



Dog School

(USAF Sentry & Patrol Dog Training)



November 4, 2005

Welcome to the first edition of “DOG SCHOOL”!

“What did you learn in dog school Daddy?” We are sure that you’ve heard that question many times before from your children and grandchildren – Now we can answer that question.

With the first edition of “DOG SCHOOL” we can now tell the truth – it was the DOG! “Duke 54M5 is the one that made me look VERY good” – sound familiar? “I was just along for the ride” said Bill Cummings for our inaugural issue.

United States Air Force Sentry Dog School was probably the most intensive training that you ever experienced. In Texas it was the heat, insects, and the aroma of wet dogs! Who can ever forget those wonderful times spent at Lackland Air Force Base? At Wiesbaden, Germany – I just had to believe that it was COLD! The PACAF School at Showa, Japan – well, it was just a prelude to Thailand, Vietnam and exotic lands of Asia.

In our first edition, we will concentrate on the “Dog School” history and locations. We would like to thank Hahn-50thAP-K9/K9 History website for the use of the information on his site included below:

**K-9 HISTORY:
THE DOGS OF WAR!
...Composite History Pages!**

Please visit his site and sign his guest book!

<http://community-2.webtv.net/Hahn-50thAP-K9/K9History>

We would also like to thank Monty and Cathy Moore for all of their work and dedication on numerous websites that promote Military Working Dog history and continued canine efforts. Please visit <http://www.vspa.com/k9/pacafhistory.htm> and <http://www.vspa.com/k9/bases.htm> .

Remember – when you finish reading this first edition, don’t forget to thank your Dog School instructor – they are out there somewhere – please take the time to think about them and what they taught us all. Wow – what a great experience we had at Dog School.

With your help – we can make your Dog School experience a part of history for all of our fellow handlers, friends, and family to enjoy. There is an enormous amount of history to be told about our dogs and our experiences – hopefully with this forum we can make sure that happens.

Although this article is not the complete history of all Dog Schools, I think it will give you a snapshot as to the schools that we attended during our careers. Hopefully, we can obtain additional information from our handlers that were instructors, along with stories concerning the training at PACAF, Wiesbaden, and of course Lackland in the future.

**United States Air Force Sentry Dog School, Showa Air Station, Japan
Lackland AFB, San Antonio, Texas – March 19, 1952**

The first Air Force Sentry Dog School was activated on March 10, 1952 at Far East Air Forces (FEAF) Showa Air Station, Japan



The FEAF Sentry Dog Training Center, Japan 1952

A second dog school, attached to the 17th AF, United States Air Forces Europe (USAFE), was opened in 1953, at Wiesbaden, West Germany, at the site of a former German officer's school. the Hindenburg Kaseme in the Biebrich suburb.



USAFE 17th AF K-9 Center, Wiesbaden, Germany

United States Air Force Security Police Dog Training School, Lackland AFB, San Antonio, Texas - October 20, 1958

Sensing it was time to take matters into its own hands, the United States Air Force on October 20, 1958, established the Sentry Dog Training Branch of the Department of Security Police Training at Lackland AFB, near San Antonio, Texas.



Lackland's "Dog School" and Kennels.

Eventually over 700 acres were set aside for training dogs and handlers, and more than 700 kennels were built to house dogs in training and those newly procured.

In the above AF photograph, the "bird cage" dog houses are the small dots, in between the buildings shown, and the tree line. The early design of the kennel was the same that was used during World War II by the Army's QMC; a crude wooden box, with the dog attached to it, by a steel chain. The entire area was separated from the main base, by a huge field, that acted as a buffer zone.

1960, the general appearance of the Sentry Dog School was still pretty much the same as two years earlier, the only major difference was that privacy fencing had been added to the kennel area, probably because the area surrounding the dog kennels was just starting to be built up. New PAT barracks had been built, as well as a mess hall and quarters for foreign officers in training; there was still a buffer zone, separating the area from the main base.

By February 1962, a shortage still existed, with another urgent appeal by the Quartermaster Corp for 560 dogs and then an additional 1,700 shepherds during the later part of '62. The QMC fell well short of this goal; it purchased only 524 dogs and received another 92 through donations.



