



Doing it Right in Denver: The DNC and the Colorado State Patrol

by **Valerie Silva**

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The Democratic National Convention (DNC) was held August 25 through August 28, 2008, in beautiful downtown Denver, Colorado. The two main venues were the Pepsi Center and INVESCO Field. Seven out of the sixteen members of the Colorado State Patrol Executive Security Unit's (E.S.U.) bicycle team were out in full force. The members started their six day stretch on Saturday, August 23. The bicycle team worked twelve-hour shifts: three day shift members starting at 0800 hours and finishing at 2000 hours, and four night shift members starting at 1200 hours and finishing at 0000 hours.

The bicycle team patrolled the Colorado State Capitol Complex, Lincoln and Civic Center Parks, and the areas surrounding the two main venues. The team worked hand-in-hand with the Denver Police Department (D.P.D.) bicycle team and the D.P.D. riot control team. On Sunday, August 24, the E.S.U. bicycle team assisted D.P.D. with a protest that worked its way from downtown to the Civic Center and Lincoln Park areas. For approximately one hour, the protestors blocked both Broadway and Lincoln Streets, the main thoroughfares into downtown. The E.S.U. bicycle team assisted D.P.D. in preventing protestors who were gathered in the parks from entering the street to block and stop traffic. To achieve this purpose, the team members were positioned at the curbs, and used their bicycles as a barricade and deterrent. The team was used in the same capacity on Monday, August 25, when several groups, including members of the "Recreate 68" group, gathered in Civic Center Park and made their way into the outskirts of downtown by blocking and rioting between 15th and 16th Streets near the 16th Street Mall area. D.P.D. once again asked for our assistance, to direct traffic and block off sidewalks on 15th Street from those who were trying to join the rioters. This particular incident lasted approximately two and a half hours.

On Wednesday, August 27, a large group, numbering up to 12,000 people at its height and led by about 50 uniformed members of the Iraq Veterans Against the War, marched several blocks to the Pepsi Center. The group did not have a permit and ignored the demonstration rules, sneaking through police patrols and meeting at the gates of the Pepsi Center. Once the massive group arrived at the DNC, the gates were locked. About 20 war veterans and 1,000 protestors remained at the gates. The veterans' mission was to deliver a letter to Senator Barack Obama requesting an immediate withdrawal of troops from Iraq, full health care benefits for returning troops and veterans, and reparations to the Iraqi people for damage caused by the war. A copy of the letter had been mailed to Obama's office on Monday. They said their efforts were worth it, as they were able to meet with the staff of Barack Obama. Led by rockers Rage Against the Machine, carrying signs and chanting slogans, the protestors dispersed without any problems.

The DNC ended on an impressive note. All of the law enforcement entities that were involved worked together and exceeded everyone's expectations. Though we were only a very small part of the DNC, we felt like we made a difference in its success, showing the world that Denver, Colorado, can do things right.

Valerie has been with the Colorado State Patrol for seven years, including two and a half with the Executive Security Unit (E.S.U.). The E.S.U. is charged with protecting the Capitol Complex grounds and employees, as well as the Governor and First Lady of Colorado. There are currently sixteen IPMBA certified bike officers on the unit. She thinks that not only was riding the bicycle during the DNC a great work-out, it was also one of the best duties. Valerie can be reached at silva.valerie@yahoo.com.

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