

MILITARY WORKING DOGS IN THE UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES FROM
WORLD WAR I TO VIETNAM

by

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DEDICATION

To the dogs: Brooks, Mariah, Wookie, Millie, Tessa, Bowser, Maya, and Keeta

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ABSTRACT

At the beginning of World War I, the only military working dogs the United States owned were sled dogs. In comparison, European nations in World War I used canines as sentries, messengers, ambulance, and draft dogs. In 1942, members of the American public, created Dogs for Defense Inc. to help recruit dogs for military use. By the end of the Vietnam War, dogs no longer were donated by the American public for use, rather the American military owned the dogs they deployed.

This thesis examines the use of dogs by the American military from World War I to the Vietnam War. It explores the idea that the evolution of military technology and tactics are ironically tied to the increased use of military dogs in the period of modern warfare by the United States Armed Forces. The grassroots movement of the American public, and its desire to contribute to the war effort, helped to accelerate the creation of an American war dog program. Even with technology becoming increasingly important in warfare, dogs were needed to fulfill roles that humans and technology could not. The expansion of these duties is evidenced by their continued use in Vietnam. For the infantry soldiers serving on the frontlines, dogs saved lives and instilled a greater degree of confidence on patrol, all the while acting as mans' best friend.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ARVN	Army of the Republic of Vietnam
CTT	Combat Tracker Team
DFD	Dogs for Defense
IPCT	Infantry Platoon Combat Tracker
ISDP	Infantry Scout Dog Platoon
QMC	Quartermaster Corps
SAC	Strategic Air Command
TM	Training Manual
VC	Vietcong

INTRODUCTION

As Pal's company moved to take a hill in Sicily, it came under intense machine gun fire. Pinned down and unable to move, U.S. Army Corporal Ockman let his German Shepherd, Pal, loose. Pal sprinted to the enemy position without being shot, and jumped at the machine gun, causing the Axis machine gunner's two assistants to flee only to fall by American rifle fire. The Americans finally moved up to the gun emplacement, they found the machine gunner lifeless with Pal's jaws still clamped on his throat.¹ It was the first reported, unassisted kill by a dog. Pal would go on to sacrifice his life on April 23, 1945 at San Benedetto Po, Italy when he took the brunt of a shrapnel charge.² His actions saved the lives of numerous men on patrol. Pal's story exemplifies the labor and loyalty that military dogs demonstrated.

Although this paper focuses on the history of military working dogs in the United States Armed Forces, it also addresses the World War I war dog programs of European nations. The latter forms a building block to understand the origin of the American war dog program. While the roles of animals, such as horses decreased because of mechanization, the use of dogs by the United States military from World War I to Vietnam, ironically expanded as technology evolved and tactics changed. In society, dogs have long served as working animals: bloodhounds for hunting; cattle dogs for herding;

¹ "Have the War Dogs Been Good Soldiers," Robert C. Ruark, *Saturday Evening Post*, November 25, 1944, 18, <http://web.a.ebscohost.com.libproxy.boisestate.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=3&sid=ba4cd061-d1b1-4948-9b25-c502ff296028%40sdc-v-sessmgr06>.

² Anna M. Waller, *Dogs and National Defense* (United States: Department of the Army, Office of the Quartermaster General, 1958), 43, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015048977865;view=1up;seq=9>

and sled dogs for moving material. A variety of breeds also function as household pets. Dogs in military history are often overlooked. The service dogs provided in war needs to be discussed because of the effects they had in changing military operations.

Scholars have traced the use of dogs in military capacities across centuries revealing how their duties became more complex over time. Military dogs date all the way back to the Stone Age, with the domestication of a mastiff type dog in Tibet.³ The Assyrians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans all incorporated dogs into their militaries, too.⁴ Different cultural views about dogs often dictated how certain groups of people deployed them on the battlefield. The Gauls and Celts of Europe outfitted their dogs with spiked collars and curved blades to injure and disrupt cavalries.⁵ Atilla the Hun used dogs as sentinels.⁶ Even in North America, Indians utilized dogs for sentry and pack purposes prior to the presence of settlers.⁷ While the comprehensive history of dogs in warfare is important, this paper concentrates on the modern warfare period, because of how changing military tactics and technology acted as a catalyst for the expanded use of dogs. As new and deadlier weapons allowed for a shift in tactics, dogs became the antithesis, preventing deaths by acting as an early warning method. Weapons with more efficient firing mechanisms, sophisticated mines and booby traps that could go undetected by metal detectors, vehicles prone to breaking down, and unreliable telecommunications technology could be countered by dogs.

³ Michael G. Lemish, *War Dogs: A History of Loyalty and Heroism* (United States: Potomac Books Inc., 2008), 1.

⁴ Fairfax Downey, *Dogs for Defense: American Dogs in the Second World War 1941-1945* (New York: McDonald, 1955), 8.

⁵ *Ibid*, 8.

⁶ Lemish, *War Dogs*, 2.

⁷ *Ibid*, 5.

For a broader understanding of military dogs, this paper will include unofficial and official canines, sled and pack dogs, and Red Cross ambulance dogs, which show the widespread uses of canines in military roles, as compared to simply showcasing dogs for offensive or defensive purposes. Aside from the military significance, this paper will also look at the public grassroots movement that spurred the American military dog program.

This thesis examines how the United States Armed Forces deployed dogs as well as their reluctance to utilize them. Ironically, this hesitation highlights the American military's belief that technology was the future of war even though history told a different story. In multiple cases, the American war dog program was the first to have funding denied or cut despite evidence suggesting future engagements necessitated the use of military dogs on a large scale. This occurred after World War I and World War II respectively. As this project took shape, it became clear that while the American military consistently swept dogs to the side in favor of technology so, too, has the historical narrative in comparison to other military components. The study of military dogs is essential to the overall study of military history because of their contributions in war.

Military history tends to highlight prominent military figures like Napoleon, or significant battles such as the Battle of Stalingrad. While commanders and campaigns make up much of the narratives of war, other aspects, such as dogs, have not received the same academic attention. Famous dogs such as Stubby, or Rin Tin Tin, who starred in movies that captivated audiences, garner extensive attention but most of the stories about military canines are unheard of. The historiography of military working dogs is limited. Most works about military canines have been produced more recently in the 1990s and 2000s. The rise in literature can be attributed to a greater focus on animal rights and the

use of dogs in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, two influential books on military dogs came out shortly after World War II by authors Clayton G. Going and Fairfax Downey respectively. Going's *Dogs at War* published in 1945, devotes most of its pages to the Marine war dogs' work in the Pacific. He conveys through his examples the value of war dogs and how they saved lives through their work on the frontlines. *Dogs for Defense: American Dogs in the Second World War 1941-1945* by Downey sheds light on the rise of Dogs for Defense and their inner workings that led to the successful use of dogs in World War II. While he touches on the heroics of specific dogs his focus is on Dogs for Defense and maintains the idea that without the organization, the American war dog program in World War II may not have been successful or even existed. Writing shortly after World War II, with the focus on the victorious outcome of the war, both books take a very patriotic stance about the war dog program and its successes, giving somewhat biased historical accounts. From the late 1950's to the 1990s the historiography on military dogs stagnated.

The 1990s saw a general increase in interest about the use of all animals in war. However, there were a few works released prior that carry significance within the historiography of military dogs. Originally published in 1983, Jilly Cooper's *Animals in War*, reissued in 2000, examined a wide variety of animals used by the military, including dogs. Initially written in conjunction with an exhibit for the Imperial War Museum in Great Britain, the book devotes chapters to mules, camels, elephants, horses and pigeons, leaving a single chapter for dogs that covers their history up to World War II. She compares how the human connection with dogs in war, is greater than the bonds people share with other animals in war, due to their intelligence and loving nature. The

more modern literature about dogs promotes the theme of intelligence and other characteristics that make them appealing as military animals. Similar to Cooper's book, John M. Kistler's *Animals in the Military: From Hannibal's Elephants to the Dolphins of the U.S. Navy* written in 2011 does not center on dogs. Only given a chapter, Kistler attests dogs' physical capabilities such as hearing and smell make them so noteworthy as a military animal. Unlike Cooper, Kistler covers military canines all the way into the war in Afghanistan, adding to a historiography that tends to stop at World War II or Vietnam. While the works of Going, Downey, Cooper, and Kistler have all been important for the historical narrative about dogs, the writing and research of Michael G. Lemish is undoubtedly the most significant contribution. Considered the leading war dog historian, Lemish's *War Dogs: A History of Loyalty and Heroism* first released in 1996 analyzes the history of military dogs in the United States, comparing them to European war dog programs. He states that mechanized warfare has not led to a decrease of dogs in war. This thesis takes this one step further with the idea that mechanization and technology as a whole, has led to the increased use of dogs. No previous author makes this claim outright. Lemish's other book *Forever Forward: K-9 Operations in Vietnam*, argues that dogs made a significant difference in the war as companions and working animals while questioning how the military could only view these animals as equipment, challenging the ethical decisions of the U.S. military. Most military dog books, other than Lemish's *Forever Forward*, do not accentuate a singular conflict. However, the most recently composed book, by J. Rachel Reed in 2017, *K-9 Korea: The Untold Story of America's War Dogs in the Korean War*, highlights the use of dogs in a conflict that typically is overlooked because of the greater use of dogs in World War II and Vietnam. Reed takes a

different approach in her book by covering the memories and comradery that dog handlers shared within their units. All of these books create an interesting historiography but this essay lends a new analysis which connects technology and tactics to the use of canines in war. To achieve that goal a variety of primary sources were employed.

The most common source used for this paper are newspaper articles from around the country. Publications such as the *Los Angeles Times* and *New York Times* wrote numerous articles in World War II and Vietnam, pertaining to the wide use of dogs during the wars. Military periodicals from *Stars and Stripes*, *Leatherneck*, and the *Marine Corps Gazette* provided tales of individual dogs and the capabilities of dogs on the battlefield or guarding infrastructure. Military training manuals were also consulted to view the war dog programs from a technical standpoint and to better understand the training and needs of military dogs. The project also revolves around the writings of individuals who worked closely with war dogs. Famous dog trainer E.H. Richardson, who founded the British war dog program, imparted the knowledge of how World War I era dogs were indoctrinated. The same can be said for the work of William W. Putney of the United States Marine Corps who wrote extensively of his field experience with dogs in training and then in the Pacific during World War II. Handlers John C. Burnham and Robert Fickbohm recounted working with canines and the special bond they shared with the dogs who served alongside them. While some government documents on military dogs from World War II to Vietnam exist, they only provide a snapshot of how the military kept track of their dogs on paper.

Using these sources to better gauge how military working dogs were used and viewed, this thesis concludes that the history of American military working dogs is a

successful history, contrary to the idea that technology renders animals obsolete. In reality military canines' jobs and usage steadily rose the further into the twentieth century military engagements occurred. Soldiers faced deadlier weapons technology every day on the battlefield, which is why military dogs are so important. Better constructed mines and efficient weapons created deadlier situations. These are offset by the work of military canines. The history of military working dogs began with European nations in World War I but by Vietnam the American military war dog program, proved itself time and again in the face of growing military technology and changing tactics.

CHAPTER ONE: WORLD WAR I: DOGS ON THE BATTLEFIELD

World War I marked a major turning point in the history of warfare. As nations formed complex alliances they also militarized at a high rate of speed. The “Great War” showcased new weapons technology more lethal than in previous wars. Artillery and machine guns, along with trench warfare, created a static war. While dogs were used in war prior to World War I, their roles were redefined by a new style of war and the weapons used. Out of conflicts, new ideas and tactics are born. Technology improved with the idea that being deadlier allowed for a swift end to fighting. However, when the technology was coupled with a stationary war, the soldiers who fought and those who commanded were forced to adapt. Dogs became part of that adaptation. They fulfilled a variety of duties that soldiers could not, either because of physical limitations or due to the dangers and high probability of death associated with a specific job. Dogs worked as sentries, messengers, draft and ambulance animals. Since dogs were employed by a great number of European nations, this chapter has been broken down into sections based on the type of duty the dogs performed. Often when technology or humans could not get a job done, soldiers turned to animals. As with any new or revamped idea, there are those who do not see the value in it and shy away from buying in to it. In World War I the United States military planners did not see the benefits dogs could provide. Their late entry may have played a part in this, but the American military doctrine at the time only viewed dogs as sled animals.

The slow-moving nature of trench warfare, along with more powerful artillery, communications technology, guns, and chemical warfare led to a high casualty rate. From the outset, animals such as carrier-pigeons, draft animals, and dogs filled the voids that technology and humans could not. The Germans started building a dog program long before the outbreak of the war. In the 1870s, the Germans created a vast system of subsidized community dog clubs to breed and train canines for their military.⁸ They augmented this program by purchasing dogs from the British.⁹ Although the German military subsidized these programs, they still had a grassroots feel to them because of the public's involvement. When World War I broke out the Germans' work with dogs was widely known but the German press continued to update citizens on the work and value of these dogs, instilling a sense of pride and patriotism in those whose dogs were part of the cause.¹⁰ As the program grew foreign military personnel took notice.

Even before the outbreak of World War I, the Germans' successful program caught the attention of the Americans. In 1896, *The New York Times* reported on the experiments carried out by the Germans, testing the effectiveness of dogs in warfare, stating, "The German Army...has permitted and encouraged the training and employment of "war dogs" ...and the results of the experiments have amply justified the expectations of the dog fanciers."¹¹ The same article discussed how American War Department officials received reports on military dogs from attachés. However, these reports did not generate enough interest for the War Department to seriously consider funding a broader

⁸ Jilly Cooper, *Animals in War* (Great Britain: Corgi Books, 2000), 73.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 73.

¹⁰ E.H. Richardson, *British War Dogs: Their Training and Psychology*, (London: Skeffington & Son, LTD, 1920), 252, <https://archive.org/details/britishwardogsth00richrich/page/n5>.

¹¹ "Training Dogs For War: Military Attachés Abroad Report That They Are Valuable," *New York Times*, August 3, 1896, 9-10, <http://libproxy.boisestate.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.libproxy.boisestate.edu/docview/95354866?accountid=9649>.

program than the sled dogs it already had. By starting a war dog program at such an early date, the Germans had sufficient time to find out which dogs were best suited for military duties. Over a long period of time, the breeds desired by militaries changed due to numerous factors such as job type, adaptability to climate, durability, and the characteristics of a specific breed. When hostilities finally broke out the Germans deployed an estimated 6,000 dogs.¹² The number of dogs used in war is usually estimated for a couple of reasons, including poorly kept records for dogs, poor tracking of those captured and retrained by the enemy, and due to dogs serving in unofficial capacities. Historians have approximated the Germans used 30,000 dogs in total.¹³ This number is greater than what the German military may have trained in their home-grown network because as their military advanced on the battlefield, they took dogs from other countries such as Belgium and France.¹⁴ The German blueprint for acquiring, training, and deploying military dogs in a multitude of capacities set the bar for other nations dog programs. For example, Lieutenant Colonel Edwin Hautenville Richardson of the British military added to an already extensive knowledge about dogs from observing what the Germans did in the years leading up to the war.

As compared to the Germans' early training of war dogs, the British authorities lacked the foresight to organize a similar program. Edwin Hautenville Richardson and his extensive history of work with dogs helped him see that there was a future for dogs on the battlefield. He advocated for their use in police work and in some parts of the country police were receptive to his ideas, but the majority of the British ignored his faith in the

¹² Cooper, *Animals in War*, 73.

