

## In Airports, 'Mounted Police' Takes on Whole New Meaning

### *Segway Personal Transport Vehicles Give Airport Police a Leg Up*

Airport police departments that have their officers patrol on Segways are discovering that the personal transportation vehicles are especially adaptable to the indoor environment of airport terminals and concourses.

Like bicycles, which are also in use at many airports, Segways raise the officers' sight lines just above the tops of most people's heads. The officers, in turn, are more



**Ed Skvarna,**  
Bob Hope Airport

visible to the general public. And both bikes and Segways are about the only practical ways inside a crowded terminal to increase response times.

These advantages — which Segway also touts on its Web site under "security applications" — are apparent to both Ed Skvarna, police chief at **Bob Hope Airport (BUR)** in California, and Lt. Richard Ricko of the **Maryland Transportation Authority (MdTA)**, which patrols **Baltimore-Washington Int'l Airport (BWI)**.

Skvarna saw the benefits of having police on bikes after spending 20 years with the police department in the city of Burbank, Calif., surrounding BUR. Now, Skvarna has just taken the helm of the police force at BUR, where the first three Segways have seen a little more than a month of use. So far, the combination of bikes and Segways at the airport works very well, he tells *Airport Security Report*.

Meanwhile, Segways have been in use since January 2004 at BWI, which now has a fleet of nine of

them. There, Ricko, who also has had officers on bikes since 1998, has come to the belief that Segways offer more advantages. Bikes need an arc in which to turn. Segways can revolve 360 degrees in place and then start off in a new direction. The public is also more likely to make way when they see

there also isn't much metal between an officer and a member of the public. Plus, most people have become curious about the devices.

The real strength of mounted police is in crowd control, Ricko adds.

While bikes and Segways both decrease officers' response time,



Officers Jason Fulton (on the Segway) and Mark Knackstedt (on the bike) patrol Bob Hope Airport (BUR) in Burbank, Calif.

Source: Burbank Airport Authority Police Department

one coming. Overall, Segways are a lot easier to maneuver with a lot of people around, Ricko tells *Airport Security Report*.

Horses also raise officers' sight lines, of course, but for obvious reasons, they aren't about to see airport-terminal duty any time soon. As Segway puts it, their devices require no "feeding, grooming, or housekeeping."

But there is also the matter of public relations — an area where the conventional wisdom has long held that mounted police are unbeatable. Even here, Ricko demurs. Officers on Segways are simply more approachable. Horses, as appealing as some people find them, are still fairly intimidating to others. An officer on a Segway isn't quite as high off the ground. And

Ricko and Skvarna agree that Segways have the additional advantage of using up none of the officers' physical energies in getting to an incident scene. "We have a long concourse," Skvarna tells *Airport Security Report*. The less an officer's cardiovascular recovery time is, the better. ➔

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