

47TH INFANTRY PLATOON
(SCOUT DOG)



PRIDE OF THE 2ND BRIGADE

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INTRODUCTION

The scout dog team, trained as an effective, cohesive unit, has become an integral part of the infantry operation in Vietnam. Founded on the natural compatibility and affection between man and dog, the scout dog team is a finished product of long hours of intensive, specialized training. Properly employed against the enemy, in both offensive and defensive operations, the team can be of significant assistance. In some instances, in that fleeting moment when men must react in battle, that "faithful servant" can and has made the difference between success and failure, between disaster and a mission accomplished.

The purpose of this brief is to provide the infantry commander with a firm understanding of the scout dog team, its capabilities and limitations, in order that he may effectively employ it on the battlefield. It will be a proud unit, the 47th Infantry Platoon (Scout Dog) of the 2nd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile), its make-up, history and accomplishments. Finally, armed with the knowledge of a scout dog team's uses and potential, it is hoped that field commanders and leaders will know that the 47th's "New Power" is ready and willing to serve.

HISTORY AND MISSION

The history of dog warfare is as old as warfare itself. Dogs have been companions for man as well as attackers, scouts, sled dogs, casualty dogs, and messengers. Certain breeds, such as the German Shepherd and Labrador Retriever, possess a superior intelligence and have exhibited a remarkable ability to adapt to various kinds of climate and terrain. Although dogs saw considerable action in both World Wars, it was not until the Korean Conflict that the first TO&E Scout Dog Platoon was formed. This was the 26th Infantry Platoon (Scout Dog). The various tactical uses that these teams exhibited, coupled with their abilities, caused the Army to enlarge its Scout Dog Program. The 26th compiled a distinguished record in Korea and was officially cited for outstanding and faithful service. The dog, York, was written up in a letter of achievement by the Commanding General of the 25th Infantry Division for a record of leading I&S combat patrols and having never lost a man due to enemy fire. This platoon was later assigned to Fort Raming, Georgia and formed the core of the Scout Dog Training Detachment at which a course of instruction is given for handlers and dogs. The success of these first teams, in conjunction with the expanded program, directly led to the wide use of scout dogs in the Vietnam War. Today, some twenty scout dog platoons are effectively working here on coastal plains, deltas, beaches, rice paddies, villages, and mountain jungles. The enemy is quite aware of their presence on the battlefield. Captured Viet Cong documents have revealed established bounties on a scout dog and his handler. Needless to say, our canine warriors have kept the pressure on.

The mission of a scout dog platoon is to support infantry, airborne and other type units in tactical operations against hostile forces by detecting and

giving silent warning of any foreign presence outside the main body. Scout dog teams may be utilized for specific missions:

- a. Detection of ambush sites
- b. Detection of snipers close-in.
- c. Detection of enemy hideouts or stay-behind groups
- d. Detection of enemy caches of weapons, food, and ammunition
- e. Detection of mines or booby-traps during road-clearing operations
- f. Assist in village block and search or block and sweep operations
- g. Accompany ambush patrols and/or listening posts to give early warning of enemy approach.
- h. Work with combat tracker teams in special situations requiring both teams' capabilities.

PLATOON HISTORY AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The 47th Infantry Platoon (Scout Dog) was activated on 2 January 1968 at Fort Benning, Georgia. The platoon consists of a headquarters group and four TO&E squads. The headquarters contains a platoon commander, platoon sergeant, veterinary technician, and a clerk. Each squad consists of six men and dogs, including a squad leader. Full TO&E strength is 28 men- 24 scout dog teams.

The men and their dogs received their training at Fort Benning, completing the 12-week course of instruction from 12 January through 3 May 1968. After a short leave, the unit deployed to RVN, arriving in country on 27 May 1968. Here we are assigned to the 2nd Brigade of the 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile) based at LZ Sally. This concurs with the current USARPV aim of providing one scout dog platoon for every infantry brigade.

The 47th has been actively engaged in supporting the 2nd Brigade's infantry operations. The men have supported every battalion in the brigade during Operation Nevada Eagle. They have worked on the coastal plains, beaches, rice paddies, mountain jungles, villages, and the A Shau Valley. Starting with the first mission on 14 July 1968, the platoon has gone on a total of 478 missions

through 31 December 1968. They have spent 821 days in the field. SGT Wright and his dog Pup accounted for the biggest enemy cache thus far which included 20,000 rounds AK-47, 75 mortar rounds, 3 mortar tubes, 12 bolt rifles, and 1 Thompson .45. 47th IPSD "Paw Power" accounted for 32 enemy KIA, 2 WIA, and 64 POW.

