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**THESIS**

**GROUND DOG DAY: LESSONS DON'T HAVE TO BE  
RELEARNED IN THE USE OF DOGS IN COMBAT**

by

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December 2005

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**GROUND DOG DAY: LESSONS DON'T HAVE TO BE RELEARNED IN THE  
USE OF DOGS IN COMBAT**

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## ABSTRACT

Currently, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan involve the US fighting insurgents. The nature of the fight in highly populated areas negates traditional American strengths in technology and mechanization. One of the potential tools in this fight is the expanded use of military working dogs (MWD), also called war dogs or K-9s. The increased use of dogs on the battlefield has the potential to save lives. The problem is that this lesson seems to have to be relearned with every prolonged conflict the US enters. The delay by the military leadership recognizing dogs' utility on the battlefield has historically cost US servicemen's lives.

The purpose of this thesis is to determine whether lessons that have been learned could be applied to the current MWD program to enhance the effectiveness of using dogs in combat. The intent is not to convince the reader that every lesson or particular conclusion or recommendation presented is the final solution to creating a "perfect" MWD program. The aim, instead, is to offer a spectrum of options or alternative methods that may be of use to those involved in MWD programs and to suggest areas for further research and exploration.

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# I. INTRODUCTION

## A. INTRODUCTION

High-tech wizardry may have changed the look of today's battlefield, but one thing will never change—the need for early detection of the enemy. For thousands of years, dogs have been in the front of men engaged in battle. Military tradition dictates and demands that they will always be "Forever Forward." (Lemish, 1996, p. xiv)

Currently, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan involve the US fighting insurgents. The nature of the fight in highly populated areas negates traditional American strengths in technology and mechanization. The number of casualties from the conflicts continues to rise everyday and the military leadership continually calls for solutions to the threat that the insurgents pose to American military personnel. One of the potential tools in this fight is the expanded use of military working dogs (MWD), also called war dogs or K-9s.

## B. THE PROBLEM

The increased use of dogs on the battlefield has the potential to save lives. The problem is that this lesson seems to have to be relearned with every prolonged conflict the US enters. The reasons why these lessons have to be relearned are numerous but inexcusable, since delays by the military leadership in recognizing dogs' utility on the battlefield have historically cost US servicemen's lives. Little has changed in the fifteen years since MAJ Denzil Frost wrote in his thesis, published by the US Army Command and General Staff College in 1990, that, "The canine's or MWD's nose offers significant potential because of its superior sensitivity to any other sensing device. Unfortunately, the US today finds itself in the same familiar position [with a MWD program not equipped for the current conflict] as it has at similar points in history" (Frost, 1990, p.1).

Jim Pettit, the dog program manager at the US Army Maneuver Support Center and Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, echoes Frost's views,

Today and in the recent past the MP dogs have been great in force protection on the gates and health and welfare inspections/customs work, and bomb detection for the President. As listed above the military needs to move dogs forward and put them in useful combat roles as was done in Vietnam. The dog is still the detection asset it was back then. Improvement in training techniques and adaptability of breeds still keeps the dog as the gold standard for detection, tracking, etc. Technology still

isn't there. I have heard technology will replace the dog for 20 years now.  
(Taken from a questionnaire response sent to the author by Jim Pettit on  
October 3, 2005)

### **C. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this thesis is to determine whether lessons that have been learned could be applied to the current program to enhance the effectiveness of using dogs in combat. The intent is not to convince the reader that every lesson or particular conclusion or recommendation presented is the final solution to creating a "perfect" MWD program. The aim, instead, is to offer a spectrum of options or alternative methods that may be of use to those involved in MWD programs and to suggest areas for further research and exploration.

### **D. BACKGROUND**

An earlier attempt to provide information about the MWD program was undertaken by Denzil Frost when he prepared his 1990 Master's thesis, *A Centralized Source of Information for the Military Working Dog Program*, for the Army Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. He also used a questionnaire in an attempt to develop more information on the military dog program. MAJ Frost had a problem similar to one I re-discovered during my research. As Frost puts it, "Attempts to locate information about the MWD Program led mostly to military regulations, with very little information about training, management, procurement, or use by the Using Agencies" (Frost, 1990, p. 256). Frost discovered that the responses he received covered the complete spectrum of what was wrong with the MWD Program at the time. He found that it, "...was impossible to establish a consensus of opinion. The Training Section blamed the procurement and management sections for the shortfall of trained dogs, or vice versa, depending on which group was queried" (Frost, pp. 256-257). These issues and others remain present in today's MWD programs.

Another Master's thesis was written on the subject of military working dogs by Lieutenant Commander Mary Murry. Her thesis was entitled, *The Contributions of the American Military Working Dog in Vietnam* dated June 5, 1998 was prepared for the US Army Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. The following abstract is from LCDR Murry's thesis:

This study investigates the contributions of the Military Working Dogs in Vietnam to determine their significance to the United States' war effort. There is limited written history concerning the use of the Military Working Dogs in Vietnam. The methods and procedures employed in this study data relied extensively on personal military After Action Reports and histories (written and oral) to compile a historical account of the military working dog in Vietnam. The study found that when correctly employed, these animals made significant contribution to the United States' war effort in terms of the saving of lives and in the protection of military resources. However, these contributions could not be quantified therefore assumptions were made as to the effectiveness of the animals. Despite their effectiveness, the scout, tracker, and mine/tunnel dog programs were disbanded at the conclusion of the Vietnam War. This practice of disbanding military working dog programs at the conclusion of conflict is one that has been practiced since World War II. Each subsequent war has necessitated the rebuilding of military working dog programs. Today, only the sentry dogs are still active, having been joined by the relatively new narcotic detection dogs. Future conflicts may necessitate rebuilding the scout, tracker, and mine/tunnel dog programs.

I have found that all of the points that LCDR Murry made in her thesis remain valid today. The ongoing conflicts in Southwest ASIA have renewed some interest in recreating programs similar to those developed in the past. And, indeed, variations on past programs are in development or becoming operational once again.

Fortunately, several books have been published since Frost wrote his thesis, including Lemish's, *War Dogs* that depict the history of the military working dogs. These historical accounts led me down a number of avenues where, like Frost, I discovered during my research that:

A large gap exists between what is known in the research world (science) and what is applied in the 'real world' (art). In other words, no evidence could be found that the art of producing consistent, top quality working dogs was based on scientific principles that ensure repetitive and verifiable results. (Frost, p. 2)

This use of the term "art" led me to create a questionnaire by which to elicit and draw on the expertise of former and current military handlers and dog trainers. I had limited success finding sources of scientific or detailed information about the effectiveness of using and training dogs for combat, so I decided to go to the people who had first-hand experience themselves. I found through my investigation of the MWD

program that certain trends have persisted over time, while other lessons have been lost and are worth recovering.

During my research on the MWD's, I visited the current MWD program, the DoD Military Working Dog Training Center at Lackland AFB. I also had the opportunity to personally visit with Jesse Mendez, former Vietnam scout dog handler and trainer, and correspond with several former and current handlers by telephone and email. From the conversations and emails with former handlers and current handlers and the use of written materials, I developed a questionnaire covering topics about which I felt former and current handlers could provide some insights. I conducted an extensive literature review of every available US military manual printed on the subject of dogs and every civilian book that could be found. This was an attempt to determine the context and history of the current program in an effort to discover how the program evolved to its current state and so that I could collate lessons along the way. This literature review revealed an extensive and colorful history. Military Working Dogs (MWDs) have successfully saved lives during past conflicts, the implication being that they could also do so in today's conflicts.

This thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter I is an introductory chapter. In Chapter II, I briefly cover the history of war dogs through the US experience in Korea. Chapter III describes US programs since Korea, with a particular focus on the scout dog program in Vietnam. Chapter IV outlines the current MWD program. In Chapter V, I summarize responses to my questionnaire and make a series of recommendations.

#### **E. ASSUMPTIONS**

This study assumes that:

1. The information and expertise required to address the problem exists, but is not static.
2. That the amount of information collected by a variety of methods—literature review, interviews, questionnaires, email, and phone conversations—is sufficient to yield valid conclusions.
3. As Frost himself noted, “Expert consensus will yield valid conclusion, even though it is difficult to prove, on a scientific basis, whether an SME [subject matter

expert] is right or wrong. If a group of SMEs reaches a consensus on a specific subject, the chance that all will be wrong will be minimal” (Frost, p. 3).

#### **F. LIMITATIONS**

1. Pertinent data may not be available, or may be incomplete, due to specific policies of general nondisclosure or for proprietary reasons.

2. Contacting *all* potential sources of information was not possible, primarily due to time constraints.

3. The amount of time that I could spend as an observer at the DoD MWD Training Center at Lackland Air Force Base was limited due funding and time constraints.

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## II. HISTORY OF THE MILITARY WORKING DOG

### A. INTRODUCTION TO THE HISTORY OF MILITARY DOGS

Over thirty thousand dogs have served in the U.S. military, thrust into harm's way and responsible for saving thousands of American lives. Throughout history, dogs have been employed effectively for sentry and scouting duty, finding booby traps, and locating wounded and lost soldiers. Their only reward was merely praise for doing a good job. Having fought alongside humankind in battle, these dogs are the forgotten veterans. (Lemish, 1996, p. ix)<sup>1</sup>

Militaries have employed dogs in a variety of roles throughout history. Dogs have been used primarily as defensive weapons; however, attempts have also been made to use them offensively. The use of dogs has changed and has been tailored to each conflict. As Lemish states, "High-tech wizardry may have changed the look of today's battlefield, but one thing will never change—the need for early detection of the enemy. For thousands of years dogs have been in front of men engaged in battle. Military traditions dictates and demands that they will always be 'Forever Forward'" (p. xiv).

### B. PRIOR TO WORLD WAR I

"The earliest known battle dog was a mastiff type from Tibet that was domesticated during the Stone Age. Persians, Greeks, Assyrians, and Babylonians all recognized the tactical advantage of war dogs and deployed them in great numbers as forward attacking elements" (Lemish, 1996, p. 1). The Assyrians used dogs as early as 2300 B.C. (Thornton, 1990, p. 4). There are records describing one engagement where dogs were used in the Peloponnesian War (431-404 B.C.). "During the battle of Versella, women led hordes of war dogs against the Romans" (Lemish, 1996, p. 2). "In the fifth century, Attila the Hun understood the advantage of traveling with dogs and journeyed with four-legged sentinels in his conquest of Europe. As with knights and horses during the Middle Ages, canine armor developed, encasing the dogs in battle plates and chains (Lemish, 1996, p. 3). The Italian naturalist Aldrovandus, born 1522, wrote of the

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Lemish has been the historian for the Vietnam Dog Handler's Association. He is not a Vietnam veteran or a former dog handler. Lemish's book, *War Dogs: Canines in Combat* is widely regarded as the most accurate and comprehensive book on the subject of war dogs. Given the fact that little has been written about the war dogs of the United States, I have frequently referenced and quoted from Lemish's book. I have done this primarily because of his ability to concisely represent the complicated and ambiguous circumstances that reflect the history of the use of dogs by the military. Lemish's book currently offers the best single resource for understanding the subject.

development of sentry and war dogs. His writings were very similar to those of the United States' Air Force manuals written more than 400 years later (p. 3).

In 1695, the British obtained one hundred savage dogs in Havana, Cuba, and transported them to Jamaica. Here they participated in the Maroon War, a guerilla action fought by renegade African slaves. During the Spanish Morocco War dogs surfaced as tactical decoys. (p. 3)

Napoleon Banaparte, in 1798, used dogs chained to the wall of Alexandria, Egypt for early warning. He understood that the dogs also served as a delaying mechanism if enemy soldiers attacked, since they would have to deal with the dogs on any approach to the city.

With the development of gunpowder, dogs' roles changed from being active combatants to providing auxiliary support for soldiers in the field (p. 4). Yet, at about the same time warfare was becoming mechanized, militaries increasingly became aware of the intelligence of dogs. Europeans showed the most and earliest interest in expanding the use of canines. The same level of interest was not shown at the time in the United States.

America's first war dogs were used by Native Americans to aid in transporting people who were sick or injured. The Native Americans used dogs defensively, not offensively. Early colonists used dogs mostly for hunting, herding, and protection. A law enacted in 1706 declared that people living in the frontier areas should whelp dogs that could be used to aid in the fight against the Indians. Benjamin Franklin first suggested the use of scout and attack dogs in 1755. No one acted on Franklin's suggestions. "John Penn, the grandson of William Penn, who founded Pennsylvania, and lieutenant governor of the colony from 1763 to 1771, also suggested employing war dogs" (p. 6).

