Extract from:

The Police Dog: History, Breeds and Service

Chapter 14

The Dogs of War

U.S. Marine handler, Corporal Michael Galloway and Scout Dog Stormy search a tunnel and find an enemy satchel of explosives (Vietnam, 1970). Stormy's first handler was Ron Aiello.

The propensity of primitive men to raid neighboring bands or villages did not abate as we advanced technically and socially, learned to fashion ever more sophisticated and effective weapons and the technical and societal means to plunder on an ever expanding scale.

As understood and explained by scientists such as Konrad Lorenz, this innate aggression is a necessary evolutionary adaption for life; but establishing mechanisms of social control has become much more difficult as advancing technology and production potential have provided increasingly effective weapons, mobility as in use of the horse and larger and more robust states to support more far reaching excursions. As a consequence small scale skirmishes between bands evolved over time into full scale wars among nations.

Dogs were participants from the earliest times, providing intrusion warning, searching out opportunities of plunder and directly fighting an adversary. Such things were natural extensions of the herd guardian and hunting roles, emerging out of ancient, evolutionary established predatory and territorial instincts and the family group or pack social structure. Even into the era of swords and spears aggressive dogs could be a significant factor in an engagement, just as in the hunt.

En masse deployment of war dogs of the Molosser type has been depicted on the walls of the ancient Egyptians and Assyrians and in the writing of the Greeks and Romans, sometimes with armor and spiked collars. Although the vision of hordes of snarling, spike collared hounds hurtling into enemy ranks is dramatic, details of breeding, training, logistics and deployment strategy are sparse. Those with the least bit of practical canine experience can well envision the care and effort necessary to loose masses of dogs in the vanguard of battle, for those large and aggressive dogs would have needed handlers and trainers to make them ready and willing at the appointed place and time. Even transporting the accouterments of war, the spiked collars and body armor, from battle to battle, indeed, even feeding the dogs, would have been a resource consuming logistical challenge.

Engagement tactics would have been problematic, for in the fog of war battle fields become confused and turbulent places. When the command went forth to release the dogs effective training and deployment strategies would have been critical to ensure that confusion and fear was struck in the ranks of the foe rather than your own advancing lines. The extent to which the purpose of the dogs was psychological, creating fear, rather than tactical is difficult to discern at this point in time.

In this era battles were decided in hand to hand combat, where discipline, holding the line of battle, was fundamental. Although we know little in the way of detail, what we do know, the descriptions of body armor and spiked collars, of massive deployment, indicate that the purpose of the ancient war dog was to disrupt and distract the adversary, to render him vulnerable through injury and fear, disrupting formations and dissipating discipline.

Since we have limited knowledge of how common or effective packs of dogs were or might have been, evocative drawings on ancient walls may have been akin to some modern depictions of war, having more to do with image and propaganda than reality; war stories have no doubt been told as long as men have gone to war. But chained or restrained dogs as perimeter defense are commonly mentioned in history, as in Napoleon's Egyptian campaign and latter in Russia. Attila the Hun is said to have routinely employed dogs as perimeter guardians of his encampments. Dogs restrained by handlers, or tied to fixed points, would have provided intimidation, deterrence, defense and the option of loosening them at an appropriate moment. Psychological factors, the fear that they might be loosed, likely played their own role.

Although the massive deployment of war dogs had long faded in Europe by the medieval era, the surge of European exploration and colonization of remote regions devoid of guns and steel brought forth new opportunities for dogs of war, as exemplified by the overrun of the Aztec empire by the Spanish Conquistadors and a little later the suppression of slave insurrection in the Caribbean islands and elsewhere. New world agriculture and mining, from South America through the American South, became dependent on African slave labor, and the ever present threat of insurrection on every scale, as illustrated by the successful revolt in Haiti, became an oppressive part of colonial life. In most regions slaves far outnumbered European owners and overseers, and every means of containment and control was employed.

Large and aggressive dogs, bred specifically for the purpose, often of the Molosser type, played a major role in intimidation, recovery of runaways and punishment. In the Caribbean particularly packs of savage dogs, bred over time for the purpose, were routinely deployed; fear, the expectation of savage attack by packs of dogs, was an ever present reality for the slave population. Such dogs, evolved by crossing Bloodhounds with especially vicious mastiff or bulldog lines, came to be known as Cuban Bloodhounds, and also as Nigger Hounds and other pejorative names meant to demean and instill fear.[1] There is little doubt that there were diverse regional varieties, with some the cross bred hound type and others more of the Molosser style, precursors to the modern Dogo Argentino and Fila Brasileiro.

In antebellum America much of this fierce canine persona was created by packs of slave hunting hounds, made famous in the movies and portrayed as hunting escaped prisoners as well as slaves. While all sorts of dogs were likely employed, the emphasis was on specific lines such as imported Cuban Bloodhounds. This savage,

[1] Bloodhound enthusiasts emphasize, correctly, that these were cross bred specifically for fierceness, and that the original Bloodhounds of the era, and those of today, were and are much more benign.

terrifying persona became legendary because of the reality and because the image was projected in lurid press accounts and through word of mouth – creating subservience through fear and intimidation was the underlying purpose. Although such dogs to a large extent disappear at the close of the war, remnants of such lines likely persist in our southern farm dogs.

Although in most of the world today military and police dogs are less often deployed for terrorism and oppression, such things do, and always will, go on. Even in the American south of the civil rights era, the 1960s, such dogs were deployed, along with the fire hoses and police lines, for intimidation. Throughout most of history, fear of the military or police dog was there because it was put there, was the purpose of the dog, was a perfectly rational response to the reality.

The Modern Era

The widespread introduction of gunpowder transformed all aspects of war. As artillery increasingly dominated the battle field and the rifle became more sophisticated and effective castles were transformed from strongholds of survival to picturesque relics, armor and the mystique of the knight were relegated to the realm of legend and the offensive role of the dog abated. Just as the infantry man with a modern repeating rifle rendered the cavalry charge obsolete, modern firearms removed any remaining vestige of practical use for war dogs as offensive weapons.

Today purely aggressive dogs are out of the mainstream of modern, progressive military and police applications. While it remains true that contemporary police breeds, such as the Malinois, are capable of serious aggression, and are bred and selected to be high in fighting drive, to be of use in the modern context this aggression must be secondary and supportive rather than the primary function. Discipline, restraint and control are canine watchwords where the dogs routinely come in close contact with diverse military, supporting and civilian personnel. The static perimeter guard role, long a mainstay of canine service, has to a significant extent been taken over by electronic and optical intrusion detection technology, such as television surveillance and night vision devices.

In the twentieth century, beginning in WW I, military dogs increasingly served as messenger, search, detection, scout and patrol dogs as exclusively aggressive roles diminished. This transition was gradual, for the old fashioned military guard dog, persisting into the Vietnam era, was in no essential way different from the perimeter guard dogs of Napoleon or even back into the era of Greeks and Egyptians.

Although many breeds were proposed and touted for modern military service, the tending style herding dogs, especially the Belgian and German Shepherds, emerged as the practical type. Although breeds such as the Airedale and Doberman served through WW II, these breeds were generally abandoned as the modern era progressed. There is a touch of irony in the fact that breeds specifically created for man aggression, such as the Molossers and Doberman Pinchers, fell by the wayside as the herders, with the inbred propensity to protect the flock or herd rather than focus on engaging the predator population, came to the forefront.

As Napoleon famously commented "An army marches on its stomach," and dogs have contributed to logistical, behind the lines support roles throughout history. The American Army deployed sled dogs as recently as WW II – to rescue downed aviators in northern latitudes among other things – and the indigenous draft dogs of Belgium played a minor role in WW I. Dogs have always fulfilled the more informal and mundane roles of watch dog, guard dog, draft dog, pack dog and even messenger; when man goes to war warriors have needs between battles, and the dogs, like the camp women, were always present as mascots and simple companions if nothing

WW I British Messenger Dogs
(Richardson, 1920)

else. The Roman legions often took herds, and accompanying dogs, on the march to provide food; to what extent the dogs participated in battle can only be a subject of speculation.

During the American Civil War dogs were employed as sentries, mascots and as makeshift search or patrol dogs, but there was no formal program of recruitment, training or deployment on either side. Dogs were used at prisoner of war camps where they served as guard dogs; and where packs of hounds were maintained to chase down escaped prisoners. No doubt the canine packs maintained to pursue and punish fleeing slaves were well adapted to this new role.