With the arrival in country of the 1/5th Mechanized Infantry Division, the call went out to the 47th and the response was, as in all cases, immediate. In support of Operation Pioneer I, scout dog teams from this unit prowled with the new troopers at Quang Tri, Con Thien, Dong Ha, and along the DMZ. A mark was clearly left. The 1/5th Mech will get their own scout dog platoon early this year.

QUALIFICATIONS OF HANDLERS AND DOGS

It has already been established that the dog and handler must work as a coordinated team to be effective. Therefore, it is important that the handler's attitude towards dogs be of genuine fondness and he must also have a personal desire to work with a dog in a way that often find the man and dog eating and sleeping together.

Handlers must have average intelligence or above to work with dogs. It is all important that a handler understands that his dog is completely dependant on him for both his training and care. Even the best handlers must realize that one cannot force desired behavior on a dog- he simply does not have the mental capacity of a human being. Therefore, a handler must, above all, be patient and understanding with his dog.

Handlers are required to have mental and physical coordination. A handler must do all the thinking for the team and, through body movements and gestures, both lead and guide his dog. Along with coordination, it is necessary that a handler

have good physical endurance. It is safe to say that on any type mission the handler must be able to "out last" his dog. In order for a team to be effective, it is imperative that the handler be awake and at all times be aware of what his dog is telling him. Only through the handler's correct interpretation of his dog's signals can a team become an aid to the infantry unit.

Because of the dog's dependency on his handler, it is necessary that the handler be of a resourceful nature and be able to cope with the wide variety of problems and situations encountered in the field. Many of these situations may be unique to a particular operation, hence, never covered in the 12 weeks of stateside training.

Dogs too must possess certain traits and characteristics which will make them adaptable to military service. All dogs used by the Army are procured through the Air Force at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas where they first must pass a series of tests. A dog must be between 1-3 years old, and have a generally healthy appearance. Then come the tests for rabies, distemper, and other diseases common to dogs. They must have two coats of hair, good teeth, be well muscled, and have good endurance. It is also important that the dog be aggressive. Although not a requirement, it is generally accepted that German Shepherds be used for the military because they possess the desired characteristics. Male dogs are more numerous but not a necessity. If the Army does accept a female she must be spayed not less than six months prior to acceptance. It has been found that a female scout dog will work well with tracker teams as they get along with the males.

TRAINING

Once the Army has accepted a dog for scout use, he is shipped to Fort Benning where he finds a young, eager handler waiting for training to begin (12- week course of instruction). The first two weeks are basic obedience in which time the dog learns whom his master is and that he must be obeyed. The next four weeks are spent on basic scouting. During this period, you take the natural instinct of a dog to hunt and chase and channel it towards human scent. At first, the dog will be alerting on small animals and birds and each time he does the handler must make stern corrections to let the dog know this is wrong. When he does alert on the human decoy, the dog is praised heavily with words and a firm hand on his withers.

After the dog has become accustomed to the work harness and knows his job, he and the handler move on to advanced scouting where they meet new problems such as decoys in trees, tunnels, or placed in areas where the wind will play tricks on the dog. Right from the beginning the handler has been learning to evaluate both the dog's alerts plus the factors that are affecting the alerts such as wind direction and strength, terrain, and the placement of objects that might tend to alter the true direction of the wind. It is here where the handler must do his part; weigh all available information and make an accurate estimate of the situation. In a few months men's lives will depend on his judgment. By the final two weeks, which is spent on specialized training, the dog and handler, working as a team, have become an effective warning device to be used by an infantry unit of almost any size. This specialized training includes rappelling, waterborne patrolling, work with helicopters, river crossing and night training. Because of this training, the teams are more adaptable to specialized units using the more advanced infantry concepts like airmobile.

To keep up with the ever-changing needs of infantry units, the 47th Infantry Platoon (Scout Dog) runs a continuing program of in-country training for the teams working throughout the Fancus Second Brigade. On days when the dogs are not filling commitments, they are run through training lanes which have everything from booby-traps to personnel. Each dog is given special attention in the areas in which he is weak. Also lanes are set up in accordance with what is being found within our AO. Our in-country training program is broad in that it encompasses all phases of scouting, yet, like most operations in the 2nd Brigade, it is highly specialized. Thus, when the field commander requests a dog team he knows he will receive a team that is knowledgeable of the current tactical situation and is prepared to do the job required. An important part of the training done on and around Sally is the intricate and challenging obstacle course which is located on the north side of the 47th's kenneling area. Dogs can be observed being worked through the course daily. This not only provides enjoyment for both the dog and handler, but also allows the dog to relieve excess energy. Thus, the scout dog training program is continually striving to meet the demands of our dynamic mode of modern warfare.

