

New Kennel Facility Opens at Fort Knox

By Sergeant First Class Chiloi O'Brien

Ask and you shall receive. That saying worked well for the military working dog (MWD) section at Fort Knox, Kentucky. After more than 16 years of operating out of a dilapidated modular kennel initially used by the veterinary clinic, the section now operates out of a state-of-the-art kennel complex completed in August 2004. The 16-run kennel is located within a four-acre fenced area with two separate training areas. An additional outside area has a covered training area for inclement weather and bleachers for command and staff viewing of proficiency training and demonstrations by the dogs and handlers.

When not training, the dogs live in spacious indoor-outdoor runs that feature radiant floor heat during cold weather, plus forced heat and air conditioning. Also, the kennel administrative building has a veterinary office with an exam table and light; all the equipment needed to conduct minor surgical procedures; and a professional bathing station that can stand up to copious amounts of dirt, grime, and fur. The noncommissioned officer (NCO) in charge of the Veterinary Treatment Facility (VTF) said he is pleased with the ability to treat the dogs on-site at the new kennel. It eliminates the worry of cross-contamination with diseases from privately owned dogs.

The kennel project began in earnest in October 2003 with the clearing of an area outside the hub of the installation's main activities. Construction began with the erection of the covered training area, followed by placing concrete for the 4,500-square-foot facility.



The new facility

The kennel includes unique gadgets that would have been unheard of 10 years ago, such as two-way swinging doors that keep bad weather and disease-carrying pests out of the dog runs. Each run also has capped drains in the interior and exterior areas and a translucent panel between the interior and exterior sections, allowing ambient light inside.

It is not only the VTF personnel who like the new facility. One recent graduate of the Military Working Dog Handlers Course at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, said her MWD, Ben, also enjoyed it. "Ben thinks it's awesome."

The MWD handlers have benefited from the new kennel as well. One obvious benefit is having a more comfortable place to work. However, the new kennel may have energized the handlers and their dogs to step up their performance to a new level. In a span of nine months, two NCOs deployed to Baghdad, Iraq. For their superior effort, both received the Joint Service Commendation Medal. After his return from Iraq, one of the NCOs entered the 16th Annual Tucson (Arizona) Area Police K9 Trials and took first place out of 65 competitors in the building search event. His first-place win in that category helped his Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) K9 team take third place in the top agency category. The new facilities have helped bring the Fort Knox kennels to the forefront of TRADOC's K9 program.



Dog bathing station