Dogs were used on a limited basis during the Civil War. "Officially at least, there existed no organized military dog program for either side of the war...By the late 1800s the military still had not adopted any official war dog program, but the Civil War did plant firm roots for the use of mascots and pets" (p. 8). Confederate and Union soldiers alike adopted dogs they found wandering the countryside and made them mascots or pets.

"Fan, the pet of Captain J.W. Byron of the 88<sup>th</sup> New York, repeatedly demonstrated her bravery under fire, according to an eyewitness who wrote:

Fan went into every battle, and while the firing was brisk lay down behind a big log or in some other secure place. And when a lull would follow she'd sally out and run along the regiment to see if any of her friends were killed or injured. She was very much attached to [one] man of the company, who during the firing fell mortally wounded. When Fan came up to him she threw herself on him and cried. She wept and licked him, while the poor fellow would throw out his hand to pat her as he feebly exclaimed, "Poor Fan! Poor Fan!" (Thurston, 1996, p. 175)

The 11<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Pennsylvania Volunteers had a mascot similarly devoted to the unit, so much so that she led the unit before President Abraham Lincoln in a pass in review after the Battle of Gettysburg. "As a permanent dedication to her memory, a cast bronze replica of Sallie stands at the base of the granite monument to the Eleventh Pennsylvania Infantry on the battlefield at Gettysburg National Military Park. It is located near the unit's actual battle positions on Oak Ridge, northwest of the historic town of Gettysburg" (Libby, 1962, intro.).

It wasn't really until the Spanish-American War of 1898, that dogs came to be used as a force multiplier. The Americans easily had the firepower advantage over the Spanish on sea and land. "Problems arose when the [American] army began to launch patrols on horseback in hostile territory covered with thick vegetation and narrow paths. Small groups of guerillas set up ambushes and fired from concealed locations upon the patrols before disengaging and melting back into the landscape" (Lemish, 1996, p. 9).

As Edwin Richardson describes in his 1910 book, *War, Police, and Watch Dogs*:

An American officer, Captain M.F. Steele, of the 6<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, after varied experience of the conditions of warfare in the Philippines, strongly urges that dogs should be attached to the army. He [Captain Steele] says that "dogs are the only scouts that can secure a small detachment against ambush on the trails through these tropical jungles. The bush is so dense that flankers are out of the question, and the trails are so crooked, and over such rough territory, that the leading man at one or two hundred yards is out of sight of the main party. The insurgents, lying in ambush, usually or often let the leading man pass, and open with a volley upon the wagons and main party of the escort. They open from apparently impenetrable jungle, and at a range of from 30 to 200 yards. They fire one or two volleys, then usually run away. Sometimes never a man of them can be seen, and our men have simply to fire into the jungle and trust luck. The

orders at present from the Jifles' superiors are, that the insurrectors shall not attack in parties less than fifty, that they shall attack none but very small parties of Americans, and that they shall always make use of ambuscades." He urges that "the animals—pointers by preference, or hounds—would need little training. Their instinct for hunting and sniffing in every hole and corner would be sufficient to justify their use." (Richardson. 1910. pp. 102-103)

It was said of Captain Steele's dog, Don, that, "Not once was the patrol ambushed with Don on the point" (Lemish, 1996, p. 9). But the U.S. army did not pursue the possibility of using dogs, despite Captain Steele's successful experience.

"Ironically, Col. E. H. Richardson, in a successful effort to establish a military dog program in Great Britain, recounted the efforts of Captain Steele and Don in a magazine article in 1911. The British would then go on to amass thousands of dogs for use in World War I" (p. 9).

### **C. WORLD WAR I**

During World War I, dogs were employed in three primary roles: ambulance services, messenger service, and sentry detail. Some secondary roles included ammunition and light-gun carriers and scouts, and Jack Russell terriers were used to combat the rats in the trenches.

The conditions on the battlefield of World War I created a unique environment with significant areas of "no-man's land" created between trenches of the opposing sides. Since the area between the trenches was so dangerous, dogs worked these areas with success. The Red Cross dogs or sanitary dogs, for instance, would provide the wounded with medical supplies and water, as well as companionship. If a wounded soldier was found, the dogs would act as a guide to bring rescuers to the wounded soldier or guide the soldier back to a field hospital. "In one case a French Red Cross dog named Captain located thirty wounded men in a single day using this method" (Lemish, 1996, p. 13). Another French dog named Prusco located more than 100 wounded men after a single battle. Reportedly, Prusco dragged wounded soldiers to the protection of crates and trenches during his search, before alerting rescuers of the wounded men's location.

Each side trained dogs to indicate the location of the wounded; however, the signal used by each country was different. It was also reported that the dogs could

differentiate between friends and enemies, though there is no proof of this fact. The dogs worked at night and relied on their olfactory ability (Richardson, 1910, p. 76).

The French began using military dogs in 1906, but stopped in 1914 after the Battle of the Marne. The decision was made by Marshal Joseph Joffre, for reasons that remain unclear (Lemish, 1996, p. 14). Some thought he just hated dogs, while others think that the nature of the fighting at that time made their use ineffectual. The French reactivated their program in 1915, calling it the Service des Chiens de Guerre. The program expanded through the end of the war.

Many breeds of dogs saw duty during the First World War. "Bulldogs, retrievers, Airedale terriers, sheepdogs, and German shepherds were used in a variety of roles. Purebreeds did not have any advantage over mixed breeds, and this is probably true today" (Lemish, p. 15). Among other things, dogs were used as draft animals. The dogs presented a smaller target than horses, could operate without a soldier present, and did not consume as much food. Unlike mechanized transportation, the dogs could likewise operate over rough terrain, did not need gasoline, and did not suffer from mechanical failure.

Except for the United States, every country embroiled in the war considered dogs a valuable commodity. When the United States entered the war, few American commanders grasped the advantages of developing the animal to their full potential and needed to borrow them from the French or British. (p. 17)

The messenger dogs achieved a long list of successes in World War I. Each side used dogs to relay messages from unit to unit. There are many stories of dogs successfully relaying messages even under intense fire and after being seriously wounded. In Colonel Richardson's later writings, he extols the virtues of messenger dogs and comments that they could be trained in just six weeks. These later writings are a contrast to those from his earlier 1910 book, when he writes, "...; but my experience tends to show that too much is expected of the dog, and although dogs are found to be sufficiently intelligent to discriminate direction under difficult circumstances, still the result is too uncertain, and the teaching partakes too much of the trick-training to be of practical use" (Richardson, 1910, p. 90). "Richardson always believed the prime motivation for a dog should be positive praise and reinforcement. This would be a key

element in developing any type of war dog, and one factor not always adhered to” (Lemish, 1996, p. 21).

On April 6, 1917, President Wilson declared war against Germany to keep the world “safe for democracy.” On June 16, 1917 American joined the French and 180,000 U.S. troops were added to the war. “Of all the armies participating in the Great War, only the United States lacked war dogs within its military ranks, with the exception of some sled dogs in Alaska” (p. 21). According to Lemish, several American canine associations tried to persuade the military to adopt a war dog program, but with no success. This may be due to the belief that the war would end quickly with America’s entry.

According to Lemish:

During the spring of 1918, the General Headquarters of the American Expeditionary Forces recommended the use of dogs as messengers, sentries, draft animal, and patrol auxiliaries. The proposal suggested that 500 dogs be obtained from the French military every three months. After training, each American division would be supplied with 288 dogs. The program also specified the establishment of training facilities to be built within the United States and the construction of five kennels that could house 200 dogs each. It promised to give the American army its first official canine unit. The hierarchy of the military, after reviewing the recommendations, dropped the plan entirely for unknown reasons. Many years passed before a similar proposal was finally adopted. (p. 23)

Some dogs were sent overseas, but to be trained by civilians. This civilian training meant that the dogs were not exposed to various weapons firing or the impact of rounds in close proximity. Again, Lemish points out, “The deficiency in their training regimen made the animals useless at the front, as they understandably cowered under fire. The same problems would plague many war dogs fielded by the United States in the years to come” (p. 24).

Contrary to Army regulations, mascots were adopted by Americans in France during World War I. Though the dogs were not formally trained, the dogs did play key roles. “Rin Tin Tin, for example, was a German mascot puppy found alone in a trench after an attack by Americans. The dog would grow up to be a matinee idol and added to the folklore and popularity of the German shepherd breed” (p. 25).

– Stubby was another famous example of a dog that discovered a sense of duty as a mascot. A number of different books devote several chapters to Stubby's life story. Stubby joined the 102d Infantry which was part of the Army's 26<sup>th</sup> "Yankee" Division during the summer of 1917. The dog was smuggled onto the ship transporting the unit to St. Nazaire, France in January 1918. One night, Stubby warned a sleeping soldier of an impending gas attack. On another occasion, Stubby the dog attacked a German who had infiltrated into the unit's area. The unit's soldiers fashioned a Victory Medal with five bars to show the dog's participation in each of the unit's offensives. He became known as the "Hero Dog". Stubby received numerous awards and medals and was made a life member of many organizations, including the American Red Cross, the YMCA, and the American Legion. Stubby also met three U.S. Presidents. In 1926, when he finally died of old age, Irene Gevenwilson Kilner, curator of the Red Cross Museum, asked to prepare Stubby for permanent display. He remained at the museum for 30 years before being moved to the Smithsonian Institute (p. 27).

By way of comparison, the Germans sent 6,000 dogs to the front upon the start of the WWI with 4,000 in reserve with their civilian owners. Italy fielded 3,000 dogs for the Allies and the French fielded even more. The British started the war with one dog, but due to the efforts of Colonel Richardson, who later started the British War Dog School (Lemish, 1996, p. 28), the British soon developed a dog program that apparently provided thousands of dogs for the British war effort and also for the efforts of the Americans later in the war.<sup>2</sup>

Once the war was over, "The French military, then [at the cessation of hostilities] possessing fifteen thousand dogs in its employ, destroyed the animals as its great war machine demobilized. The vast quantities of dogs used by the British, Germans, Italians, and Russians faced the same fate" (p. 29). Significantly, the Germans did not destroy their animals and maintained their program after the war.

In contrast, the US appears to have learned very little. The U.S. military budget declined sharply after World War I and no interest was shown by the military in the pursuit of a military dog program. There were individual advocates but no serious efforts were made through the 1920s or 1930s.

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<sup>2</sup> I could not find an estimated number of dogs fielded by the British.

## D. WORLD WAR II

With the emergence of Adolf Hitler as the leader of Germany and his invasions of countries in Europe, it appeared by 1938 that the world would again be engulfed by war.

Several years before the beginning of World War II, the German military authorities, again foreseeing an approaching conflict, began a canine force to be used in the front lines of warfare. As a result of this planning, the Nazis had, in 1939, what was probably the largest, best trained, and best-equipped canine army in the world. It was estimated that they had 50,000 Pinschers, Sheepdogs, Alsations (German Shepherd dogs), and Rottweilers trained for active service as pack-carriers, first-aid scouts, and messengers, while others of the same breeds were well trained for carrying out reconnaissance with patrols. When the shooting began, these specially trained dogs quickly found the positions of the Allied forces and, thus, frequently made it possible for the Nazis to annihilate these positions. The majority of these dogs were trained at the Military Kennels at Frankfurt, established in 1934, where some 2,000 animals were constantly being trained (Sloane, 1955, pp. 386-387).

The U.S. was also aware that the Germans supplied hundreds of dogs to the Japanese military authorities. According to Downey, the Germans supplied Japan with, "25,000 trained war dogs before Pearl Harbor" (Downey, 1955, p. 5).

However, some Americans *were* clearly paying attention. For example, an article in the January 1940 issue of *Infantry Journal* described the war dog's potential in battle and used information and photographs from the German and Japanese armies (Lemish, 1996, p. 31). Just as Captain Steele argued several decades previously:

In Panama and the Philippine Islands on jungle trails, where flank security is impossible of achievement because of the dense growth, dogs used as advance guards and scouts could ferret out an ambush before it could take effect. Their ability to work in tangled terrain would be an invaluable security measure in jungle operations.

