



PRESS RELEASE

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TSA highlights role working canines play in security operations at SJC

Explosive detection canines are a key element in efficient security operations

SAN JOSE, Calif. - Officials with the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) Thursday highlighted the agency's Passenger Screening Canines (PSCs), a key asset used to enhance security and keep passengers safe and secure when departing Norman Y. Mineta San Jose International Airport (SJC).

PSCs are trained to detect explosives and explosive materials in a busy transportation environment. They work with a handler searching travelers and their belongings in the security checkpoint and assist with the efficiency and effectiveness of TSA's screening operations.

"Our canine teams play an important and visible role in our security operations at SJC," said Joseph Rodrigues, TSA Federal Security Director at SJC. "Travelers departing SJC not only enjoy seeing the canines working in the security checkpoint, but benefit from this additional layer of security at the Airport."

"Canines are an important layer in SJC's security and customer service programs and we're proud to highlight the important work they and their handlers do every day in serving our travelers and employees," said Director of Aviation John Aitken. "The TSA and San Jose Police Department deploy working canines to supplement screening of passengers and their baggage, airline cargo, and to ensure our facilities are free from prohibited items. Passengers enjoy seeing the dogs working as they experience an enhanced level of security as they move to and from their flights."

Passengers departing SJC can at any time expect to see PSC teams working around travelers. The teams capably navigate among large groups of people to pinpoint the source of an explosive odor, even if the source is mobile and often without the source being aware it is being tracked. A PSC handler is trained to read its dog's change of behavior when it indicates an explosive scent has been detected.

If a dog alerts its handler to the presence of explosive odor, TSA follows an established procedure to resolve the alarm. The use of these highly-trained canines is an effective tool in deterring and detecting the introduction of explosive devices into the nation's transportation systems.

Because explosives are known to be the greatest threat to the aviation system, PSCs are regularly tested to ensure they maintain a high standard of operational effectiveness. This continual training allows for all teams to be a reliable resource in detecting an explosive threat, maintaining proper acclimation within the airport, and mitigating potential distractions in a busy transportation environment.

(more)

Currently, TSA has more than 320 PSC teams that work primarily at airports across the country. These teams are also trained to work in non-aviation transportation venues. While PSCs are sociable, they are working dogs and they should not be petted or fed by anyone except their handlers.

Profiles of some of TSA's working canines supporting security operations at Mineta San Jose International Airport

Blek is a five-year-old German Shorthaired Pointer and he has been working at SJC with his handler **Sasha** since 2016. Together, they enjoy working to protect travelers departing SJC, but they have also had the opportunity to support multiple special events outside of the Bay Area. When Blek goes home at night with his handler, they are greeted by TSA retired explosive detection canine Truck. Blek's favorite after-hours activity is trying to get Truck, a Hungarian Vizsla and Labrador Retriever mix, to play with him in the back yard.

Xxylon:

After working at other airports on the west coast, **Xxylon** and his handler **Danilo** are happy to be working at SJC. Xxylon is an eight-year-old chocolate Labrador who has seen (and sniffed) a lot in his canine career. He began working in Anchorage, Alaska, as a police dog before moving to Seattle where he was part of the canine cargo team. In spring of 2017, he came to SJC where he works as a Passenger Screening Canine (PSC). Nicknamed "X-man," he has an excellent work ethic and travelers can regularly be overheard commenting on just how "cute" X-man is.

Bank is a seven-year-old black Labrador Retriever whose love for his work and handler **Rhena** has brought this team many opportunities. In addition to working regularly at SJC, they have also supported TSA security screening operations at Super Bowl 50, the New Orleans Jazz Festival, and the 2016 NCAA Bowl Championship Series football game in Glendale, Ariz. You can often spot Bank happily trotting backwards through the terminal trying to entice his handler into a game of tug of war after a successful work outing.

Jim is a four-year-old yellow Labrador Retriever. He and his handler **Scott** are the newest PSC team at SJC. They quickly endeared themselves to travelers due to their excellent teamwork and Jim's calm and playful presence. When Jim isn't hard at work searching for explosives, he can either be found playing a good game of catch or stretching out to take a nap in the sun.

Torro is a six-year-old German Shorthaired Pointer who has been with his handler **Nick** since 2014. After starting his career as an explosive detection canine at San Francisco International Airport, Torro moved to SJC in 2015 to help launch the PSC program here. Torro and Nick have worked at other venues away from the airport including Alcatraz and the Berkeley Marina. After a long day at work, Torro loves to lounge around, sleep on the couch and eat crumbs off the floor. Although he is cuddly at home, Torro looks forward to coming to work each day ready to put his explosive-detection skills to the test.

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