The first formal, large scale deployment of the modern war dog took place in the First World War, most prominently and successfully by the Germans, the only nation with a substantial, long term prewar program in place. Although the Americans had no military dogs of their own, they were able to utilize British and French dogs to some extent. (Chapman, Police Dogs, 1990)

The early German enthusiasm for military applications naturally brings to mind the prominence of the German police breeds, but this was going on in the later 1800's before these now famous breeds had been formalized, were still in the fields and meadows with the sheep and cattle. Although there had been growing interest, the German Shepherd national breed club and the rapid proliferation of the breed, and to a lesser extent the others, particularly the Doberman, would not occur until the later 1890s.

In their search for war dogs the Germans were focused on the formal purebred rather than cross breeds or undocumented dogs of the fields and pastures. In this era many of the prominent purebreds were British, the progenitors of the German police breeds still unnoticed in the hands of shepherds, drovers and farmers. The breeds considered included the Poodles because of their intelligence and trainability, but they lacked ruggedness. The St. Bernard was a candidate, but had degenerated, was too far from their functional roots. The Great Danes were large, unwieldy and difficult to control. The larger hunting dogs were robust, but the inherent hunting instincts were a serious impediment to training; the deeply ingrained propensity to chase rabbit or deer presented discipline issues. The Airedale was a contender early on, and many served in the German military in both world wars, but they would fade.

In his 1892 book on the war dog the famous German animal painter and illustrator, Jean Bungartz, made an impassioned case for the Scotch Collie. (Britanica) Beyond his illustrations and writing he was directly involved in the Red Cross (military medical assistance) dog program of the German Government, was in fact the director. This experimental program seems, at least initially, to have been focused on the Collie, and his participation would persist until well into the twentieth century. Von Stephanitz was not enthused about Herr Bungartz and his Collie dogs.

Commencing after the Franco-Prussian War, in 1870, the German military had begun encouraging and subsidizing civilian training and breeding. In 1884 the first

war dog school was established at Lechernich, near Berlin. Training was diverse, including messenger dogs, scout dogs, sentry service and ambulance or sanitary dogs. Jean Bungartz, a hands on man as well as a famous artist and writer, was the head trainer with his particular interest in the Red Cross dogs. These ambulance dogs were the subject of incessant promotion and publicity prior to WW I, in several nations, largely because many of the promoters were essentially breed advocates seeking service venues which would engender positive public perception. In the harsh reality of WW I trench warfare expectations faded and interest did not reemerge after the war.

The Herrero Campaign (1904-1907) in German South-West Africa (modern Namibia) served as a proof of concept proving ground for the German war dog program. Some sixty dogs were deployed with the military and were deemed effective as security, search and patrol dogs in difficult terrain and operating circumstances. This success provided impetus for the German program in the lead up to major European war. In a war of subjugation over the native population there was no expectation of public concern over harsh treatment or injury to victims with no legal rights or standing, which provided a great deal of latitude for experimentation with little expectation of negative press or civilian wringing of hands.

The establishment of the German Shepherd as a formal breed in 1899 and the phenomenal growth over the next fifteen years under the leadership of von Stephanitz was the pivotal event in the evolution of the modern military and police dog, for in terms of sheer numbers everything else became preamble. The German Shepherd would be the backbone of military and police canine service for a century.

WW I

When war finally came, the Germans were ready with trained dogs, placing 6,000 in service at the onset of hostilities. According to records of the German Society for Ambulance Dogs at Oldenburg, of 1,678 dogs sent to the front up to the end of May 1915, 1,274 were German Shepherds, 142 Airedale terriers, 239 Dobermans and 13 Rottweilers. (Britanica) About 7,000 German dogs were destined to die during the First World War, serving as messengers, guard dogs, telephone cable pullers or medical search dogs.

The allies – the British and French – were late to the war dog game. A formal British program was not established until 1917 at Shoeburyness, some three years into the war, under the auspices of the signal section of the Royal Engineers. This program was under the direction of Major Edwin H. Richardson, who had been promoting and studying military and police canine applications for many years. The initial dogs going into service were those that he had been training privately, and the supply of dogs was largely from private citizens in response to a well-published plea for donations. As mentioned, there was no American war dog program at all.

Emphasis was on the messenger service, but sentry dogs were also trained and deployed. Of 340 dogs sent to France from the school within a certain period, 74 were collies, 70 cross bred sight hounds or Lurchers, 66 Airedales, 36 sheep-dogs, and 33 retrievers, the remainder being made up of 13 different breeds. (Britanica) The static western front provided relatively little opportunity for the scout or patrol style of service that would prove so successful in the South Pacific in the next war, and in Vietnam.

One of the primary uses of the dog[2] was for message delivery, as practical radio use was in the future and telephone lines took time to lay and were subject to sabotage or monitoring by the enemy. High value goods, such as maps, ammunition or even cigarettes could be transported. Elaborate training and deployment methods were devised, including the delivery of pigeons by dogs for return messages. The trench warfare contributed to the practicality of this, for it provided cover for the dog and established routes which could in some circumstances be learned and repeated. In more dynamic tactical environments, with routine advances, retreats and troop movements, a returning dog might have to seek the handler by use of his nose, that is, find where he had moved to, which introduced an element of uncertainty.

The British used messenger dogs with a single handler or trainer, the dogs being taken forward by ordinary soldiers and then released as necessary with a message in a tube or container attached to their collar, the dogs returning to their handlers by instinct and training. Among the advantages of this approach was the efficiency in terms of personnel, that is a single handler typically worked several dogs, since specialist handlers were not required at the point of origin, usually the front lines, the dogs having been taken forward by ordinary soldiers, and all of the dogs could return to a central location, usually some sort of command center. The Germans employed teams with two handlers for each dog so they could be sent back and forth, sometimes referred to as liaison dogs.

Richardson, in his famous book on war dogs, says that the simpler single handler system was necessary for the British because there was no preexisting program and reservoir of trained dogs and handlers. He advocated that a certain number of liaison dogs, those capable of going back and forth between two handlers, should in the future be trained and maintained ready for service, but much to his frustration the British program was abandoned after the war.[3] Richardson indicates a strong preference for use of male dogs and reports that retrievers in general were not as satisfactory. Terriers such as the Airedale and also smaller breeds such as the Irish Terrier were successful in his program, and he was entirely open to the use of mixed breed dogs. Statistically, the Collies, Lurchers and Airedales predominated.

A central British kennel and training operation was established in France at Etaples. The dogs were ready for deployment after five or six weeks of intensive training. From Etaples the dogs were posted to sectional kennels behind the front line, each kennel consisting of about 48 dogs and 16 men. From these kennels the handlers, with up to three dogs, were sent forward for duty behind the trenches.

The French canine training center was at Satory, established about the same time as the English school at Shoeburyness. Shepherds of various kinds, Airedale terriers and Scotch collies were among the breeds utilized. In addition to the messenger, sentry and patrol dogs, the French also trained dogs for transport, that is, pack and draught dogs.

As mention previously, the German war dog program was large and diverse, with German Shepherds, Dobermans, Airedale terriers and Rottweilers the preferred breeds, roughly in that order. The Germans emphasized the duel handler messenger dog system, the so called liaison system, with the dogs travelling back and forth between two handlers. The two handlers generally had several dogs, and were trained or adaptable to cable laying and transporting carrier pigeons, ammunition, maps or other light, high value items. If there were no military missions, the dogs were run without messages as necessary in the interest of training and conditioning.

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[2] Carrier pigeons also played a role, sometimes transported to the front on messenger dogs.

[3] (Richardson, 1920)

According to Lemish the British and the French had twenty thousand dogs by the end of the war, and the Germans thirty thousand. Least anyone retain any illusion of the romance or nobility of war, thousands of these unfortunate dogs, acquired and trained at such sacrifice, were simply put down at the end as surplus. (Lemish, 1996)

After the war the Germans were under onerous terms, very seriously limited and restrained in their military activity, which made another war virtually inevitable, and the British and French greatly diminished their own military preparedness. The Americans disarmed almost completely, and only low level, sporadic interest in dog applications would come before Pearl Harbor. Canine programs were very much on the back burner everywhere, but the Germans, under duress and economic hardship, persisted as best they could.

But in spite of the short sited curtailing of activity, the effectiveness of war dogs in these new roles was in general proven, and the service would expand significantly in the future. The Germans especially learned their lessons well, and even in spite of the restrictions of the peace terms carried on their training and breeding programs.