Lackland: The Gateway To The USAF

In June 1964, the Air Force relieved the Army Quartermaster Corps of procuring all "live animals not raised for food" ...the Air Force would now purchase their own dogs, and train them at their new school at Lackland.

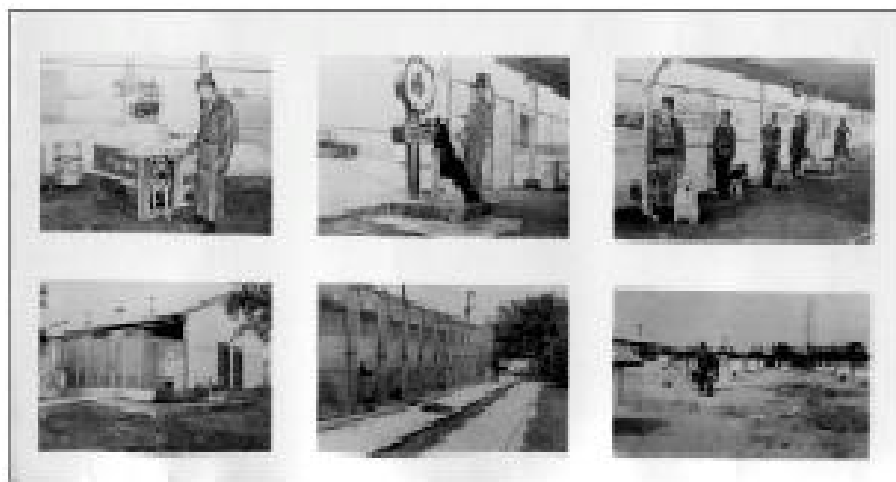


Lackland AFB Basic Training Center

USAF Procurement Teams!

In a effort to attain the necessary dogs to fulfill its assigned quotas, the Air Force established twelve man teams, consisting of a team leader, a procurement officer, a veterinarian and assistant, and several dog trainers and handlers; they then went on dog buying trips around the country. Although the use of the Procurement Teams was successful, it also proved very expensive.

The dog candidates were given examinations on the spot, and most were purchased for \$150 on average. The US Army for awhile considered doing the same thing, but quickly realized, that it was cheaper to just purchase whatever dogs they needed from the Air Force ...for only \$175.



Scenes From Lackland's Dog School, Mid 60s

The above photo shows six scenes from the Air Force's new Sentry Dog School in the mid sixties (from top left to right): (1) A newly arrived K-9 candidate being removed from his shipping crate. (2) The dogs were then weighed in and (3) Assigned to a new handler and ready for inspection. (4 & 5) They were then quarantine from the general population for several weeks and given a thorough medical exam, before being assigned to their (6) "bird cage" kennels with the other dog trainees.

A New Type of Dog

In the early sixties, the primary use of Sentry Dogs was base security and guarding missile sites ...they were the Air Force's "Guardians of the Night!"

The dogs, mostly male German Shepherds, were trained as attack dogs. At the time of their purchase, they were tested for aggressiveness and had to show a strong attack tendency.

They were one handler dogs, unlike the patrol and messenger dogs from WW II; they were a valuable tool in the US Air Force resource protection plan, but their use was limited to restricted, and isolated area.



Lackland Sentry Dog School, Bldg 1130

It was suggested in the mid sixties, by Colonel John A. Cady, from USAF HQ Security Police, that there was a real need for a more social dog, one that could work in proximity to people other than its handler, like a civilian police dog. **Note – Colonel John A. Cady was on board the C-141 that arrived at U-Tapao Royal Thai Air Base on March 24, 1968, with the first “wave” of Sentry Dogs and handlers from Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, to be assigned to U-Tapao.**

In 1966, one NCOIC and four sentry dog teams from Andrews AFB, Md., were given Patrol Dog Training by the Washington, DC, Metropolitan Police Department.

The additional advantages and capabilities of more tolerant and controllable dogs were quickly proven.

By 1967, the USAF approved the new dogs and the patrol dog program was initiated at the new Security Police Dog Training School, at Lackland, as the new standard AF military working dog.

The program produce dogs that could be worked in a crowded public place, dogs that could be approached by any child and petted like a normal dog, but would attack only on command.

Very quickly, the patrol dog team became a common sight worldwide, at base exchanges and commissaries throughout the Air Force.



"Get Him." cried the handlers.