Considering the many ways in which the dogs may benefit the soldier we should begin now to breed and train suitable types of dogs for the various functions of probable employment, to develop the dog's most favorable characteristics, and to expand the number of uses wherever such employment will relieve a man. This program cannot be fully realized after M day [the first day of a war]; it should start at once. Our liaison with dogdom should be much closer than that implied by the common name for the soldier's identification tag (p. 31)

In 1941, the military did obtain 50 sled dogs from the Byrd Antarctic Expedition. The dogs were sent to Greenland to help locate and rescue crashed pilots. No official dog program existed yet. The catalyst to start a program came from a fear. The foundation of this fear, "consisted of saboteurs, fifth columnists, and enemy aliens, within the continental United States, who could potentially damage the rapidly expanding industrial plants with strategically placed explosives or incendiary devices," and this fear, "became an even greater reality as Japanese submarines operated off the Pacific coast and German U-boats increased their activities along the Atlantic seaboard" (Lemish, 1996, p. 34). Various dog associations around the country pushed the use of sentry dogs. One widely circulated selling point was that, "A single dog could replace eight sentries, freeing them for more important work" (p. 34). Yet, on the day after Pearl Harbor, the entire U.S. Army library contained just one book about dogs: a field manual on the care and transportation of dogs in Arctic regions (p. 35).<sup>3</sup>

In March of 1942, several months after Pearl Harbor, the War Department appointed a civilian organization, "Dogs for Defense," as the official procurement agency for U.S. war dogs:

Without cost to the Government, that organization recruited, at first trained, and shipped to military centers the dogs which formed the K-9 Corps. Dogs for Defense, Inc. staged highly successful publicity and financial campaigns which made its accomplishments possible. Carrying on throughout the war, it continued to supply thousands of dogs to the Armed Forces, launched a war dog breeding program and acted as the Government's agent for the demobilization of the K-9's. Without Dogs for Defense, Inc., there would in all likelihood have been no K-9 Corps (Downey, 1955, p. 7).

The war dog reception (K-9) centers fell under the jurisdiction of the Office of the Quartermaster General. The K-9 centers trained dogs in one or another of the following duties: interior guard duty, which included sentry and attack; and the tactical service, which included messenger, scout, and casualty duties. Early in the efforts, the DFD concentrated on defensive roles for dogs, not offensive or tactical roles. The Coast Guard began its program in July of 1942 for sentry and beach patrol. This program was started

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<sup>3</sup> This fact was verified by simply conducting a search of past US Army manuals, the earliest was the *FM 25-6 – Dog Team Transportation*.

to aid in the policing of the thousands of miles of coastline, military installations, and “war plants” in the United States.

Although, the Coast Guard and the DFD programs experienced disappointing early results with training the sentry dogs, the program continued to expand. Soon tactical roles for the dogs were envisioned and a directive was issued to all the service branches “to explore the possibilities of using dogs advantageously in the various activities under their control” (p. 40).

On March 13, 1942, the Army transferred its authorization for 200 trained sentry dogs to the Dogs for Defense. “It [March 13, 1942] marks the first time in the history of the United States that war dogs were officially recognized” (p. 21).

Problems that developed in the DFD program continue to plague current dog programs. For instance, the dog trainers who volunteered to help in the effort were amateurs as well as professionals. The dog training was initially scattered among several kennels throughout the country because no single kennel was capable of accommodating large numbers of dogs at one time. “Soon it became apparent that this widely scattered and loose-knit system was neither altogether efficient nor economical. While training specifications for sentry dogs had been set up by DFD, a more standardized procedure would be required, particularly if training were diversified to include other types of war dogs” (p. 21). Another problem that faced the DFD program was the lack of personnel, since expert trainers were too few and scattered across the country.

By December 30, 1942, the Quartermaster General notified the members of DFD that the U.S. Armed Forces would require 125,000 dogs for the war, though by war’s end, the actual number of dogs enlisted into service ranged between 17,000 and 25,000 for the U.S. (p. 22).

Given these numbers, the military classed 32 breeds and crosses as war dogs in its Technical Manual 10-396 (1 July 1943). The list then was pared down due to scarcity of certain breeds, experiences during training, and various experiments. The military and DFD tried to standardize procedures for training and procurement, but the changing requirements and need for public participation complicated the efforts. The curtailment of certain breeds caused problems with some members of the public who were eager to

enlist their animals to support the war effort. Many misunderstood the reasons that the military declined their animals for service. The DFD procurement problems were compounded, meanwhile, by sudden initiatives by the military. One such initiative was that of the M-dogs. This program called for smaller dogs such as Cocker and Springer Spaniels and Dachshunds to counter the threat of non-metallic mines that were being introduced by Germany in North Africa (Downey, 1955. pp. 25-33).

According to Downey, in the *History of Dogs for Defense*:

The new mine was slowing the Allied advance....Alert keen-nosed animals were taught to point an anti-tank or anti-personnel mine by sitting down from one to four paces in front of it. In training, they were given an electric shock when they walked into a trap, demonstrating to them that there were objects in the ground that would hurt them and that they must shun them.

The idea of M-dogs was ingeniously derived from the observation that squirrels can find a nut they buried months earlier, or dogs a long-cached bone. Similarly, dogs tested at the camps were able to indicate where mines or other objects had been buried. At camp and in rear areas, the M-dogs performed excellently. Both the British and Americans trained and sent out units of M-dogs. The British Royal Engineers, trying the dogs at the front, found that they located at best only 51% of the mines planted and suffered many casualties. The dogs proved to be too seriously distracted by the dead and debris of a battlefield to function well. The American unit, sent to Italy, accomplished nothing whatever and was reported for the poor discipline and low morale of its personnel. Its failure was not the dogs' fault (Downey, pp. 32-33).

The M-dogs worked on a six-foot leash and were also trained to indicate mine-free areas. The Army deactivated the units since a detection rate of less than 90 percent was unacceptable. The Russians reportedly had an M-dog that found 2,000 mines in eighteen days. The dog was used to de-mine hundreds of railroad tracks and several key airports.

The Russians also trained dogs to conduct anti-tank missions by carrying bombs under attacking tanks. The idea was that once the anti-tank bomb was under the tank, it and the dog would be exploded, theoretically destroying the enemy tank. The problem developed when the dogs began destroying Russian tanks instead of the German tanks. It was then discovered that the training methods used were the cause of the problem: though the dogs were conditioned by having them to search for food under Russian tanks, the

Russian tanks ran of a different fuel than the German tanks. The dogs were able to differentiate between Russian and German tanks due to the type of fuel and so they ran under the Russian tanks on the battlefield.

A similar US program was proposed to destroy bunkers along beaches. The dogs would be equipped with explosives and then trained to run into enemy bunkers, where the explosives would be detonated. This plan was rejected due to the difficulty of training the dogs to differentiate between bunkers with friendly and enemy personnel. Interestingly, current reports indicate that the Israelis have programs that use dogs as "smart" bombs.

Another ill-conceived dog program involved training packs of dogs to attack and "kill". Walter B. Pandre, a civilian, claimed he could accomplish this for between 20-30,000 dogs. Due to problems and delays, the military officer assigned to oversee Pandre called for an army dog trainer to help with the program. The Army trainer accomplished in weeks the basic obedience that Pandre had been unable to accomplish in months, though the idea of assault dogs working in packs itself turned out to be "not practical." The program failed to produce the effects desired and the dogs did not demonstrate the "ferocity or intent...to do any bodily harm" (p. 57). The dogs, even after training would not attack without direct supervision and reinforcement of a handler. They also became easily distracted by environmental variables, such as small animals. Later demonstrations continued to fail to meet expectations, and as the military officer overseeing the experiments remarked,

In my opinion it [the demonstration] would be convincing to a person without knowledge of both tactics and dogs. To me the performances of the animals with one exception appeared artificial and forced and with one exception I do not believe I saw anything that could be developed in something of military value (p. 57).

The DFD launched the DFD Breeding program in the summer of 1943. The program emphasized the importance of carefully breeding selected top dogs that possessed traits desired in their offspring. The program required volunteers to assume the expense of raising the puppies until they were one year old. At one year, the DFD inspectors would classify the dogs into one of three categories: (1) Accepted for the

Armed Forces; (2) Suitable for the Seeing Eye program; (3) Offered as a gift to the breeder (p. 33). The drop in demand ended the breeding program on December 15, 1943.

By the end of 1944, the number of Armed Forces' preferred breeds was down to five: German and Belgian Shepherds, Dobermans, Collies, and Giant Schnauzers, plus crosses of those breeds (Downey, p. 34). Most of the dogs were doing scout duty by this time. "In 1946, the German Shepherd was named by the War Department as the official U.S. Army dog" (p.34).

The Marines were the first of the services to show interest in dogs and to incorporate their use in their manuals. The use of dogs in jungle warfare had been suggested in the 1935 revision of the *Small Wars Operations*, authored by COL Victor Bleasdale, published by the Marine Corps Schools. In Chapter 24 of the manual COL Bleasdale wrote, "Dogs on Reconnaissance: Dogs have been employed to indicate the presence of a hidden enemy, particularly ambushes" (p. 59).

The Marines started developing their dog program in December 1942. Their initial efforts were disappointing mostly due to problems with the trainers, but with continuing efforts most of these early problems were eliminated. One problem was the initial trainers had trained dogs in civilian life and did not appreciate the unique challenges experienced during combat. It was determined that a Marine dog handler should be someone, "...who could scout and patrol on his own and simply used the dog as an extension of his own talents" (p. 62). The Marines focused their training on scout and messenger dogs, noting that since, "the Marine Corps is strictly a combat organization, it was felt that time should not be wasted on training dogs unless that training contributed to directly killing the enemy or to reducing Marines casualties" (p. 61).

The Marine war dog training camp was located at New River, presumably North Carolina, and commanded by Captain Jackson Boyd. From his experience with trainers and handlers Boyd observed that:

Men who have associated with animals have that indefinable ability to read their minds and understand them are the most successful. A high percentage of them come from farms where they have handled hunting dogs and farm stock....In general it may be said that through all his

training, the man gives orders to his dog; once trained, the dog gives orders to the man.

The dogs are not to be considered as a new weapon; they have not replaced anyone or anything. They have simply added to security by their keen perception, and their use should be limited to situations where that increased perception is of service. Where a man can function satisfactorily by his own intelligence and perception, the dog is superfluous.

On the other hand, it has been found that the dog's care and feeding present a very minor problem and add little to the burden which already exists for an outfit in the field. The dog can thrive on the biscuits and canned meat in the field ration. He needs no shelter beyond that provided for a man, and a dog can safely drink any water not deliberately poisoned. His medical care parallels a man's (Downey, pp. 54-55).

All dog teams had to complete basic training which included basic obedience training. Once the basic training was completed, the dogs were selected for specialized training. "Higher rating in intelligence, willingness, energy, and sensitivity were required for scout and messenger (13-week course) than for sentry dogs (8-week course)" (Downey, 1955, p. 56).

No dogs were trained just for attack. Dogs were taught to mistrust anyone but their master and the natural tendency to attack by certain dogs was not discouraged. Several dogs saved their handlers in combat by tackling the enemy. "But attack dogs as such were not desired by combat troops—they were too vulnerable. Sending them to charge the enemy was, in the opinion of a Marine captain 'just a waste of a good dog'" (p. 56).

Silence was clearly impressed on scout dogs. Sternly scolded if they barked, they learned on scenting an enemy to alert their handlers unmistakably but quietly. Some stood tense, others crouched suddenly. Some pointed like bird dogs. With some their hackles rose or a low growl rumbled in their throats. They worked both on and off leash, but the former was preferred because it gave closer control (Downey, p. 56).

The training of the handlers became as important as that of the dogs. Again, Downey describes the situation facing the services—both then and now:

That man failure meant dog failure was axiomatic but not generally appreciated at first. Unless handlers were capable and willing and physically able to stand tough campaigning, it was no use sending a scout

dog platoon to the front. The Marines understood that sooner than the Army which accounted for the former's greater success in the earlier Pacific operations. To quote Captain Boyd again: "Something was wanted which would help in direct contact with the enemy. It soon became apparent that if the war dog was the answer, the important thing lay in the selection of the type of man to handle him—the type of man who, dog or no dog, makes an excellent Marine, capable of scouting and patrolling on his own, the dog merely an animated instrument to increase his radius of perception (p. 57).