But not all war dog programs were successful. In the years leading up to the war a great deal of publicity and effort had been devoted to the so called sanitary or ambulance dogs, intended to find wounded and disabled men on the field of battle and provide assistance, often in the form of guiding rescuers to the wounded men. A principle factor in the effectiveness of the medical assistance dogs was to have been the ability to distinguish between the dead which they were trained to ignore and the wounded who they were to respond to by encouragement or taking a hat or object back to the handler, thus summoning help. All of this was based on the assumption that the unmistakable red on white cross symbol used on men, animals, hospitals or ships would be recognized and honored. Such turned out not to be the case. According to Edwin Richardson:

> "Had these conditions obtained in this war, ambulance dogs would have been of great assistance. As it was, however, when the French army hurriedly sent some of their ambulance dogs with their keepers to the front in the earliest feverish days, the first thing that happened was that, although both men and dogs wore the Red Cross, the enemy brutally shot them all down whenever they attempted to carry out their humanitarian work. It was also found that, when the opposing forces settled down into trench warfare, the opportunities on the Western front were closed. The only ambulance dogs that were used with any success were those with the German army when the Russians were retreating on the Eastern front." He continues: "… the conditions on the Western front soon became, as I have said, impossible for the successful use of ambulance dogs. The French War Office entirely forbade their use with their army after the first few weeks."
> (Richardson, 1920)

It seems that the Ambulance dog, the soldier's friend, was created for public relations reasons as much as anything else; advocates seeking a favorable public persona for their breeds and the dogs generally. Although peace time, civilian oriented search and rescue carries on, formal military programs of this sort no longer are significant.

The Specialists

In modern warfare many soldiers are specialists, and this is even more true of the military dogs: there are a number of distinct functions or missions that demand selection for specific characteristics and the provision of specialized training according to their expected role in combat or behind the lines. Trainers and handlers of course also require their own specialized skill and knowledge sets, and more senior officers and noncommissioned officers need to understand these roles and deploy the teams accordingly, something that has not always been appreciated or achieved in practice.

Most military training programs are thus set up to produce a specific skill set, that is specialist dogs such as sentry, patrol, scout and search dogs. But these roles – discussed in subsequent sections – can overlap and evolve in service as handlers, perhaps assisted by trainers in the combat zone, adapt their dogs according to circumstances, tactical needs and perceived potential in the individual dog and handler. As a prime example, many of the WW II Marine messenger dogs were converted to scout or guard dogs in the South Pacific theatre. In the fog of war, capacity for adaption and improvision is essential.

The Messenger Dog

In WW I the primary canine function was, arguably, that of messenger dog. As illustrated in innumerable tales of dogs returning home over daunting distances, they are capable of navigating difficult terrain and avoiding detection or interference. The four footed drive, low profile, ability to blend in and innate instinct to find a way home were the ingredients for service, and until the advent of reliable, effective field radio units the messenger dog was found to be quite useful and effective. The dogs were often acclimated to carrying a pack so as to deliver supplies or ammunition, and some were trained to string telephone wire up to a mile using special harnesses.

Dogs could move rapidly in adverse terrain and presented a difficult target for the rifleman. While most often the dog returned to the handler, it was also able to follow and find the handler by scent at a distance up to several miles in case circumstances, the shifting battle, forced the handler to move. This is a brief description of WW I German service:

> "... a dog was intercepted no more frequently than a man, and furthermore, if a human messenger is captured he can be forced to amplify the information he carries whereas no one has yet learned how to make a dog talk."
>
> "The infantry and the artillery have separate sets of liaison dogs, because the infantry dogs run from the front lines back and vice versa while those of the artillery run parallel to the fighting line. It has been found that if a dog regularly runs in a given direction there is less chance of its changing its course when crossing other lines of canine communication. All animals are taught to run wearing gas masks as frequently they must cross gassed areas."
> (Humphrey & Warner, 1934) p19

The Germans – and the Americans in WW II – employed two handlers for each dog so they could be sent back and forth. The initial Marine deployments in the South Pacific were half messenger dog teams, with one dog and two handlers, the other half being scout dogs. In the early deployments messenger dog usage turned out to be minimal and they were deemphasized as the war progressed. Many were converted to scout, guard or other duties. (Putney, 2003)

In WW I British messenger dogs used a single handler for the dog, which was taken forward in the care of the ordinary soldiers and then released as required to return to the handler at a base location, usually some sort of command post. Each base end handler typically worked with several dogs since individual trained handlers were not required at forward points in the lines. The special collar with a message tube was typically put on immediately before the dog was sent to build the association with the task required.

WW I had been largely a static engagement where the soldier walked into battle and much transport was by horse and mule, but increasingly WWII, particularly the European and African theaters, involved rapidly moving tank warfare, deployment by truck and generally mechanized operations, made messenger dogs increasingly impractical. In addition to this the early phases of WW II saw the introduction reliable portable field radio units – the famous walkie-talkies – which came into widespread use and were very effective.

In the South Pacific the rain and wet conditions typical of jungle warfare reduced the reliability of the radio gear in the early stages and thus the messenger dogs retained a minor role. But improving radio equipment and tactics over time reduced this role, and many messenger dogs were converted to sentry or scout duty. (Putney, 2003) The relative number of messenger dogs deployed with new units also was substantially reduced over time, and the Marines eventually stopped training such dogs entirely to focus on the enormously effective and in demand patrol dogs.

The overall transition away from the messenger dog was gradual, for they were still being trained to some extent at the Camp Carson Army center as late as the early 1950s.

The Sentry or Guard Dog

The dog of war conjures up the image of the snarling, barking beast straining at the end of a lead, but this guard dog is only one of several types, and in many ways the least sophisticated and demanding in terms of training and handler sophistication. The function of such dogs was to protect fixed bases, encamped troops or any other static asset, anywhere a watch or guard is needed. These dogs were selected to be active and aggressive to protect the handler and to give warning of an intruder; sometimes their highest priority was to live long enough for the handler to recognize and warn of an intrusion. When the handler lacks a radio, the barking of the dog may be the primary warning and notification mechanism. Often deployed as a foot patrol, they are also useful when a jeep or other vehicle is utilized.[4] Sentry dogs are to a large extent born rather than made, for the instinctive, even excessive, aggression cannot be effectively created where it is not there, and making lesser dogs aggressive by abuse, by backing them into a corner and making them fight, is unreliable because in the field there may not be a corner and flight

[4] There are also references in the literature (Richardson, 1920) to long metal lines strung between stationary points, sometimes with a shelter for the dog, so that he could move back and forth as the line from his collar to the slide on the static line allowed him to cover a great range. I am unaware of any contemporary applications of this sort, which are probably precluded by considerations of legal liability.

might very well win out over fight. The sentry dog needs to form at least a minimal bond to the handler, and a certain level of insecurity can aid in this; there is in general no need to be restrained or social, for the world of the guard dog is one dimensional, he is in many programs either on duty or in confinement.

There has been significant variation over the years in the sentry dog, for when they are selected and trained for total aggression they can be dangerous even to the handler, and to veterinarians and others who must care for and interact with them, as when the handler is off duty. Furthermore, such dogs can be deployed only where there is no expectation of interaction with people who may have legitimate business or a legal access to the area. There are a lot of advantages to a more stable, controllable and better-trained dog.

In the modern world of increasingly effective electronic surveillance, that is very economical networks of TV cameras and intrusion detection, and increasing legal liability, this old fashioned one dimensional security dog is increasingly obsolete.

The Patrol Dog

The next step up from the sentry or guard dog is the patrol dog, which is trained so as to be very similar to the traditional police dog. The patrol dog can work in a crowded environment and is much more sophisticated in terms of response to handler management; that is will out reliably and can be recalled. Just as in their civilian counterparts, the military patrol dog, often serving with the military police, is often a dual-purpose drug or narcotics detection dog. Such dogs require a generally better and well-rounded dog, much more training and a more sophisticated and well-trained handler.

Beginning in the Vietnam era, the focus of military training has shifted from the guard dog to the patrol dog. Much of the discussion in the police dog chapter is directly applicable to this sort of military dog, rendering further comment superfluous, but such dogs are very important in military service.

The Scout Dog

The sentry or guard dog is by definition always playing defense, deployed to warn of intrusion on fixed assets such as a military base or encampment. This is a relatively straightforward role, relying in the natural instincts of the dog to bark and show aggression in the presence of a threat, requiring only minimal control and skill in the handler. But neither war nor football games are won on defense, in order to prevail it is necessary to seek out and engage the adversary. This is the purpose of the military scout dog.