USAF First Dog Schools:

The Early History of The United States Air Force's First Sentry Dog Training School...

Far East Air Force Sentry Dog Training Center

Showa was the USAF very first Dog School, and it was just plain luck, that it happened to be started during the Korean War.

Originally in 1948, FEAF had made a request to HQ USAF for trained US Army sentry dogs; to help stop the huge pilferages losses being suffered by their air bases throughout the Pacific.

In the latter part of 1949, then USAF Air Provost Marshal, Lt. Colonel Joseph V. Dillon, advised FEAF's General George E. Stratemeyer, Commander FEAF, that the availability of US Army trained dogs would be extremely limited, and he (Dillon) recommended that FEAF should consider establishing their own dog training center in the Far East.



All photos courtesy of Claude Anderson, 3rd ADS, Guam

On December 5, 1951, FEAF HQ authorized the Far East Air Logistic Force, Japan, to establish "Project Kennel," which called for the construction of 50 kennels, an obstacle course, and other facilities at Showa Air Station located several miles from Tachikawa Air Base near the Japanese village of Showa.

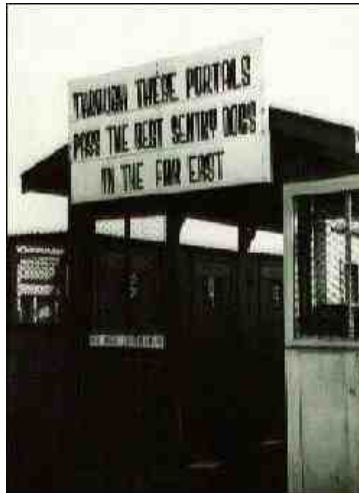
Showa Air Station was the site of a former WW-II Japanese training school used by Zero fighters; and towards the end of the war, Kamikaze pilots were trained therenot that they needed that much training on how to crash a plane!

FEALF started construction of the new facilities on March 10, 1952; the location adjoined an small US Army anti aircraft gun emplacement, that was part of the air base defenses, because of the Korean War.

Showa's first training staff consisted of: 4-5 enlisted trainers, veterinarian, kennelmaster, and one officer, plus 6 Japanese handler/trainers.

On March 17, 1952, final arrangements were made for the purchase of fifty German Shepherds from the Nippon Police Dog Association of Tokyo, and from members of the Japan Kennel Club.

On April 1, 1952, about eighty-five dogs were examined and tested in a small Tokyo park, and fifty of the most promising dogs, between the ages of twelve and twenty-four months, were purchased for \$75 each, constituting the first Air Force training class.



Kennel Entrance, Sign Reads: "Through These Portals Pass The Best Sentry Dogs In The Far East"

Now operational, the school's enlisted staff slept in tents on the building site, while the new dogs were simply staked out, near what was to become their kennels.

By November 28, 1952, the school had completed the first contract, and trained a total of 200 dogs, which were shipped mostly to Air Force bases in Korea for the war effort, and to FEAF bases in Japan, Okinawa, Guam, and the Philippines.

All of the dogs were pre-trained for three weeks, 48-hours per week, by the civilian Japanese handler/trainers in an effort to keep the US handlers' TDY time to an absolute minimum.

Prior to the arrival of the handlers, the following schedule was used to pre-train the dogs:

1st Week: Basic Obedience (On Leash).

(1) Heel (2) Sit (3) Down (4) Come (5) Stay

2nd Week: Advanced Obedience (25 ft. Leash and Off Leash).

(1) Heel (2) Sit (3) Down (4) Come (5) Stay (6) Explosions (7) Group Training.

3rd Week: Advanced Training.

(1) Jump (2) Crawl (3) Obstacles (4) Riding Motor Vehicles (5) Attack (6) Explosion (7) Guarding



Kennel Building Construction Was Started March 1953

The handler's training was for anywhere between two or three weeks, depending upon the handler's attitude and abilities.

1st Day:

Roll Call, Orientation, Group Assignments, Assignment of Dogs, Rules of the Center, Training Film, First Aid, and Sanitation.

2nd Day:

Tour of the Center, Demonstration with Dogs, Introduction of Dogs, Use of Equipment, Safety Procedures, Dog Feeding, plus Grooming and Care.

3rd Day:

Road March (0900-0930), Basic Obedience.

