

Military Working Dogs Section



There's a unique team at Cannon AFB that few people have seen out and about, and often times they get over looked. Not because they aren't important, but because they're not what you would expect.

The Military Working Dog Section is a group of active duty individuals teamed up with K-9 counterparts who work together to overcome unseen obstacles and protect against what our human senses can't see, hear or smell. Whether in training or in real-world situations, these teams dedicate one-hundred percent of their talents to completing the mission and getting the job done.

Q: How many MWD's are allotted to Cannon AFB?

TSgt Hines: We have six dogs allotted here at Cannon AFB.

Q: There are only two active at Cannon right now?

TSgt Hines: No. We have all six. One is about to be retired out. So we'll be down to five. Two are currently deployed. Two are active on here [installation] right now.

Q: What happens when they retire?

TSgt Hines: The most recent handler gets the option if they would like to adopt the dog. MWD Arivaldo is our dog that's about to be retired out. Staff Sgt Chico was his last handler, so he's going to be adopting MWD Arivaldo when his time is officially done.

Q: Do handlers get to choose their MWD partner?

TSgt Hines: We try to pair dogs, sometimes based off of personality of the handler and the personality of the dog, because every dog is different. But sometimes if there's only one dog available and we have one handler that's available, then they're kind of forced to being partners at the time.

Q: Do MWD's and handlers stay together for the longevity of their career or do you switch partners when you [the Airman] go to a new duty station?

TSgt Hines: All the dogs we have here are assigned to Cannon AFB. Once that Handler PCS's, they then go to another base with other MWD's assigned there and they [the Airman] will get assigned another dog there. So they're not together their whole careers.

Q: So it's not like Police dogs?

TSgt Hines: Correct. It's not like civilians.

Q: How long did/does training take? And do you still train daily or weekly?

TSgt Hines: Yeah. The training never ends. It's our job out here [at Cannon] to train them and advance them in all the other areas that we need. That could be environmental, going to different areas they haven't seen before. Some of the dogs have to get used to all the dirt around here. There's different odors with every environment. There's requirements for them too that they have to meet every month for training.

Q: For those of you that have MWD's, what's your dog's favorite exercise?

SSgt Chico: My dog's [MWD Atos] favorite exercise is basically fetch but we call it 'center line drills'.

Q: [to SrA Roman] what's your dog's favorite exercise?

SrA Roman: She [MWD Djenga] likes to chase. She loves to chase. So if I can take the Kong [toy] and just throw it as far as possible for her to just go, that's what she likes to do. Just chase all day.

Q: Would she actively try to get the prairie dogs all day if she could?

SrA Roman: Yes. (All laugh)

Q: Has that ever been an issue before?

TSgt Hines: Not the prairie dogs. Rabbits though... (All laugh)

SSgt Bailey: Anything small that likes to run away from her, she's like, "Game on."

Q: Is training a dog with that kind of personality difficult?

SrA Roman: Just patience.

TSgt Hines: Yeah, having a lot of patience and knowing the right ways to train the dog. We'll actually go out training and try to look for those things and put ourselves in positions where maybe a rabbit will jump out of the field while were doing this training and if MWD Djenga reacts, to try and go for that [rabbit], we can try and correct that.

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CANNON Spotlight

Q: If you could describe your MWD's personality, what would it be?

SrA Roman: She's [MWD Djenga] definitely the typical Malinois. (All laugh) But, super loyal. As much as she might want to chase everything, she's very loyal to the Handler. She's always willing to work. So... crazy, but super loyal. (All laugh)

Q: For everyone who has ever had a MWD; what is your favorite moment with your dog?

SrA Roman: It's when your training all comes together and you're put through a problem that's kind of difficult, and then you run it and you do it well, you perform well, your dog performs well, and you refine everything you need to and you complete it and it's just like, "that's what we work for."

SSgt Bailey: I'd say along the same lines, that's the objective for everything. For you and your dog to mesh well, and as soon as you do, and you start eliminating those problems, it is the best feeling.

SSgt Chico: I would have to agree with them too. Seeing all of that work and everything pay off.

Q: [to TSgt Hines] have you had a working dog before?

TSgt Hines: Yes, I've worked multiple. We go through a process where you're a handler first, then you'll be a trainer then you'll go up to a Kennel Master position. Those are the best moments when you teach the dog something new or they do something successful that you've been working on for weeks, you know, those are the moments that are gratifying as a Handler. Just being able to showcase those to people and at demonstrations or getting picked up for Secret Service missions or going out and actually doing your job in a deployed environment.

Q: Bringing those missions up, is there a goal for each of you that you want to attain? Where do you see yourself or where do you want to be?

SrA Roman: Doing exactly what I'm doing now.

SSgt Bailey: Honestly, all of the missions that you do are great. It's an opportunity. Like he [TSgt Hines] said, you're chosen for that. It's kind of a reward in and of itself.

SSgt Chico: For me, at the moment, because I just barely got partnered with my dog, short-term goal is to mesh well with each other.

Get to know the 27th Special Operations Security Forces Squadron Military Working Dogs and their Handlers!



TSgt Philip Hines

KENNEL MASTER



♂ MWD ATOS | 2 YRS
GERMAN SHEPHERD

SSgt Leonardo Chico

MWD HANDLER



♀ MWD DJENGA | 8 YRS
BELGIAN MALINOIS
1 DEPLOYMENT

SrA Jonathan Roman

MWD HANDLER



♂ MWD RIKI | 9 YRS
GERMAN SHEPHERD

SSgt Allison Boehler

MWD HANDLER

NOT PICTURED

SSgt Eryn Bailey

MWD HANDLER

SrA Felicia Almeida

K9 PROSPECT