The scout dog is deployed with a patrol, a group of exploring soldiers generally seeking out the enemy to force engagement or establish his deployment pattern. The function of the scout dog is to detect and silently give warning of the presence of a concealed adversary, primarily by means of the sense of smell but also hearing. Silence is essential because even the smallest sound could potentially alert the enemy and thus transfer the advantage to him, endangering the entire unit. The scout dog role is among the most sophisticated and useful, requiring an especially proficient handler capable of reacting to the first hint of alert in the dog and maintaining situational awareness. In the most effective mode the dog is off lead and ranging ahead so as to give the earliest possible warning while keeping the handler and the rest of the patrol as far back from danger as possible. This requires strong control, which must be silent or almost silent, in order to keep the dog within sight and thus under control and capable of giving warning.

Vietnam era Scout dog: SP4 Bealock & Chief

Scout dog candidate selection must emphasize alertness, intensity, the acute sense of smell and the ability to remain silent when detecting the enemy and seeking out his position. The dog must be cooperative and trainable; remain under close control as he detects and then moves up to engage the enemy or while withdrawing from a superior force as the tactics of the situation dictate. While the guard dog need be little more than neutral to his handler, the bond between handler and scout dog is the foundation of the effectiveness of the team.

In the ideal the dog will work off leash yet remain responsive to handler control, since in this way, as long as they remain in sight, the dog can give earlier warning and put the handler and the patrol further back from danger. This is difficult in that the handler must keep the dog within the desired distance and yet maintain silence so as not to warn an enemy.

An important point is that the olfactory potential of the scout dog is primarily used for scenting air borne odors or particles rather than the ground odor, that is sniffing the ground to detect disturbances in vegetation or other scents on the surface rather than in the air. While tracking or ground scenting is appropriate in many police situations, including military police and tracking or trailing operations, the scout dog needs to have his head up and be focused ahead where he can alert at the earliest moment based on airborne scent, sound or sight. Sometimes both search or tracking dogs and scout dogs are deployed on the same mission in order to provide both functions, that is search out or follow an enemy through ground and local air scent and also detect the hidden enemy rather than approaching too closely not knowing of his presence.

The sight of the dog tends to be less effective than that of the handler, who because of his erect or semi erect position has a much better field of view; this is very much a team effort. The dog, while not color blind, has much less color sensitivity than a man, which means he is less capable of picking out stationary or partially hidden distant objects or adversaries. The man has better binocular vision, and thus better depth perception, which greatly enhances his ability to discern distant objects. In the dark, the canine eyesight is superior to the man but in general supplementary to the senses of hearing and smell.

Handler understanding of the acuity and limitations of the olfactory power are fundamental, he must always be aware of the wind direction and intensity, for when the wind is from behind the odor of the adversary is carried away in the opposite direction. Because of this the detection capability of the dog is enormously compromised, in a way comparable to operating partially blind. It is essential that the handler understand and be responsive to such issues: operating with the wind from your back oblivious to the consequences may be more dangerous than not having a dog at all because of the false sense of security. For maximum effectiveness and safety the leader of the patrol must make his deployment decisions based partially on the capability of the dog, it is always a substantial advantage to advance into a dangerous area with the wind in your face, bringing the scent to you

and your dog, rather than from behind. Another consideration is that if the enemy has a dog then this tactic takes advantage of wind direction to conceal the advance as long as possible. (The Japanese had an extensive military canine program in WW II.) Very often practical circumstances prevent a downwind approach, but the handler and patrol leader need to be aware the vulnerability.

Airborne scent carries and disperses on the wind, which means that terrain, including hills, bodies of water and vegetation influence airflow and thus the distance and reliability at which the dog can alert to danger. The more the handler and patrol leader are aware of these factors, the more the dog can contribute to the safety and effectiveness of the patrol.

Although scout dogs are sometimes thought of as similar to police service dogs, the man aggression of the scout dog is secondary in a team where every human is heavily armed and alert to the need to respond. Sure if things get up close and critical it is good that the dog pitches in and contributes, and the dogs with the drive and intensity to be good scout dogs are likely to be aggressive in close. But direct aggression as in bite and hold is secondary for the primary mission of the scout dog.

That said, in many programs the scout dog is sometimes expected to be capable of service as a sentry or guard dog, able to protect a command or observation post against enemy infiltration, especially at night. This needs to be limited however, the dog in the field all day must be rested just as the soldiers must rest; expecting to get double duty from the dog by having someone else take him on guard duty at night could greatly reduce effectiveness in both roles. But of course in war every man and dog has to occasionally pinch hit in something a little bit outside of his comfort zone.

Explosive Detection Dogs

Although explosive or mine detection is today arguably the most important military canine application, this is a relatively recent development. There is little mention of such things in the literature prior to WW II, and although there were significant unsuccessful American efforts to develop and deploy mine detection dogs in that era detection would not come into its own until the twenty first century.

WW II German use of buried, nonmetallic mines in North Africa, which could not be detected by existing electronic mine detectors, created a serious problem and led to the training and deployment of mine detection dogs. A unit including 100 trained dogs was deployed to the African campaign, arriving in Algeria in May of 1944. But the dogs proved unreliable and substantial causalities occurred as they were deployed. (Lemish, 1996) (Waller, 1958)

According to Lemish there were the usual problems of setting up a program with no experience base, that is no trained personnel, and canine acquisition and training programs in place. But the underlying problem was that the dogs were essentially taught to detect the odor of the material of the mine and the soil or ground disturbance by human beings when the mines were buried. This training was based on compulsion and avoidance, generally producing erratic and fearful response. The underlying problems were thus in the motivational approach, compulsion rather than reward, and not understanding that the focus of training should have been on the odor of the explosives themselves rather than the material of the mine or the disturbance to soil created by the burial. Those involved did not seem to comprehend that the dogs could have been much more effective at sniffed out the odor of the actual explosives had they been trained to do so. The unit was soon returned to America and deactivated, providing poor public relations for the war dogs in the European theater. (Lemish, 1996) The Marines also trained a small number of mine

dogs, which were ineffective for these same reasons. (Putney, 2003) In general WW II attempts to produce mine detection dogs were regarded as failures.

U.S. Army training documents late in the Vietnam era indicate that the primary motivation for the explosives detection dog was to be food, and the concept was that any trained dog could be utilized by any correspondingly trained handler. (Phillips, 1971) German Shepherds and Labrador Retrievers were the preferred breeds, with no mention of Belgian Shepherds or any sort of play object motivation such as use of a Kong or ball.

The aftermath of the 9/11 attack in 2001 and our subsequent military engagement in Iraq and Afghanistan would bring explosive detection dogs to the forefront, both in the military as a counter to the ubiquities deployment of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and in police and domestic security operations to deal with terrorist use of planted bombs. Although the traditional training methods as pioneered by men such as Most were historically adequate in scout, patrol and sentry applications, successful substance detection, both drugs and explosives, required a much more inducive or reward based training protocol. The more traditional aggression based applications, that is guard or patrol dog, were effective because the motivation, the fighting drive, came from within the dog; there is no need to reward a good dog for engaging the decoy with food or a ball. But in and of themselves drugs or explosives have no interest for a dog, the training protocol must therefore provide a separate reward, generally food or an object such as a ball or Kong.

In addition to the traditional breeds of herding origin, the German and Belgian shepherds, the military today employs other sorts of dog for purposes such as explosive or IED detection, notably Labrador Retrievers, that while powerful and robust are, because of long term breeding selection, much less volatile and much less intimidating to civilian populations.

In general the dual purpose dogs, that is Shepherds or Malinois, used for patrol and detection, are largely trained using prey or object drive, where the dog learns to indicate passively, usually by sitting quietly, in order to gain his reward of a tennis ball or Kong. The specialists such as the Labradors are often trained exclusively with food, sometimes to the extent that the only food they receive is in payment for finding the desired substance. It is to be understood that these are generalities, and that there is a great deal of diversity in training methods according to practical considerations in specific circumstances and the preferences of the people involved. The old training saying that there are many roads to Paris certainly is applicable here.

WW II

The consequence of Hitler's rise to power was rapid expansion of the existing covert preparation for war. One component of this was the establishment of a canine training facility at Frankfurt in 1934. The result was 50,000 dogs ready to go when the Polish invasion commenced in 1939. (Chapman, Police Dogs, 1990)

As in the Police applications, the American military also lagged European programs, with no formal canine program prior to the WWII. When the Japanese struck at Pearl Harbor dogs on hand in the military were only few sled dogs in the north, which did form the nucleus of an critical rescue capability for downed flyers, as for instance in Greenland during transfer of military aircraft for service in the European theatre.