In sum, the Marines trained their own war dogs and organized them and the personnel handling the dogs into platoons, regularly attached to battalions or regiments in combat.

The Army got off to a much bumpier start. One initial difficulty had to do with the assignment of Quartermaster Corps personnel to the K-9 Corps.

Quartermaster personnel consequently manned the scout dog platoon. Their QM insignia prejudiced field commander who did not believe service force men were likely to be trained for jungle patrols. That estimate was correct in some cases. Ultimately the Army saw the light and infantrymen trained as scouts were assigned as handlers, with the outfits redesignated from Quartermaster to Infantry Scout Dog Platoons (p. 57).

By V-J Day, September 2, 1945, six new Scout Dog Platoons had been organized, trained, and were about to graduate.

As described by Downey,

At the camps scout dog platoons were regularly organized and equipped before proceeding to the front as a unit. A First Lieutenant commanded and the remainder of the personnel was non-commissioned: One Technical Sergeant, four Sergeants, and fifteen Technicians, Grade 5, who were the dog handlers. The Table of Organization called for 27 scout dogs. Armament was the carbine and pistol or revolver. Six jeeps with trailers were authorized. Gas masks for men and dogs and all the regular dog equipment—leashes, brushes, veterinary supplies, and so on, were furnished (p. 58).

The dogs were not effective on the initial amphibious assaults. The dogs could handle being under fire, but their senses were of little use in such an extreme, dynamic environment. The dogs worked best at night to warn of Japanese counter-attacks and once the beachhead had been secured, the dogs' abilities were readily demonstrated (p.

80). The deciding factor on effectiveness seemed to have been the training that the dog team received. The experiments performed showed that dogs needed to be trained to tolerate artillery fire. Most had been trained around small arms fire, but not under artillery-type explosions. These training factors were identified by handlers in the field and the information was relayed back to the training programs so they could adjust accordingly.

The K-9 Corps contributed significantly to the war effort in the Pacific Islands during World War II. As a regimental commander on a Pacific Island reflects about the contributions made by the K-9 Corps:

'The dogs have made over 100 patrols to date with Infantry troops, ranging from five-man reconnaissance patrols to combat patrols of a reinforced rifle company. Length of patrol extended from one to five days...It is significant that during this period not a unit suffered a casualty from enemy ambushes or snipers when a scout dog was being used on the point of the patrol' (Downey, 1955, p. 7).

The Americans faced dense jungles where the trails were tunnels through vegetation. If the soldiers did not use existing trails then they laboriously had to create new ones. The risk of being ambushed in this environment was extremely high, especially since the Americans were attacking islands that had been occupied for a period of time by the Japanese. The Japanese had the advantages of surprise, prior knowledge of the terrain, and prepared defensive positions. The scout dogs took some of these advantages away from the Japanese:

Yet when a scout dog and his handler were at the point of the patrol, then it was different. A keen canine nose caught the Jap scent anywhere from a score to several hundred yards away. The dog froze into rigidity, an almost inaudible rumble in his throat. The patrol halted while scouts wriggled through the jungle to the flanks and dealt with the enemy machine gun covering the trail, or the patrol leader sent for a mortar section, perhaps by messenger dog, to blast out the ambush. Sometimes a muzzle would point up a tree. The Jap sniper, hidden in its branches, had made himself almost invisible to human eyes by painting his body green....The dog continued to point. So Yank sub-machine guns sprayed the tree with lead, and the sniper's body hurtled to the ground or hung limp from the belt that had bound him to the trunk.

Now and again the dogs failed. But this sentence keeps recurring in reports on war dogs platoons by the division to which they were attached: "No Patrols led by dogs were fired on first or suffered casualties" (p. 81).

According to Downey, the scout dogs' successes in the Pacific Theater began to earn them a significant reputation, which then required the Staff to protect the platoons against over-estimates of their abilities (p. 91). The reports state that dogs could detect enemy from 60 to 1000 yards depending on various environmental conditions and the dog team. Earlier, most people believed that dogs could not be used in the Pacific theater because of disease and parasites in tropical climates. Also the reports in 1942 of disappointments in North Africa added to doubts about their potential use. Fortunately, these fears were proved wrong through the dogs' actual performance in the Pacific.

Orders were issued by the Staff of the Pacific Theater in a training circular sent to all divisions operating within the Pacific. A précis of the guidance, as put together by Downey, is:

No individual, it directed, will attempt to touch or feed a scout dog, nor will he speak, whistle, lunge at, or in any manner, either by voice or gesture, attempt to attract the dog's attention.

Dogs give silent warning in the following manner: by lunging on their leash, pointing in the manner of a bird dog, or by raising the hair on their back and neck. They do not bark and seldom growl.

The handler is the sole judge of what the dog can do. He will not be ordered to work a dog if he says that the dog cannot work.

One factor, such as the wrong direction of the wind, will cause a dog to be useless on a mission.

Dogs work best for from 4 to 8 hours. If a mission requires a night vigil all night, it must have two dogs.

The use of scout dogs is a matter of common sense, mixed with a fair understanding of animals.

These dogs are not super-weapons nor will they work miracles. They have been trained for special work which they can do with the help and understanding of all concerned, and will more than prove their worth by giving timely warning of the approach of the enemy. (p. 92)

One example of why the scout dog platoons began to develop such a favorable reputation was the performance of the 28<sup>th</sup> Infantry Scout Dog Platoon: not "one of the

more than 800 patrols led by its dogs was ambushed” (p. 99). The 26<sup>th</sup> Scout Dog Platoon had a similar record, but according to Downey the 26<sup>th</sup> almost did not have the chance to enter battle due to prejudice against the use of the scout dog platoons. Many people were prejudiced against the use of dogs, believing the dogs were not going to be effective and would cause an increased loss of US lives. According to Downey, many thought that in, “...modern warfare they [dogs] were a hairbrained novelty, a probable nuisance, and a distinct liability. Gripping extended from operations staffs down through the rank and file. Dogs were one of those wild ideas dreamed up by the chairborne brigades back in Washington and wished on troops on the line” (p. 99).

Orders were given by higher commands for dogs to be used in combat operations. They may well have saved thousands of lives. The problem is, it is a difficult to quantify the exact number of personnel that were saved in a manner likely to convince the critics and prove the scout dogs’ benefits to the infantry patrols. Because of the orders to use the scout dogs, the 26<sup>th</sup> Scout Platoon demonstrated its valor and capabilities as shown by the awards and medals that it received. The 26<sup>th</sup> Scout Platoon’s personnel were, “...awarded one Silver Star, eight Bronze Stars, and seven Purple Hearts, two with Oak Leaf clusters (the last-mentioned decorations was for wounds; none of the men were killed in action). All members were given the prized Combat Infantryman Badge. The platoon received a unit citation from the 31<sup>st</sup> Division and another from the 6<sup>th</sup> Division” (p. 107).

During the 26<sup>th</sup>’s last few months of the Pacific campaign, there were reports that the Japanese made particular efforts to kill the scout dogs. The Japanese were observed to pass up chances to shoot American soldiers, instead concentrating fire on the K-9s.

Without question, the dogs proved invaluable aids in the “cave clean-ups” that followed major offensives on an island. The caves had to be cleared to ensure that small groups of enemy were not behind American front lines where they could create trouble and kill US personnel. Even though the dogs had not been specifically trained for this task, the adaptability of the dog teams proved they could execute this new role.

As for Japanese war dog units, the Americans did encounter several of them. One unit seemed to use small dogs that turned and ran back when they encountered American troops. Several reports guessed that the Japanese would estimate the location of the U.S.

units from the length of time the dogs were scouting and the direction from which they returned. The Americans, however, soon used these dogs to guide them to the Japanese positions.

The Japanese scout dog programs seemed to have other problems, too. Most of these appeared to stem from errors in tactics, training, and procedures, rather than from the capabilities of the dogs. The Japanese scout dogs, "...worked off leash and about fifty yards ahead of the point, the dogs were sighted by American who thus learned the Japs were close at hand. Even if a Jap dog was not seen, he lost the value of surprise for his masters, since unlike a well-trained K-9 he was apt to bark" (p. 97).

At the close of the war, the US military had to decide what to do with the dogs that it had recruited. The military attempted to return most of its K-9 veterans to a civilian role. This decision was ambitious and not easy. According to Downey, "four platoons were designated to be retrained in the postwar Army. Their dogs include fine animals kept for breeding purposes" (p. 108). The big challenge came in determining how to demobilize and disperse the remaining dogs. The US military had control of approximately 8,000 dogs at the end of World War II (Downey, 1955, p. 108). Many dogs were returned to the owners who had donated them for service. Some donors, however, no longer wanted them due to a "change of circumstance" while the dog was at war. Some dogs came from kennels and had no owners.

According to Lemish:

In April 1945, the War Department stated that the dogs would be disposed of through one of the following methods:

1. By issue to the Seeing Eye, Inc., as a prospective Seeing Eye dog.
2. By issue to a military organization as a mascot.
3. By making available to the servicemen dogs they had handled in the service.

4. By sale through negotiation of the Procurement Division, Treasury Department. (Lemish, 1996, p. 142).<sup>4</sup>

## **E. POST-WORLD WAR II AND KOREA**

After World War II, the dog programs all but disappeared. Recommendations were made by various individuals to continue working on the various dog programs that had been used during World War II, but they were seldom implemented. When the Korean War began, the dog program in the military consisted of one active scout dog platoon (26<sup>th</sup> Infantry Platoon Scout Dog).<sup>5</sup>

The Quartermaster Corps did maintain a procurement program through the Army Dog Association, which listed private breeders who had animals they would make readily available to the military when needed. However, because of a lack of demand the Quartermaster Corps lost interest in the procurement of dogs and the program was quietly terminated in 1950 (Lemish, 1996, p. 150).

Training also became an issue and no one wanted the responsibility, mostly because of lack of resources after the war. On December 7, 1951, dog training was transferred to the Military Police Corps and the 26<sup>th</sup> Scout Dog Platoon moved to Fort Carson, Colorado. Sentry Dogs became the focus since the country was at peace and scout dogs were “no longer required”. The program was then transferred to the Chief of Army Field Forces in 1954. The shifting of responsibilities resulted in a lot of confusion,

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<sup>4</sup> Before the dogs could be returned, they were “demilitarized”. This “reprocessing” took almost as long as the original training. The dog was re-trained to not be a “one-man” dog, and reoriented to the sights and sounds of American towns. Dogs were trained and continually tested to ensure that any aggressive tendencies were eliminated to the extent possible. Only a few dogs proved to be too aggressive to be returned. Unfortunately, many dogs had diseases that could not be cured and were destroyed to prevent any spread of disease.

The chance to provide a home to a surplus war dog was popular. A total of over 15,000 adoption applications were received by the DFD. The applications kept pouring in years after the last dog had found a new home. The dogs were sent to their new homes accompanied by a collar, a leash, an honorable discharge certificate, and the Army manual War Dogs. The manual was to serve as an instruction manual to help the new owners better understand the dogs. Of all the dogs “demilitarized,” only four had to be returned to training camps due to behavioral problems.

<sup>5</sup> I could gather little information on the Korean War efforts. The only source that I could find was a short chapter in Lemish’s book, *War Dogs* and a few articles from a few military journals. I was fortunate to interview Captain Haggerty, a gentleman who has been running a prominent, civilian dog training business since his military service. He did not serve as a dog handler in Korea; however, he did conduct a patrol with a dog team which led to his later reassignment to the Army Dog Training Center in 1956. He was the Commanding Officer of two scout units, the 26<sup>th</sup> ISDP, at Fort Benning and at Fort Ord from 1959 to 1961. He later served as instructor of Sentry Dogs at Fort Gordon and as Liaison Officer between US Occupation Forces, Berlin Germany and the Berlin Police Department which had 120 dogs at the time.

yet this also did seem to matter since the military's attention was on nuclear confrontation, not on conflicts that might require tactical uses of dogs.

When the Korean War began, the only dogs available for service were those of the 26<sup>th</sup> Scout Dog Platoon. In fact, "For its duration in Korea the platoon was never sent into reserve" (p. 155). The platoon was also never supplied with all of its authorized equipment which added to the challenges facing the unit.