4th Day:

Road March (0900-0930), Basic Obedience.

5th Day:

Road March (0900-0930), Basic Obedience.

6th Day:

Road March (0900-0930), Advanced Obedience, Testing (written and demonstration).

7th Day:

Road March (0900-0930), Advanced Obedience.



Kennel Building Construction Was Started March 1953

8th Day:

Road March (0900-0930), Advanced Obedience.

9th Day:

Road March (0900-0930), Advanced Obedience and Night Training (1800-2200).

10th Day:

Road March (0900-0930), Advanced Obedience and Night Training (1800-2200).

11th Day:

Road March (0900-0930), Advanced Obedience and Night Training (1800-2200).

12th Day:

Road March (000-0930), Testing (written and demonstration), Graduation (1400 hours).

13th Day - 21st Day:

Special Training, if necessary. During the final week, all of the handlers and their new dogs were shipped back to their units.

Note: Prior to each day's schedule, all kennels and runways were cleaned by the trainees and their dogs were groomed (with the exception of any sick dogs, the road march started immediately afterwards).

Besides training all Air Force volunteer handlers, the school also trained both US Army and Marine personnel; as well as Japanese Civilian Security Guards (CSUs) employed by the USAF, and civil Japanese police officers.

Project Kennel, officially became known as the FEAF Sentry Dog Training Center, on December 16, 1952, by virtue of FEAF Regulation 125-3; with the primary mission of procurement and training of all sentry dogs, and handlers for FEAF wide assignments.

On January 12, 1953, a new contract was made with the "All Japan Guard Dog Assoc." for the purchase of two hundred dogs.



Showa's Dog Kennels and Lady F-433

And on March 13, 1953, construction of a new kennel building with thirty attached steel runs was started; twelve days later, on March 25, 1953, another new contract for the purchase of three hundred fifteen additional dogs was entered into with the "All Japan Shepherd Dog Association."

It was thought, with the Truce Talks under way, and the end of the Korean War in sight, there would be a need for a larger number of sentry dogs for use in the new demilitarized zone in Korea, and at all FEAF's bases. Of course, they were right...it was also becoming more difficult to obtain qualified dogs!

According to Colonel Clifford V. Oje, Sr., Air Provost Marshal, of Headquarters, Far East Air Forces, the Center's sentry dog program, and use of K-9 Teams in FEAF theater of operation had "proved most beneficial," and that "all written and verbal reports from the field indicated exceptionally good results. In every instance where Sentry Dogs have been used, thievery and pilferage have stopped." (Note: Taken from the preface to the Center's Sentry Dogs Manual No. 2, revised May 1, 1953) Also within the same Manual ...the Center had very casually voiced some of its concerns it had on the future use of dogs; quoting from Section V, on the "Utilization of Sentry Dogs."

"1 GENERAL: Sentry dogs are trained to be obedient, suspicious of strangers, and unfriendly to everyone but their handlers. Their aggressiveness has been developed to a point where they will attack on command. To best maintain the dog's "sharpness," unfriendly nature, and alerting qualities, they must be constantly trained, cared for, and handled by only one person. The only exception to this should be in cases where the dog works two (2) shifts per day which requires an alternate handler."

It seems the Center realized in May 1953, that there would be a future shortage of qualified sentry dogs for duty. The Manual No. 2 (revised) continued on the subject, in the Section on the "Areas Conductive To Use Of Sentry Dogs."

"C. It has been determined that dogs are capable of working as much as twelve (12) hours a day. Generally, when increasing the dog's work day from six (6) to twelve (12) hours, a three or four week's "conditioning" period is required before the dog becomes fully adjusted. A loss in the dog's weight during this "conditioning" period is not cause for alarm. Normally, some increase in daily food rations is necessary when the dog's working hours are increased. Also, this operation requires the training and utilization of an alternate handler. The necessity for approximately one (1) hour per day of training for the dog must be considered when establishing working hours. Sentry dogs are very effective in large buildings, and enclosed areas devoid of personnel such as bomb dumps and POL stations."

Starting in late 1954, and continuing throughout most of 1955, the FEAF Sentry Dog Training Center had problems obtaining enough qualified shepherds from the various Japanese dog associations and began the temporary practice of training two (2) handlers for each sentry dog. This policy was limited to US Air Force and Army handlers in the Far East command.