¹³ John M. Kistler, *Animals in the Military: From Hannibal's Elephants to the Dolphins of the U.S. Navy*, (United States: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2011), 15.

¹⁴ Richardson, *British War Dog*, 252.

value of dogs. The first British war dog on the battlefield in World War I was an Airedale he personally trained. His personal work led him to house a large kennel of dogs which he used for different studies.¹⁵ While the military in Germany subsidized dog training, Richardson was left to his own devices to learn as much as he could about dogs for military work. In 1912, a *Los Angeles Times* article noted, “Major Richardson is famous as a trainer of dogs for such special services as police, sentry, and ambulance work, and foreign armies have taken more notice...”¹⁶ His reputation for his work with dogs preceded him around the world but the British government did not show interest in using dogs on a large scale. Richardson did not lose hope and instead turned to the British Red Cross Society in 1914.¹⁷ He went to Belgium but the plans to utilize his trained ambulance dogs fell through as the Belgians retreated. In his writing on the subject, Richardson claimed that the ambulance dogs on the Western Front were not as successful as the German ambulance dogs on the Eastern Front.¹⁸ Even though his offer to start an official war dog program was rejected, soldiers soon started inquiring about using his dogs in an unofficial capacity.

In 1916, the British outlook on dogs took a drastic turn. Many soldiers wrote to the War Office asking for dogs for sentry and patrol work. In one instance, a Royal Artillery officer named Colonel Winter wrote directly to Richardson asking for some messenger dogs. Richardson happily obliged and sent two Airedales to France on December 31, 1916. Winter replied to Richardson and said the dogs did an excellent job

¹⁵ Ibid, 51-52.

¹⁶ “Dogs of War Are Lank Hounds,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 29, 1912, 4, <http://libproxy.boisestate.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.libproxy.boisestate.edu/docview/159729101?accountid=9649>.

¹⁷ Richardson, *British War Dog*, 54-55.

¹⁸ Ibid, 55.

carrying messages over terrain they had never seen in a very timely manner.¹⁹ The actions of the two Airedales and Colonel Winter's recommendation led the War Office to finally give Richardson the official greenlight to open a War Dog School at Shoeburyness in Essex, where the sounds of artillery bombardments could be heard for training purposes.²⁰ Unlike the Germans, who received plenty of dogs from community clubs and capturing them from fleeing armies, the British procurement proved to be much harder.

As the demand for war dogs grew in Britain so too did the ways to acquire them. Many came from the Home for Lost Dogs at Battersea and then from Birmingham, Liverpool, Bristol and Manchester Dogs' Homes.²¹ Of course not all the dogs fit the profile required by Richardson for training and so the War Office turned to the public for donations. The staggering number of dogs donated and the patriotic letters that accompanied them surprised the War Office. Dogs in both Germany and Britain symbolized a sense of nationalism and pride. The patriotic ideals of superiority extended to every aspect of an individual nation. The German and British dog programs are heavily focused on by historians because of the expanse of their programs but also the media coverage that focused on these dogs in their respective countries. The French also utilized dogs but historians have gravitated towards the Germans and British.

Just as Edwin Hautenville Richardson pushed for the use of war dogs, a Frenchman named Paul Megnin called for the employment of dogs by the French armed forces. Much like the British, France did not have a war dog program prior to the start of World War I. Before August 1st, 1914 only one dog named Ella Schanz, trained for the

¹⁹ Ibid, 56-57.

²⁰ Cooper, *Animals in War*, 74.

²¹ Richardson, *British War Dog*, 60.

French military.²² In 1905, Megnin set up a trial to demonstrate how dogs could be used for military and police work, bringing dogs from French, German, Swiss, and Belgian police forces.²³ Ella proved her worth and with it, Megnin's strong conviction to utilize them in World War I. General Castelnau of the French Army also called for the use of dogs and went forth setting up kennels in France for them to be trained at.²⁴ The French officially named their dog program the "Service des Chiens de Guerre" in 1915 and it continued to grow until the end of the war.²⁵ Prior to the program being named, there was a short period when the French decided against using dogs. Marshal Joseph Joffre, a French commander decided dogs held no value in his army.²⁶ It is possible he did not know how to best use the dogs on the battlefield or simply disliked them. Many times, commanders and officers did not fully understand the tactical deployment of these dogs, rendering them useless. Aside from the British and French other Allies utilized dogs in similar roles.

In comparison to the French and British war dog development and programs, the Belgians employed dogs as beasts of burden. Belgian citizens used dogs to pull carts long before their use as draft animals in war and naturally the country had numerous animals capable of doing so in a military capacity. The Belgian military used draft dogs to pull carts loaded with machine guns and ammunition.²⁷ Machine guns were not new to the battlefield but World War I marked the beginning of their widespread use due to upgrades in weapons technology and the large scale of the war. The downside to

²² Paul Megnin, *War Dogs: Memoirs of Monsieur Paul Megnin in the Year 1917: (Sergeant 11th Battalion of the Chasseurs Alpine, Chief of the French War Dogs Service and of the Military Kennels of the 7th Army*, (Wild Colonial Press, 2017), 1, Kindle.

²³ *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁴ Richardson, *British War Dog*, 235.

²⁵ Lemish, *War Dogs*, 15.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 14-15.

²⁷ Richardson, *British War Dog*, 248.

Belgium's serviceability of their dogs were the dogs needed because their duty mandated animals of similar size to pull the carts.²⁸ The downside may seem to outweigh the benefit because the need to find two compatible dogs, but the manpower needed to move these weapons and ammunition detracted from the numbers who could serve on the frontlines in battle. Unfortunately, the Germans quickly overwhelmed the Belgians, taking many of their dogs. The remaining ones went to the French army who put them in a special kennel where they could be used by the Belgians as needed.²⁹ Like the Belgians, Italians also made use of dogs for draft purposes, something the British did not use their canines for.

Before World War I the Italian army retained dogs for work as sentries and draft animals. In Tripoli during their conflict against the Turks, a story emerged of sentry dogs saving Italian soldiers from an impending attack. As the Italians camped for the night outside of Derna, near Tripoli, Turkish and Bedouin soldiers under the cover of darkness advanced towards the Italians' position, but they had taken the precaution of deploying dogs ahead of them who alerted to the attempted ambush, thwarting the attack.³⁰ This story caught the attention of Richardson and solidified his beliefs that dogs provided a valuable service in war time. While Richardson and others took note of instances when dogs proved themselves in war time situations, the United States failed to do so on a consistent basis. The Italian military used an estimated 3,000 dogs during World War I for sentry and draft purposes.³¹ Dogs also took up roles that did not include offensive or defensive duties.

²⁸ Ibid, 248.

²⁹ Ibid, 248.

³⁰ "Dogs of War Are Lank Hounds," 4.

³¹ Lemish, *War Dogs*, 28.

Ambulance Dogs

Whether for sentry, draft, messenger, or ambulance work, the Red Cross, like various militaries, effectively employed dogs. The ground between entrenched positions earned the name “No Man’s Land.” This open space proved to be very deadly. Among the dead lay wounded soldiers, holding on, hoping to be saved. Ambulance dogs (or Red Cross dogs) provided a little hope and helped save countless lives. The dogs discerned between dead and wounded so other soldiers did not waste time finding the wounded. One Red Cross Magazine even claimed, “These Army or Red Cross or Sanitary dogs as the Germans call them, are first trained to distinguish between the uniform of their country and that of the enemies.”³² While possible, it is doubtful that dogs knew the difference and more likely that the Red Cross were exaggerating. Their acute sense of smell allowed them to better find wounded men than if rescue parties were sent to search in such dangerous terrain where they made for bigger targets.

According to Richardson, ambulance dogs only worked on the Eastern Front with the German army as the Russians retreated.³³ Red Cross dogs met mixed results and reviews, such as the one given by Richardson, but there is no denying that the dogs saved lives. Ambulance dogs were fitted with a pouch containing medical supplies, water, and of course spirits.³⁴ These supplies gave a soldier the chance to patch themselves up and grab a sip of water and something a little stronger. The dogs’ next step involved returning to the trench to alert fellow soldiers of the wounded man’s position. This procedure evolved through trial and error as the war progressed.

³² Ellwood Hendrick, “Merciful Dogs of War,” *Red Cross Magazine*, January 1917, 71, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=njp.32101066999010;view=1up;seq=79>.

³³ Richardson, *British War Dog*, 55.

³⁴ Lemish, *War Dogs*, 12.

From the beginning of their use, the golden rule for ambulance dogs meant no barking. The auditory nature of this alert gave away the position to enemy troops. Instead, dogs brought back the wounded individual's cap or handkerchief to the soldiers who waited in the trenches.³⁵ If needed, a dog pulled off an article of clothing or a bandage but this proved problematic because pulling off a bandage did not help the wounded.³⁶ This system later proved primitive in comparison to other procedures. As the war progressed, trainers taught dogs new techniques that alerted soldiers to the wounded. If a dog found a wounded man, the canine returned to the trenches and persisted that their handler follow them, otherwise they simply laid down.³⁷ The Germans used a different technique, where attached to the dogs' collar was a short strap. If the dog came back with the strap in their mouth it signaled a wounded soldier needed help.³⁸ Some sources, like the *Los Angeles Sunday Times* in June of 1916, claimed the dogs were taught to bring back an object found near the soldier such as a pipe, matches, or anything else close by.

Regardless of how the alert was given, Red Cross dogs proved to be useful, just never to the extent most expected them to be, partially due to the nature of trench warfare and its sluggish pace. They were still more reliable than mechanized vehicles. Motorized vehicles were still in their infancy and prone to breaking down often and struggled on uneven and soggy terrain. However, dogs did not have the same issues, making them more reliable than technology. Dogs never had a chance of finding all the wounded in the

³⁵ "Use of War Dogs: Divided into Five Classes. They Serve as Watch, Messenger, Patrol, Ambulance and Pack Animals in the Great European War," *Los Angeles Sunday Times*, June 18, 1916, 19, <http://libproxy.boisestate.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.libproxy.boisestate.edu/docview/160145434?accountid=9649>.

³⁶ Lemish, *War Dogs*, 13.

³⁷ Hendrick, "Merciful Dogs of War," 71.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 71.

vast expanses of “No Man’s Land.” At the very least, these dogs gave a wounded man a companion in his final moments.

Sentry Dogs

In times of war and peace, sentries stood guard to protect those resting or occupied with another task that might leave them exposed. They guarded encampments, outposts, depots, and anything else of vital importance. Dogs presented an early warning system, giving soldiers a chance to react. Canines took the burden off soldiers who might be fatigued from life in the trenches. The constant rigors of war tired soldiers quickly and the front lines meant no break in the action. Whether it be a frontal assault by enemy troops across “No Man’s Land,” chemical attack, or an artillery barrage, someone always had to be on guard.

In one famous instance, a German outpost had managed to go undetected, until a dog was brought to a nearby trench and located the elusive outpost within less than fifteen minutes.³⁹ Soldiers relied on their eyes and ears to try and find intruders or enemy spies trying to infiltrate sensitive areas or anyone in close proximity of trenches, but they were not as reliable as a dog. This was especially true at night, or when a fog bank or smoke severely limited visibility. Sentry dogs did not rely on their eyesight but rather their ears and olfactory senses. No human or technology existed that functioned better than dogs in finding enemy troops. Dogs possess olfactory senses that are up to thousands of times more sensitive than a human.⁴⁰ Chemical warfare made dogs very valuable because they could detect an attack so that troops could prepare for it.

³⁹ Susan Bulanda, *Soldiers in Fur and Feathers* (United States: Alpine Publications, 2014), 20.

⁴⁰ Virginia Morell, “The Secret of a Dog’s Sniffer, *Sciencemag.org*, December 9, 2009. Dogs have a heightened sense of smell due to what is now known as the olfactory recess, a collection of airways that humans do not have. As dogs sniff a scent it goes through the nostrils, which act independent of each other,

Dogs' ears are also much more sensitive than humans. Stubby, the American war dog would alert soldiers to incoming artillery shells because he could hear them much sooner.⁴¹ Humans hear about twenty hertz to twenty kilohertz, while dogs can hear up to forty-five kilohertz.⁴² Even when seemingly inattentive, dogs stayed alert. A French sentry dog named Ben laid at his handler's feet asleep until he sprang to his feet and uttered a low growl. His handler passed word down the trench and the French soldiers braced for an attack that came shortly thereafter. As soldiers attempted to penetrate the trench, the French either killed or captured all the Prussians assaulting the trench lines.⁴³ Dogs presented the best option to act as sentries against enemy troops, artillery, and chemical attacks. Their physical characteristics pitted them against the more powerful and deadly weapons technology used during the war. Sometimes technology proved unreliable and dogs were needed to augment its use.

Messenger Dogs

Communication is key for any fighting force. When the Central Powers and Allies went to war in 1914, communication technology was still in its infancy, but the need to relay messages as quickly and reliably as possible grew. Messages were sent using human runners, carrier pigeons, dogs, and telecommunications.⁴⁴ Each means of communication had its downside. Soldiers acting as runners presented a big physical

allowing for the dog to know which direction the scent is coming from. It then enters the olfactory recess where it stays even after the dog exhales.

⁴¹ Kistler, *Animals in the Military*, 22.

⁴² Alexandra Horowitz, *What Dogs See, Smell, and Know* (New York: The Gale Group Inc., 2009), 92-93. Dogs hear better for a couple of reasons. The first is the pinna, the outer visible part of the ear, which opens a passage so the sound can travel to the inner ear. Secondly, the hair cells in human ears do not bend to the same extent as those in a dog. However, cropping dogs' ears can negatively affect their ability to hear.

⁴³ "Dogs are War Heroes as Well as Alert Sentinels," *Washington Post*, October 14, 1916, 6, <http://libproxy.uwyo.edu/login/?url=https://search-proquest-com.libproxy.uwyo.edu/docview/145490098?accountid=14793>.

⁴⁴ Bulanda, *Soldiers in Fur and Feathers*, 2.

target, making it easy for the enemy to prevent the relay of important information. Soldiers could also lay down telecommunications lines but dogs were just as capable and more effective. They presented smaller targets and had better endurance than a soldier, both of whom would have to carry enough line to connect phones from the front to the rear. The downside to telecommunication technology was that it could easily be disabled from artillery fire or enemy saboteurs cutting the lines.⁴⁵ Any gain of territory meant that telephone wires needed to be moved to lay on the new front lines.⁴⁶ Telecommunications also did not do well in wet and muddy conditions.⁴⁷ Electronic means of communication were still evolving, often making them difficult to use. Traditional methods of communication were more viable. Technology had its growing pains leading to a need for more traditional and proven methods of communication. This necessitated a higher use of human runners, dogs, and pigeons.

While pigeons could be an effective mean to communicate, their abilities were limited and in some instances needed dogs to help them by carrying them in little pouches on their backs. Any land gained from an attack required an establishment of communications posts from the new front to the rear. Attacking at night gave troops the cover of darkness but meant pigeons could not establish communications because they could not find locations in the dark.⁴⁸ This left two options, humans and dogs. While soldiers could be used, their physical abilities were almost useless on the battlefield compared to that of dogs.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 2-3.