Early in 1942 the need for working dogs was an escalating priority, and the civilian, volunteer based Dogs for Defense program came into existence to fill the gap. Although training, begun on an amateur civilian basis, quickly was taken over by the military, Dogs for Defense was a primary supplier throughout the war. By the end of the war, 40,000 dogs had been offered to the program, but more than half were rejected immediately, with 18,000 being shipped to training and reception centers, where another 8000 failed preliminary health, size or temperament evaluations. Although the Navy and Marines initially procured some dogs directly from civilian donations, this was folded into the DFD program, which thus became the sole provider. On one level this represented a strong citizen commitment to the war and helped build public morale, but on the whole it would seem to have been a relatively inefficient means of supplying the necessary dogs. (Lemish, 1996)

The formal military program began on March 13, 1942 under the auspices of the Army Quartermaster Corps. The most urgent priority was the costal patrol operations of the Coast Guard, for there was great fear of a Japanese invasion and the landing of Japanese or German sabotage personnel, especially from submarines, which were actively patrolling both coasts. In June of 1942 four German saboteurs were landed from a submarine on Long Island and four more landed in Florida a few days later. Although there are no records of other landings, the beach sentry dogs were available for rescue efforts and did on occasion locate bodies from merchant marine ships which went down.

In the modern era there have been only sporadic programs to develop more offensive oriented canine programs, that is, train dogs to take direct physical action against the enemy. The most prominent of these in America was a program begun in October 1942 at the Cat Island War Dog Reception and Training Center, located in the Gulf of Mexico near the mouth of the Mississippi. Approximately 25 American soldiers of Japanese descent were selected to play the role of Japanese soldiers in the training, which included large dogs such as Irish Wolfhounds and Great Danes. This played out for about four months before the Army brass came to their senses and

WW II Marine War Dogs

scrapped the program, although the Cat Island facility served as a conventional training facility for the duration.

In addition to the Cat Island episode, there was a brief experimental program at Fort Belvoir in Virginia where dogs wearing a backpack with explosives and a timing device were to be trained for sending to enemy bunkers, unknowing suicide dogs. This program never got beyond the preliminary phase, which is probably just as well.

Although it is human nature to be critical or dismissive of such things in hindsight, in time of all consuming war every potential avenue of advantage needs to be explored. If no one ever looked into concepts that seemed obviously foolish or impractical in the end enormously important and effective innovations, such as repeating rifles or atomic weapons, would have been overlooked. Nothing could have seemed as outlandish to those lacking a knowledge of modern physics, all but a few mathematicians and physicists, as the initial proposals for the atomic bomb. Several high ranking military officers are reported as flat out denying that it was possible.

The Army canine program formally commenced on July 16, 1942, under the auspices of the Quartermaster General. The first Army training center was established by the Quartermaster Remount Depot in August of 1942 at Front Royal, Virginia. In late 1942 additional centers were opened at Fort Robinson, Nebraska, Camp Rimini, Montana and San Carlos, California. Later in the war, as the focus was increasingly on the scout dog, all training was done at Fort Robinson.

Eventually a little over ten thousand dogs were trained by the Army and rendered valuable service around the globe, from the deserts of North Africa to jungles on Pacific islands. The following chart of WWII statistics is from the Army Quartermaster General's Office (Waller, 1958) :

Type of Dog	Army	Coast Guard	Total
Sentry	6,121	3,174	9,295
Scout	571	0	571
Sled and pack	263	0	268
Messenger	151	0	151
Mine detection	140	0	140

Type of Dog	Number	Domestic	Overseas
Sentry	9,295	8,396	899
Scout	571	135	436
Sled & Pack	268	0	268
Messenger	151	0	151
Mine Detection	140	0	140
Total	10,425	8,531	1,894

This is only part of the picture, since WW II Marine Corps canine operations in the South Pacific, commencing a little later, became extensive and on the whole more successful. A total of 1,047 dogs passed initial screening and were enlisted in the Marine program, with 465 eventually deploying overseas. Over the course of hostilities 29 canine Marines died in action and 5 went missing, 25 on Guam where dogs served on 500 patrols. (Putney, 2003)

The first contingent of canine Marines trained with the Army at the Fort Robinson, Nebraska facility; because of this the first forty marine war dogs were Army supplied, mostly German Shepherds. Subsequent basic training during the rest of the

WW II Coastguardsman with Walkie Talkie radio unit and Doberman.
Combat radio equipment was rapidly rendering the messanger dog obsolete, and although initially many messenger dogs were trained there was less and less use as radio equipment became more reliable. Some dogs were retrained in the field as scout or guard dogs.

war took place at the Camp Lejeune Marine facility in North Carolina.[5] More advanced training, on the way to Pacific deployment, took place at Camp Pendleton near San Diego.

At the end of the war, 232 dogs were shipped back in November of 1945 to be returned to their owners or remain with their handlers. Eventually, 491 canine veterans, from overseas and Stateside, were processed back into civilian life. This was done over a period of about a year at Camp Lejeune under Dr. Putney, author of a subsequent book on the marine war dog experience. In spite of dire predictions, this went smoothly, with virtually no subsequent problems in civilian life, although, sadly, a hand full of dogs had to be euthanized as too difficult to transition back.[6]

Although impressive numbers for a program that started from nothing, literally with donated dogs off the street, this was a relatively small program compared to that of the Germans and others. Even the Japanese had their ongoing prewar, large scale breeding and training programs and substantial numbers of trained dogs, primarily German Shepherds, at the commencement of hostilities. Some of these Japanese dogs, were captured and converted for use in our own programs. (Putney, 2003)

The Guadalcanal invasion conducted by the Marine Corps in August of 1942 was very difficult jungle warfare, and ongoing efforts to clear pockets of resistance in this environment met with high casualties. Although there were no existing canine units available, one result of this experience was the decision to launch an ambitious recruitment and training program to provide canine support for future invasions and particularly patrol in jungle environments.

This turned out to be very successful, and experience in the South Pacific and Vietnam has proven conflicts in jungle settings to be the arena where the dog is the most effective and useful. The jungle patrol is relatively quiet and cautious, the enemy is dangerous because he is silent and hidden. The scout dog was able to detect hidden Japanese troops at distances large enough to provide an effective warning. Although distances of 1000 yards, more than half of a mile, were reported this would be under unusually favorable circumstances, but one or two hundred yards would be a reasonable expectation. Perhaps the greatest testimonial to the effectiveness of the scout dog is that, once training and deployment issues were refined by experience, they were much in demand by the troops actually going out to face the dangers of patrol in enemy infested jungle areas.

[5] This was in some respects a bad choice, as the majority of dogs trained developed heart worm and other parasite infestations associated with mosquito populations. This was much more difficult to prevent and treat in that era. (Putney, 2003)

[6] This brings into focus the shameful military policy of the Vietnam era and beyond, where policy was that dogs served for life, to be put down when they were no longer convenient for the military bureaucrats to deal with.

WW II Marine War Dogs

The Doberman Pincher Club of America immediately took up the cause and substantial numbers of Dobermans were provided for the duration. There are some misconceptions about this in that there were about as many German Shepherds as Dobermans used in the Marine program and also other breeds. These Dobermans were promoted under the banner Devil Dogs but this seems to have been largely external propaganda, the term does not appear in the definitive book on the Marine war dog experience by Marine Captain William Putney (Putney, 2003), a veterinarian who played a key role in the training program and deployed to the South Pacific where he was actively engaged in combat. Captain Putney is also well remembered for his efforts, in the mid-1990s, to move and preserve a canine cemetery as a memorial for these fallen heroes of the South Pacific, a shining example among many shameful episodes in the military's treatment of the dogs of war when their service came to an end. (Putney, 2003)

The primary Marine training center was Camp Lejeune in North Carolina, and deployment in the Pacific theater commenced in June of 1943; the combat debut was Bougainville in the Solomon Islands shortly thereafter. Significant numbers of Army trained canines were also being deployed in the South Pacific and South East Asia in 1943, some serving with Marine units.

In a broad sense, the experience of the second world war was that dogs are much more effective in the jungle warfare of the South Pacific than in more open terrain suitable to tank warfare as existed in Europe and North Africa. Lemish makes reference to "...the failure of the military dog program as a whole throughout the European campaign." (Lemish, 1996)p97 While this could perhaps be construed as harsh it is nevertheless probably a realistic assessment.