There were still instances where one handler was matched to one dog, but it depended largely upon the circumstances and needs of the "home base" that sent the handler to the Center.

One other interesting item from the Center's 1953 Manual, in comparison to today's U.S. Air Force requirements, was that potential handlers only needed to have a minimum of four (4) months left on their tour of duty to be able to volunteer for Sentry Dog duty!

Over the next thirty-two years, the Center saw many changes, some important and some not; on July 1, 1957, the name was officially designated PACAF Sentry Dog Training Center; and some time in the late fifties, the school was moved a few miles to Tachikawa AB, then in '62 back to Showa, when the former base was returned to the Japanese government. The problem of finding qualified dogs in Japan was on going, and stateside procurement was eventually initiated in May 1961, the first 50 dogs arrived from Lackland soon afterwards.

In July 1969, during the Vietnam War, the Center was moved one final time, to Kadena Air Base, Okinawa; and on January 1st, 1970, the name was changed once again, this time to the PACAF Military Working Dog Training Center.

The school was now controlled by the HQ PACAF Security Police, Hickam AFB, Hawaii. Operational control was transferred to the Security Police Academy, Lackland AFB, Texas, in 1980. Prior to that, the school would send instructors to other PACAF units to teach courses. For example, this saved valuable TDY funds because it was less expensive to fund one or two instructors than to send several students and their dogs from the Philippines. Under ATC guidance this was no longer allowed. This reduced the cost effectiveness of the school. The Center continued operating for another fifteen years, and finally closed down during the mid 80's.



DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

U.S. MILITARY WORKING DOGS TRAINING SCHOOL

341st TRS, Lackland Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas



341st Training Squadron

Introduction

The executive agent for the Department of Defense Military Working Dog Program is the United States Air Force.

Today the 341st Training Squadron, Lackland Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas, has the mission of operating this program for the Air Force.

The 341st Training Squadron is responsible for procuring and assigning all dogs for the MWD program and for shipping them to military installations worldwide following training.

More than 125 Army, Navy, Marine corps and Air Force personnel conduct training courses for dogs and handlers for all branches of the Department of Defense and other federal agencies.

Civilian police officers are trained as explosive detector dog handlers for the Department of Transportation. These highly specialized teams support the Federal Aviation Administration at more than 30 major airports throughout the country.

The MWD training environment consists of 62 training areas, encompassing over 3,350 acres, 691 kennel spaces and an average population of over 400 dogs located at Lackland AFB and the Lackland Training Annex, San Antonio, Texas.



US: Air Force, Navy, Army and Marine K-9 Teams!

Operation Center

Lackland manages the tasking of 1,394 Air Force, Navy, Army and Marine Corp's Military Working Dogs world wide.

On a single day, as many as 108 dogs may be on assignment. About 8 dog teams are dispatch each day, year round, to assist in the State Department's Dignitary Protection Program.

Also Bomb - Detection dogs assignments, require for the U.S. Secret Service and the State Dept., go through our Operation Center; as well as Drug Detection dogs and handlers for our major air, land and sea ports-of-entry to the United States in a joint counter drug effort with the U.S. Customs Dept. and other federal drug law enforcement agencies.

A number of drug dogs are actually down on the Mexican US border in a training capacity. According to the 341st, there is no other place where dogs are routinely exposed to the odor volume and as large a variety and quantity of drugs as they are on the Mexico and U.S. border. Each major command routinely provides drug dogs for the joint mission.

"Although we can't identify a specific dog team with a specific drug seizure, I will say that a team from Kelly AFB that just returned, made significant finds of drugs along the Mexico and U.S. border," a 341st spokesman explained. He said that U.S. Customs requested a month-long extension for the team because they were so good at finding drugs.

The Air Force alone is authorized 579 dogs, and currently has 477 assigned worldwide. All military working dogs and handlers are trained at the 341st Training Squadron here, which is fondly called the "Dog School." The dog school is projected to train 300 detector dogs this year -- a detector dog is either a bomb or drug detector dog. Another 96 dogs will be trained for patrol use only. Patrol dogs are trained for scouting, searching and attacking. All Air Force dogs, including detection dogs, are first patrol trained.

