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Sheriff Lee Baca, at right, and Sheriff's Deputy Wayne Carpini welcome LASD Deputy Johnny Ringo, a biochemical sniffing Labrador Retriever, to the Transit Services Bureau at a press conference Jan. 16.

Sheriff's Newest Deputy Johnny Ringo Helps Keep Metro Riders Safe

By Laura Kloth
Staff Writer

(Jan. 19, 2010) There's a new nose in town and his name is Johnny Ringo, a beautiful 17 month-old black Labrador Retriever – the nation's only chemical/biological weapons detection dog.

The latest addition to the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department's 50-member canine unit, Johnny Ringo was introduced by Los Angeles Sheriff Lee Baca accompanied by Deputy CEO Paul Taylor Jan. 15 at a press conference and demonstration held in the Metro Board Room.

With his tail wagging, it took only a couple of minutes for the dog to



detect non-lethal anthrax and ricin hidden in the Metro Board Room.

Trained in Germany and Texas, Johnny Ringo responds only to German commands like "*platz*" (sit) and will be used to detect biochemical agents such as ricin and anthrax on Metro's trains and buses and at public sites throughout the county, according to the dog's handler, Sheriff's Emergency Operations Deputy Wayne Carpini.

New sheriff in town doesn't hide behind his badge.

In action for the first time, Johnny Ringo spent a day sniffing out the Rose Bowl before the venue's signature football game parade and the BCS game a week later, and, more recently, conducted a "sweep" of the Beverly Hills Hotel before the celebrities attending the Golden Globe Awards took to the red carpet.

The sheriff's department invested some \$40,000 in grant money to purchase and train the dog, which has logged more than 235 hours of training to sniff-out and hone-in on odors at concentrations nearly 100 million times lower than what humans can detect.



Johnny Ringo checks out the Board Room to demonstrate chemical detecting abilities.

When a scent is identified, the dog is promptly pulled back by Carpini, who can read the "tell" signs the dog signals when it recognizes a scent.

Baca said the dog is a "great investment" for his department because it

provides a portable, sensible way to assist his department deputies in dangerous situations.

“Biological detection is very important to us in keeping Los Angeles safe and Johnny Ringo is our number one detective in the Sheriff’s Department when it comes to biological agent,” said Baca, as he introduced the four-footed retriever and pinned an LASD deputy badge on his collar.

“This is where man-based science cannot exceed what is now known as the canine science,” he said, indicating that the Los Angeles Police Department and several other public agencies are thinking seriously about adding chemical agent sniffing dogs to their own rosters.