Contributing factors were the reactions of the dogs in the presence of artillery, partially a training and selection issue but also a fundamental limitation and the rapid pace of mechanized war. And some of the problems were due to the lack of experience and knowledge that would only come later. As an example, Lemish notes that a major problem with mine detection dogs was that no one knew that the dogs could detect through smell the presence of the chemical explosive and training efforts thus centered on the disturbed ground or the metal.

On the eastern front in WW II the Russians trained and deployed dogs as anti-tank weapons by acclimating them to a bomb laden pack, starving them and then teaching them to seek out food under tanks, where the explosives were most effective because of the thin armor. This had its problems in that released dogs are unpredictable, can wind up in many undesirable places including back with the handler and under your own tanks. The threat was, however, serious enough that the Germans were aware of it and devised counter measures, that is, were alert to

shoot lose dogs on the battlefield. In spite of the difficulties, such things have been contemplated more recently, by the Israeli military among others.

The fundamental lesson to take from our WWII experience is that while dogs can be extraordinarily useful and effective adjuncts to our service men in their duties, full benefit only comes from programs that invest wisely in acquisition and training of the dogs and handlers and focus resources and funds selectively. There will always be a need to identify areas where dogs are marginal or ineffective and direct resources elsewhere. But even this is not enough, for effective deployment requires that the general military leadership, the officers and noncommissioned officers, know enough about canine capabilities and especially limitations to apply them effectively. These same general common sense principles also of course apply to police deployment.

Toward the end of the war, there was a decision in the Marine Corps to abandon use of the Doberman Pinchers. (Lemish, 1996) This is the pivotal report by Marine Lt. William T. Taylor, commander of the Second War Dog Platoon:

> "Although a few of the Dobermans performed in an excellent manner, it is considered that this breed is, in general, unsuited for combat duty due to its highly temperamental and nervous characteristics. They also failed to stand up as well as the other types under field conditions. On the whole, the Doberman proved to be more excitable and nervous than the other breeds under combat conditions, and required much time and effort on the part of his handler at all times in order to keep him properly calmed down and under control. Although admirably suited for certain types of security work, dogs of this breed are not desired as replacements for the 2d and 3d War Dog Platoons."

Lt. Taylor goes on:

> "They [German Shepherds] stood up excellently under field conditions; and throughout their health average has been very high. Possibly the fact that this group were not so highly bred may have had some bearing on their more stable qualities and better stamina. All German Shepherds were available for front line duty at all times." (Lemish, 1996)p129

Lemish goes on to comment:

> "Taylor's report, accepted on face value, meant the beginning of the end for the Doberman Pinscher as a military working dog."

This needs to be kept in perspective, since we were at war with Germany and because of the general state of war in Europe all of these dogs were drawn from existing domestic stock, the dogs in American homes. In light of the effectiveness of more modern specialized breeding programs, what was accomplished by pulling ourselves up by our bootstraps was remarkable. On the other hand, these working breeds, that is the German Shepherds and Dobermans especially, were from American breeding only a few years removed from the original imports after WW I and in fact there was continuous importation, especially of widely used stud dogs, in that era. American and European lines were not nearly as divergent as they have become in recent years.

The Doberman community was intensively aggressive in promoting their breed, and through the Dogs for Defense program provided the lion's share, particularly for the Marine program. The most plausible explanation for the observed problems is that these civilian enthusiasts, with no real military dog knowledge or experience, generally misunderstood the actual attributes necessary in war service, and selected for overtly aggressive dogs, both in breeding before the war and in recruiting

candidates. It is true such dogs would have been more appropriate in static perimeter sentry duty, and many were to serve successfully in that role, which may have skewed initial selection toward more overtly aggressive, less stable dogs. While the guard or sentry dog only needed to relate to the handler, and overt aggression to others was generally appropriate, the Marines of the South Pacific were primarily in need of patrol dogs where timely warning of the presence of the foe was of the essence, and where the dog had to remain silent and under tight control in routine close contact to other Marines and civilians, in the general fog of war.

After the war the canine programs were greatly curtailed as part of a general disarmament in the brief lull before the commencement of the cold war. The Army dogs were in the immediate post war period under the operational control of the Quartermaster Corps in Front Royale, Virginia, and beginning in 1951, the infantry at Fort Carson, Colorado. In this era the Army was purchasing their own dogs, exclusively German Shepherds, and the Marine program was no longer in existence.

Although there were some areas of disappointment, on the whole the American WW II military canine program was a remarkable achievement, based as it was on dogs taken directly out of American homes for men with little or no experience assigned to new canine units with no culture or established training methodology in place. They literally built a program from the ground up in a very few months.

Scout dog & handler in Korea

Korea and the 1950s

The Korean police action is the forgotten American war; reminiscing about the great generation of WWII being much more emotionally satisfying than remembering the brutal conflict in remote Korea, ending in stalemate rather than victory. But those who served there sacrificed and died too, including some of the dogs. This was a cold harsh climate rather than a jungle and after a quick North Korean advance, a spectacular American amphibious landing at Inchon and then massive Chinese forces coming across the border the conflict became relatively static on the 38th parallel. During the early stages of rapid mechanized warfare there were no American scout dogs deployed. (Lemish, 1996)p153 The existing canine forces were totally inadequate and an extensive recruitment and training program was implemented. As the dogs became available emphasis was on night patrol and sentry duty. Approximately 1,500 dogs were deployed for the Korean conflict, many serving with distinction even if they are now almost forgotten.

By the mid-1950s the Army was winding down in general and the canine operations were no exception. This was the era of the increasing tension with the Soviet union and great expansion of the missile and air bases of the Strategic Air Command and the Nike anti-aircraft missile bases going up around the nation as a defense against Soviet air attack. There was great concern about potential sabotage and the Air Force was seeking ever-increasing numbers of dogs for perimeter defense of these critical installations.

In the 1954 to 1957 time period, the Army Dog Training Center at Fort Carson was primarily used to train military working dogs for the Air Force. In 1957 this facility was closed down and operations transferred to the Air Force.

In October of 1958 the Air Force established the Sentry Dog Training Branch at Lackland Air Force Base near San Antonio, Texas. Although this was in the beginning a very small unit, with less than a dozen men, it would eventually evolve into an enormous facility encompassing more than 700 acres. The Lackland facility grew rapidly, and eventually, after the Vietnam war, would become the primary training facility for all military canine operations, other governmental operations such as the Secret Service and, after 9/11, the *Transportation Security Administration* (TSA).

In 1964 the Air Force began a policy of securing and training its own dogs, rather than through the Army, further expanding operations at Lackland. This was an era of increasing tension, expanding police canine units and escalation in Vietnam. The biggest problem was procuring sufficient numbers of suitable dogs, and Air Force recruiting teams toured the country, setting up radio and TV advertising and buying dogs on the spot.

Scout dog & handler in Vietnam

Vietnam

The Vietnam experience was gut wrenching for the entire nation, most especially the military; and the canine operations were no exception. In the early years the focus was on propping up the Vietnamese military, sending in ever-increasing amounts of material and American advisors. In general the South Vietnamese government did not have adequate, broad based support from the population and commitment was the one thing we could not pack up in boxes and ship over at taxpayer expense. This was fundamentally guerilla warfare where the enemy held no ground, controlled the time and place of engagement and disappeared at will back into the jungle or underground tunnel and cave networks.

In the early years significant numbers of dogs, many purchased in Germany and shipped directly to Vietnam, were provided with the expectation that American advisors would be able to conjure up an effective military canine operation, with the hope of creating a standalone capacity through ongoing breeding, training and deployment programs.

This turned out to be tragically unrealistic in every aspect, for the Vietnamese culture simply did not relate to the dog in the same way as do the Europeans and Americans: turning the often reluctant Vietnamese candidates into effective handlers, let alone trainers, was difficult, and creating a stand-alone infrastructure capable of an ongoing breeding and training was simply beyond the realm of reality. Even establishing an effective program for care of the dogs was problematic in a culture where many saw dogs as food, and, indeed, more than a few dogs did wind up being eaten and many more perished because of starvation or lack of simple care.