⁴⁶ Richardson, *British War Dogs*, 124-25.

⁴⁷ Kistler, *Animals in the Military*, 18.

⁴⁸ Richardson, *British War Dogs*, 124-25.

The tactics and weaponry used in battle during World War I meant that the spaces between the frontlines and the rear were treacherous for humans. Artillery played a major role in World War I and 75 millimeter guns and 105 millimeter howitzers were used to heavily shell trenches throughout the conflict.⁴⁹ Both valuable and powerful, they left giant craters on the battlegrounds, making it difficult for troops to cross no mans' land.⁵⁰ These craters themselves were deadly for advancing troops but also for human messengers. They were tricky to navigate, and along with enemy fire, presented a major obstacle. Some were so large that soldiers could drown in the puddles that formed in the muddy holes, unlike dogs who could swim their way through if necessary and come out on the other side unscathed and a much smaller target in the event of enemy fire.⁵¹ The physical capabilities of dogs as messengers surpassed those of humans. Dogs could navigate the rough terrain an estimated five times faster than a human, especially over longer distances.⁵² Their other physical abilities allowed them to transport a variety of necessities that humans or other pack animals could not.

Draft Dogs

While messenger dogs helped ferry important news from the frontlines, dogs also moved vital supplies. This included guns, ammunition, food, and medical supplies.⁵³ Some nations were more apt to use dogs for draft purposes than others. The amount of weight dogs could pull far exceeded what soldiers could. Two dogs alone could pull carts

⁴⁹ John Powell, *Weapons and Warfare: Modern Weapons and Warfare (Since 1500)* (Pasadena: Salem Press Inc., 2002), 605.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 605.

⁵¹ Richardson, *British War Dogs*, 102.

⁵² Kistler, *Animals in the Military*, 18. Kistler notes that dogs could be four to five times faster while Jilly Cooper in her book *Animals in War* states that it was about three times faster. It is hard to know the exact number because there are a multitude of factors to account for, including the type of dog, terrain, distance, and human endurance. Regardless of these components, it is agreed upon that dogs were much faster than a human runner, especially over longer distances.

⁵³ Cooper, *Animals in War*, 85.

weighing up to 200 kilos and pack dogs moved anywhere from twelve to fifteen kilos of food or ammunition to the frontlines.⁵⁴ Dogs were readily available for draft purposes compared to vehicles which were also unable to cross types of terrain that dogs did. The Italians utilized large breed dogs to traverse the Alps when horses were not a viable option. Like the Italians, dogs were used in the daily lives of Belgians, but the war created a necessity to move military supplies. The Germans quick invasion of Belgium forced the small nation into retreat where their draft dogs were used extensively to move as much as they could.⁵⁵ The drawback to using draft dogs was that two dogs of similar sizes were needed when harnessed to carts.⁵⁶ Dogs were used for other roles more than draft purposes, partially due to some countries not utilizing them in that manner.

The number of draft dogs was relatively small in comparison to the number of dogs employed as messengers or sentries. Other options such as horses or mules were preferred because they could move larger amounts of provisions but there were instances when dogs were better suited to move supplies. Unlike European nations who relied on dogs for a number of roles, when the Americans finally entered the war in April of 1917 they did so without dogs. The only dogs owned by the United States military at the time were sled dogs.

The United States

When the United States officially entered World War I American soldiers took dogs with them. These dogs were not trained military canines but companions and mascots. Even though they were just for show or company some of them proved to be much more than that. Arguably the most famous American dog in World War I, the story

⁵⁴ Richardson, *British War Dogs*, 237-238.

⁵⁵ Richardson, *British War Dogs*, 248.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 248.

of Stubby is one that continues to be told. As Robert Conroy and the 102nd Infantry of the army's 26th "Yankee" division trained in the Yale Bowl in Hartford, Connecticut, he came across a stray dog.⁵⁷ Conroy took in the bull terrier and soon Conroy and Stubby, named for his tail, found themselves going through training together even though dogs were not allowed.⁵⁸ While the American military did not see the value of having military working dogs, many units would adopt dogs as mascots to improve morale in the trenches. Although no formal training regime existed for dogs, Stubby would follow Conroy through live ammunition exercises and explosions without flinching.⁵⁹ Conroy proceeded to smuggle him on to a ship bound for Europe. Stubby would soon prove his worth when he alerted the sleeping soldiers to an incoming gas attack and he even subdued a German spy by biting him until soldiers could detain the man.⁶⁰ Stubby's heroics during the seventeen engagements he participated in did not go unnoticed and he was decorated with several medals by the men in his unit and even General John J. Pershing.⁶¹ Stubby even received a shrapnel wound at Seicherpry. Following his recovery, he made it back to the United States where he participated in numerous parades. He passed in 1926 and his body along with his medals was put on display at the Red Cross museum and eventually made its way to the Smithsonian where his remains reside today.⁶² Only Rin Tin Tin, a German Shepherd puppy rescued from a German trench, is more famous in American pop culture. The work of Stubby made him an

⁵⁷ Lemish, *War Dogs*, 25.

⁵⁸ Evelyn Le Chene, *Silent Heroes: The Bravery and Devotion of Animals in War*, (Canada: Souvenir Press, 2009), 165.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 165.

⁶⁰ Lemish, *War Dogs*, 25.

⁶¹ "Pershing Honors Dog Mascot of A.E.F." *New York Times*, July 7, 1921, 4, <http://libproxy.boisestate.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.libproxy.boisestate.edu/docview/98397843?accountid=9649>.

⁶² Lemish, *War Dogs*, 26-27.

American war hero but would not have a major impact on future decisions to use dogs in war by the American military. Though the United States did not have their own military dog program, its armed forces did get to use dogs provided by their Allies and found them to be very useful.

To compensate for their lack of dogs, the Americans turned to their allies for help. The British and French willingly let the Americans use their dogs whenever they could and as Lieutenant Colonel Richardson noted, the Americans did well to follow the rules on managing and taking care of the dogs.⁶³ The British soldiers, the dog lovers that they were, sometimes ignored the rules by petting and feeding the dogs, undermining their training that was imperative to successful work.⁶⁴ Although the Americans were good at working with these dogs, one humorous pitfall with using French trained dogs was the language barrier. The dogs acted on French commands and mastery of the French language proved difficult for the Americans.⁶⁵ The Americans knew that other countries were experimenting with dogs as early as 1896 but did not act on this intelligence to start their own programs. This lack of foresight could be attributed to the military's belief that mechanization would make dogs obsolete, and a reluctance to spend money on a new program.

Much like the work of Edwin Hautenville Richardson, who was a civilian before working with the British Army, American civilians pushed the military to put in place an expanded dog program. American associations such as the German Shepherd Dog Club of America and the Army and Police Dog Club lobbied for the military to add a larger

⁶³ Richardson, *British War Dog*, 249.

⁶⁴ Cooper, *Animals in War*, 81.

⁶⁵ Kistler, *Animals in the Military*, 21.

dog program, but much like Richardson's first attempts, their ideas were brushed aside.⁶⁶ When America did enter the war, they quickly learned how to utilize the dogs loaned to them by the British and French. Every soldier learned the hard way that the front lines were nothing like their training camps. While situations could be simulated, the battlefield was a different place and preparation for that environment required thorough training. The same was true for dogs. It would have been difficult for the American military to implement a training program with only civilian trainers who did not have any battle experience. Richardson overcame this because of his previous work with training police dogs but also from traversing the continent to watch other nations' military dog training.

Some American citizens wished to help the American Red Cross by giving their dogs to the organization to be trained and sent to Europe but only a small number made it, while others did not because their training did not simulate the noises of war found on the frontlines.⁶⁷ The American Red Cross pushed for the U.S. Medical Corps to use dogs trained by their organization, and there was interest from the U.S. Medical Corps, but a bill by Senator James Brady of Idaho in 1917 did not make it through the legislature.⁶⁸ In 1918, the American Expeditionary Force requested that 500 dogs be procured every three months from the French and training facilities and kennels built to supply American divisions.⁶⁹ These dogs would then have been divided into messenger, sentry, and draft dogs, but the procurement did not pan out. American military planners scrapped the idea

⁶⁶ Lemish, *War Dogs*, 21-22.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 23-24.

⁶⁸ *Ibid* 22-23.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 23.

for unknown reasons. World War I provided a small glimpse of what was to come for United States military working dogs in future wars.

There are no hard numbers because record keeping was often inaccurate and not all military dogs were officially trained through military dog programs. The total number of dogs, from all nations, killed in World War I varies widely, ranging from 7,000 to 16,000 dogs killed in action.⁷⁰ These estimates might be far off because of dogs who had been captured and then used by the enemy and the presence of unofficial dogs on the battlefield. Despite the lack of certainty on exact numbers, the statistics are evidence that dogs were heavily relied on to perform the duties that other animals or soldiers could not. However, many dogs that survived the war suffered the same fate in mass. The French alone killed around 15,000 dogs after the war had ended because they were viewed as surplus.⁷¹ There are no clear estimations for the dogs killed after the war by the British, Italians, Germans, and Russians.⁷² World War I demonstrated that the use of military working dogs could be beneficial to the army utilizing them. They served in numerous niches that people nor technology at the time could fill. New mechanized vehicles and communications technology were still relatively young during the war, however, while technology changed, dogs would still be used for some of the same and new roles in later conflicts. Even at the start of World War II, many people, especially those in the American military community, were not convinced that dogs could be valuable on the battlefield. The period between World War I and World War II would reflect the skepticism of the value of war dogs.

⁷⁰ Kistler, *Animals in the Military*, 24.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, 24.

⁷² Lemish, *War Dogs*, 29.

CHAPTER TWO: AMERICAN MILITARY DOGS IN WORLD WAR II

The end of World War I marked a shift in military ideology as many believed that the “Great War” would be the last major global conflict. As militaries cut spending and downsized, certain programs stopped receiving support and proposed programs were postponed or canceled. The success of military dog programs did not go unnoticed by the United States, but the nation’s focus turned towards demilitarization and the creation of the League of Nations.⁷³ In contrast, even though the Treaty of Versailles stated that Germany could not have a standing army, they continued to train military dogs.⁷⁴ The only American military spending on dogs continued in the form of sled dog training in Alaska.⁷⁵ Within American culture, dogs had already taken up their special place. The public viewed dogs as useful for cattle ranching, hunting, and as loving household pets that were part of the family.⁷⁶ Americans’ relations with dogs differed from that of their counterparts in Europe. While the Europeans had deployed dogs in both military and police capacities, Americans did not widely use them for military or police work except for sled dogs and the occasional employment of bloodhounds for tracking.⁷⁷ When war broke out in Europe in 1939 the American military still did not have a major dog program. By the time America entered, the Germans already had 200,000 war and police

⁷³ Lemish, *War Dogs*, 29.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 29-30.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 30.

⁷⁶ Fairfax Downey, *Dogs for Defense*, 5.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 5.

dogs and even gave the Japanese about 25,000.⁷⁸ The United States entry into the war would force the military to realize their need for military dogs. American civilians, not military professionals, would lead the push for an expanded military dog program and the work of Dogs for Defense Inc. helped fill the needs of the U.S. military.

Dogs for Defense

The American military's aversion to the widespread use of canines on the battlefield put the onus on the public to prove their value. Pearl Harbor brought Americans together and stoked patriotic feelings. People wanted to do anything they could to help with the war effort and dog breeders, fanciers, and owners believed they knew of a major way to support the war effort. Mrs. Milton S. Erlanger, a dog enthusiast since childhood, placed a call to Roland Kilbon of the *New York Sun* to discuss the role of dogs in the war.⁷⁹ Erlanger and Kilbon spearheaded the movement to use dogs in the military, but they received help from other dog enthusiasts, including people such as Leonard Brumby, Dorothy J. Long, Harry I. Caesar, Henry Stoecker, and Felicien Philippe. Together they created Dogs for Defense in January 1942.⁸⁰ Dog advocates such as Erlanger felt their contribution to the war effort rested with the expanded introduction of dogs into the military. Dogs were viable sentry options to help patrol coastlines, plants producing war materials, and other vital military installations around the country.⁸¹

Unlike World War I when the threat of sabotage or enemy attack on the U.S. mainland

⁷⁸ Ibid, 5.

⁷⁹ Clayton G. Going, *Dogs at War* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1945), 5. In some historical accounts, Milton Erlanger and Roland Kilbon are referred to as Arlene Erlanger and Arthur Kilbon.

⁸⁰ Lemish, *War Dogs*, 36. Leonard Brumby served as president of the Professional Handlers Association, Dorothy J. Long and Henry Stoecker both were knowledgeable in obedience training, Harry I. Caesar held the title of director of the American Kennel Club, and Felicien Philippe was the ex-chief of the Italian State Game Preserve who was familiar with the war dog programs of European nations.

⁸¹ Toni M. Kiser and Lindsey F. Barnes, *Loyal Forces: The American Animals of World War II* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013), 1.

was low, the realities of World War II meant sentries on American soil were vital to the war effort. More efficient and effective waterborne vessels and aircraft made it possible for the Japanese to expand their range of attack to American soil. The founders and consultants of Dogs for Defense Inc. knew that defending both American military interests and civilians could be done with dogs. Their work would be paramount to providing the military with dogs. The process of doing so required a lot of civilian effort.

Dogs for Defense Inc. (DFD) named Henry Caesar, the director of the American Kennel Club as president of the organization. The American Kennel Club immediately backed the DFD along with the Westbury Kennel Association and Professional Handlers' Association both of whom contributed financial aid to the program.⁸² With these associations came breeders, trainers, and dog fanciers. Their collective knowledge about different breeds and characteristics far outweighed anything the military knew.

The DFD's biggest breakthrough came from the American Theater Wing who wished to contribute to the war effort.⁸³ Actress Sydney Wain and public relations director of the American Theater Wing, Helen Menken, travelled to Washington to meet with Major General Edmund B. Gregory, the Quartermaster General.⁸⁴ After they approached Major General Gregory, and offered their assistance, he met with Lieutenant Colonel Clifford C. Smith, the head of the Plant Protection Branch who needed more guards for the Quartermaster supply depots. Smith raised the possibility of using dogs as sentries and Gregory agreed to the proposal and put the American Theater Wing in

⁸² Downey, *Dogs for Defense*, 17-18. While the American Kennel Club backed the DFD it could not be a part of the DFD in an official capacity, but their approval and backing lent credence to the work of the DFD and assured the public that their donated dogs would be properly trained and cared for.

⁸³ Women within the theatre community banded together in World War I and organized The Stage Women's War Relief to support the troops. In 1940, they changed their name to the American Theatre Wing and continued their history of supporting the war effort.

⁸⁴ Going, *Dogs at War*, 6-7.

charge of recruiting and training 200 dogs. Unfortunately, they were unable to do so because they did not have the facilities. The group turned over the procurement to the DFD.⁸⁵ On March 13, 1942, Smith alerted DFD president Caesar of the Quartermaster's needs, marking the start of a broader war dog program.⁸⁶ Their first quota was the original 200 dogs needed for sentry duty and Henry Caesar put out the call for medium sized dogs and voluntary trainers to help prepare them.⁸⁷ Military technology had evolved from that used in World War I but the need for guards and sentries remained.