Background of the Basic Military Working Dog

Prior to the conflict in Vietnam, nearly all dogs used by the U.S. armed forces were trained as sentry (attack) dogs. Their function was to detect and attack, on command, all people except the handler and others who helped care for them.

When a transfer of handlers was necessary, it took several weeks for a new handler to gain the sentry dog's trust. Clearly, a dog trained to be more tolerant was needed. Civilian police dog training provided the answer.

Air Force K-9 Team, Belgian Malinois

In 1966, Lt. Colonel John Cady, a veterinarian, assigned to Headquarters USAF Security Police, initiated the action that resulted in changing training methods, so that dogs could be used for many other purposes.

It was Cady who made the suggestion to Robin A. Baker, then the Chief of Security Police at Andrews AFB, while on a tour of the Squadron, to send four Air Force sentry dogs through the Metropolitan Police Dog School for patrol dog training.

Major Baker thought Cady suggestion, sounded like a great idea, and he sought and was granted approval, from the base commander, Brig. General Polhamus, to send five people, one supervisor and four dogs through the school.

The Met training lasted several weeks; when the team and dogs returned to Andrew, training and tests continued and demonstrations were conducted for the public, and HQ USAF officials.

Finally in 1967, the Air Force approved the program, and the Andrew's team and the four dogs, along with trainers from the Metropolitan Police Dog School went to Lackland AFB to help establish the patrol dog program at the AF Security Police Dog Training School.

Training objectives for patrol dogs aim for a composed, discriminating, controllable animal for detecting intruders and subsequent aggressive attack when commanded by their handlers.

Patrol dogs are trained not to be disturbed by the approach of people and to discriminate between a threat and acceptance of others by the handler.

They are trained to remain alert, not to become excited by strangers, and to willingly enter vehicles with other people and dogs without becoming hostile.

The patrol dog is trained to be obedient both on- and off - leash. It will enter an empty building to search for hidden intruders or cover an area to find a lost or concealed object.

The patrol dog is trained to press an attack at the command of its handler with the aggressiveness of a sentry dog, but unlike the sentry dog, can be called off the attack at any time.



Provided by Charlie Brugnola (Student – First Patrol Dog Class – September 1968) – Davis-Monthan AFB, Tucson, Arizona

Procurement

Military Working Dogs are purchased from American breeders (80%) and from selected foreign breeders (20%). The average cost is \$4,000 per dog. Male and female dogs are accepted but females must be spayed.

Dogs must be between 12 and 36 months old, and weigh at least 55 pounds, stand at least 22 inches tall at the shoulders and be in good physical condition.

Prior to procurement, prospective dogs undergo extensive temperament and physical evaluations.

They are tested for gun shyness, aggressiveness and basic searching behavior.

Their physical examination includes a blood test for heartworm disease, radiographs of their hips and elbows and a thorough physical examination from head to tail.

Only if the animal is found to be both temperamentally and physically sound will it be procured for the program.

New Breeding Program Announced

The Air Force Security Forces Center, Army Veterinary Corps and the 341st Training Squadron have combined efforts to raise dogs for the military working dog program through a new breeding program designed to augment the current method of buying dogs.

The program has produced seven litters of Belgian Malinois dogs — the only breed the program will produce — since it began in 1998. The breeding stock used for the litters came from the inventory at Lackland, three males and five females.

Buyers will go to Germany in July (2001) to buy new breeding stock, which can cost up to \$10,000 per dog. Quality is the most important consideration when buying dogs, said Capt. Anthony Maisonet, 341st Training Squadron director of operations and foster parent of Dugan, a puppy from one of the litters. The 341st TRS trains military working dogs and their handlers.

"It's a considerable investment because it's for a lifetime of work," said Captain Maisonet.

The goal of the breeding program is to produce more than man's best friend.

"The puppy program should give us a couple things," said Maj. John Probst, **(One of our own Thailand handlers – Don Muang – 1975 (Shep - 80M3 & Rebel - 8M12)** 341st TRS commander. "It will give us a better understanding of dog behavior to make our training program more productive. It will make our recruitment process better by allowing us to buy a better quality dog, because we know what we're looking for. Physical traits are easy to recognize on the spot. Characteristics and temperament, however, are not, and hopefully, the puppy program will give us a clearer view of that."

