placed more than six feet above the ground, unless that place can be accessed by the canine.

According to Solis, the Los Angeles Police Department has asked to attend the next certification exercise held at Metro.

The certificated Metro canine teams not only benefit the Metro System, they benefit the Southern California community, as the canine units are often requested to help other agencies detect explosives and narcotics.

"We make sure the system is safe for everyone who rides our system," Solis said of the canine units.