According to emails I received from Theodore D. McKelvey, who was a member of a dog unit in Korea that, "was formed and trained 'in Country' within range of enemy artillery," the unit was formed based on recommendations from T/Sgt Sheldon. The commander had some understanding of the performance of dogs in World War II and was looking for similar capabilities for his unit in Korea. The dog unit was not part of the official military war dog program, but a combat unit's own dog program within the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division. A brief history of this Tactical War Dog Platoon, 7<sup>th</sup> Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division can be found on the US War Dog Association Webpage.

T/Sgt. Sheldon said he volunteered for duty in Korea to escape marital difficulties at home. After enduring the required refresher training, Sgt. Sheldon ended up in 'Dog' Co., 7th Cav Regt. After sharing a fifth of whiskey with his company commander one evening, T/Sgt Sheldon got permission to develop the nucleus of a K-9 group. A trip to Pusan was authorized so T/Sgt Sheldon could acquire, at his own expense, the needed tools of the trade. He returned to the front lines with dog food, choke chains, leather leashes, leather harnesses, leather saddle bags (fashioned by Korean artisans) and bowels to feed the dogs. T/Sgt Sheldon was very persuasive in gaining support for his project.

Dogs needed for this startup effort were bought, begged, borrowed and stolen from the Korean civilian population. Platoon personnel were volunteers, friends of T/Sgt. Sheldon in 'Dog' Co. All activity/training was authorized to take place only during times when the unit wasn't engaged in active combat with the enemy. Our training as handlers was very much like what you might see on current TV programs on the subject.

After the period of training had proved to the upper command that this was a desirable tool, the unit was transferred from Dog Co. to Regimental Hq. & Hq. Co., and was led by 1st Lt. Ted Cook, who undertook the job in addition to his original assignment. A period of more formal training was scheduled, and was to span about a month in duration. At that time additional personnel were authorized, and recruited by the existing platoon

members. I was a member of "C" Co. at that time and was recruited by Pvt. James D. Matty, Snowshoe, P.A., who I had befriended on board ship. The deal as proposed to me included a month free of combat to train the unit to a degree T/Sgt Sheldon considered combat ready. (McKelvey, 2005)

Even with these challenges, some basic policies emerged during the Korean War. The dog teams worked mainly on night patrols and were given 24 to 48 hours' notice of an expected mission. The notice was to allow the handler and dog to prepare and meet with the patrol members so the dog could become more familiar with their individual scents. This time also allowed the dog handlers to brief the patrol leaders and members on the dog's capabilities and limitations so they knew what they could expect.

In Korea the dogs again proved their worth, as Bert Deaner noted in a report dated February 1953:

The dogs could scent best on level terrain. Mountains and hills tend to make the wind swirl, and an alert at one hundred yards from the enemy in these locations was considered very good. Still, there were times when the dog did not scent until thirty feet from his quarry. It was also difficult for the dog to scent someone on higher ground than the patrol, since scent often rises like smoke. But although the dog might not pick up the scent due to the terrain, his keen sense of hearing would also provide an alert—perhaps not as reliable, though (Lemish, pp. 157-159).

According to Lemish:

One thing was for certain: The Chinese did not like the American dogs. Many handlers found out that in close-quarter fighting, the Chinese or North Koreans would try to kill the dog immediately....By all accounts, the success of ambush and reconnaissance patrols at night struck a certain fear in the Chinese and North Koreans alike (p. 158).

The limitations and capabilities of the dogs paralleled those discovered in World War II. However, there were concerns about the utilization of dogs as seen in a memo from the Seventh Infantry Division, which states, "Several instances have been noted wherein maximum benefit was not obtained due to improper utilization of the dogs and a lack of understanding as to their capabilities and limitations" (p. 160). Success was determined by the team's ability to work together. As Lemish quotes a former scout dog handler, Robert Kollar, "You can have the best dog in the world. But if the guy on the other end of the leash doesn't understand his dog, cannot pick up the subtle alert, then someone is going to get killed."

The Korean War also highlighted some other aspects of using dogs in combat. Even after training, dogs could differ greatly on what they alerted on and how they displayed their alerts. Dogs of the same breed would scent from the ground, while others favored airborne scents. Some dogs would alert to suspicious sounds while some would not and would instead check for any type of movement (pp. 160-161). It was the handler who had to determine and “read” his dog through his understanding of that particular dog.

After the Korean War, the Army closed the training facility at Fort Carson, Colorado. The Army at this time, “cited little need of the animals for its own use and said it wished to demobilize the entire canine force” (p. 163). The reason seems to have been economic, even though it cost only about 55 cents a day to maintain a dog. The Air Force, meanwhile sought to continue its sentry dog program in order to secure airfields, equipment storage facilities, and, specifically, missile sites. While the Air Force expanded its program, the Army scaled back its program, until the 26th Infantry Scout Dog Platoon (IPSD) was once again the sole remaining Army unit. The platoon was based at Fort Benning, Georgia. In 1958, the Air Force took ownership of the US military effort vis a vis dogs, when it established the Sentry Dog Training Branch of the Department of Security Police Training at Lackland Air Force Base, near San Antonio, Texas. Because the Army Quartermaster Corps was unable to procure the number of dogs required for the Air Force program in June 1964, the Air Force took over the responsibility of procurement as well.

The Army at this point had to purchase its dogs from the Air Force. The procurement of adequate dogs of high quality continued to be an issue due to the competition from police departments and security firms for the best qualified dogs.

## **F. CONCLUSIONS**

1. The US military has continually been reluctant to use dogs in combat or in the military. While other militaries have successfully exploited the capabilities of dogs, the US did not grasp the benefits early in any conflict. The US depended on other countries for the capability during World War I. Even thereafter, other countries maintained their dog programs as they prepared for the next war.

2. The training methods to adequately develop an effective program have not always been clearly understood by those who implement the programs. This has been demonstrated by the consistent lack of success in the early stages of a dog programs. Usually, there are too few qualified trainers or a lack of trainers and others that are realistic about what can be achieved.

3. Finding qualified experts has been an issue throughout US history. Each conflict produces a cadre of experts who could be used to further develop dog programs and improve their effectiveness. However, the military typically deactivates successful programs at the conclusion of a conflict.

4. The use of dogs in combat seems to improve and develop with each conflict, but the lessoned learns in the past have to be relearned due to lack of experienced personnel deactivation of programs.

5. Military leaders rarely seem to sufficiently appreciate the capabilities that dogs can provide or what it takes to develop those capabilities. If military leaders clearly understood the tactical advantages that dogs can provide, programs would be maintained since they are relatively inexpensive. Instead, the default focus is on technological and equipment improvements.

6. Procurement of animals with the required qualities is a continual problem. Since the programs are not continually maintained, an adequate and consistent procurement system is not kept in place. No program has had the quality or numbers of dogs, handlers, or trainers needed once the military leadership decides to once again use dogs in combat.

7. Dogs enhance the capabilities of dismounted patrols in combat. This has been demonstrated by hundreds of personnel accounts throughout history. The desire for this capability has led some units to develop their own programs in the field.

8. Scout dogs and sentry dogs have made the most significant contributions to the US military in combat. The US history of successfully using dogs is predominately in these areas through the Korean War.

### III. THE VIETNAM DOG TEAMS

#### A. AN OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAMS USED IN VIETNAM

The United States conducted the Vietnam War via the use of massive firepower that was intended to overwhelm the enemy's will to fight. Yet, even though massive firepower was used, Soldiers and Marines still had to walk through the jungle and find and fix the enemy in order to destroy him. The problem was that the US was fighting on unfamiliar, foreign soil against an enemy that fought in a manner that made engagement by our preferred methods—and superior technology and firepower—difficult. Also, prior to the arrival of US troops, the enemy in Vietnam had combat experience on the same terrain, having already defeating the French. The jungle provided the concealment that allowed the VietCong (VC) to attack US patrols and then virtually disappear without a trace. The freedom of action that the VC enjoyed in conducting operations had to be challenged in order to curb the rising US casualties as the US became more involved in the war.

Significant American involvement in Vietnam began around 1960. The Military Assistance Advisory Group, Vietnam (MAAGV), “recommended the establishment of a military dog program for the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN). Some American advisers were familiar with the British use of dogs to put down the Communist insurrection in Malaysia.” (Lemish, 1996, p. 167). The US military advisors hoped that the British successes using dogs in Malaysia could be duplicated by the Americans and ARVN. According to Jesse Mendez, who acted as one of the American scout dog advisors to the South Vietnamese as part of the MAAGV program, the program was plagued by problems from its inception. In an earlier thesis written by Mary Murry, Mendez provided the following information: “The Vietnamese viewed dogs as a source of food and deliberately assigned soldiers of poor performance to the handler program. Due to limited resources, the ARVN forces could not and would not provide nutritious diet to the dogs and many suffered and even died from malnutrition” (Murry, 1998, p. 1). Additionally, Lemish notes, “in the years that followed, even with support from the US Veterinary Corps members, nearly 90 percent of the ARVN dogs’ deaths would be attributed to malnutrition” (p. 169). In September 1964, the ARVN had 327 dogs and by

1966 the ARVN had only 50 scout and 80 sentry dogs (p. 172). The ARVN also did not have a single veterinarian on staff. Also according to Murry, "many of the dogs that did survive the initial training phase suffered a high casualty rate due to the abbreviated training and lack of ARVN understanding as to the correct employment of the animals" (pp. 1-2).

The problems that were generated by the abbreviated training were quite obvious to the American advisors: the ARVN were employing the dogs improperly. The ARVN commanders did not, or would not, understand the capabilities that the dog team provided to a patrol. According to Mendez, for instance, the ARVN would place sentry dogs on patrols. The sentry dogs were extremely aggressive and trained to bark on alert. This meant that many of the ARVN patrol locations were compromised by the dog teams or that the dogs attacked fellow patrol members. As the word filtered from the patrols to other ARVN units, the dog teams became even more unwelcome. However, the advisers kept recommending that the dogs be used, so they were, but their ability to make a contribution to the patrol was minimized by the manner in which they were used.

When we first got there we had a heck of a mess. The Air Force had trained many sentry/attack dogs and some were being used by the ARVN infantry units out in the field. These dogs would bark on patrol missions posing a serious problem. On top of that, they wanted to attack and chew up the friendly patrol members. The only type of dog that would work out on patrol was a silent scout dog. It took a while to get these dogs exchanged out. Eventually we got trained dogs to each of the five ARVN infantry scout dog platoons spread out across each Corps area. (Murry, p.34)

Mendez would accompany many of the ARVN patrols in an attempt to maximize the dog team's capability, but found that many patrol leaders did not trust the dog and did not want the dogs or the American advisors on the patrol. "In the fall of 1961 MAAGV recommended that 468 sentry dogs and 538 scout dogs be sent to RVN. These dogs were purchased privately, since the US military did not possess the required number in its inventory" (Lemish, 1996, p. 169). This showed that, once again, the US procurement process was not prepared for the numbers of dogs and handlers required during a war.

According to Mendez, few of the advisors had served in Korea and had little combat experience prior to Vietnam. The MAAGV program reveals that the Army's lack

of institutional knowledge. While those who implemented the programs, such as Jesse Mendez, were extremely knowledgeable, many of the leaders based their decisions on a set of assumptions that may or may not have been correct. Assumptions, such as the notion that the South Vietnamese would embrace the use of dogs once their capabilities were demonstrated to the South Vietnamese commanders, proved to be false; few Vietnamese commanders wanted to use dogs on the patrols. Many commanders thought of the dogs as food, not as a combat multiplier. The US advisors also assumed that the Vietnamese would properly employ the dogs once they were trained. This assumption also proved to be false. According to Mendez, the South Vietnamese took trained sentry dogs on a few patrols with disastrous results. The sentry dogs either barked and revealed their position or attacked fellow patrol members.

Even with the setbacks demonstrated by the use of scout and sentry dogs by the ARVN, there is evidence of some early successes. The memorandum included in Appendix A is the guide for scout dog platoons provide by the Office of Senior Advisor in Vietnam. This guide was released as an attempt to enhance the effectiveness of the platoons and outline the requirements for a successful program. The items in the guide are reflected in the earlier military dog manual, *FM 20-20: Military Dog Training and Employment*, dated April 1960. They were also included in the *FM 7-40, Scout Dog Training and Employment*, dated 1973. The wording is somewhat different, but the general principles remain the same. For instance, one key rule states, "The dog must be trained for only one job." Another point of interest is that the reward system for the dog was to be based not only on "praise and petting," but also by accomplishing a mission.