The commander said he hopes the program will give the squadron 10 to 30 percent of the dogs they will need each year, but that's a long-term goal. Right now, they are more interested in learning what makes the best military working dog and how to recognize those characteristics for future buy trips.



Photo courtesy of Goulds Malinois, PA

To do that, each puppy is given to a foster parent, volunteers from the 341st TRS, who will keep them for the first 10 months to socialize the puppies and observe them.

"We try to expose them to as many things as possible," said Captain Maisonet. "We take them to social gatherings; get them used to noise, vehicles and machinery. You don't want a dog that will cower to any kind of sudden noise, because in the future you want your dog to be prepared for anything."

Once a week for the duration of the socialization period, the puppies and foster parents see Dr. Stewart Hilliard, breeding program manager, who tests their drive for an object, their willingness to bite and how the puppy reacts to different situations and noises.

"We try to help the foster parents encourage the right traits and strengthen desired characteristics into the dog as they mature and become socialized" said Major Probst. "A full grown dog that is used every day has to be one with courage and confidence, one that is not afraid of a new environment and feels comfortable running into it."

All of the puppies from the first seven litters and from the first litter of the new breeding stock will have a chance at training so the 341st team can observe and gather information. One litter will begin its training by the middle of the month.

After that, Captain Maisonet said they will try to use the information they have learned from the pilot litters to eliminate a puppy as quickly as possible so they aren't spending as much time with a dog that will not succeed as a military working dog.

Formal funding for the breeding program began in 2000 and will continue through 2005. On average, it costs about a \$420,000 per year to run the program, according to the major. He says the funding and the whelping kennels are the first steps toward making the breeding program permanent and making the Department of Defense dog program a more effective one.

All at the 341st TRS agree there is still a lot of work to be done.

"Breeding puppies is the easy part," said Captain Maisonet. "Raising them and training them is what is difficult. We want to make sure we're doing it right, and that's always a challenge."



Graduation: USAF, Army and Marine Handlers

Training Today!

Military working dog training begins by establishing the handler - dog relationship through constant close association – feeding, grooming, exercise and play.

This stimulates and develops the dog's natural instinct for companionship. Once this relationship has begun to develop, basic obedience training is introduced.

Obedience training for military working dogs is not significantly different from that conducted by professional civilian trainers for personal pets, except that it never stops.

The same key factors of patience, firmness, repetition, and reward and correction are applied throughout the training process. Of these factors, patience is the most important. The handler must never lose his patience and become irritated, or the dog becomes confused and hard to handle.

A dog does not understand the difference between right and wrong according to human standards.

Desired response is communicated to the dog through reward and punishment. When the dog responds correctly, it is rewarded with verbal praise, physical petting or, with food or play articles.

If a wrong response is made, the reward is withheld or the correction is applied. For most dogs, a firm "no" and sharp jerk on the leash are sufficient correction. Repeated jerks on the choke chain are seldom needed.

This is the only form of correction generally applied to military working dogs. Inflicting pain on a dog is detrimental to training and is not allowed except as a last resort for correcting deliberate disobedience, stubbornness or defiance.

From the initial phases of training, the dog is never permitted to ignore a command or fail to carry it out completely. If a dog fails to execute a command properly, praise is withheld, and the dog is placed in the desired position and then praise is given.

The dog is never allowed to suspect that there is any correct response except total obedience.

Advance Training!

After basic obedience training, a dog enters advanced training, which includes controlled aggressiveness, attack, and building and open area searches.

During this phase a dog is taught to ride quietly in the patrol vehicles without exhibiting hostility toward other people or dogs; to find a suspect or hostile person in a building or open area; to attack, without command, someone who is attacking its handler; to cease an attack upon command at any point after an attack command has been given; and other tasks.

Because these tasks require absolute control over the dog at all time, proficiency training must continue from this point throughout the dog's entire service life.

Dropping proficiency training on any one of these tasks for as little as 30 days significantly decreases the dog's capabilities and can result in having to completely re-train the dog.

"Sniffer" Dogs.

To combat the growing use of marijuana and other drugs in Southeast Asia, a drug detection course was added in January 1971 to the MWD program.

Qualified patrol dogs demonstrating exceptional curiosity, eagerness and ability to retrieve were selected as the dogs most likely to succeed in the program.

