



## News Release



Tampa Field Division

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### **LOCAL EXPLOSIVES DETECTION CANINES HELP TAMPA PREPARE FOR SUPER BOWL XLIII**

#### *Fulton County K-9 team works with security team in Tampa for Super Bowl*

TAMPA, Fla. — Not everyone participating in this year's Super Bowl is a football player. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) has fielded its best players to help prepare for a safe and secure Super Bowl XLIII. These pros include ATF K-9 explosives detection teams that have been deployed to Tampa from around the country.

One K-9 team working in Tampa is Canine Handler Sergeant Kirk Markham and his black Labrador retriever, Mokey. Markham and Mokey work for the Fulton County, Georgia Sheriff's Office and have been partners for 5 years. Markham and Mokey routinely work together in criminal investigations and at high profile security events where their expertise is needed detecting the presence of explosives, firearms and ammunition. They were called to assist at this year's Super Bowl to help locate any type of explosives that might be in close proximity to the Raymond James Stadium or any other venues relating to the big game.

The K-9 teams are working side-by-side with other federal, state and local law-enforcement officers to keep the football teams and fans safe throughout this event.

"The K-9 teams that are here in Tampa for the Super Bowl are the best of the best," said Virginia O'Brien, special agent in charge of the ATF Tampa Field Division. "Like the football teams that will be playing in the Super Bowl, these handlers and their K-9 partners have been training and preparing all year for this event.

"ATF and our law enforcement partners have been working closely and planning for this event for two years," O'Brien further stated. "We are proud to say that the only thing the fans have to worry about is whether their team wins or loses."

ATF has used its explosives detecting canines at other special events including the

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Republican and Democratic National Conventions, the Presidential Inauguration, the G-8, the World Series, the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympics and of course, the Super Bowls.

ATF's canine program, which began in 1986, uses only Labrador retrievers. The dogs are supplied by the Guiding Eyes for the Blind, the Guide Dog Foundation, and Canine Companions for Independence. These specialty canines and their handlers attend a 10-week training program with their handlers that are conducted at the ATF Canine Training Center in Front Royal, Va. Upon completion of this course the canines are able to detect a variety of explosive compounds and materials that could be used in an explosive device. The canines can also detect firearms and ammunition and are used in the more traditional protective search and sweep operations. Once the canine and the handler complete the ATF basic training course they begin their field work but continue to train on a daily basis.

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