



WHY DOGS?

The Air Force had almost 1,900 military working dogs during the 70s before the defense cuts. Currently the Air Force uses approximately 500 dogs worldwide.

Why were so many dogs used in Southeast Asia? During the Vietnam War, American technology placed man on the moon. Couldn't the dog have been replaced with a computer that beeped when a bad guy approached?

Why are dogs still being used in South-West Asia? This is the age of smart phones!

There is no simple answer to those questions, only proven facts. Man has used dogs in war dating back to the Romans. A dog has senses far superior to our human senses. Dogs can sense living creatures or inanimate objects such as explosives or drugs at distances that seem unbelievable to non-dog handlers.

Proven Facts

Dogs have a superior sense of smell. The older military manuals (Vietnam era) stated that dogs had a sense of smell 50,000 times greater than humans did. But what does that ratio mean to us? A research project was conducted in the 70's. A dog was trained to detect table salt, using the same drug detector dog techniques. The dog was rewarded for alerting on a covered container of salt; the container was surrounded by identical containers of plain water. The salt was diluted with water until the dog could no longer pick out the right container. The dog could still detect the salt when it was mixed, one tablespoon of salt to 13 gallons of water. Next time you pick up a salt shaker give it a sniff.

A dog can smell a living creature several hundreds yards away. The theory is that scent particles fall from all-living creatures and drift with air movement.

The particles dissipate eventually, but can be carried by air over a long distance. The distance varies due to wind speed and humidity. Alerts of 250 yard plus alerts under ideal conditions (Dry & medium consistent breeze) are not uncommon. Under terrible conditions (rain) dogs could still alert on humans at 50 yards. Now that may not seem great, but 50 yards at midnight, on a jungle post, during monsoon rains, is far better than tripping over someone that want to do you bodily harm.

The fact is that the government spent \$ 18 billion to perfect a gizmo to detect explosives in suitcases at airports. And they were not as good as a dog. Dogs have been trained to do that since the early 1970's. Dogs combating terrorism in Afghanistan or Iraq work better than their electronic counterparts. They can detect weapons caches or IED's better. Period, it's a fact.

Dogs have a superior sense of hearing. Dogs hear in a range far above the capabilities of the human ear. The silent dog whistle emits an ultrasonic blast, where we only hear the sound of rushing air. Again, the older military dog manuals (Vietnam era) stated that a dog sense of hearing was 20,000 greater than humans. You can take my word for it, (or any other dog handler), a dog can hear someone walking while F-4 Phantoms were taking off and you can not hear anything else. The handler could see the dog cock his ear to better listen to the offending noise. That action warned the handler.

Dogs have superior night vision. Now, that's a given! How often have you seen your pet dog trip over something at night? Dogs could see movement long before the handler could. The alert was simple to recognize, when your partner starts staring in one direction, it's because there is something to see. Of course we could stare in the same direction and only get a headache. That's the facts, dogs can see, hear, and smell bad guys or bad things before we can. Batteries are never needed and some assembly is not required! Now granted, some maintenance is required and a dog will not work non-stop. Dog posts were usually located in areas uninhabited by friendly forces. In South-East Asia, dog handlers were often the first line of defense. Handlers were usually posted in front of the machine gun bunkers that made up the main line of defense around bases. In South-West Asia dog teams are once again the first line of defense.

But do you want to know the real reason why we had dogs?

It was so than when the handlers are hungry, tired, wet, and sometimes scared; they had a puppy to play with. The nice men in the suits gave us puppies so we would never be alone. Our puppy would listen to us whine and complain, but would always be our buddy. Handlers would talk to their puppies like they were human.

They were better than most humans!

It was frequently stated that dog handlers were antisocial (True in most cases). Some guys tolerated other handlers only because they shared a common love of their furry partners.

*I mean that other guy could not be too bad,
if a puppy liked him!*

The official Air Force story in South-East Asia was that we were tasked with early warning and detection of hostile forces. Our mission was to sound the warning, make a strategic withdrawal, and wait for reinforcement. In South-West Asia the mission is to protect resources from terrorist attacks.

*That sounds better than stating ,
we yelled for help!*



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