The first dogs trained for marijuana detection were tested under a variety of field conditions and proved highly successful.

Even samples sealed in plastic bags and glass jars, and other samples packaged with other substances intended to mask the marijuana scent were easily detected by the dogs.

After these successes, the marijuana detector dog program was expanded and cocaine, hashish and heroin were introduced into the program to expand the dog's capabilities.

This also proved successful and today the Department of Defense has more than 500 drug detector dogs in service at bases around the world.

Bomb & Mine Dogs.

Also in 1971, the Air Force began training dogs to detect explosives. The British, who trained "bomb dogs" for use in Northern Ireland, first attained success in this field.

In special tests, explosives detector dogs were able to detect odor concentrations as small as one to two parts per billion; in several tests, the dogs detected concentrations too small to measure with current equipment. To ensure that detector dogs retain the highest possible level of capability, constant proficiency training is required. Mine Dogs, not used since Vietnam, are now being used and trained in Bosnia in support of our troops.

Veterinary Care

The Veterinary Division supporting the Department of Defense Military Working Dog program provides complete veterinary care for the more than 300 dogs kenneled at Lackland AFB.

Worldwide referral and consultative veterinary services are available for all dogs in the MWD program. The Veterinary Division's professional staff consists of four U.S. Army Veterinary Corps officers with advanced training in surgery, radiology, and internal medicine, plus one civilian veterinarian specializing in animal behavior.

Ten enlisted animal care specialists plus three animal behavior technicians complete the highly skilled staff. The Endodontic Residency Program at the 59th Medical Wing, Wilford Hall Medical Center, supports the veterinary function by performing endodontic therapy for all military working dogs and by training human endodontists and clinical veterinarians in veterinary endodontics for specific application to military working dogs.

The Veterinary Division supports dog buying trips in the United States and overseas with veterinary personnel for medical evaluation of each prospective canine candidate. Renovation of the veterinary hospital was completed in September 1990 and provides a unique modern facility with state-of-the art equipment for optimum care of these valuable canine assets.

Duty!

Most (not all) military working dogs serve long, useful careers. If they are no longer needed by one installation, they are now moved to another.

There is no limit to the number of times a MWD can change bases or handlers! In this way, most dogs can serve a long useful life!

There was a time that once a dog was accepted for military duty and trained, it would not be returned to a civilian environment...but that changed on November 9, 2000, when President Clinton signed Congressional Bill HR-5314 into law.

Congressional Bill HR-5314 allows the option of retired military working dogs to be adopted, by their former handlers, or any individual, who has comparable experience or by law enforcement agencies.

With the new law, the U.S. Department of Defense can change its policy forbidding the adoption of these dogs due to the possible danger they pose to the public. The law resolves this concern with its "Hold Harmless Agreement," which releases the United States from any liability for a retired military dog's actions once the dog is transferred to a new guardian.

To be eligible, the dog's current Base Commander and Vet would have to approve the dogs suitability for adoption.

Those dogs who are unable to perform active duty, and are not eligible for adoption, would still be sent back to the Lackland 341st Dog Training School, to be used in the training of new dog handlers; or for MWD demonstrations.

While the law allows for the adoption of the dogs as an option, it is still not a requirement for the DOD. However, the DOD will be responsible for keeping an annual, detailed record of each dog that is adopted or euthanized, including case by case information about why a dog was either adopted or selected to be euthanized.

We certainly hope that you have enjoyed our first edition and maybe even learned something about our Dog Schools – they were great times!

In conclusion, the below art work by Mr. Charles W. Shaw, Austin, Texas, sums up the turbulent times of “retraining” Sentry Dogs to Patrol Dogs. Over a year ago, I spoke with Mr. Shaw and we talked for about one half hour. I tried to explain to him what I felt this art work meant to me as a dog handler – it was so very hard to put into words. As we were about to end our conversation, Mr. Shaw thanked me for contacting him and told me how much he appreciated my thoughts on the dog and the handler depiction. He thanked all of us for our service and was very appreciative that “someone” had contacted him after all these years. He told me that I had captured his thoughts about the painting and that he now felt that he had told the story correctly. Study the photograph carefully – I think you can see the emotion in the handler and the dog. This is what it is all about!



Charles W. Shaw – Air Force Art Collection (1970.126) – 3 March 1970