Before the 200 sentry dogs went to the Plant Protection Branch, the opportunity for a test run arose. In April of 1942 in Poughkeepsie, New York, the Munitions Manufacturing Company tested out three sentry dogs which caught the attention of Major General Philip S. Gage at Fort Hancock who liked the notion of guard dogs.⁸⁸ The idea of military dogs caught on like wildfire among the military and public alike and soon enough DFD grew to accommodate the military with enough dogs. The DFD swelled in size with the addition of 402 dog clubs across the nation to help recruit.⁸⁹ The sheer number of people willing to help recruit dogs demonstrated a clear picture of the patriotism that swept the nation, but also the number of dog owners in the United States in 1942. The civilian effort made it possible for the DFD to contribute dogs to the military.

Dogs for Defense did not exist without its problems however. The first major issue it came across was how to train and house the high numbers of dogs requested.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 7.

⁸⁶ Downey, *Dogs for Defense*, 21.

⁸⁷ "200 Dogs Being Trained for Sentry Duty; Army to Use Them as Supply Depot Guards," *New York Times*, March 22, 1942, 45, <http://libproxy.boisestate.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.libproxy.boisestate.edu/docview/106480703?accountid=9649>.

⁸⁸ Lemish, *War Dogs*, 37-38.

⁸⁹ Going, *Dogs at War*, 7.

Private kennels in different locations helped to house and train the dogs but no standardized training existed.⁹⁰ In July of 1942, dog training became the duty of the Remount Branch of the Quartermaster Corps (QMC) reducing the workload of both the DFD and Plant Protection Branch whom the dogs were originally for.⁹¹ The War Department tasked the QMC with creating training facilities, instructions for handling, and training dogs for the Coast Guard and Navy by the fall of 1942.⁹² As the war ramped up, so did the work of DFD as they tried to meet the demands of the military. On December 30, 1942, the Quartermaster General told DFD that the Army, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard would need a staggering 125,000 dogs.⁹³ This number was never met and DFD later approximated that 17,000 dogs were used, with other estimates being as high as 25,000 dogs used.⁹⁴ This discrepancy may stem from dogs who were transferred between branches of the military and recounted as new recruits, or dogs procured directly from private citizens by the Marines, who also partnered with the Doberman Pinscher Club of America to obtain some of their dogs. While this number did not come close to 125,000 dogs, the work put in to acquire even the lower estimate of 17,000 dogs could not have been done without the efforts of volunteers. The number of people willing to help recruit dogs demonstrated a clear picture of the patriotism that swept the nation. Dogs for Defense had national officers, regional directors, and their assistants numbering upwards of 1,000 men and women.⁹⁵ The strong organizational structure of DFD made

⁹⁰ Lemish, *War Dogs*, 39.

⁹¹ Kiser and Barnes, *Loyal Forces*, 2.

⁹² Lemish, *War Dogs*, 40.

⁹³ Downey, *Dogs for Defense*, 22.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 22.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 22.

recruiting dogs on such a large scale possible. While DFD played a vital role, the most important came from American citizens willing to part ways with their dogs.

Donated dogs came from every state in the continental United States and a variety of different backgrounds.⁹⁶ Some had been working dogs, others beloved household pets, and some were dogs that owners simply could not stand or control. Kids gave away their pets to feel like they had contributed. People sent letters to national headquarters, explaining why they were donating or as testimony to the capabilities of their canines. As cited in Clayton G. Going's *Dogs at War*, one eight-year-old named Bobby Britton from Morgan Hill, California wrote, "I am eight years old and live on a farm. I have a large Australian Shepherd dog...that is a very good hunter and I think he would be good hunting Japs. He sure likes to kill skunks..."⁹⁷ Donations did not just come in the form of dogs.

Different benefit events and individual cash donations helped the DFD recruit and care for dogs. Dog shows such as one put on by the Greenwich Kennel Club raised their entry fees with the extra money going to DFD.⁹⁸ For dog owners whose dogs did not meet requirements for service, James M. Austin started a fundraising campaign that made it possible for them to donate money in exchange for a title of rank for their dog. From this idea came the War Dog Fund of Dogs for Defense.⁹⁹ Civilian innovation helped create fundraising that the DFD needed to continue their work.

⁹⁶ Going, *Dogs at War*, 9.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 9.

⁹⁸ Henry R. Ilsley, "Benefit Plan Set by Greenwich K.C.," *New York Times*, May 10, 1942, 5, <https://search-proquest-com.libproxy.boisestate.edu/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/106326153/595A8A6DDDC54F1APQ/1?accountid=9649>.

⁹⁹ Downey, *Dogs for Defense*, 49.

Thousands of dogs were donated but the military only wanted specific breeds. In 1943, the War Department published Training Manual 10-396 (TM 10-396) which listed thirty-two breeds that were acceptable for military use.¹⁰⁰ By 1944 the list only consisted of German and Belgian Shepherds, Dobermans, Collies, and Giant Schnauzers.¹⁰¹ The list's refinement over time reflects the usefulness of each breed in relation to certain types of warfare and duties. This was not an exact science however because every dog of even the most preferred breed has their own personalities and characteristics. After the DFD sorted through the donated dogs they received, the ones selected began their journey, either to guard the American coastline or to serve on the frontlines overseas.

Once dogs were recruited by the DFD veterinarian staff examined them. After examination, the approved canines were sent to training centers.¹⁰² Dogs that did not meet the qualifications such as passing a physical were returned home. Dogs were moved to training centers across the country where vets would process the dogs and administer fecal tests, rabies and distemper inoculations, and worming as needed.¹⁰³ Each dog was carefully tracked and was tattooed on the ear or flank using the Preston tattooing system for easy identification.¹⁰⁴ The first canine center, at Front Royal, Virginia opened in 1942

¹⁰⁰ War Department, "Technical Manual: War Dogs," July 1, 1943, 17-26. The list consisted of: Airedale Terrier, Alaskan Malamute, Belgian Sheep Dogs, Bouvier de Flandres, Boxer, Briard, Bull Mastiff, Chesapeake Bay Dog, Collie, Curley-coated Retriever, Dalmatian, Doberman-Pinscher, English Springer Spaniel, Eskimo, Flat-coated Retriever, German Shepherd Dog, German Short-haired Pointer, Giant Schnauzer, Great Dane, Great Pyrenees, Irish Setter, Irish Water Spaniel, Labrador Retriever, Newfoundland, Norwegian Elkhound, Pointer, Rottweiler, St. Bernard, Samoyede, Siberian Husky, Standard Poodle, and Wire-haired Pointing Griffon. Not all of these breeds served in every role. Some like Huskies and Alaskan Malamutes were used for sled dog work instead of as sentries or scout dogs.

¹⁰¹ Kiser and Barnes, *Loyal Forces*, 5. Malamutes and Siberian huskies were still used as sled dogs.

¹⁰² Lemish, *War Dogs*, 41.

¹⁰³ Ibid, 44. Dogs were quarantined to recover if they had parasitic or contagious diseases. If a dog had leptospirosis they were put down promptly. All dogs that passed their examinations were held in a quarantine kennel for twenty-one days.

¹⁰⁴ Kiser and Barnes, *Loyal Forces*, 5. Animals were marked starting with A000 then A001. After reaching A999 the letter placement changed to 0A00. Records were thorough and like any soldier, followed the dog

and Camp Rimini, Montana; Fort Robinson, Nebraska; and San Carlos, California opened by the end of the year.¹⁰⁵ In April of 1943, Cat Island by Gulfport, Mississippi opened to simulate the jungle terrain in the Pacific theatre.¹⁰⁶ The success of the DFD is clear by the work they did and the work of dogs protecting the American coastline and in both the European and Pacific theatres. Without the dogs provided by the DFD many more American lives would have been lost in some of the most intense fighting of the war. Just like the soldiers they went to war with, dogs received rigorous training to prepare for the duties they performed on the frontline.

Training

Dogs are intelligent animals capable of learning a wide array of commands and are committed to carrying them out to receive praise. Just like other soldiers, training is a vital part of being able to perform on the frontlines. The training that handlers and dogs underwent helped to form an everlasting bond and a fierce sense of loyalty to each other. While dogs served their handlers and the other soldiers in a unit on the frontlines, they also built a symbiotic relationship with their handler. Military dogs seek to please their handler and in return receive praise and a pat on the back. That reward is everything to them. In return handlers and others gain a powerful ally on the battlefield. There are no hard numbers as to how many soldiers survived because of the actions of dogs but there is no denying the value of having a dog on point, alerting to a possible ambush, or a sentry who in the middle of the night warns when an enemy is approaching. To successfully do that, dogs had to train.

wherever it went. There were still clerical errors and miscommunication between branches, resulting in dogs being counted twice sometimes.

¹⁰⁵ Lemish, *War Dogs*, 41.

¹⁰⁶ Kiser and Barnes, *Loyal Forces*, 2-3.

The American military according to TM 10-396 looked for the right balance of energy, aggressiveness, intelligence, motivation, and willingness to learn.¹⁰⁷ Of course physical characteristics such as good sense of smell, vision, and hearing also needed to be superb. Training dogs and handlers together was paramount to success and a good working relationship needed to be established. At the different camps around the country, these relationships were carefully honed until dogs and handlers could work in tandem without any verbal commands.

The first task a handler had was to become accustomed to his dog and work to form a trust between the two. The military found that the best way to do that was through the handler caring for the everyday needs of the dog. This included feeding and water, grooming, and keeping their kennel area clean to a standard set by a veterinarian.¹⁰⁸ Handlers were outfitted with a leather leash, a 25-foot leash and a choke chain collar.¹⁰⁹ The Marines used a leather collar when doing tactical field training so that the dog knew when the leather collar was on it was time to work. The first vocal commands taught were done so with the dog on a leash. These consisted of heel, sit down, cover, stay, come, crawl, and jump.¹¹⁰ Vocal commands were given in a strong and clear voice to help establish the handler as the master. Next came off leash commands consisting of

¹⁰⁷ War Department, "Technical Manual: War Dogs," July 1, 1943, 13-16, <https://archive.org/details/TM10-396/page/n0>. TM 10-396 goes into depth from veterinary care to how to properly bathe and administer first aid. It goes even deeper about how commands like sit and stay should be taught. It also covers the traits that a good handler must possess. All equipment necessary and proper transportation and dietary needs are also covered. After going through all of the basics it gets into the specialized training techniques for specific duties such as sentry, silent scout, attack, messenger, and casualty dogs. While the manual created a standardized training and care regiment, it was not uncommon for handlers to cross train their dogs for multiple duties. Handlers also tended to stray from the manual which even states that handlers need to be flexible and resourceful. The longer a handler and dog were together, the easier it was to detect discomfort and conform to the special needs of the dog. More importantly the bond formed helped on the battlefield because dogs signal and alert in different ways. Knowing the personality of the dog could be the difference between life and death.

¹⁰⁸ William W. Putney, *Always Faithful* (United States: Potomac Books, 2003), 7.

¹⁰⁹ Putney, *Always Faithful*, 22-25.

¹¹⁰ Going, *Dogs at War*, 19.

drop and jump.¹¹¹ Handlers needed to be patient and show restraint while going through training. Familiarity with dogs was preferred but as handlers were needed they were assigned. Dogs needed to learn to wear a muzzle and gasmask, ride in a vehicle, and most importantly be comfortable with gunfire. Dogs learned not to bark when working and to act on silent hand signals instead of vocal commands because some situations required silence.¹¹² It cannot be stressed enough how important training was to success on the battlefield. The training that many dogs and handlers underwent helped prepare them for the fierce fighting of World War II.

U.S. Coast Guard and Army

On June 13, 1942 four German agents came ashore near Long Island, where they ran into Coast Guardsmen John C. Cullen who pretended to accept a bribe and let them continue on.¹¹³ A few days later, four more German agents embarked from a U-boat, landing on a Florida beach.¹¹⁴ These two incidents highlighted the risks long stretches of exposed coastlines presented. Man power alone could not patrol as effectively as a handler and canine. Out of the 10,425 dogs trained by the Army, the Coast Guard used 3,174 for sentry purposes.¹¹⁵ Rarely did the patrols turn anything up but the dogs helped to free up men for other duties and gave people, both enlisted and civilian, a greater sense of security. Even when the dogs did not provide tangible results the intangibles made their presence worthwhile. By May 10, 1944, patrols were greatly reduced because the chances of infiltration by foreign agents decreased. The dogs given to the Coast Guard by

¹¹¹ War Department, "Technical Manual: War Dogs," 60-61.

¹¹² Ibid, 23.

¹¹³ Downey, *Dogs for Defense*, 59.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 59.

¹¹⁵ Erna Risch and Chester L. Kieffer, *The Quartermaster Corps: Organization, Supply, and Services Volume II*, (Washington D.C., Office of the Chief of Military History Department of the Army: 1955), 329.

the Army did not generate the same sensational stories as the dogs who served overseas but their value was evident in the new-found faith the military had in using dogs.

Prior to 1944, some dogs worked in Europe in small contingents attached to other units. By the end of the year seven Army Quartermaster War Dog Platoons went to Europe.¹¹⁶ Chips, a Collie-German Shepherd-Husky mix, arguably the most famous American war dog in World War II, worked numerous jobs in the European theater. He worked as a sentry dog for the Army's 3rd Infantry Division and from January 14-24, 1943 Chips guarded the house in Casablanca where Prime Minister Winston Churchill and President Franklin Delano Roosevelt held a conference.¹¹⁷ Chips most famous exploit occurred near Sicily on July 10, 1943 during an amphibious landing. Private John R. Rowell and Chips became pinned down by machine gun fire. Even though Chips trained as a sentry dog, Rowell unleashed Chips who took off towards the pillbox.¹¹⁸ Shortly after, one Italian soldier appeared from the pillbox with Chips biting at his arms and throat. Three more soldiers came out with their hands up. All four surrendered to Rowell but Chips sustained a burn and scalp wound which he would recover from. Later that night, Chips again helped Rowell take ten more prisoners when he alerted to them on a road.¹¹⁹ Chips received the Purple Heart but William Thomas of the Military Order of the Purple Heart did not think a dog should share the same honor as a soldier but also recommended creating an award solely for dogs.¹²⁰ The soldiers who worked with Chips decided to have their own ceremony for him instead.

¹¹⁶ Lemish, *War Dogs*, 139.

¹¹⁷ Kistler, *Animals in the Military*, 28.

¹¹⁸ Lemish, *War Dogs*, 74. A pillbox is a military term for a fortified position for a machine gun or other weapon emplacement. It is constructed of materials such as concrete, steel, sandbags, and wood. It can also be dug into the ground or hillside for added protection.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, 74.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, 75.

Chips' work demonstrated the versatility of military dogs. Though he trained as a sentry, his actions demonstrated he was capable of much more. Had an American soldier tried to move while pinned down by the machine gun fire on July 10, 1943, they would have likely been gunned down due to their size and slow speed. A dog like Chips made for a much smaller and more elusive target allowing a valuable chance to move on a fixed enemy position. On the same day, he worked as a silent scout and helped capture a patrol. Most dogs were capable of multiple roles even when only trained for one. The dogs serving in the Pacific trained as scouts and served as sentries at night. Dogs in the European Theater faced different terrain, weather conditions, and tactics. Other dogs besides Chips went above and beyond to protect the lives of their handlers.