At the same time, scout dog teams proved their worth. "The guerrilla tactics of the Vietcong were taking their toll on the American forces, and it became apparent that additional measures had to be taken to slow the casualty rates within the infantry. The answer would be the reactivation of the scout dog program" (Murry, 1998, p. 35). The US military had a tremendous problem procuring an adequate number of dogs. One reason was that the German Shepherd Club withdrew its support when a rumor circulated that dogs were not being adequately received in Vietnam and that a shipment of dogs had been sold as food. While the rumor was never confirmed, the damage to the program's reputation added to the difficulties of procuring quality animals.

At this point, the Air Force still had the responsibility of procuring the required numbers for the Department of Defense. The US was already using sentry dogs in Korea, Japan, and Thailand at the beginning of the Vietnam conflict. In 1965, "the director of security and law enforcement for the air force believed that the tropical climate would be too oppressive for the animals and they would be ineffective. Obviously, he had not been informed that ARVN forces were already using German shepherds..." (Lemish, 1996, p. 173), once again demonstrating that the decision makers and the military in general did not understand the capabilities of dog teams and their ability to adapt to the environment. If the decision makers had been informed about past dog programs, then they would have known that dogs had been used in tropical climates during World War II.

Once an appreciation for the potential of dogs to save American lives in Vietnam was finally realized, a number of different military dog programs were initiated. The military working dog programs and dog teams developed the five categories of:

1. Sentry – extremely aggressive dogs used by Military and Security Police for physical security of general storage yards, airfields, ammunition supply points, petroleum storage areas, food storage areas, docks, and convalescent centers. Eventually their aggressiveness led to their replacement, the patrol dog.
2. Scout – used by Infantry and Military Police to detect primarily any human scent while on patrol and trained to operate silently. They were usually the lead element of a patrol of infantry. They were also used as flank and rear security. They also proved useful for supporting outposts and ambush sites, as member of reconnaissance teams, and in the search of hamlets. Scout dogs were also trained to detect snipers, wires, booby traps, and mines, and other enemy locations.
3. Tracker – used by the Infantry to follow a particular scent to locate the enemy or sometimes friendly locations. The teams assisted US combat units in maintaining contact with the Vietcong in jungle areas.
4. Mine/Tunnel – used by the Infantry to detect mines and explosives as well as determine the location of enemy tunnels. They had some successes, but unfortunately they were not "a foolproof detection system."
5. Narcotics – used by the Military and Security Police to determine the location of hidden narcotics (Thornton, 1990, p. 5-6).

"At the height of the conflict, the United States had some 6,000 MWDs in its world-wide inventory of which over 1,100 were in Vietnam" (p. 5).

While all of the dog programs in Vietnam had numerous successes, I will focus on the scout dog program in order to limit the scope of this thesis. Fortunately, many of the lessons learned by the other programs are reflected in the scout dog program, and, in addition, the US had prior experience in developing scout dog programs, though again many of the lessons from World War II and Korea had to be relearned during Vietnam.

By 1965, the US decided to begin a more aggressive, offensive role in Vietnam. This meant an expansion of US forces to be deployed to Vietnam.

For the Vietcong this made little difference in their tactics. Since the Americans had intervened, they always attacked when everything was to their advantage. A quick strike and they melted back into the jungle or countryside. The VC ambushes on American patrols increased dramatically. Trip wires, bamboo whips, and punji pits took their toll both physically and psychologically. The Vietcong were everywhere—yet often nowhere to be found (Lemish, p. 182).

The US used the World War II tactics of heavy firepower, whereas the Vietcong fought using guerrilla tactics. A tactical solution was thus needed to counter the increasing number of American casualties. As Jesse Mendez says, “Ever since the Vietnam War began, Charlie has been hitting only when everything has been to his advantage.” The Army reactivated its Scout Dog Program in 1965 in the hopes that this would help minimize the Vietcong’s advantages. The scout dogs would alert to any unfamiliar odor, mostly in the air but also on the ground. Along with scent the dog could use its other senses to detect and alert to possible dangers. The specific capabilities varied with each individual dog and handler. Official Army reports noted that in ideal conditions of wind and terrain, the scout dog in Vietnam was easily able to detect personnel 500 meters away (Murry, p. 46).

Jesse Mendez redeployed from his position as an advisor on scout dogs to the ARVN just in time to participate in the reactivation of the Army’s scout dog program at Fort Benning, Georgia. Mendez was a primary trainer in the 26<sup>th</sup> IPSD at Fort Benning from 1966 to 1969, when he retired from the military. Initially the 26<sup>th</sup> IPSD (the personnel listing is included in Appendix B) was to undergo a one-time expansion to support the war. However, the Army later identified that the requirement had been underestimated and thirteen infantry scout dog platoons and three Marine platoons were added to the force structure. This was the first time since World War II that the Marines

were expected to use scout dogs, since only the Army had used scout dogs during the Korean War.

Due to the success of the scout dog program demonstrated by the Marines and Army, the Air Force began its own scout dog program at Lackland AFB. Fort Benning could not support the Air Force program due to the short notice of the requirement and the concurrent level of demand for scout dogs from the Army and Marines Corps. As successful as the Air Force was with sentry dogs, its scout dog program was plagued by commanders who did not understand the new scout dog's capability. The lack of understanding meant that the dogs were used as sentry or patrol dogs and were not used to maximize their scout dog training (Lemish, p. 190).

The mission of the scout dog was to support tactical units and to give silent warning of any foreign presence outside the main body by:

1. Warning against ambushes.
2. Warning against snipers.
3. Detecting enemy hideouts or stay behind groups.
4. Detecting enemy caches or food, ammunition, and weapons.
5. Detecting mines and booby traps.
6. [Early] warning of the enemy's approach to ambush patrols [US patrols with the mission of ambushing the enemy] and [US] listening posts (Murry, p. 42).

Not surprisingly, the expansion of the scout dog program strained the procurement process's ability to acquire the sufficient numbers. "This problem could be attributed to a high rejection rate of 30 to 50 percent of the potential canine recruits. Competition with civilians and private security firms also hampered military procurement" (Lemish, 1996, p. 184). The rapid expansion also led to a shortage of qualified handlers and instructors. The author of the book *Dog Tags of Courage*, John Bumam, was trained "on the job" to be a dog handler and recruited to a dog platoon while he was an infantryman in Vietnam. This was due to the lack of qualified, trained handlers available to fill the personnel shortages at the time. Even though Fort Benning was producing a number of trained handlers and dogs, the risks inherent to continually

operating at the “point” of a patrol and the expansion of the program led to an overall shortage of personnel. Also, the scout dog handlers were volunteers and known hazards of the job limited the number of volunteers:

...[Their] three to five day missions involved silently walking ahead of a unit and providing warning to the men of possible ambushes and booby traps. The shortage of scout dog teams and their “as needed” assignment did not allow time for the handler and his dog to train with the unit they were supporting. Often times there was little warning given to the handler as to the mission on which he was to embark, making a dangerous task that much more psychologically demanding (Murry, p. 43).

As Jim Black, a former dog handler from the 37<sup>th</sup> IPSD notes:

It was a nerve-racking and dangerous assignment some have equated with defusing unexploded bombs. Dog teams combat-assaulted by helicopter into enemy-infested jungles and immediately began leading the way down well used enemy trails with fresh tracks in front of them.

Often a handler jumped off a chopper and reported to the CO, then went directly to the point. Moving quietly through enemy-held territory when the “pucker factor” is high is not the best place to strike up a conversation. Only after a few days in the field did the regulars actually get to know the handler and the dog by name. Most handlers had only a nodding acquaintance with the men of the host unit (Murry, p. 45):

Initially, only 40 percent of the instructors at Fort Benning had been to Vietnam (p. 184). This lack of experience about the conditions in Vietnam led to some of the initial problems with the program. Fortunately, instructors with Vietnam experience, like Jesse Mendez, clearly understood the role that the new handlers would have to fill when on patrol.

The complexity and challenges of training dogs and handlers cannot be overstated. As Sgt. Charles Paris, a training NCO from the 26<sup>th</sup> IPSD, put it, “These dogs are just like humans. Some are quick to learn and others are slow-witted. Some cooperate and others are stubborn. You don’t know what to expect until the dog and man start working together” (Lemish, p. 185).

Some of the early problems were that the dogs were not accustomed to shotguns and flares. The heat was also a problem until the dogs acclimatized to the environment in Vietnam. Dogs required more water than a man operating in the same conditions. Another risk generated by the scout dogs on a patrol was a concern that they:

...instilled a false sense of security and overconfidence in the men on patrol. Scout dogs were suppose to instill confidence, and they did, but the confidence sometimes overwhelmed the men's good judgments, making them careless. They began to feel invincible which, of course, they were not. (Kelch. 1982, p. 38)

Even with these problems, 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Ronald Neubauer noted, "Although people have to be convinced that the dogs will be a positive use to them, once a unit uses dogs, they always come back for more. At times, requests had to be turned down because of the limited number of dogs available" (p. 185). Neubauer's observation is reflective of the earlier comments made by handlers and advocates from World War II and the Korean War. As Neubauer also pointed out, "It has been estimated that well over two thousand Marine lives have been saved since the insertion of the 1<sup>st</sup> Scout Dog Platoon into Vietnam" (p. 187).

Far more reminiscent of WWII experiences was Neubauer's statement that, "We never had a patrol ambushed that has had a dog along. The dog has always managed to sniff out the danger and force the VC to show his hand before he wanted to" (Lemish, p. 186). But also, as in WWII, not all field commanders understood how best to take advantage of scout dogs.

Nevertheless, the Vietnam scout dog and handler training program that was executed at Fort Benning has been described as a very successful program. One way to quantify its success is to use the summary (Figure 1, 2, and 3) created by Jesse Mendez. His summary includes over 1,100 monthly After Action Reports (AARs). These reports are entitled, "Monthly Report of Scout Dog Operations" (Figure 4 and Figure 5 are examples of these reports from the various dog units that operated in Vietnam). Mendez's summary illustrates the large number of patrols that were accompanied by scout dog teams. The fact that the Vietcong placed a considerable bounty on each dog speaks to their effectiveness. The bounty was collected if the Vietcong soldier turned in one of the scout dog's tattooed ears as proof. The Vietcong also had a standing order that if a scout dog team was encountered, the dog should be shot first and then the handler because of the capability that the dog represented. Jesse Mendez makes it clear that his report does not include all of the available data, but is the result of his best efforts to compile the data from numerous visits to the National Archives and other sources.

Mendez has not found any indications during his extensive research that anyone, beside himself, has made an effort to collect the dog unit data from Vietnam into one document.

U.S. Army K-9 Ops (Scout, Combat Tracker & Mine/Tunnel) V N

	Scout Dogs	Combat Tracker	Mine/Tunnel	Total*
Enemy KIA	3630	165	24	3819
Enemy MIA	332	25	8	365
Enemy POW	1174	31	17	1222
Enemy Detainees	1000	84	23	1107
AK47	1802	64	2	1868
AK50	22	2	1	25
SKS	566	397	1	964
PPS	1			1
M1's	16	1		17
Carbines (US)	71	1		72
Carbines (Russ)	1			1
Pistols (US)	1			1
Pistols (unk)	2	1		3
Pistols (US)	17	9	1	27
Pistols (unk)	17	1		18
Shotguns	55			55
Shotguns (unk)	326			326
Ammo (unk) - rds	149698	2319		152017
Ammo AK47 - rds	243543	12090		255633
Grenades	137	3	56	196
Explosives - lbs	2021	7		2028
Det Cord - - ft	5352			5352
Blasting Caps	14675	55		14730
Radio	6	1		7
Snipers	269		2	271
Bamboo whips	73			73
Gooby traps	1161	199	139	1499
Punji pits	181		39	220
Mines AP	52	6	32	90
Mines AT	49	6	3	58
Claymores	66	13		79
VC-NVA packs	764	95		859
Equipment (unk)	5000			5000
Documents - lbs	284	108	20	412
105mm - rds	36	6	4	46
60mm - rds	1868	28		1896
82mm - rds	2597	21		2618
75mm - rds	148	2	1	151
155mm - rds		6	2	8
81mm - rds			51	51
AKammo- rds			80	80
C-4 - lbs			40	40
Rockets (war)	51364			51364
Bunkers	12818	915	97	13830
Tunnels	704	99	260	1063
Caves	517	77	60	654
Base Camps	1119	116	15	1250
Huts	580	27		607
Caches	877	2	29	908
Spider holes			30	30
Rice - lbs	1178080	35023	52020	1265123
Corn - lbs	7195	1		7195
Salt - lbs	4284	40	330	4654
Food stuffs	151	150		301

\* NOTE: These figures subject to increase as all data has not been located and researched; there are further docs which exist and will affect these s!