CAPABILITIES AND LIMITATIONS

Dogs are possessed of certain keen senses which make them an invaluable tool in counterinsurgency operations. Like other specialized items of equipment, you must be thoroughly familiar with its operation before you can fully realize its benefits. Such is the case with scout dogs.

Dogs can give early silent warning of enemy hiding in caves, canal banks, foxholes, trees (jungles, forests), rice paddies, and even on occasion alert on the presence of a well-concealed mantrap. They accomplish this through their superior senses of smell, sight, and hearing. By detecting sounds too faint for

human ears--- the scraping of clothing against brush, harsh breathing, the rasp of a sandal against a rock, the accidental clicking of a bolt; and even more remarkable is its ability to detect the presence of a trip wire in total darkness by the faintest of all sounds--- soundwaves by the vibration of the wire, plus its ability to scent the boobytrap and associated human odor.

Properly trained and employed under ideal conditions, the average scout dog is capable of alerting on airborne human scent at a great distance. However, even an alert of 30 meters is a lifesaver under the most adverse conditions of human visibility.

Even though a dog hears 40 times better than a man, smells with an ability 20 times greater, and sees 10 times, it is not to be said that a dog team is infallible, incapable of error, or devoid of limitations. These limitations are harmful only when the handler is unaware of what they are and what influence they have on the dog's sensory and physical activities.

PROPER EMPLOYMENT OF SCOUT DOG TEAMS

Because of the wide variety of tactical situations encountered in the field, the employment of the scout dog team should be left up to the discretion of the commanding officer of the unit supported. However, certain rules and guidelines should be followed. The primary mission of a dog team is to provide early silent warning, to the infantryman, of impending danger. Calculated in terms of tactical value, a dog properly employed can foil an enemy's operations. Since the dog detects primarily airborne scent, for a team to be most effective, it is generally accepted that the dog will be on the point position or at least in the point element where he will have the least distraction. In areas of likely danger, the dog should be moved to the middle or rear of the patrol, as a

dog team is not intended to take part in any enveloping action. Remember, a dog is capable of alerting from anywhere in the patrol.

In situations where vegetation is extremely thick, such as dense jungle, the travel of scent will be considerably restricted; causing it to drift aimlessly because of the lack of circulation in such areas. An alert range of 10-15 meters is considered good under such conditions. In jungle-covered mountains, experience has shown that what little wind is available usually is headed directly up the slope. In such a situation, careful consideration should be given to the placement of the team so as to afford maximum use of the wind. A trail cutter may be used ahead of the dog without limiting his abilities, however, in cases where speed is essential to the mission of the patrol, the dog team should be moved off the point as a dog cannot work effectively at a fast pace. Commanders should realize that a dog is not a machine and needs rest, as does any infantryman. If a dog is worked throughout the day, it is unwise to use him on a night ambush. Remember, the handler knows his dog best and his suggestions as to the employment of the dog should never be disregarded.

Above all, a scout dog should be used for scouting only. Using dogs for interrogation of prisoners and detainees is strictly forbidden except in cases of emergency. Scout dog teams will never be used to track, such as following a blood trail or similar track. A scout dog that is prone to track may lead you into an ambush.

Tracker teams are available and work in conjunction with the scout dogs on many occasions. The use of scout dogs with combat tracker teams is becoming the rule throughout the Brigade. Tracker dogs, more often than not, will not alert on the origin of scent until only a few feet away. This creates a dangerous situation to the handler and the unit supported. By employing a

scout dog with the tracker, the commander is able to follow an enemy force and yet be warned in advance of its whereabouts.

Commanders should always bear in mind the importance of using scout dog teams only when they are likely to be effective. Misuse of teams can lead to injury which would hinder the availability of dogs. Properly employed, the scout dog team can spell the difference between success and failure of a mission.

CONCLUSION

It has been shown that the potential of a trained scout dog team, in support of infantry, is immense. Emphasis must be placed on its proper and efficient utilization in tactical situations. It is hoped that the information and background provided in this brief will assist the commander in accomplishing this.

The 47th Infantry Platoon (Scout Dog) is a specialized unit, made up of volunteers who support every infantry company in the Famous 2nd Brigade. We have walked point, combat assaulted, and searched villages with all the troops of the Brigade. Our record stands for itself. A commander who calls on "The Power" for support knows he will receive the best. This is nothing less than standard for the "Pride of the 2nd Brigade".

REFERENCES

1. FM 20-20, HQ, DA, May 1967.
2. Handbook for Scout Dog Employment, USAIS, Fort Benning, Georgia, May 1967.