The dogs used in Italy proved on numerous occasions to be valuable in a multitude of roles. The 33rd Quartermaster War Dog Platoon exemplified how dogs could tip the balance of war, but also be hamstrung by weather conditions. After arriving in August 1944, the platoon worked as sentries but also accounted for forty-one scout and reconnaissance patrols.¹²¹ Unfortunately, deep snow made scouting improbable and the dogs were relegated to sentry duty until the weather conditions improved. This dilemma was not unique to just dogs as weather can adversely affect missions or the use of specific technologies. However, some discredited the dogs as only useful to a point due to some of the restrictions caused by aspects out of their control. Once the weather improved, the dogs went on more patrols bringing the number to seventy-two. On one patrol a dog named Chub led a mission through enemy lines to create an observation post. Two more dogs, Aufra and Muffy took turns carrying a total of seven messages throughout the night

¹²¹ Downey, *Dogs for Defense*, 76.

back to the command post.¹²² The 33rd demonstrated how military dogs filled a specific niche in war time by providing services that technology or humans could not complete. Other dogs in Italy produced results that many in the military did not expect at the time because they were not trained to complete that type of job.

In a patrol through the Italian Alps, a dog illustrated that while trained in one role, could be much more versatile. While on a trail, Peefka, a German Shepherd, accompanied by a group of American troops on patrol, signaled to trouble in the vicinity. At first his handler did not understand why he alerted, but soon discovered a trip wire attached to multiple mines covering the trail.¹²³ Mine detection dogs had not started training yet, but Peefka's protective instinct saved the lives of those American troops. The use of mines in slowing the advances of an army in a non-static war proved to be another relatively new tactic that created a necessity to adapt how the military navigated minefields.

U.S. Army mine detection dogs or M-Dogs did not enter the war until 1943. The African campaign required a different way to detect mines because of the introduction of non-metallic mines that rendered typical metal detectors useless.¹²⁴ While the Germans found a way to make mine detecting harder by changing the materials used in mines, no technology existed to counter these modifications. The Germans used non-metallic components such as wood and even glass to lessen the amount of metal in mines. Dogs countered these technological changes and filled the void that technology could not. While metal detectors were a valuable technological advancement to counter mines, they were ineffective to the introduction of non-metallic mines. Other European countries

¹²² Ibid, 77.

¹²³ Ibid, 76.

¹²⁴ Waller, *Dogs and National Defense*, 30

were already using mine detection dogs with enough success that the U.S. New Developments Division took to heart a suggestion from Captain Garle of England's War Dog Training School to start training M-Dogs.¹²⁵ Many logically assumed that dogs would be well suited for this type of work because of their abilities to find buried bones or other objects.¹²⁶ Of course this reasoning did not account for many factors that differ from a dog at home finding a bone versus a dog under duress in a war zone detecting a mine.

The M-Dog program trained dogs to find a range of mines including metallic and non-metallic, anti-tank and personal mines, and trip wires. Training relied on two methods, positive and negative reinforcement. Dogs who alerted to a mine in training were rewarded. A dog who did not alert was given an electrical shock from the mine or trip wire.¹²⁷ The military primarily relied on negative reinforcement assuming that the fear of an electric shock would make the dog more likely to find a mine. On September 7, 1943, an exhibition for some officers was held in Virginia where M-dogs were tested in a mine field planted two weeks prior.¹²⁸ In summary the dogs missed twenty percent of mines and incorrectly alerted twenty percent of the time in places where no mines existed. Despite the discouraging numbers, the dogs did successfully find a mine field created eight months prior, winning the approval of officers and cementing premature belief that the dogs would do well overseas.¹²⁹ With the exercise deemed a success, the QMC went ahead and trained more M-dogs. On May 30, 1944, America's official M-dogs landed in Algeria. Soon thereafter, the M-dogs started searching for mines which

¹²⁵ Lemish, *War Dogs*, 94

¹²⁶ Waller, *Dogs and National Defense*, 30.

¹²⁷ *Ibid*, 32.

¹²⁸ Lemish, *War Dogs*, 95.

¹²⁹ *Ibid*, 95.

led to a high number of casualties.¹³⁰ By 1945, the M-dog program virtually ceased to exist.

Military experts and historians disagree on whether the program was a success or a failure for multiple reasons. In hindsight, it is understood that negative reinforcement is not an effective means of training M-dogs. Military members at the time expected a one hundred percent success rate, something that mine detecting technology could not even accomplish. M-dogs should not shoulder the blame of failure because of the human error that undermined the possibility of success. Dogs advantageous olfactory senses could have filled the gap where technology could not. Mine dogs in Vietnam prospered in finding booby traps and nonmetallic mines due to changes made in training. When people think of mine dogs they think of the dogs described above, but American military planners also viewed mine dogs as a mined dog.

The United States New Development Division floated the idea of using dogs to blow up Japanese pillboxes or entrenched positions. The idea involved attaching a mine with a timed detonator to a dog's back and having the canine charge a fixed position.¹³¹ The idea never came to fruition partly because of the anticipated negative reaction by the American public upon learning the military was blowing up dogs on purpose. The military also found flaws in the idea including the potential of dogs running back to American positions. The Soviets, however, used this strategy to blow up German Panzer tanks as they moved through Russia.¹³² Training for those dogs, consisted of starving the canine and then placing food under a tank with a running engine so the dog associated tanks with food. An explosive vest with a metal rod was attached to the dog and when the

¹³⁰ Ibid, 96.

¹³¹ Ibid, 91.

¹³² Kistler, *Animals in the Military*, 26.

rod touched the underside of a tank, the vest would explode.¹³³ The Soviets blew up some German tanks this way but cut the use of these dogs short due to them sometimes turning around and running under Soviet tanks. The use of military dogs was still relatively new and by no means perfect. World War I and II greatly differed in technology and tactics and thus the use of dogs was not an exact science.

Historians and military personnel write mixed reviews on the usefulness and benefits of using dogs in the war. The differing opinions of canine success often vary based on the metric used to grade the military dog programs. Those who expected perfect work from these dogs will surely say that they failed. Military personnel who served with these dogs will grade them based on their interactions in combat. For those who benefitted from having a dog in combat, whether as scouts, messengers, or sentries, will see their work as a positive and a game changer on the battlefield. Higher up military members may judge solely on the reports they have received and the numbers on paper which can be quite deceiving and do not always tell the whole story. There is no easy way to measure the dogs work or the program as a whole. But if it were possible to compare the number of American lives saved by the military dog program, compared to those who were, or might have been, lost, the dogs accomplishments would be undeniable. Unfortunately, there is no way to quantify the number of lives saved, and conversely there is no way to know what American lives lost were the fault of the dog and handler but rather those leading a patrol who chose to ignore the advice of a handler or did not know how to properly deploy the dog. One way to measure the success of these dogs is the reviews from handlers and other soldiers but also the continued use and training of these dogs by the military. If they were not successful, financial resources

¹³³ Ibid, 26-27.

would not continuously be spent on military canines. The Marines' experience with dogs showcased their ability to operate in different environments than the Army's dogs in Africa and Europe.

The Marines

The United States military saw some of the most intense fighting in the Pacific as they embarked on a campaign that took them from island to island to root out entrenched Japanese soldiers. The terrain and flora of these islands aided the Japanese by providing additional cover, giving them the ability to spring deadly ambushes. Dense jungle and caves found on many Pacific islands made patrolling for the Marines very dangerous. In this regard military dogs became incredibly valuable to locating Japanese positions and saving American soldiers' lives. The dogs employed by the Marine Corps helped nullify the tactical advantages provided by the Japanese style of fighting.

It is important to note that historical records tend to focus more on individual dogs or specific war dog platoons as opposed to the U.S. war dog program in its entirety. This is likely due to the successes of their deployments or the historical weight that certain battles carried. However, eight Army and seven Marine Corps platoons served in different capacities in battles in the Pacific such as Guadalcanal, New Guinea, New Britain, Saipan, Peleliu, Iwo Jima, Okinawa, and the Philippines.¹³⁴ In 1943 at New Guinea, Marine scout and messenger dogs were both utilized in combat areas where reports reflected their "consistently excellent performances."¹³⁵ When other means of communication were not available, dogs as they proved in World War I, were faster messengers than humans. The thick jungle made it difficult at times for soldiers to

¹³⁴ Downey, *Dogs for Defense*, 91.

¹³⁵ Waller, *Dogs and National Defense*, 27.

navigate quickly. Unlike other military dogs, messenger dogs had two handlers. This was necessary because the dog would take a message from the handler in the forward position back to the handler at headquarters. Along with the messenger dogs, the scout dogs performed well in the jungle.

At New Guinea scout dogs went on reconnaissance patrols and warned of Japanese positions up to 1,000 yards away.¹³⁶ The range at which dogs could identify an enemy position varied due to numerous factors such as wind and humidity. A lack of knowledge on how to properly use dogs resulted in ineffectiveness. In some cases, dogs were not used properly, causing some to believe that they could not be helpful in the war. In other cases, early successes convinced some commanders and soldiers, who quickly learned that dogs could play a large role in future battles for other islands. The work of dogs and their handlers greatly helped in the battle at Bougainville.

On November 1, 1943, an artillery bombardment started up to help the ground forces to land on Bougainville with less resistance. Among the Marines that would land on the beach were the 1st Marine War Dog Platoon led by Captain Clyde Henderson attached to the 2nd Marine Raider Regiment.¹³⁷ Loading the dogs into their landing crafts needed to be quick to keep schedule and arrive on the beach with the rest of the landing force. After having time to practice, Henderson found that lowering crates into the landing crafts would not work so he used ropes to lower the dogs much quicker.¹³⁸ In a speech given just before the landing, Marine Lieutenant Colonel Alan Shapley said to his

¹³⁶ Ibid, 27.

¹³⁷ Lemish, *War Dogs*, 97-98.

¹³⁸ Going, *Dogs at War*, 76. The War Department's TM 10-396 did not contain any instruction on how to move dogs from ships to landing crafts and Clyde Henderson had to come up with a solution. William W. Putney would use a similar method with leashes at Guadalcanal in 1944.

men, "I want you to remember, that the dogs are the least expendable of all!"¹³⁹ An officer's understanding of how important dogs could be played a role in how effective the dogs were. Inexperienced or indifferent officers did not deploy the dogs properly or in some cases ignored when handlers informed them of a dog alerting to an enemy presence. At Bougainville, the dogs and men under Henderson's command changed people's minds on the value of dogs in battle. As Marines assaulted the beach, the entrenched Japanese units that American artillery hoped to soften up, pushed back. The artillery did not do enough to extensively damage the Japanese positions. From the pillboxes, the Japanese could continue firing on the landing craft, including the dog platoon, but no dogs were lost in the initial landing.

During the first eleven days where it rained continuously, creating a swamp, the dogs continued to handle their duties without issues.¹⁴⁰ The Marines needed to cut Japanese reinforcements along the Numa-Numa and Piva trails where they joined. To do so they took a dog named Andy who worked off leash ahead of the Marines.¹⁴¹ Andy alerted by raising the hair on his back on multiple different occasions during the mission, and there were no Marine casualties.¹⁴² Andy accomplished a feat that no human could have. Using his highly sensitive nose and ears he made alerts in jungle that blocked out

¹³⁹ Ibid, 76.

¹⁴⁰ Lemish, *War Dogs*, 98.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, 98. Andy was one of only a few dogs within the First War Dog Platoon that could work off-leash. This created an advantage because the dog could move further ahead of the patrol. As long as the dog stayed in sight, quiet noises from the handler and hand gestures could make the dog come back closer to the formation. Depending on the dog and the handler, this practice would be used when it would be more advantageous than working on a leash. Of course, there were instances where the dog went too far ahead creating a problem for the accompanying soldiers and handler.

¹⁴² Ibid, 98.

the sky due to its density.¹⁴³ Japanese snipers used the thick jungle to their advantage and the dogs were alerting to them and to larger enemy ambushes.

The list of achievements of the 1st Marine War Dog Platoon is an impressive one. On all patrols led by scout dogs there were no Marine deaths, positions with sentry dogs were not infiltrated by Japanese surprise attacks at night, and no dog gave away Marine positions due to barking.¹⁴⁴ The dogs' success at Bougainville did not go unnoticed by the soldiers whose lives they saved but also Major General Roy S. Geiger, United States Marine Corps, Commander of U.S. on Bougainville and Major General Allen H. Turnage, United States Marine Corps, Marine Division Commander. While they noted that there were some very minor issues with the use of the dogs, it did not stop them from expressing praise about the abilities of the dogs and their handlers. Two dogs, named Kuno and Rolo died in the fighting at Bougainville.¹⁴⁵ When Lieutenant Colonel Shapley told his men that the dogs were not expendable, he was right as their efforts proved at Bougainville.

Just like the military working dogs at Bougainville, the Marine war dog platoons in the battle of Guam in 1944 proved invaluable to the Americans' efforts to retake Guam from the Japanese. Captain William W. Putney of the United States Marine Corps chronicled the work of the 2nd and 3rd War Dog Platoons in his book *Always Faithful*. On July 21, 1944, the Marines made their way ashore. Twenty dogs and twenty-six handlers landed on the first day with the 1st Marine Brigade followed by the 2nd and 3rd War Dog

¹⁴³ James E. Bassett, "Bougainville's Jungle War Proves Murderous," *Los Angeles Times*, November 21, 1, 1943, <http://libproxy.boisestate.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.libproxy.boisestate.edu/docview/165485669?accountid=9649>.

¹⁴⁴ Going, *Dogs at War*, 79-80.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 119.

Platoons commanded by Lieutenant William T. Taylor and Lieutenant William W. Putney respectively.¹⁴⁶

Guam presented many of the same challenges that other Pacific islands did for the invasion forces. The beaches provided little cover from the ridges and cliffs overlooking them, providing Japanese forces deadly fields of fire. After initially taking the beaches, the Marines on Guam faced the difficult task of rooting out the Japanese that dug into the cliffs and who occupied caves. Trails inland were hemmed in by dense vegetation and tall sword grass that afforded the Japanese concealed ambush points for Marine patrols. The war dogs on Guam were tasked with working point on patrols. The Marines working with scout dogs found them invaluable to alerting to the enemy before walking into ambushes.

Unfortunately, some handlers and their dogs died in the line of duty, but not before fulfilling their assigned tasks. Allen Jacobson and his dog Kurt were scouting for a patrol moving through thick brush when Kurt signaled to a nearby enemy in the brush. Jacobson killed two enemy soldiers before a mortar round landed near them.¹⁴⁷ Jacobson and Kurt were both wounded from the round and William Putney performed major surgery on Kurt later that day but he died that night, becoming the first dog at Guam to pass away.¹⁴⁸ Kurt's alert to the two Japanese soldiers seems minor but he saved the patrol from a certain ambush. More importantly, his discovery kept the 3rd Battalion, 21st Marines from walking into a larger Japanese force. In the battle that followed, 350 Japanese were killed.¹⁴⁹ The Japanese used smaller outposts of soldiers to ambush Marines or let them pass if a bigger force lay in wait behind them. These small groups

¹⁴⁶ Lemish, *War Dogs*, 126-127.

¹⁴⁷ Putney, *Always Faithful*, 165.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 165.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 165.

proved deadly. The tactic while effective, became much less effective because of the work of scout dogs who used their superior sense of smell and hearing to detect them. Along with scout duty, dogs served as sentries at night, alerting to pending Japanese attacks.