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Figure 1. Page 1 of Jesse Mendez's Results

MISSIONS - U.S. Army Scout Dog Operations 1966 - 1972 VN

Combat	1127
Recon	13831
Ambush	12774
Outpost	3317
Search/Clear/Destroy	37624
Village Search	1451
Long Range	25
Perimeter Patrols	4465
Road Clearing	1567
Combat Assault	1318
Base Defense	229
Blocking Force	179
Med. Cap.	31
Rat Patrols	28
VCI Ops	2
Sweeps	453
Combat Tracker Support	61
Sniper Team	2
VA Capture	12
Other	4916
	*****
Total*	83509

Missions K-9's

<u>Scout Dogs</u>	<u>83509</u>
<u>Mine/Tunnel</u>	<u>2196</u>
<u>Tracker</u>	<u>2359</u>
	*****
<u>Total*</u>	<u>88064</u>

data subject to increase as all records/files/reports have not been located and researched

Figure 2. Page 2 of Jesse Mendez's Results

The scout dog program created and utilized some important concepts. Former handlers credit these for the high level of success of the program. The Monthly Report of Scout Dog Operations is one such concept. It was a simple easy-to-use form that allowed results to be collected. This form provided a means to gather data on a variety of items, such as the number of days that the dogs from a platoon supported units, the types and number of patrols, the medical status of the various dogs, and any benefits derived or lessons learned due to the presence of a scout dog on the patrols. The examples illustrated in the following figures were not selected for any particular reason, but were pulled as random examples from Mendez's collection of 1,100 of these monthly reports.

MONTHLY REPORT OF SCOUT DOG OPERATIONS				RCS: A1700-7	DATE 10 Jul 70
TO: Commanding General HQ USAFV ATTN: A1700-05 APO 96375		FROM: Commanding Officer 36th AUS Plat (Scout Dog) 1st Cav Div (AM) APO 96375			
1. MONTH June 1970	2. SGT AVAL 10	3. SGT CP 10	4. AUTH STP PERM 26 DOG 25	5. ACTUAL STP PERM 26 DOG 25	
6. HANDED IN BY: [blank] NOSE 2 LHM BY 4 TNG 0 NO DOG 0 REPL RGR 5			7. DOG: CA 0 WA 0 DCK 1 BAO 0 TNG 0 NO HANDED IN 5 REPL RGR 0		
8. MISSTIONS					
SEARCH 10	AMBUSH 15	RECON 37	OUTPOST 0	PERI PTL 3	
ROAD REPAIRING 2		OTHER BUNKER SEARCH 4		TOTAL 110	
9. SCOUT DOG TEAM SUPPORT DAYS 94					
10. SCOUT DOG ALERTS:					
a. Warning of enemy ambush 1, occupied base cave 0, occupied bunker 1, cave 0, sniper 0, tunnel 0, other 5. (VO radio; AIA; trails)					
b. Warning of enemy booby traps 0, caches 0, mines 0, unoccupied base unoccupied bunker 0, unoccupied cave 0, unoccupied bunker 0					
c. Warning of enemy movement toward friendly ambush 0, friendly outpost 0					
11. RESULT OF SCOUT DOG TEAM ALERT: EN *A 1A 3 1A * WWS 0 A57 2 8 40 (3 1A) 5071 20 1 1 no cache, no mine, 1 small bunker					
12. COMMENTS OF PLAT COMMANDER: 1. 2 AIA - Supplies) 4 tons rice, 27 tons medical supplies cache.					
13. COMMENTS OF REVIEWING OFFICER:					
14. NAME AND GRADE PLATOON COMMANDER: [blank] 1LT			15. SIGNATURE: [Signature]		
16. NAME AND GRADE OF REVIEWING OFFICER: [blank]			17. SIGNATURE: [Signature]		
FORM 100-1 (Rev. 10-68) PREVIOUS EDITIONS OBSOLETE					

Figure 4. Example of a Monthly Report of Scout Dog Operations

CASUALTIES

DOG HANDLERS KIA-VN

<u>USA</u>	221 (Spec Forces 2)
USMC	28
USAF	10
<u>USN</u>	2 (Seals 1)
	****
<u>Total*</u>	<u>261</u>

1975 <u>SS Mayaguez rescue</u>	3
	****
<u>Total*</u>	<u>264</u>

U.S. K-9's KIA - VN

USA Scout Dogs	228
USA Sentry Dogs	7
USA Combat Tracker Dogs	5
USAF Sentry Dogs	14
USMC Scout/Mine Dogs	32
USMC Sentry Dogs	8
unit unk.	9
	****
<u>Total*</u>	<u>303</u>

Enemy (Credited to U.S. Military Dogs)

	<u>US Scout Dogs</u>	<u>US Mine/Tunnel Dogs</u>	<u>US Tracker Dogs</u>
KIA	3630	24	165
WIA	332	8	25
POW	1174	17	31
Susp	1000	23	84
		<u>Total*</u>	<u>6513</u>

Figure 3. Page 3 of Jesse Mendez's Results

MONTHLY REPORT OF SCOUT DOG OPERATIONS				RCS: AVHOL-7	DATE 31 Jul 69
<b>FROM:</b> DG, 1st Cav Div (AM) ATTN: G-3, Doctrine & Training APO SF 96490		<b>TO:</b> Commanding General HQ USAFV ATTN: AVHOC-CS APO 96375		<b>FROM:</b> Commanding Officer 34th Inf Platoon (RD) 1st Cav Div (AM) APO SF 96490	
1. MONTH July	2. SET AVAL 25	3. SGT OP 15	4. AUTH STR PERS 28 DOG 28	5. ACTUAL STR: PERS 30 DOG 27	
a. HANDLER KIA VIA HOSP LHM DY 1 TNG 5 MC DOG REFL ROR		b. DOG KIA VIA I.S.D.R. A BAD 1 TNG 4 MC BANTLER REFL ROR			
<b>8. MISSIONS</b>					
SEARCH 54	AMBUSH 8	RPOCH 18	OUTPOST	PERI PTL 2	
ROAD CLEARING		OTHER Blocking Force 9 Bunker Search 3		TOTAL 94	
9. SCOUT DOG TEAM SUPPORT DAYS 87					
10. SCOUT DOG ALERTS:					
a. Warning of enemy ambush 2, occupied base camp 1, occupied bunker, cave, sniffer 1, tunnel, other.					
b. Warning of enemy booby traps, caches 2, mines, unoccupied base camp, unoccupied bunker, unoccupied cave, unoccupied tunnel, other. Dead Trails, Workers (2), 1					
c. Warning of enemy movement toward friendly ambush, friendly outpost, other.					
11. DIRECT RESULT OF SCOUT DOG TEAM ALERT: SN KIA PW WPNS SUPPLIES					
12. REMARKS OF PLATOON COMMANDER:					
1. Our AD seems to be experiencing a lull in fighting. Enemy activity and contact has been sporadic and small for the most part.					
2. Concerning the five (5) dogs on Medical Hold: BENJA - Broken Foot MAX - Growth on eye MAJOR - DNS CAMRY - Amputation wound in Foot BENBO - WIA, Foot					
13. REMARKS OF REVIEWING OFFICER:					
14. NAME AND GRADE PLATOON COMMANDER: RICHARD D. DIBSON, 2LT, Infantry			15. SIGNATURE: <i>[Signature]</i>		
16. NAME AND GRADE OF REVIEWING OFFICER: JOHN E. DAVIS-ROD, MAJ, INF, S - 2/3			17. SIGNATURE: <i>[Signature]</i>		

Figure 5. Example of a Monthly Report of Scout Dog Operations

Another item of interest is the Operational Readiness Test (ORT), (see Appendix A). According to Mendez, the ORT was one of the keys to the success of the program. It was used to evaluate a scout dog team in a number of realistic scenarios that had been created based on experiences from Vietnam. Evaluators were independent of the dog program and were instructed regarding the standards by which each team was to be evaluated. The evaluators, student handlers, and instructors knew that this evaluation or test was the last chance to identify problems before having to face the real dangers in Vietnam, so the evaluators, student handlers, and instructors who participated took the ORT very seriously.

From all accounts by former scout dog handlers, the training conducted at Fort Benning was, "successful due in great part to the outstanding training received by

handlers and dogs alike at Fort Benning” (Murry, 1998, p. 40). During my visit with Jesse Mendez in Columbus and Fort Benning, Georgia, he recounted that many dog team members, upon completing their requisite combat tour in Vietnam, volunteered to finish their Army tours as instructors at Fort Benning. Their primary goal was to inject realism into the training. As the primary instructor who developed the scout dog curriculum and authored the program of instruction, Mendez is credited by many with having been a major force in instilling realism into the training.

Mendez based the training on his experiences walking patrols in Vietnam as a military advisor with the ARVN. He even helped develop a training area that was a replica of a Vietnamese village, complete with live farm animals. Training patrols were also very long in order to develop the team’s stamina and to ensure the handler understood how to recognize fatigue and heat exhaustion in the dog and himself. Mechanized infantry units at Fort Benning also assisted with the training. The dog teams would learn to mount and ride inside the armored vehicles and then practiced dismounting and working an objective area. The training exercises consisted of a long movement in the vehicles, firing from the vehicles, reacting to ambushes while moving to an objective, etc. Even helicopter support was incorporated. The helicopters would shoot blank rounds from above their positions to simulate combat conditions experienced in Vietnam. The teams were trained to travel in all military vehicles to include helicopters. The teams even qualified to rappel from helicopters. Mendez also conducted a HALO parachute jump with a dog to test that capability. In short, diverse and realistic training was critical since a dog team could be called to support any unit in Vietnam immediately upon graduation.

The availability of infantry and other combat arms units at Fort Benning facilitated and provided essential support for various aspects of training. Many times, according to Mendez, the dog teams would support other training conducted at Fort Benning, such as at Ranger School. Hy Rothstein, a professor at the Naval Postgraduate School and former Special Forces Battalion Commander, remembers having to lead a patrol to which a scout dog was attached during Ranger School in 1974. He was evaluated on how well he incorporated the dog team’s capabilities into the patrol. Rothstein said that the dog team was very effective during the training patrol.

Due to the successes of the scout and sentry dog programs in Vietnam, the military began exploring expanding K-9 roles and exploiting the capabilities of dog teams in combat. Some of these programs developed problems similar to those experienced when Pandre was awarded his contract in WWII, while others were quite successful.

For instance in 1969, the US Army Limited Warfare Laboratory (USALWL) decided that something like M-dogs from World War II might be useful in Vietnam. Research had been conducted on using dogs to detect mines at the British War Dog Training Center and at the Stanford Research Institute after World War II. Although results of the British and Stanford experiments were not encouraging (p. 198), mines and booby traps still proved a constant menace in Vietnam. On roads and in open areas, mechanical mine detectors were effective, but in the jungle these devices were not useful. The USALWL contracted a civilian company to establish a mine detection program.

The civilian company that was contracted by USALWL was called Behavior Systems, Inc. (BSI) which, according to Perry Money, a former Marines Corps handler of a BSI dog, deployed 56 Army dogs in 1969 and 28 Marine Corps dogs in 1970. The training doctrine was written and administered by two civilians who, at the time, held Master's Degrees in Animal Behavioral Psychology. BSI initially trained fourteen dogs to detect mines, booby traps, and trips wires, and another fourteen to detect and locate tunnels only. Each dog produced by BSI cost approximately \$10,000 (Lemish, p. 201). According to Mr. Money, "Their primary focus was on a dual system called "conditioned reflex and positive reinforcement." BSI civilians traveled to South Vietnam with the Marines and their new dogs.

The BSI program led to the formation of the 60<sup>th</sup> Infantry Platoon at Fort Gordon. Its formal designation was the 60<sup>th</sup> Infantry Platoon (Scout Dog) (Mine/Tunnel Detector Dog) (White, 1969, p. I-1). The BSI mine dogs were assigned a variety of missions including Reconnaissance in Force (RIF), sweeps, search and destroy (clear), land clearing operations, and road sweeps (p. II-2). The handlers would make clear to the support unit leader the dog team's capabilities and limitations prior to the mission. The handler would also inform the leader that the dog should not be made to walk a tiring distance, i.e., two or more kilometers, before the dog was committed to an active search role (p. II-2).