Vietnamese officers made serious blunders in deployment: according to Lemish it was not uncommon to deploy sentry and attack dogs into the field as scout dogs, often with tragic results. Such dogs were entirely useless or more to the point a

danger because of their training, that is, they were programmed to alert, bark and attack any stranger, which was appropriate on perimeter base security but a disaster looking for a place to happen on patrol, where the dogs needed to silently indicate unseen Viet Kong. (Lemish, 1996)p171

As the situation deteriorated and combat was taken over increasingly by Americans the canine units became much more numerous and effective. The military dogs served a number of distinct roles:

Security of Air Force and army bases and other fixed installations.
Scout dogs for patrol.
Search or tracking dogs
Tunnel detection and neutralization
Mine detection.
Drug and contraband detection

As the American presence expanded, the initial highest priority canine role was base security at places such as Cam Ranh Bay, Da Nang and Tan Son Nhut; names that became all too familiar on the evening news. Air Force sentry or guard dogs peaked at 467 dogs in 1967, and the Army had their own program peaking at about 300 dogs. The Marines and Navy also had smaller sentry dog units at Da Nang. Most if not all of these dogs were German Shepherds. (Lemish, 1996)

The sentry or guard dog training of the era focused on the creation of vicious and difficult to control dogs, perhaps appropriate for a single man and dog on the perimeter of a lonely ICBM facility in North Dakota but difficult to deal with on increasingly crowded bases with increasing interaction with others, such as veterinary personnel, new handlers and larger groups deployed to respond to a Viet Kong intrusion.

In 1968 the military responded by developing training and selection emphasizing better control, that is, producing dogs more akin to traditional police patrol dogs than dogs with single dimension aggression. Such dogs were much more versatile, able to function unmuzzled and in some circumstances off leash in increasingly crowded areas in the presence of both friend and foe. The 1968 program at Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland used personal from the Washington Metro Police to train the dogs, and more importantly the military personnel. This, and similar Air Force experimental programs marked a turning point in military training, an era of more sophisticated training and deployment and better public relations. The patrol dog, that is a dog trained according to contemporary police methodology, replaced the sentry dog as the standard and most common military dog.(Lemish, 1996)p181

Over all, the security dogs in Vietnam were enormously effective and a serious impediment to Viet Kong base intrusion. Although there were the unavoidable causalities, to both handlers and dogs, training and deployment strategy became so effective that more sentry dogs were lost to heat related illness or snake bite than enemy action. (Lemish, 1996)p181

Secure base areas was well and good, but in order to win the war the need was to engage the enemy on his own ground, the jungles and villages. As in all guerilla warfare the Viet Kong held little ground, selected the time and place of engagement and disappeared at will back into the jungle or underground tunnel and cave networks, some within the confines of supposedly secure base areas. In order to respond to this, new tactics and strategies were needed. Ultimately, the best defense is a good offense, and as American infantry men and Marines were increasingly engaging the Viet Kong in the jungles, their home territory, the enemy's knowledge of his environment and ability to select the points of engagement placed our troops in an increasingly hazardous environment. Several solutions emerged, especially the

renewal of the scout dog program to provide security for our troops on patrol and specialist search or tracking dogs to seek out the enemy in his lair, especially his underground networks.

Thus the Army base at Ft. Benning, Georgia was designated to provide Vietnam era scout dog training, commencing in early 1965. In addition to the Army dogs, for the first time since WW II the Marines were preparing to deploy scout dogs: On July 3, 1965 the 1st Marine Scout Platoon also commenced training at Ft. Benning. (Aiello, 2012) The program kicked into high gear in September of 1965 in response to urgent requests from Vietnam for immediate deployment of scout dogs. In February of 1966 two Marine scout dog platoons, with fifty six dogs, all German Shepherds, deployed for the first time since WW II, near Da Nang.

In order to search out the enemy, the military implemented training programs to produce dogs that could follow or search for Viet Kong troops and other dogs specializing in locating the ever expanding network of tunnels. Bloodhounds were tried but quickly discarded, one reason being that they were vocal, with the likelihood of warning the intended targets. As the program evolved, most of the tracking dogs were Labrador Retrievers, who were found to be robust, resilient and very effective. Since these dogs were focused to a certain extent on ground scent, likely altering between tracking and trailing in today's terminology, there was a significant risk of inadvertently engaging the object of the search, with seriously bad consequences. For this reason, the search teams often included a tracking / trailing dog and also scout dogs, which were trained to focus entirely on air scent, sight and sound so as to most reliably alert on the presence of an adversary at a distance large enough to maintain tactical control, that is effectively engage or retreat rather than blundering into an ambush.

Mines and all sorts of what today would be called improvised explosive devices – booby traps, trip wire explosive detonators, punji stakes, concealed pits and so forth – were ubiquitous and effective elements of the Viet Kong operation. Although the scout dogs might very well alert on such devices, a significant number of dogs were trained as mine or explosive device detection specialists. These were apparently most often German Shepherds or other traditional police breeds, as engagement with the enemy was a regular occurrence. These dogs and the tunnel detection dogs were originally trained as separate specialties, but in the realities of actual war service individual handlers and dogs often adapted to fulfill functions other than their original training.

Vietnam was an unpopular war and most Americans were not there voluntarily. This and other factors, such as easy availability and an increasingly open drug culture, led to a significant level of illicit drug use. Just as drug detection dogs have become part of drug suppression on the home front, there was considerable use of dogs in Vietnam to counter this activity. This seems to have evolved late in the war and been focused primarily on preventing large quantities of drugs going stateside with the returning troops.

Another consequence of conscripted troops was that, although volunteers were much preferred, many canine handlers were draftees arbitrarily assigned to canine training; handlers injuring their own dogs to avoid patrol duty was not unknown, since the handler of a sick or disabled dog normally remained at base rather than on patrol. Sending handlers of injured dogs out on the point, sans dog, seems to have discouraged this. (Lemish, 1996)

During the Vietnam War the Army unit at Fort Gordon, Georgia was primarily responsible for training scout dogs, combat tracker dogs, mine dogs, tunnel dog teams, and marijuana detector dog teams. Ultimately approximately 5,000 dogs were deployed, mostly as sentry or scout dogs. Since many handlers, especially the

draftees, went home after a year or two, most dogs, serving life sentences, had two or even more handlers. Thus over the course of the war, more than 9,000 handlers were used for the 5,000 dogs.

Credible estimates are that about 2,700 dogs were given to the South Vietnamese, of which 1,600 were euthanized and 281 were eventually listed as killed in action. These dogs could not win the war, but they made an enormous contribution to the effectiveness and safety of our ground troops; many American men returned because of these dogs.

Vietnam was not our finest hour in many ways, and the wind down after defeat rather than victory tends to be disorganized and ugly. These military dogs, heroes to so many, were for the military bureaucrats merely excess equipment to be disposed of locally in the most expeditious way. Although there was enough public reaction to goad the military into sending a token few back, in the end most of these dogs were to be abandoned and sacrificed by an incredibly callous military leadership in one of their most shameful and blackest hours, forever a stain on their honor.

Current policies are much more humane, but this is not credit to a better grade of military bean counter, but rather that direct internet and telephone contact between the troops and home would create an enormous backlash at the abandonment of a dog except in the most dire circumstances. Throughout history military bureaucracies have been able to do whatever they found convenient, satisfying or personally profitable, to their own as well as the enemy, and routinely lied about it on the grounds of security considerations. Indeed, military secrets often have more to do with shame and concealment of greed than actual security for the troops in the field. This was primarily because communication was meager, delayed and absolutely under their control. This is no longer true, and although there are some complexities on the whole we are better for it.

The Post Vietnam Era

In June 1973, as Vietnam wound down, the Defense Department made the decision to give the Air Force complete responsibility for canine procurement and training, which has carried forward to the present. Thus today the United States Air Force provides all procurement and training services for American military working dogs through their 37th Training Wing at Lackland AFB located at San Antonio, Texas. At the height of the Iraq and Afghanistan engagements Lackland was producing about 500 working dogs a year, some from their own Malinois breeding program. Reports of the total number of military dogs at any time vary, but about 2,700 seems to be the conscious. Since this means that on average the career of the individual would be a little over five and a half years, this seems to pass the common test. Reports on the actual number in Iraq and Afghanistan, primarily for search and explosive detection, also varied over time as circumstances changed; five to seven hundred are typical of reported estimates.

This Lackland base supplies trained military working dogs for scout, patrol, drug and explosive detection, and other specialized mission functions for the Department of Defense. Other government agencies including the Transportation Security Administration also use Lackland as a primary source of trained dogs. Although primary procurement and training responsibility is with the Air Force, the other branches, that is, the Army, Marines and Navy, also have training personnel involved to support their specific needs and programs. Although many breeds have participated in the past, today only the German Shepherd, Belgian Malinois and Dutch Shepherd are accepted for patrol and sentry dog duty. Drug and explosive specialist dogs are sometimes other, less intimidating, breeds such as Beagles and Labrador Retrievers.