As the Japanese began to lose control of Guam they became desperate. Occurring under the cover of darkness, Japanese troops would mass for a charge towards American positions. Dogs were crucial to counter this, acting as early warning systems that gave the Marines valuable time to prepare. In one instance a Marine dog named Big Boy signaled multiple times before the Americans entrenched line came under attack. 7,500 Japanese troops had gathered nearby on Mount Tenjo. As the soldiers moved closer, Big Boy alerted but stopped signaling because the Japanese stopped advancing toward the lines. Later he indicated that the Japanese had started to move again. He alerted once more before the Japanese charge finally assaulted the American positions.¹⁵⁰ Big Boy's story is just one example of what many dogs did for the Marines. Skipper, a black Labrador retriever's story is similar, but he died in the ensuing combat.¹⁵¹

When the fighting ended on Guam, the Marine war dogs had played a vital role in retaking the island while reducing the number of Americans killed. Serving dual roles in some cases, scout dogs aided in the tactics of finding Japanese in the dense jungles and caves. Meanwhile sentries gave Americans a better chance at repelling intense charges. The dogs hindered the Japanese ability to surprise the Marines. They changed the Marines' tactics, allowing them to be more patient and meticulous in their patrols, ensuring that the Japanese could not stay hidden and attack the next patrol to come

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 168-169.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 171.

through. The 2nd and 3rd Marine War Dog Platoons took part in over 550 patrols, coming into contact with the Japanese on 40 percent of patrols. This led to hundreds of Japanese killed or captured.¹⁵² As sentries, they signaled forty times, likely saving many American lives even though no exact number exists.¹⁵³ The Marines would see intense fighting in all of their battles in the Pacific, and their dogs would too.

The battle of Iwo Jima is synonymous in the minds of many with the iconic image of the Marines putting up the American flag. Iwo Jima was especially important in the Pacific Theater due to its proximity to Tokyo and the air fields that the Japanese used to harass American bombers. The island's vegetation consisted of scrub and no trees, but the Japanese force of around 13,000, heavily fortified the island to defend their airstrips.¹⁵⁴ The Battle for Iwo Jima and Guam differed greatly due to the terrain and tactics but the successes of the dogs on Iwo Jima mirrored the successes of the dogs on Guam.

On February 19, 1945, the Americans invaded Iwo Jima. The fighting lasted until March 26, 1945. The 7th Marine War Dog Platoon demonstrated the versatility of their dogs in a variety of combat roles. The platoon split up into three groups with one landing on the beaches during the assault and the other two coming ashore two days later.¹⁵⁵ Along with the 7th, was the 6th Marine War Dog Platoon also split into three groups with one landing on the first day and the others coming ashore four days later.¹⁵⁶ Once on Iwo Jima, dogs were used mainly as sentries, but also in the dangerous mop up work to help

¹⁵² Putney, *Always Faithful*, 202.

¹⁵³ *Ibid*, 127.

¹⁵⁴ "First Six Days on Iwo Jima," *Marine Corps Gazette* 29, no. 5 (May 1945): 3-4, <https://www.mca-marines.org/gazette/1945/05/first-six-days-iwo-jima>.

¹⁵⁵ Lemish, *War Dogs*, 135.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 136.

clear the island of any Japanese hidden in caves or pillboxes.¹⁵⁷ Just as the dogs on Guam alerted to banzai charges at night, the dogs on Iwo Jima saved numerous lives from surprise attacks by the Japanese at night. On the fifth night at Iwo Jima a dog named Carl and his handler Raymond Moquin of the 6th Marine War Dog Platoon dug in at the bottom of Mount Suribachi.¹⁵⁸ Through the course of the night, Carl alerted multiple times by coming out of the foxhole he was in and growling. Moquin had attached a string between him and a sergeant's wrist and pulled on it to let him know when Carl was alerting. Fifteen minutes later, one hundred Japanese attacked. In the ensuing battle, the Marines killed twenty-seven Japanese and no Marines died.¹⁵⁹ The ambush and surprise attacks used by the Japanese were much less effective when a dog was scouting or working security. Rebuffing these potentially deadly assaults allowed the Marines to hold ground that they fought so hard to take. The dogs also did more than just save lives, they gave Marines at night a sense of security and safety, allowing them to be confident that they would not be taken by surprise and rest more easily. Nighttime security and sentry work were important on Iwo Jima. Messenger dogs in World War II are often overlooked due to the communications technology at the time. However, on Iwo Jima, messenger dogs played a vital role.

The stories of Duke and Rex, two messenger dogs, illustrated the importance of messenger dogs on Iwo Jima where there was little cover for relaying messages that could not be transmitted over a radio. Rex transported map overlays and daily reports from a command post by the front lines back to division headquarters at night and during

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, 135-136

¹⁵⁸ Duane Decker, "The War Dogs Paid Off at Iwo," *Leatherneck* 28, no. 7 (July 1945): 20-21, <https://www.mca-marines.org/leatherneck/1945/07/war-dogs-paid-iwo>.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 20.

the day, when it was near impossible for a Marine to do so without being killed or wounded.¹⁶⁰ Some messages, like map overlays could not be done over radio and the safest and fastest method utilized dogs. Along with carrying map overlays and reports, Rex saved the lives of wounded Marines by bringing blood plasma to the front lines until he died from a sniper's shot.¹⁶¹ Even with mechanization, the quickest and safest methods of moving things still relied on simple transportation. Technology, while valuable was not always practical to use.

Vital information needed to be relayed in a timely manner and dogs were able to move faster through the terrain and vegetation while not being as exposed to enemy fire. In some cases, the sheer number of American troops moving about made it difficult for a human messenger to navigate. This was the case for Duke who carried about two messages a day at a distance of three quarters of a mile through, "traffic thicker than Broadway at high noon."¹⁶² Unfortunately, Duke would be killed on the sixth day by a Japanese sniper.¹⁶³ The dogs on Iwo Jima who served as scouts also helped with mop up duty, a monumentally important task but also very dangerous for Marines.

Heavily fortified and entrenched positions, along with caves and hidden pillboxes were tactically difficult for Marines to secure. Ambushes set by the Japanese, well concealed in places, killed many soldiers. The 6th and 7th Marine War Dog Platoons made patrols and mop up duty much easier. Rick, a German Shepherd gained a reputation for his accurate alerts and went on numerous special patrols to search out caves. In one instance, he alerted to a Japanese soldier who was subsequently killed but he continued

¹⁶⁰ Ibid 20.

¹⁶¹ Cyril J. O'Brien, "World War II: Marine War Dogs," *Leatherneck*, Jan 1996, 12.

¹⁶² Ibid, 20.

¹⁶³ Lemish, *War Dogs*, 136.

alerting within the cave, prompting an interpreter to be summoned.¹⁶⁴ Nine Japanese soldiers hiding in the back of the cave surrendered. Lieutenant Taylor of the 3rd Platoon noted that the caves on Iwo Jima were subterranean caverns that extended hundreds of feet and had multiple outlets unlike the caves on Guam, Peleliu, and Saipan which were essentially holes in the ground.¹⁶⁵ The dogs continued to prove valuable at Okinawa, which tested the dogs in a new way.

For Marine war dogs, Okinawa presented new challenges that they had not encountered on other islands in the Pacific. At Okinawa, the 1st Marine War Dog Platoon took fifty men and thirty-four dogs ashore. They were followed by the 4th with some elements of the 5th for a total of seventy men and thirty-seven dogs. Lastly, the 2nd Marine War Dog Platoon brought a sparse thirteen men and fourteen dogs.¹⁶⁶ With fortified ridges, lots of open ground, sugar cane fields, cities, and civilians many handlers ran into new scenarios on Okinawa.¹⁶⁷ The Japanese took advantage of the rattling sound of the sugar cane to stage ambushes. In one instance, as a Japanese ambush used the cover of the sugar cane, a Doberman named Prince signaled his handler, allowing the Americans to get the jump on the Japanese and open up with automatic machine gun fire.¹⁶⁸ While scout dogs had mixed results on Okinawa due to daylight operations, failures of commanders to understand dogs, and the wide open terrain, messenger dogs proved valuable.¹⁶⁹ When Okinawa finally fell to American control, the dogs had saved American lives and once again contributed to a major battle in the Pacific Theater.

¹⁶⁴ Decker, "The War Dogs Paid Off at Iwo," 20-21.

¹⁶⁵ O'Brien, "World War II: Marine War Dogs," 11.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, 12.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, 12.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, 13.

¹⁶⁹ Lemish, *War Dogs*, 139.

Overall, the Pacific Theater and the tactics utilized by the Japanese made it a perfect place for war dogs to operate in a successful manner.

The dogs who stood guard, walked point, and ran important messages to and from the frontlines in World War II demonstrated how different battlefields, tactics, and more advanced military technology did not make the use of canines defunct. Whether on the frontlines or the home front war dogs made a lasting impression on Americans. At the end of the war, 559 Marine war dogs were still on duty.¹⁷⁰ Of these, 540 returned to civilian life and fifteen were destroyed, four due to behavioral reasons.¹⁷¹ William Putney and Major General Harold C. Gors worked hard to make sure the Marine war dogs were repatriated. They knew that these war dogs could be retrained and brought home despite the high costs of doing so, a financial burden the Marines did not expect.¹⁷² The Marines would not use scout dogs again until Vietnam. Marine, Coast Guard, and Army war dogs served valiantly during World War II. They helped counter new weaponry and tactics employed by the enemies they faced. More efficient weapons and mines made these dogs even more valuable. Some fell on the battlefields while others came home. Without the DFD and the grassroots movement to employ dogs for war purposes, more Americans likely would have lost their lives. The heroic work of the dogs is often overlooked except for by those who worked alongside them. When the nuclear bombs were dropped on August 6th and 9th, 1945 the military believed that conventional military tactics would be supplanted by new technologies.

¹⁷⁰ Putney, *Always Faithful*, 212.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid*, 216.

¹⁷² Kiser and Barnes, *Loyal Forces*, 20.

CHAPTER THREE: COLD WAR K-9S: CEMENTING A LEGACY

The end of World War II ushered in a new era of politics and weaponry. For American forces, the weapons technology developed in World War II signaled a change in how future wars would be fought, or so military planners believed. With new airpower and stronger naval power that could reach anywhere on the globe, it seemed that the use of more conventional forces would not be necessary. This included the dogs who assisted at home and on the frontlines in World War II. The canines used in World War II came from civilian homes and some returned to their original owners or were adopted in to new ones. Following a familiar pattern, the period after World War II saw a cut in spending on military dogs and the belief that their work would not be needed in the future. Instead of using dogs procured from civilians, the Army QMC in 1946 decided the best way to obtain dogs was through purchasing them, making them the property of the Army.¹⁷³ The military dog program did not fully disappear but existed as a small fraction of what it was. The Korean and Vietnam Wars validated the need to keep and expand the war dog program.

While the majority of American military planners and advisors did not believe in the usefulness of war dogs because of the advancement of technologies after World War II ended, there were still those who advocated for them. Brigadier General Frederick McCabe pleaded with the U.S. Quartermaster to not only keep but expand the war dog

¹⁷³ J. Rachel Reed, *K-9 Korea: The Untold Story of America's War Dogs in the Korean War* (United States: Regener History, 2017), 10. By purchasing the dogs, the Army had sole possession and did not have to worry about returning the dogs or finding them homes, an endeavor that required financial resources and bureaucratic procedures.

program for scouts and sentry dogs.¹⁷⁴ His appeal fell on deaf ears and the war dog program shrank to the point that the only effective unit in existence was the Army's 26th Infantry Scout Dog Platoon (ISDP).¹⁷⁵ By this time, the U.S. Army chose the German Shepherd as their go to breed due to their versatility, physical attributes, and intelligence.¹⁷⁶ Between 1948 and 1951, the 26th moved training from Front Royal, Virginia to Fort Riley, Kansas, where the first group of dogs from the 26th trained before deployment.¹⁷⁷ On December 1st, 1952 training again moved to Fort Carson, Colorado.¹⁷⁸ The switching of locations indicated the instability of the war dog program. Fort Carson accommodated approximately eighty handlers and four hundred dogs within one eight-week training cycle.¹⁷⁹ The training program focused on sentry dogs because the military did not see the need to train more scout dogs, with the exception of the 26th. Sentry dogs were posted in World War II to protect from enemy infiltrators but post World War II sentries aided in loss prevention from bases. In 1949, supply depots in Japan lost 600,000 dollars in four months due to theft, but with the introduction of 125 handlers and sixty-five dogs the military did not lose any inventory to theft for twelve months.¹⁸⁰ Sentry dogs continued to demonstrate their practicality. Unfortunately, the war in Korea needed more than just sentry dogs.

U.S. Army 26th Infantry Scout Dog Platoon

Even though the Korean War started on June 25, 1950, the 26th would not make its debut for almost another year. On June 12, 1951, seven handlers and dogs linked up

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, 11.

¹⁷⁵ Lemish, *War Dogs*, 149.

¹⁷⁶ Reed, *K-9 Korea*, 11.

¹⁷⁷ Lemish, *War Dogs*, 151.

¹⁷⁸ Robert Fickbohm and Sandra Fickbohm Granger, *Cold Noses, Brave Hearts: Dogs and Men of the 26th Infantry Scout Dog Platoon* (United States: Xlibris Corp., 2011.), 47.

¹⁷⁹ Reed, *K-9 Korea*, 19.

¹⁸⁰ Lemish, *War Dogs*, 151.

with the 3rd Reconnaissance Group.¹⁸¹ Squad leader Corporal William J. Irving believed that the scout dog platoon would work best at night.¹⁸² Many American patrols and enemy ambushes and attacks occurred at night. Dogs' olfactory senses and hearing countered the cover of night, just like they had in World War II against Japanese banzai attacks. Corporal Irving and his squad of men would be joined by the rest of the platoon in 1952, but before that they were assigned to the 24th Infantry Division to work on the frontlines.¹⁸³ Before the arrival of the rest of the platoon, Corporal H.L. Green wrote a letter to them stating that the men needed to prepare for walking point by learning how to read maps. He also described their duties as ambush, which consisted of two dogs rotating on point for an hour with the objective of killing the enemy or taking prisoners; security for the lines by patrolling and making contact with the enemy before they reached the American lines; combat patrols where one dog would go with a large force to try and find and engage the enemy; and clean up duty, checking bunkers for remaining enemy troops.¹⁸⁴ Clean up duty was the only work the dogs would be expected to do during daylight hours. Green went on to explain the terrain as mountainous and hills with lots of valleys, terrain that needed a dog for scenting purposes to counter enemy forces hiding. Aside from acting as an early warning system, scout dogs provided a confidence boost.

Captain Richard Prilliman of the 5th Regimental Combat team recalled how scout dogs changed their operations. Interviewed after the war, Prilliman stated that Chinese

¹⁸¹ Sergeant Dave Brown, "Squad of War Dogs New on Recon Duty," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, September 4, 1951, 9, <https://starsandstripes.newspaperarchive.com/pacific-stars-and-stripes/1951-09-04/page-9>.

¹⁸² *Ibid*, 9.

¹⁸³ Private First-Class Walter Cord, "K-9 Corps War Dogs Join 24th," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, October 2, 1951, 9, <https://starsandstripes.newspaperarchive.com/pacific-stars-and-stripes/1951-10-02/page-9>.

