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ANIMALS -
DOGS

Note -
Missing Page 17

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SPECIAL STUDY

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COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE

SPECIAL STUDY

AN INFANTRY SUPPORTING WEAPON CONCEPT

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ABSTRACT

The United States Marine Corps needs an anti-guerrilla capability to fight guerrillas in the trouble spots of the world today. This study proposes a squad of specially trained guerrillas, armed with dogs, to be attached to a Marine infantry company as a supporting weapon. This weapon will make the company a more effective anti-guerrilla fighting unit.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	ii
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. GUERRILLA WARFARE	3
III. THE U. S. MARINE CORPS' COURSE IN WARS . .	10
IV. FIGHTING DOGS	13
V. THE THREAT	20
VI. PROPOSAL	23
BIBLIOGRAPHY	29

CHAPTER IV

FIGHTING DOGS

Let us consider the general nature of a dog. He is a beast, not as intelligent as a man, but more intelligent and tractable than any other of the beasts except the primates. This intelligence is the key to being able to use the dog to assist man in his work; specifically, the soldier in his fighting. The United States Army says:

A dog can be taught to respond appropriately to an extremely large number of spoken words. Some dogs have been known to master responses to well over 100 oral commands.¹

Since dogs can show their intelligence by responding to spoken commands, man has, in a trained dog, a beast to do his bidding.

The dog's senses are also useful to man.

The dog's nose tells him countless things about his environment that entirely escape humans. He is more sensitive to sounds than humans. His visual sensitivity to the movement of objects is superior to that of humans.²

Man and dog working together can have their acuvative senses extended over a much greater range than either working separately. Together they can see, smell and hear much better and thereby be able to detect an enemy

faster. The natural psychological fear that an aggressor has for a dog also helps the man-dog team to have the advantage over the enemy.

With the nature of the dog as it is, it seems that he would make an excellent military weapon as part of a man-dog team. This thought is far from being original.

Ever since primitive times men have domesticated dogs and used them as sentries, for hunting and as scouts. They have made use of dogs' intelligence, loyalty, keen senses and latent ferocity to protect and help them in the tasks of everyday life. Today these animals can be a potent weapon in warfare.

World War II ground forces on both sides found dogs invaluable for sentry duty, for use as messengers, for assisting troops on patrols, and helping on scouting and reconnaissance missions. "The U. S. Marines used 'Devildogs' in the fighting at Guadalcanal, Bougainville, Peleliu, New Britain, New Guinea, Guam, Iwo Jima and Okinawa."⁴ In the Marine engagements with the Japanese at Iwo Jima, scout "Devildogs" doubled as sentries.

In the night Carl "alerted" repeatedly indicating the presence of a large enemy force, and his handler immediately signalled the sleeping Marines. In the resultant battling, the Marines cut down over 100 Japs and only two Marines were wounded.⁵

At Okinawa dogs were used in similar roles.

Then Coates, lying on the ground beside his dog, felt Barron's hair stand up and heard him growl. He glanced to the side and saw a column of Japs sneaking up the trail on the flank. He raised up and killed the officer in the lead. The Japs retreated.⁶

U. S. Army scout dog units in Korea distinguished themselves in the fighting. "The dog was used quite successfully to provide warning of enemy approach and as security against any enemy attempt to encircle the patrol."⁷ Methods of using dogs on patrol in Korea were interesting.

One battalion sent out patrols along suspected enemy patrol routes with the mission of intercepting an enemy patrol and taking a prisoner. The patrol would proceed until the dog detected the enemy. Should the enemy be moving toward the patrol, it would deploy into an ambush. If away from the patrol, it would attempt to intercept. Were the enemy static, the patrol would attempt an envelopment.⁸

A dog is born with a ferocity that he may show at any time during his life. He does not have to be taught to be a courageous fighter. He does not have to learn to be ferocious through experience. If a dog is properly trained, this innate ferocity can be held back until it is desirable for him to show it, then the dog will take over.

The keen anticipation that breeds alertness on patrol is built up by leading the dog to believe that he will eventually get his fangs into anyone he detects.⁹

Dogs have been used for other purposes in a military operational area.

Trail dogs are used to hunt fugitives in the manner of a Bloodhound. Infantry units assigned to guerrilla suppression will find such animals invaluable. They are often the only means of tracing marauders to their hideout.¹⁰

It is evident that dogs can be trained for many different types of missions in combat.

Before a dog can become useful as a weapon in combat, he must be trained to obey the commands of the men with whom he will fight. Current training given to military dogs begins with careful selection of the dogs for qualities known by experience to be desirable in them. These qualities are: an inconspicuous color that will blend with most natural backgrounds, good physical condition, lack of gun or man-shyness, aggressiveness, proper sensitivity to sound and touch, and normal canine vision and smell. If the dog meets these requirements, it is likely that he will, with careful and conscientious training, make a good fighting dog. Only German Shepherds are accepted for training in the U. S. Army Scout Dog program. The Army has found that they are as easy to train as any other breed and possess all the good qualities of the other breeds. As a bonus feature, the German Shepherd has the ability to provide himself with a coat suitable to any climate. Only males are used.

It is interesting to note that all U. S. Army dog training is carried out with the dog being trained by one handler. This handler, and the dog he has trained, deploy together. Subsequently they fight together in combat. Lt. Robert Ferguson, Commanding

his preparation and extremely careful in its execution.... In basic training the animal must be taught to advance, attack and jump over obstacles on command. He must be taught to refuse food.... The dog must be taught to become accustomed to gunfire. The process must be a very gradual one.... In tactical training the dog is taught first to advance and search and then to return on finding the enemy. Then he is taught to pursue a fleeing enemy and either attack or detain him.... When a dog masters a lesson in the daytime, he must be reinstructed in the same lesson at night.... The dog's superlative sense of smell enables him to not only reconnoiter the enemy, but even to detect buried mines. Advantage must be taken of this sense by developing his aptitude for searching out buried gunpowder.... Basic and tactical training are usually completed in three months.¹²

One can see from these excerpts that it takes a lot of time and effort to train a dog for combat.

¹U. S. Army Infantry School, Military Dog Training and Employment, FM-20, (Fort Benning, Ga.: 1962) p. 9.

²Ibid. p. 1.

³Paul F. Gorman, "Scout Dogs on Patrol", The Infantry School Quarterly, XLIV no. 3, (July 1954) p. 60.

⁴John M. Behan, Dogs of War (New York: Scribner and Son, 1946) p. 78.

⁵Ibid. p. 7.

⁶Ibid. p. 8.

⁷Gorman, op. cit., p. 67.

⁸Ibid. p. 68.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid. p. 64.

¹¹Interview with Lt. Robert Ferguson, Commanding Officer, 20th Infantry Platoon (Scout Dog), U. S. Army, 15 Jan., 1962.

¹²Japan, Imperial Army Doc. 1452, Training, Breeding and Care of Army Dogs, trans. 1940.