The mine dog handler typically ranged 5 to 20 meters behind the dog, and the supported unit leader followed 20-50 meters behind the handler. The terrain dictated many of the distances because line of sight was needed to allow for the recognition of the alert by the handler and for safety and survivability of the dog team. The dog handler would mainly use hand signals to direct the movement of the dog, so if the dog could not see the handler, then the directions could not be given. Some attempts to use transmitters on the dogs were made in an attempt to give the handler greater flexibility in using the dog in limited visibility. One such attempt was called the Remote Control of War Dogs (Remotely Controlled Scout Dog) conducted for the US Army Land Warfare Laboratory (Romba, 1974, pp. 1-55).

The major objective of the study on remote controls was to develop procedures by which a dog handler could control the direction of off-leash movement of his dog by remote means in an unrestricted environment. The experiment used tones as commands to the dog. Similar experimental work is being currently done at Auburn University. The 1974 experiments pointed to problems at greater distances due to the difficulties of providing immediate positive reinforcement to the dogs when they were behaving appropriately. The study concluded that a scout dog could be trained to operate off leash up to ½ mile away from the handler using radio-transmitted signals. The experiments indicated that the change-direction command was the most difficult for the dog to learn. The overall intent of the experiments was to create a baseline of information that could be used to further develop, refine, and standardize, “techniques for the large scale production of highly trained war dogs” (Romba, p. 46). The closing comment and recommendation made by John Romba, who wrote the *Final Report: Remote Control of War Dogs (Remotely Controlled Scout Dog)* in 1974 for the US Army Warfare Laboratory, noted, “Command emphasis should be given to the need for improving current military dog capabilities and training procedures with the ultimate objective of providing, at least on a stand-by basis, a proven capability for the rapid, large scale production of highly trained war dogs” (Romba, p. 47).

One reason to experiment with the extended off-leash method of dog handling was to increase the distance between the dog and personnel so that the handler’s survivability might be enhanced if a mine or booby trap was detonated in the dog’s

vicinity. The 60<sup>th</sup> Infantry Platoon (Scout Dog) (Mine/Tunnel Detector Dog) had a limited off-leash capability as described earlier, and there were a number of casualties. One casualty in the 60<sup>th</sup> IPSP, for example, occurred with a handler on his first support mission:

His mine dog responded correctly on three occasions to trip wire devices. The dog made a fourth correct response and as the handler approached the dog he fainted from heat exhaustion, falling on the trip wire. A grenade exploded wounding both handler and dog (White, 1969, p. II-5).

With regard to the 28 Marine BSI-trained dogs, consider the statistics Perry C. Money collected based on his first-hand experiences.<sup>6</sup> The data that Money has collected based on his experience suggest the following:

1. Number of BSI trained Dogs assigned -- 28
2. Number of Dogs Killed in Action – 6
  - Of the (6) Killed in Action:
    - a. Command Detonation after the dog found the device -- 1
    - b. Shot by sniper – 1
    - c. As a result of missing the device or actually setting it off – 4
3. Number of Dogs Missing in Action – 1
4. Number of Dogs Died of Unknown Causes -- 1
5. Number of Handlers Killed in Action – 6
6. Officers Killed in Action -- 1
7. Total Number of USMC personnel assigned to the project fro March 1970 to June 1971 -- 50.

Mr. Money does not consider this to be a high casualty rate, considering all factors involved. The Army unit, the 60<sup>th</sup> Infantry Platoon (Scout Dog) (Mine/Tunnel Detector Dog), had a reported 25 percent casualty rate (White, 1969, p. II-5). White's report states that in the case of the 60<sup>th</sup> Infantry Platoon (Scout Dog) (Mine/Tunnel Detector Dog), there were "no handler losses due to the dog's performance" (White, II-5). The casualties described in detail in the report seem to have been caused by combat or environmental conditions while the dogs were not being actively employed. In other

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<sup>6</sup> His numbers are slightly different from those that appear in the "Final Report". by B. White evaluating the effectiveness of the BSI program, which was written at the end of the 260 day trial period because the Marine unit operated for another six months after the "Final Report" was issued.

words, the deaths were not caused by a failure of one of the dogs to warn the handler of danger on the job.

Perry Money's assessment of the BSI program is that, "You get what you pay for." which was approximately \$15,000 per dog, an amount somewhat different from Lemish's figure. Money believes that, "The (2) civilians from BSI were 'War Protestors', but not anti-American, I think they firmly believed that they were creating a defensive weapon that would reduce US casualties, while not increasing enemy casualties. Long haired hippie looking, but they were there with us every step of the way until we hit the bush." The current programs that are being created to counter the Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) employed by insurgents in Iraq share at least some of the same attributes, including the reliance on contractors. But there may be other similarities worth considering as well. For instance, dogs, like humans, are susceptible to the heat and humidity. Supported unit leaders in Vietnam would at times make the dogs walk farther than the recommended distances before working. In one case, a mine dog was forced during a road sweep to cover twenty-one miles of hard surface road in only seven hours (Lemish, p. 203). The overuse and abuse of the dog caused injuries that then rendered it ineffective. At the end of the trial, patrol leaders evaluated the mine/tunnel dogs. Gunfire and explosions caused adverse reactions in about 50 percent of the dogs in the 60<sup>th</sup>. Some dogs attempted to run away as a consequence and, when caught, "whined, whimpered, and cowered." In extreme cases, dogs were ineffective for 30 minutes to an hour (White, 1969, II-10). About 85 percent of the supported unit commanders believed that dogs enhance security, 12 percent thought they had no effect, and 3 percent felt the dog teams were a hindrance to security and performed poorly (White, p. II-7). Even though the program was considered a success, a future contract was not awarded to BSI.

According to Lemish the performance of the BSI dogs deteriorated as the war continued. This deterioration was mainly due to issues created when handlers began to deviate from the original training regimen. New handlers arrived and each one had less experience and training than the previous one. This led to idiosyncratic and non-standardized personal training techniques being introduced which could only have confused the dogs. (Lemish, pp. 204-205).

Other programs evolved as offshoots of the Vietnam Scout Dog Program. One was the “Superdog Program” as part of the Biosensor Research project. This program was an attempt to selectively breed dogs with fewer health problems, thereby increasing the length of use of the dog along with the development of a “superior ambush detection dog” (Lemish; p. 216). The program involved a range of people from different career fields involved. Nothing conclusive appears to have been published or disseminated about the experiment. At first glance, it might appear that Lackland AFB’s “puppy program” has similar objectives today. However, the “puppy program” seems much more a response to continual procurement issues.

The US Army Combined Arms Combat Development Agency considered the development of “the infantry tactical dog.” The concept was to combine the skills of the scout, tracker, and mine/tunnel dog into one all-purpose animal. This was a cost-saving measure. The program only lasted three month before it was cancelled (Lemish, p. 216). Most people seem to believe that the capability was neither realistic nor attainable.

Meanwhile, what is perhaps most striking is that many current handlers are not aware that earlier attempts were made similar to their current efforts to develop effective programs. Yet, the lessons learned by members of these earlier units could be of tremendous use and value. At the very least, more information about these earlier attempts needs to be collected and the expertise of these former handlers tapped. This should be a major priority for current program managers, contractors, and handlers.<sup>7</sup>

## **B. CONCLUSIONS**

1. The assumption that other militaries will use dogs similarly is erroneous. Just as Japanese in WW II did not use dogs in the same manner or roles as the Germans, even though they received trained war dogs from Germany, the South Vietnamese had a different attitude toward dogs than did their American Advisors. This made their use by

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<sup>7</sup> Although, the scout dog platoons continued to make contributions for the remainder of the war, dogs that were deployed and used in Vietnam were left in Vietnam. The military regarded K-9s as equipment. Only 120 dogs were shipped back to the US. The remaining dogs were handed over to the ARVN troops. The dogs’ final disposition once handed over is open to speculation (Lemish, p. 236). Many former handlers wanted to bring their dogs back to the US and demilitarize them as in World War II, but Army policy prohibited this. Also, the US public was not fully aware of the fate of the dogs at the conclusion of the Vietnam War, when so many other problems were facing the military. At the time, the dogs’ fates were not a priority or a concern to any but their handlers and those whose lives so many of them saved.

Vietnamese/ARVN problematic. This lesson may need to be borne in mind as we encourage the use of MWDs in Iraq and elsewhere.

2. The success of a tactical dog program requires realistic training. The dog and handler must be trained in conditions that simulate their future operating environment. The scout dog training program made continual adjustments class to class based on feedback from handlers in Vietnam, the monthly AARs, and thanks to handlers from Vietnam who returned to become instructors at Fort Benning.

3. The job or task of being a scout dog handler or a dog team operating on "point" of a patrol is extremely taxing. This means that training is even more important so that the handler can concentrate on the dynamic variables in the environment and not on controlling his dog or their integration with the patrol. A dog handler should have extensive patrolling expertise and have experience working with the unit that the team will support. If the dog handler has not had experience with a particular unit, then time must be made for the dog team to become comfortable with the supported unit and the members of the patrol. The particular patrol should rehearse battle drills with the dog team to ensure that both the dog team and the patrol members know what to expect from each other. During the Korean War, efforts were made to allow for this introductory period and this seemed to increase the effectiveness of the patrol.

4. M-dogs or dogs similar to those of the 60<sup>th</sup> Infantry Platoon (Scout Dog) (Mine/Tunnel Detector Dog) can be successfully trained if trained by qualified trainers. The difficulty seems to be determining the qualifications necessary to adequately train dogs and handlers, especially when the military decision-makers lack any background or experience with dog training. Alternatively, some who do have experience with dogs with certain capabilities may bring a particular bias to developing new capabilities.

5. Acquisition is a perennial problem. The lack of foresight and resources applied to the acquisition issue continues to restrict US dog programs from their full potential to save American lives in conflicts. The use of dogs in combat has continually been underestimated by the US military. Consequently, since World War II the maintenance of an adequate pool of qualified dogs and the process to procure even greater numbers quickly has never been established. Civilian contracting or other options

should be explored to determine whether decentralization of the procurement process can provide adequate numbers of qualified dogs.

6. The organization of the dog units as separate platoons attached to higher headquarters may help prevent elimination of the units after a conflict. Since dog platoons or teams were not assigned to the tactical level of command, tactical commanders did not have ownership of the assets, and therefore after Vietnam many commanders did not object to platoons' deactivation since it did not directly impact their own unit's organization and equipment. We should prevent the same from occurring again in the future.

7. Scout dogs were extremely effective in Vietnam. This is based on an extensive literature review and personal testimonials of those individuals who operated with or as the scout dog teams. As Jesse Mendez's spreadsheet shows, scout dogs made many contributions at the tactical level. The more people who can be saved on the battlefield, the more effectiveness and combat strength can be maintained by a unit. The psychological advantage of feeling less vulnerable to the enemy also helped enhance patrol members' effectiveness.

8. There are numerous lessons to be learned about military dog handling from the Vietnam programs. The issue is that there is no centralized source of information on the subject or repository of materials. The greatest sources of information and documents are found in veterans' personal collections. The DoD Military Working Dog Program at Lackland AFB does not have the various manuals or documents produced in the past. At the very least, this material and lessons learned should be maintained at the DoD Military Working Dog Training Center so that current and future dog handlers can review the experiences of former handlers and ensure that past lessons are built on in order to save lives. Too many lessons have had to be relearned at the expense of American lives. The use of After Action Reviews such as those used in Vietnam could also well be of use during current operations in order to capture the lessons and ensure that the dog team training programs are producing dog teams that adequately fulfill the requirements of the current operational environments.

9. Civilian contracting of dog training, such as that done by BSI during Vietnam, may well be called for today, but the training must be properly executed by qualified

personnel. Otherwise, the military risks contracting with trainers and program managers who offer a capability that is not realistic. If dogs are to be trained by civilian contractors the military should release a list of requirements and desired capabilities. If the contractor meets the demands, then the military may purchase the dog. This would require military personnel who are independent from the contractors to evaluate the dogs, as well as to develop acceptable and measurable standards.