¹⁸⁴ Robert Fickbohm and Sandra Fickbohm Granger, *Cold Noses, Brave Hearts*, 48-49.

Communist Forces worked mostly at night and the fear of ambush greatly affected his company's mental fortitude. Scout dog teams allowed his men to patrol at night with a greater degree of confidence.¹⁸⁵ Prilliman went on to say that even without a scout dog, his men's new-found confidence carried over to all night patrols. Evidence of the fine work scout dog teams did went beyond tangible results. Their work meant the need for the deployment of more scout dogs.

The original group sent to Korea from the 26th ISDP only consisted of seven handlers and dogs. The rest of the 26th left Fort Riley, Kansas in January of 1952. After a long journey and some logistical delays, the 26th made it to Korea and split up with one squad joining the 2nd Infantry Division and the other with the 40th Infantry Division.¹⁸⁶ Sergeant First Class James Heffron and his dog Hasso made quite the impression on the 38th Infantry Regiment when they led a night patrol deep into enemy territory and brought everyone back safely. The soldiers said the "canine radar" boosted their confidence tremendously.¹⁸⁷ This sentiment echoed with most of the troops who operated with a scout dog. Heffron and Hasso saved a patrol from an ambush just six days later when his alerts kept the group from walking straight into an ambush. On May 16, 1952, handler Jack North and his dog Arlo accomplished a similar feat by returning a reconnaissance patrol from an almost guaranteed ambush.¹⁸⁸ A common tactic during World War II and Korea, ambushes became deadlier with the introduction of more advanced machine guns that were more reliable and had higher rates of fire. Patrols could

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, 55.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, 60.

¹⁸⁷ Sergeant George Buttery, "2d Div Patrol Gives Approval on K-9 Unit," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, March 20, 1952, 9, <https://starsandstripes.newspaperarchive.com/pacific-stars-and-stripes/1952-03-20/page-9/george-buttery?psb=dateasc&page=4>.

¹⁸⁸ Fickbohm, *Cold Noses, Brave Hearts*, 70.

easily be pinned down or worse, destroyed in a matter of minutes. Dogs kept patrols from suffering these fates by allowing them to either skirt these ambushes or by retreating back to American lines. In Korea, it was very difficult to receive aid via reinforcements due to the terrain and difficulty in pinpointing the exact position of a trapped patrol. One of the more famous Korean War dogs, York, saved the lives of fifteen American troops by stopping them from crossing a bridge where they would have been gunned down. Instead, the patrol radioed back for flares, which illuminated the area, exposing the Chinese. From here the patrol fired while they retreated back to American lines.¹⁸⁹ Continuing the trend from World War II, the dogs' work continued to save the lives of countless men.

As the war came to an end, the 26th continued their work and even came up with a new way to hunt down enemy troops. The squad attached to the 2nd Division worked with the Aviation Co. and built two cages of wood and chicken wire, for the dogs to ride in, that could be fixed to the litter pods of the Army's H-13 helicopter.¹⁹⁰ Even though this idea came after the cease fire, the Aviation Co. and 26th put on a demonstration by having troops search for an unidentified person. When the person could not be found, York and handler Helmer Hermanson boarded the helicopter outfitted with the cage and landed with the patrol out searching. Delivery of scout dogs by helicopter would be an important part of dog operations in the near future. It was fitting that York took part in the demonstration. Between his arrival on June 12, 1951 and the signing of the armistice, York led 148 patrols.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁹ "Dog Saves 15 Yanks on Korea Front Patrol," *European Stars and Stripes*, February 23, 1953, 2, <https://starsandstripes.newspaperarchive.com/european-stars-and-stripes/1953-02-23/page-2>.

¹⁹⁰ "Airborne Dogs," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, February 12, 1954, 20, <https://starsandstripes.newspaperarchive.com/pacific-stars-and-stripes/1954-02-12/page-20/airborne-dogs>.

¹⁹¹ Lemish, *War Dogs*, 161.

The 26th's work did not end with the armistice, as they worked security patrols to prevent theft by the Korean people. The excellent work of the 26th Infantry Scout Dog Platoon was evidenced by their three Silver Stars, six Bronze Stars of Valor, and thirty-five Bronze Stars for meritorious service.¹⁹² In comparison to the number of dogs used in World War II, the Korean War saw a much smaller amount deployed. The end of World War II greatly affected the war dog program, but the Korean War kept it going. The Cold War was predicated on powerful weapons that could destroy armies and infrastructure without the reliance on conventional forces. For the American war dog program, Vietnam completely altered how military dogs would be used in the future. It also would change the American military's policies about war dogs.

The Vietnam War

After the Korean War, the military dog program focused on sentry dogs. Nike missile sites, controlled by the Army, sprang up around the country as protection against the Soviet Union. These sites grew in number and size so rapidly that fences could not go up fast enough and the Air Force turned to sentry dogs to secure the vital installations.¹⁹³ Although the Army procured and utilized the majority of dogs in the Korean War the Strategic Air Command (SAC), a part of the Air Force, began procuring dogs for sentry duty in 1955 for airfields, SAC bases, and other important technology the American military needed for possible action against the Soviet Union.¹⁹⁴ Ironically, sentry dogs guarded technology that was supposed to render them obsolete in war zones. While the United States used sentry dogs in great numbers, some of their allies did not possess the

¹⁹² Ibid, 157.

¹⁹³ Michael Lemish, *Forever Forward: K-9 Operations in Vietnam* (Atglen, Pennsylvania: Schiffer Publishing, 2009), 239.36.

¹⁹⁴ Lemish, *War Dogs*, 162.

capabilities and resources to train and use war dogs. The Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) did not have a dog program so the U.S. tried to jump start a program for them. Named “Project 19,” the U.S. sent dogs to Saigon along with instructors and a veterinarian in March of 1961, and by October of that year the Air Force sent another forty-six along with personnel to train ARVN handlers.¹⁹⁵ The Air Force’s plans ultimately failed because members of ARVN did not want to work with dogs due to cultural reasons. Americans and the Vietnamese societal view of dogs greatly differed. Many ARVN members wanted nothing to do with the dogs and their lack of passion coupled with logistical nightmares meant the program never really blossomed into what the Air Force hoped for. On July 1, 1963, “Project 19,” under the guidance of the Air Force, shut down. As America became more involved in Vietnam, the military turned their attention away from training dogs for the ARVN military dog program, concentrating instead on their own.

The Vietnam War led the American military to expand the capacities in which dogs would serve. About 4,000 dogs deployed over the course of the war.¹⁹⁶ Sentry dogs and handlers continued to protect vital military infrastructure like ammunition depots, personnel, and air assets. Patrol dogs expanded on this role by protecting these same key components, but they did so outside of the base perimeters by searching villages nearby and tracking. These dogs were seen riding along with military police. New jobs for some dogs in Vietnam designated them as members of mine, booby trap, and tunnel dog teams who were attached to infantry and combat engineer units. They were to scent for deadly traps set up by the enemy, along with the complex underground tunnels used to hide war

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, 40.

¹⁹⁶ Lemish, *Forever Forward*, 10.

material along with enemy soldiers. Last, but not least, combat tracker teams were deployed. Unlike other roles, Labrador retrievers were used instead of German Shepherds. The dogs in this role utilized ground scents instead of airborne smells. These teams included the dog, handler, visual tracker, cover man and team leaders.¹⁹⁷ The dogs helped find wounded Americans or enemy soldiers who could quickly disappear into the dense jungle. The increased role of dogs in Vietnam signaled that they would be essential to the American war effort.

Just like the dogs that guarded Army Nike missile sites, American forces needed sentries to guard against sapper attacks on bases in Vietnam. On July 1, 1965, the Marine base at Da Nang lost multiple aircraft when sappers quickly overran the base. In response, forty dogs and handlers went to Vietnam on a 120-day temporary trial duty.¹⁹⁸ Dubbed “Project Top Dog 45,” the trial was deemed a success. From this success came the first Marine war dogs since World War II. Marines from the 3d Marine Division were selected to join the 1st Marine Provisional Dog Platoon.¹⁹⁹ After training, dogs were sent to bases all over Vietnam.

Even though the military used sentry dogs back in the United States, Vietnam was much different because it was an active war zone where bases were targeted by armed enemy fighters. In one attack on the Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Vietcong (VC) launched a mortar attack while some breached the perimeter. The 337th Air Police Squadron were

¹⁹⁷ John C. Burnam, *A Soldier's Best Friend: Scout Dogs and Their Handlers in the Vietnam War* (New York: Carroll and Graf Publishers, 2003), XII-XIV.

¹⁹⁸ “AF Testing Sentry Dogs in Vietnam,” *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, August 6, 1965, 2, <https://starsandstripes.newspaperarchive.com/pacific-stars-and-stripes/1965-08-06/page-2/af-testing-sentry-dogs>.

¹⁹⁹ “Marines Begin Using Sentry Dogs,” *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, September 20, 1965, 34, <https://starsandstripes.newspaperarchive.com/pacific-stars-and-stripes/1965-09-20/page-34/marines-begin-using-sentry-dogs>.

unable to locate where the VC were on base but the sentry dogs did. A sentry dog named Rebel was killed as he attacked a VC by the throat. Two other dogs died.²⁰⁰ Later that week another attack led to Nemo alerting to some bushes where he found 4 VC, killing one before he was badly injured.²⁰¹ Unlike sentry dog duty back at a missile site in the United States, the stakes in Vietnam were much higher. The sentry dogs on duty with the 337th Air Police Squadron saved some of their handlers and the base from serious damage. Sentry dogs were loyal to their handler and no one else, going to great lengths to protect them. A dog named Mac saved his handler from a poisonous bite by a krait snake, pushing him out of the way while on patrol. The handler kept Mac still until help arrived and he received antivenin.²⁰² Sentry dogs served throughout the conflict at bases all over Vietnam. Their work tended to overlap with other duties such as scout and patrol work.

After World War II dog training focused on sentries leaving a shortage of scout dogs. The Army and eventually the Air Force continued to emphasize sentry training over scout training, even though evidence from the single active scout dog platoon in Korea proved the need for scout dogs. Vietnam, however, proved that the scout dog could be a vital part of the future of the American military program. Their work in Vietnam cemented their legacy. As the Marines 1st Provisional Dog Platoon transitioned their training from sentry to scout, the Marines continued their patrols adding scout dogs from the ARVN program.²⁰³ A lack of foresight to train scout dogs sooner, led to the need to

²⁰⁰ Staff Sergeant Gene Young, "Hard Fighting Hurlled Back VC at Airport," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, December 8, 1966, 6. <https://starsandstripes.newspaperarchive.com/pacific-stars-and-stripes/1966-12-08/page-6?tag=hard+fighting+hurled+back+vc+at+airport&rtserp=tags/hard-fighting-hurled-back-vc-at-airport>.

²⁰¹ *Ibid*, 6.

²⁰² "2 Sentry Dogs Save Handlers from Snakes," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, November 25, 1965, 28, <https://starsandstripes.newspaperarchive.com/pacific-stars-and-stripes/1965-11-25/page-28>.

²⁰³ Lemish, *Forever Forward*, 72-73.

use ARVN dogs and handlers. On March 1, 1966, the first truly trained Marine scout dog platoon landed in Vietnam under 1st Lieutenant Robert Wilder.²⁰⁴

Wilder wanted to use the dogs at night because of the cooler temperatures and due to their use almost exclusively at night in Korea, but different tactics between the two wars meant that the plan was not feasible.²⁰⁵ Scout dogs proved so valuable in Vietnam that the VC had instructions to shoot the dogs prior to engaging an American unit.²⁰⁶ Scout dogs and their handler walked point to give an early alert to possible ambushes. In June of 1966, the Army followed the example of the Marines and sent two scout dog platoons to Vietnam. They were soon followed by the Marines 2nd Scout Dog Platoon in October.²⁰⁷ While scout dogs were meant to act as an early warning system, they also proved valuable for finding important war material. Dix, handled by Private First-Class Roger M. Collins of the 57th Infantry Platoon, was on a night ambush patrol when he strayed from the designated route and found twenty-three mortar rounds amongst two newly dug holes.²⁰⁸ Scout dogs did excellent work but there were some problems.

The humidity and heat of Vietnam greatly affected the dogs conditioning, and certain scenarios such as the use of shotguns and flares, confused them.²⁰⁹ Genetics and experience dictate how an animal will react in certain scenarios and in a combat zone, the loud noises emitted from firearms could cause a dog to be jumpy or react

²⁰⁴ Ibid, 95.

²⁰⁵ Ibid, 95.

²⁰⁶ "New Army Scouts Already at Work Dogging the VC," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, February 18, 1967, 27, <https://starsandstripes.newspaperarchive.com/pacific-stars-and-stripes/1967-02-18/page-27>.

²⁰⁷ Lemish, *Forever Forward*, 99-100.

²⁰⁸ "Canine Flushes VC Into CO's Doghouse," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, July 25, 1969, 27, <https://starsandstripes.newspaperarchive.com/pacific-stars-and-stripes/1969-07-25/page-27/canine-flushes-vc>.

²⁰⁹ Lemish, *War Dogs*, 185.

unpredictably.²¹⁰ Scout dogs needed to be composed to prevent them from giving away the patrol's position to enemies. In 1965, the Department of Defense had set a quota of 1,000 dogs for procurement to supplement the dogs already in the program but only 761 were acquired because of the standards set.²¹¹ These standards applied to their temperament and physical abilities which precluded some dogs from procurement, making it difficult at times to find suitable canines. German Shepherds were desired due to their temperament and trainability.

As the war continued into the late 1960s, more war dog units headed to Vietnam to aid in the high number of patrols conducted by American soldiers. In 1967, the Army started with 380 dogs in Vietnam but would have more than 1,000 by the end of the year.²¹² While scout dogs proved to be very helpful, there was always room for improvements in the operating procedures of the handler and his canine. Originally handlers used a fifteen-foot leash to control their dog from close proximity but this had its downside because it could put the handler in danger if the dog missed an alert on a booby trap. In 1968, the Army began to experiment with using off leash scout dogs.²¹³ By 1969, 137 off leash scout dogs were active in Vietnam.²¹⁴ The work that scout dogs did led the military to look at other roles for dogs.

Guerilla warfare proved effective against the conventional forces of the United States military. The jungle environment allowed for quick hit and run tactics and easy concealment of mines and booby traps slowing the progress of an American patrol. Mines

²¹⁰ Temple Grandin, "Thinking the Way Animals Do: Unique Insights from a Person with a Singular Understanding," Colorado State University, 1997.

²¹¹ Lemish, *War Dogs*, 184.

²¹² *Ibid*, 190.

²¹³ *Ibid*, 194-95.

²¹⁴ *Ibid*, 194.

and booby traps brought patrols to a halt and left them exposed to a quick ambush. Landing zones were targeted often, and the use of punji sticks employed. These sharpened bamboo spears were placed in the ground and covered with vegetation. They were sometimes dipped in human feces to cause infection to anyone who fell into them.²¹⁵ The fear of the unknown greatly affected American patrols. Animal research has shown that events without warning create feelings of helplessness, stress, and ulcers.²¹⁶ The feelings of stress and helplessness soldiers felt made them weary of going on patrols. The thought of being maimed by a booby trap or mine weighed heavily on the minds of American soldiers. To help relieve the burden of stress, the military turned to dogs to help prevent injuries and deaths due to mines.