Military dogs were present in August of 1990 when American and associated forces drove Iraq out of the Kuwait oil fields, but played a minor role in the high tech operation involving air operations and wide ranging tank engagements. Although difficult to confirm, it is said that this was the first presence of the Malinois deployed with American forces, an accelerating trend even today.

Century Twenty One

The decade long American military engagement in Iraq and Afghanistan thrust our soldiers into a new kind of war, one in which they had all of the advantages in terms of weapons, infrastructure and technology but were nevertheless uniquely vulnerable, in many ways fighting blind in that the enemy, among and indistinguishable from the people, could choose his moment to strike. Multimillion dollar helicopters and elaborate armored vehicles, transported at enormous expense half way around the world, often proved inferior to explosive devices triggered by a twenty dollar radio controlled toy truck mechanism or a modified cell phone, activated at the decisive moment by an invisible foe who slipped away unseen from the blood splattered scene of devastation and death.

To meet these challenges more sophisticated canine training and deployment strategies evolved, most especially explosive detection dogs capable of seeking out the ubiquitous IED devices by the odor of their explosives, of indicating quickly, reliably and correctly without disturbance to the found objects. Also essential were dogs able to patrol and search streets and buildings under handler direction, often off lead, where civilians were more often than not more numerous than the enemy.

For the detection dogs especially this marked a paradigm transition in training doctrine and methodology in which prey or hunt drive – balls and Kongs – became the primary motivating factor. This necessitated stability, intense drive and dogged persistence since the war zone military search by its nature is a long and arduous task in enormously stressful and often disagreeable circumstances. (Some specialist dogs continue to be trained using food as the reward mechanism, but the same comments on intensity and persistence apply.)

Although the old style military training – pioneered a century earlier by men such as Colonel Most – remained as a foundation, more modern concepts of drive based training came to the forefront. In this program training tends to be increasingly through enhancement and encouragement of natural drives and instincts, as in the use of food and prey objects such as balls and Kongs, rather than compulsion. In acquiring young dogs breeding according to these natural propensities and drives became increasingly important, for such training demands that the drive be there and that it be intense and persistent under stress. Many dogs will play fetch for a few minutes on a sunny afternoon, but in war long hours of persistence and adverse conditions are the norm.

Thus the modern war dog is focused on the search and detection roles, that is patrol duty, clearing or searching city neighborhoods or building interiors and detecting hidden explosive devices. Such dogs can be most effective through the cooperative bond with a strong handler, an exemplary soldier as well as a capable dog man. This bond unites the assets of the dog, that is the olfactory acuity, sharp hearing, night vision and aggressive potential, with those of the man, that is, modern automatic weapons, situational and tactical awareness and the more effective, above ground field of vision. The effectiveness of the team is thus multiplicative, so much more than the sum of the individuals.

Because this bond, this partnership, is so essential the ideal military canine experience would be an exclusive long term relationship with a single handler, extending from initial training throughout the service life of the dog. This ideal is very seldom realized. Handlers in the normal course of events are routinely reassigned, promoted, incapacitated or reach the end of their enlistment. In such instances the dog, representing a substantial investment in acquisition cost and training, must usually transfer to a new handler. (An older dog nearing the end of his

U.S. Marine Lance Cpls. James Blomstran and Ryan Gerrity, an improvised explosive device detection dog handler and fire team leader with Blomstran's dog Sage.
Helmand province, Afghanistan, Photo Cpl. Reece Lodder.

service life sometimes retires with the handler or his family.)

Transfer is generally readily accomplished so long as the need for time and resources dedicated to a training and bonding process is recognized. In a typical scenario, when a handler is rotated out at the end of a tour of duty and the need for the dog remains, in addition to the waste of resources it would detrimental to readiness to not transfer the dog to a new handler, putting lives unnecessarily at risk.[7]

Although historically new dogs and handlers often were trained together from the ground up, today the green dog is often trained by full time staff personnel to a relatively advanced level, at which point a novice or even experienced handler is introduced to complete training as a pair prior to deployment preparation and training. Just as the truck driver does not necessarily need to know how to overhaul a transmission, effective handlers are not necessarily, and do not need to be, competent ground up trainers. Civilian business entities often acquire and train pups and young dogs for subsequent sale to the military. When well run, such programs have advantages in that they evolve effective relationships with suppliers, often European, maintain consistent work to keep the better trainers on staff and can be called on to supplement training by military personnel in times of peak demand, as in war.

One of the reasons for dedicated trainers is that no matter how selective the program some dogs are inevitably found wanting and must be discarded part way through the training process. With experienced trainers such things can often be minimized or identified early in the process, thus discarding the dog with less waste of time and money. A novice handler and a green dog can make problem determination, whether to wash out the dog or the handler, difficult.

While military dogs must be under good control, and many are reasonably social and can mix with diverse people, others are not social and only safe because of handler situational awareness, discretion and discipline. This means that the dog, the handler and the mission must be appropriately matched, which is why the success of canine programs, police and military, depends on understanding of the intricacies of canine service at administrative and leadership levels.

Many aspects of war are ugly and fraught with unintended consequences, and for these reasons downplayed or done in secret. There is a general fear of dogs in many individuals and cultures, which can be and is exploited in order to intimidate or extract information.[8] This is sometimes condoned and sometimes goes on without explicit authorization because it is understood that nobody is going to look for it; under the stress of war men will do what seems necessary to prevail or survive and deal with the consequences, if any, later. It would be seriously naïve to doubt that this sort of thing will exist as long as men go to war.

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[7] During the war in Iraq there was a much-publicized incident where a female canine handler was injured and wanted her dog to be sent home with her to provide companionship and comfort, even though dogs were acquired and trained at great expense, in short supply and thus withdrawing the dog from service would seriously endanger other personnel. She sniffled a little bit, played the press card and got her way, and the politicians paraded her in Washington for their own propaganda purposes. But this was a selfish and irresponsible episode, potentially endangering her fellow soldiers still at hazard in a combat zone. War is a cruel and difficult business, and such decisions need to be left to the professional military and not played out in the press or through political patronage and manipulation.

[8] The primary purpose of the Malinois in the mission to take out Osama bin Laden is generally believed to have been intimidation of possible civilians outside the compound.

Commentary

Vietnam was an American tragedy. We blindly blundered into a new kind of war where with great confidence, some would say arrogance, we sought to impose our concepts of how others should govern themselves, conduct their national affairs. We found ourselves losing a war where the enemy was among the people, wore no uniform and could strike and then fade into the background. We were brought down by hubris; the expectation that our vaunted industrial and military prowess enabled and justified the determination to rearrange the social order in regions of the world we did not begin to comprehend.

Most sadly of all we learned nothing, for forty years later we would do the exact same thing in Iraq in the aftermath of the 9/11 attack. As in Vietnam, in Iraq and Afghanistan the American military has had overwhelming superiority in terms of weapons and technology, yet was unable to prevail in the long term. The people of Afghanistan in particular have been fading into the countryside and mountains for centuries in the face of invasion and occupation, only to reappear when the Greeks, British, Russians or Americans finally just gave up and went home frustrated.

The Iraq and Afghan insurgents fight with patience, cunning and skill, one of their primary weapons being the IED or Improvised Explosive Device, which has been responsible for the majority of American causalities. The military dogs have been generally the most effective means of countering this threat, and rendered great service and helped to bring many of our people home alive and whole, not an insignificant legacy is such difficult circumstances. But in a culture with vastly differing attitudes to dogs, it is questionable whether the military canine has had a positive role in winning minds and hearts rather than projecting the image of the arrogant American.

War is a business where young men, and now young women, perish, often for no perceivable purpose of national honor or gain, to atone for the failures of leadership and diplomacy of the old men who provoke and conduct war. Most would endorse our WW II crusade, but those who were maimed or perished serving in Korea, Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan must also be honored and remembered. Our war dogs have not won or lost any wars, but thousands of young American soldiers and Marines lived to return to families and complete their lives because of our canine soldiers – and their trainers and handlers – and we must thus honor them as well.

The war dog is a vast and complex subject and this can be only a brief introduction; those with deeper interest are well advised to acquire and study the exceptionally useful and well written books of Michael Lemish and Captain Putney. The Lemish book especially is indispensable for the serious student and scholar of American military canine applications, there is really nothing to compare to it. (Putney, 2003) (Lemish, 1996)