As the Vietnam War progressed, the United States military adjusted to their enemies' tactics, just as the North Vietnamese sappers did when sentry dogs were deployed. In 1967, the U.S. Army Limited Warfare Laboratory investigated the feasibility of using mine dogs. In 1968 the laboratory contracted Behavioral Systems Inc. to create an advanced program for the dogs.²¹⁷ Without proper training, the military knew the effectiveness of dogs in a combat zone greatly deteriorated. Behavioral Systems Inc. did a trial run in front of multiple military organizations and after its evaluation received a contract for roughly 625,000 dollars to train twenty-eight mine detecting dogs for the U.S. Army and the Marines.²¹⁸ Mine dogs training came at a high price because of the nature of their work. One fully trained mine or tunnel dog cost roughly 10,000 dollars.²¹⁹ In 1969, the 60th Infantry Platoon (Scout Dog/ Mine and Tunnel Dog) went to Cu Chi and

²¹⁵ Burnam, 81.

²¹⁶ Robert E. Lubow, *The War Animals* (United States: Doubleday & Company Inc., 1977. 175.

²¹⁷ Lemish, *War Dogs*, 199.

²¹⁸ Lubow, 193.

²¹⁹ Lemish, *War Dogs*, 201.

then Chu Lai on a trial basis.²²⁰ During this trial period, handlers and tactical unit commanders filled out surveys after each mission.²²¹ Along with the responses, there was empirical data from the trial that illustrated the value of mine and tunnel dogs. The mine dogs alerted to twenty-one tunnels, spider holes and punji pits, plus seventy-six mines and booby traps, and six times when enemy soldiers were close by.²²² Tunnel dogs were also successful finding 108 spider holes, tunnels, bunkers and punji pits in addition to thirty-four mines and trip wires.²²³ Between the first-hand accounts and survey data it was clear that the mine and tunnel dogs were having a positive impact. When asked how effective the dogs were for the security of a unit, eighty-five percent of patrol leaders said effective, twelve did not see a noticeable benefit, and a paltry three percent said the dogs had a negative impact.²²⁴ The dogs helped counter the guerilla tactics of the North Vietnamese. Military dogs were very versatile as the military learned throughout the conflict. Constant experiments and changes in training made these dogs even more effective.

The thick vegetation in Vietnam, paired with the guerilla tactics of the North Vietnamese made it very hard to find them after an ambush or attack on a military base. The quick strikes that were characteristic of the Vietcong allowed for a smaller number of troops with efficient and powerful weapons technology to inflict heavy casualties on the bigger American patrols. To pursue Vietnamese soldiers, the United States military introduced combat tracker teams to the war. The United States did not know much about using dogs to track in a combat zone and turned to the British for training and tactics. The

²²⁰ Lubow, 194.

²²¹ Ibid, 194.

²²² Lemish, *War Dogs*, 202.

²²³ Ibid, 202.

²²⁴ Lubow, *The War Animals*, 198.

British had experience as they had utilized combat tracking dogs in World War II to locate Japanese troops. General William Westmoreland liked the idea and set a plan in motion to train American combat tracker teams at the British Jungle Warfare School in Malaysia.²²⁵ The British and Americans agreed to a program that began in October 1966.

The British began by training the 63rd Infantry Platoon-Combat Tracker (IPCT) of the Americal division, and the 65th IPCT of the 9th division.²²⁶ Combat tracking teams (CTT) trained by the British proved successful enough that the United States military went to work creating their own combat tracker school. By 1968 the United States had their own combat tracking team school at Fort Gordon, Georgia.²²⁷

While the dogs main job consisted of tracking, the Labrador Retrievers also signaled mines and booby traps. The original plan called for fourteen CTTs. Military personnel quickly warmed to the use of CTTs. On June 23, 1967 CTT #6 was called upon by the 9th Division. The track was twelve hours old but the dog still hit on the scent and led the team to a base camp where they retreated before calling in an artillery strike.²²⁸ A combat tracker team consisted of a handler, dog, cover men, a visual tracker, and a team leader.²²⁹ The handler had to keep his eyes on the dog so the cover men kept an eye out for immediate danger and for defense if they came under attack. Tracking dogs differed from scout dogs because they were trained to follow one scent, which they were given by smelling an article of clothing, footprint, or even a blood trail.²³⁰ In 1968 the U.S. military sent ten trackers to Vietnam and one more in 1969.²³¹ Tracking teams were

²²⁵ Lemish, *Forever Forward*, 112.

²²⁶ *Ibid*, 209.

²²⁷ *Ibid*, 212.

²²⁸ *Ibid*, 117.

²²⁹ Burnam, XII.

²³⁰ Lemish, *War Dogs*, 209.

²³¹ *Ibid*, 211.

relatively small and when tracking a scent, they were vulnerable to ambushes. To counter this threat, combat tracking dogs were combined with scout dogs when possible because the tracker dog was following a ground scent and the other airborne scents.²³² In some cases tracking handlers were former scout dog handlers and taught their Labrador to alert for airborne scents too.²³³

Military dogs did not go out on every patrol but the numbers illustrate just how much the military used these dogs. Army scout and mine detection dogs racked up 84,000 missions resulting in 4,000 enemy killed, 1,000 captured, the confiscation of one million pounds of food and 3,000 mortars.²³⁴ These numbers do not include Marine war dogs, or the thousands of hours sentry dogs worked defending vital supplies and troops. Unfortunately, the Americans only valued these dogs to a certain point.

The American exit from Vietnam was a slow process. The U.S. military had committed large amounts of resources to the war effort and now had to withdraw all of their equipment and personnel. Handlers that served in Vietnam grew attached to the dogs they worked with because they worked and interacted with them every day and the dogs saved the lives of so many troops including their own. The military had to decide whether to bring home these dogs. To the military, leaving the dogs in Vietnam made the most sense because they were just another piece of equipment.²³⁵ By purchasing the dogs they owned them.

Soldiers and officials held starkly different views of the dogs. To military officials, the dogs were viewed as a piece of technology. They may have seen bringing

²³² Mary Kathleen Murray, "The Contributions of the American Military Working Dog in Vietnam." 72-73.

²³³ Ibid, 73.

²³⁴ Lemish, *War Dogs*, 240.

²³⁵ Ibid, 232.

the dogs home as a financial and logistical nightmare, and instead determined that they were disposable surplus equipment. The officials making decisions did not serve with the canines and did not form the same bond that a handler or soldiers who served alongside them did. To those on the frontlines, these dogs were their buddies who went into battle with them. To officials, these dogs were another means to an end. Their use could turn the tide of battles and the war just like a new piece of military technology.

The military reasoned that the dogs should be left in Vietnam because some had contracted deadly diseases which could be transported back to the United States.²³⁶ When the American public found out about dogs being left behind, they were quick to denounce the decision.²³⁷ The Vietnam War created many cultural and political rifts in America, and the treatment of military dogs made people opposed to the war even angrier when they learned the dogs were to be left behind.

In response, Representative John Moss, a Democrat from California, proposed a bill that would allow for retraining or retirement of war dogs in a humane shelter.²³⁸ The bill did not pass but all the attention made the Army rethink their policy of leaving the dogs in Vietnam with ARVN. The Department of Defense revised their policy of leaving military canines behind, allowing for some dogs to return home.²³⁹ This revision of policy was done more for publicity, rather than to actually bring the dogs home. The military reviewed all of their dogs in Vietnam and only 200 were considered for return. Fifteen scout dogs stayed at Okinawa, fifty-one went to Lackland Air Force Base, and the

²³⁶ George McArthur, "Must Stay in Vietnam: Diseases are Added Hazards for Viet War Dogs," *Los Angeles Times*, December 1, 1970, 1, <https://search-proquest-com.libproxy.boisestate.edu/hnplatimes/docview/156601009/420A25E4EC5B457APQ/1?accountid=9649>.

²³⁷ Lemish, *War Dogs*, 233.

²³⁸ *Ibid*, 233.

²³⁹ "Some War Dogs Will Return from Vietnam," *Los Angeles Times*, March 4, 1971.

rest split between Fort Benning and Fort Gordon.²⁴⁰ It is hard to say what happened to the dogs left in Vietnam, as there are no records. Rampant speculation assumes that at least some of these dogs were killed for food for ARVN soldiers, but most probably died from malnutrition. Almost all of the dogs did not receive the end they deserved.

²⁴⁰ Lemish, *War Dogs*, 233.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Captain William W. Putney, of the 3rd War Dog Platoon could not believe what he saw. When he revisited Guam in 1989, he went to the War Dog Cemetery started in 1944 only to find it moved and in disarray. Putney made it his mission to honor the dogs who served their handlers and other Marines so valiantly. His work paid off and five years later the United States Navy placed the Marine War Dog Cemetery at the Naval base at Orote Point, Guam.²⁴¹ The Marine War Dog Cemetery is just one of many cemeteries and monuments dedicated to the military working dogs who served in the United States Armed Forces. Individuals like Putney wanted to ensure that the dogs who laid their lives on the line are never forgotten. Like other veterans' groups, dog handlers have formed their own over the years to share their experiences and memories of their best friends.

The Vietnam Dog Handler's Association raised money to put up a monument on February 21, 2000 at March Field Air Museum in Riverside, California, in honor of the war dogs from all wars.²⁴² While the building of monuments and cemeteries persists, the first memorial to war dogs dates back to 1921, when the Hartsdale Canine Cemetery in New York raised money to erect a monument in memory of the dogs who served in World War I, even though American military dogs were limited to dogs serving in unofficial capacities.²⁴³ Dog lovers and handlers alike saw and continue to see, the need

²⁴¹ Putney, *Always Faithful*, 222.

²⁴² *Ibid*, 223.

²⁴³ "Hartsdale to Honor Dog Heroes of War: Granite and Bronze Monument in Canine Cemetery to Commemorate Their Services," *New York Times*, December 19, 1921, 15,

to memorialize the canines who worked so hard for their handlers and fellow soldiers. Groups like the United States War Dog Association and Vietnam Dog Handler's Association continue to work tirelessly to give these canines the respect they deserve. Much of the funds for these monuments come from donations by these associations or individuals, speaking to a lack of recognition by the government. Handlers pushed for a living memorial at Arlington National Cemetery but a 1986 law prohibits monuments or living memorials for small units from being placed in the Washington D.C. area.²⁴⁴ Surprisingly, the Vietnam Dog Handler's Association, constitutes a small unit and the idea did not come to fruition. The war dog memorial at Lackland Air Force Base, the current training center for all military dogs, consists of four dogs with a soldier in the middle with the words "Guardians of America's Freedom," inscribed on the front. These memorials are only a handful of the ones in the United States, not to mention in the world as other countries have tributes to their military dogs.

The work that military working dogs did cemented their legacy and opened the eyes of military personnel to the future of military working dogs. In 1971, the Air Force began using sniffer dogs to search homebound troops for drugs.²⁴⁵ The use of sniffer dogs blossomed and they are now used by search and rescue crews and U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents. These dogs search for a multitude of contraband, including narcotics, explosives and weapons, currency, and food to name a few items. Dogs are found at shipping ports, airports, border crossings, and vehicle checkpoints. Since the Vietnam War, dogs were present for military operations such as Operation Just Cause in

<http://libproxy.boisestate.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.libproxy.boisestate.edu/docview/98493812?accountid=9649>.

²⁴⁴ Michael Lemish, *Forever Forward*, 239.

²⁴⁵ Lemish, *War Dogs*, 244.

1989, Operation Desert Storm in 1991, Operation Uphold Democracy in 1994, and more recently the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan where they have played vital roles in finding IEDs.²⁴⁶ The roles that military dogs serve still cannot be replicated by any piece of technology, making them indispensable. While jobs such as messengers were phased out long ago, other duties such as tracking and mine detection necessitate the use of dogs.

Military dogs stood the test of time by competing against advances in military technology and different tactics. While other animals were phased out due to technological advances, dogs stayed relevant to both offensive and defensive military tactics. In each American conflict, from World War I to Vietnam, war dogs played a vital role in protecting American lives and thwarting enemy tactics along with the technologies they employed. Newspaper articles and first-hand accounts are evidence of the work they did and what they meant to their handlers and those who served alongside them. While the number of lives they saved can never be accurately quantified, their work as sentries, scouts, combat trackers, messengers, and mine detection cannot be overlooked. The easiest way to substantiate the successes and effectiveness of military dogs is to look at the continued expansion and funding of the American war dog program. If taken off the battlefield soldiers would miss the dogs as a bulwark against deadlier tactics and weaponry. For many dog handlers, their dogs were their best friends. The bond between man and dog forged in training and in battle cannot be replicated or even completely explained in words. Preserving the memories of these dogs' heroics is a way to remember just how important military working dogs were and are to the United States Armed Forces. Even as military tactics and technology evolved and expanded between World War I and the Vietnam War, the deployment of military working dogs increased. While

²⁴⁶ Ibid, 247-248.

dogs worked in military roles long before World War I, it is important to focus on this period because of the rapid growth and reliance on military technology. This time span also showcases how the American military's convictions about canines changed, as they went from only having sled dogs in World War I to dogs as sentries, scouts, mine detection, and trackers by Vietnam. However, the shift in doctrine cannot be solely credited to the military. The American public laid the groundwork for the use of military working dogs in World War II. The donations of dogs to the military instilled a sense of patriotism in the civilian population. These dogs became a source of pride and another way to contribute to the war effort. The popularity and widespread use of dogs in World War II did not make the program immune to change. As the American military scaled down their numbers after World War II, the war dog program's funding was cut even though the canines proved that they were a valuable part of military operations. The military reverted to the belief that technology such as air power and nuclear weapons rendered war dogs irrelevant. Even with the intense bombing campaigns during the Vietnam War, dogs demonstrated how significant their contributions were in the face of cutting-edge military technology. From World War I to the Vietnam War, dogs consistently demonstrated their ability to rival the advances in military technology, leading to an increased use and reliance on dogs.

As technology continues to change, so too has the definition. It raises the question: Are dogs technology? The military's current breeding program is selective, with the best possible physical and mental characteristics desired for specific jobs. Military officials may very well see canines as technology. They attempt to create the best dog for the jobs required of them. A breeding program in essence is genetically

engineering dogs for the specific purpose of war. The breeding program allows the military to alter the evolution of dogs.²⁴⁷ How different is that from engineering the best materials for a missile to be more efficient and cost effective. Military members used to view horses as just a means to an end, a piece of technology. Most soldiers did not form a strong bond with the horse they used in battle. Are dogs seen in the same light? For handlers and soldiers, these dogs are far from technology. A canine is a living biological being that they bond and interact with in an environment that fosters companionship. The answer may very well depend on the viewpoint of the person answering the question.

If dogs are not considered technology, will there be a point when technology renders dogs obsolete? Will the use of dogs continue to increase until that point? If dogs are technology, what new technology will dogs be coupled with in future military operations? These questions may not be answered for a long time but the question of how important military working dogs have been is clear. Military working dogs have left their mark on history. It would be unfortunate to let their stories fall to the wayside and the handlers who worked alongside these dogs would be mortified to see that happen.

²⁴⁷ Edmund Russell, *Evolutionary History: Uniting History and Biology to Understand Life on Earth* (United States: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 54-55. Altering the evolution of dogs falls into the category of what Russell calls the “evolution revolution,” which refers to domestication and the changes in inherited traits and genes of populations.

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