

Engineer Dog Handler Honored

By Captain Erik Karstensen and Mr. Luke Waack

On 4 December 2007, the Army's newest and most modern veterinary hospital and military working dog kennel, located at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, was dedicated to a fallen Soldier, Corporal (CPL) Kory D. Wiens. A member of the 94th Engineer Detachment (Canine), 5th Engineer Battalion, 1st Engineer Brigade, Fort Leonard Wood, CPL Wiens and his specialized search dog, Cooper, were killed in July by an improvised explosive device (IED) while on patrol near Baghdad. They had been in Iraq since January.

Dozens of family members, friends, and Soldiers attended the dedication ceremony, and the memory of CPL Wiens was honored with words, song, and actions. Brigadier General (BG) Gregg F. Martin, United States Army Engineer School commandant, addressed the Wiens family directly, saying, "We will never



CPL Kory D. Wiens and his specialized search dog, Cooper

forget your son. We will always remember him as the great Soldier and the great person that he was."

Murray Weinstock, a singer-songwriter who has worked with many well-known recording artists, performed his song "War Dogs," which he wrote after seeing a documentary that highlighted the special relationship that exists between these beloved canines and their military handlers. To quote the song, "A bond is built forever, forever and a day; built on love, built on trust, that's the K-9 way."

An oil painting depicting CPL Wiens and Cooper was dedicated to the facility by military artist Chief Warrant Officer 2 (CW2) William Smock, who also presented a watercolor version of the portrait to the Wiens family. An Indiana National Guardsman, CW2 Smock

has painted many scenes from his deployment to Iraq. And in May 2007, he presented a portrait of engineer Medal of Honor winner Sergeant First Class Paul R. Smith when Fort Leonard Wood's new Counter Explosive Hazards Center (CEHC) was dedicated to the fallen hero (see *Engineer*, April-June 2007, page 24).



Engineer Soldiers stand at parade rest during the dedication of the Kory D. Wiens Veterinary Hospital and Dog Kennel.

The new kennel training facility—a part of the CEHC—will be home to the Engineer Regiment's Forces Command (FORSCOM) Canine Company. This company, which has grown since its inception in 2003, has become the most constantly deployed unit in the Regiment, with canine elements deployed continuously to Operation Enduring Freedom since 2003 and Operation Iraqi Freedom since 2004. The Soldiers and canines involved in these deployments provided the Army mine detection and specialized search capabilities that have saved the lives of countless coalition forces. These symbiotic teams of Soldiers and canines develop phenomenal capabilities to

detect weapons, ammunition, and explosives and are an essential element to fighting the War on Terror.

The Kory D. Wiens Veterinary Hospital and Dog Kennel will provide state-of-the-art facilities to support the training of current and future engineer dog teams. The facility provides 36 new kennel runs for these vital assets. This increased capacity, which makes it the largest FORSCOM kennel and second largest kennel in the Department of Defense, allows the teams to better support both the War on Terror and missions closer to home. (The largest kennel is the Department of Defense Military Working Dog Center at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas.)

The kennel runs are almost as large as a single Soldier's room, providing the working dogs plenty of room to move about. Additionally, the offices in the kennel provide a state-of-the-art working environment, which significantly enhances the Canine Company's operations. The facility helps create a colocated synergy between handlers, kennel masters, and the chain of command.

And lastly, the colocation of the veterinary hospital with the kennel is a tremendous benefit to the military working dog (MWD) program. This regional hospital is not only responsible for the health of engineer MWDs but also for MWDs of military police and other branches of service as well, to include those on surrounding forts and bases.



Photo by Mike Curtis, DOI/M, Visual Information Center

This oil painting depicting CPL Kory D. Wiens and Cooper was dedicated to the facility by military artist CW2 William Smock.



During the ceremony, BG Gregg Martin presents Mr. Wiens with a remembrance plaque of his son, CPL Kory D. Wiens.

The hospital—which will provide both routine and emergency care—has an intensive care unit, a full laboratory, and modern X-ray equipment, along with a fully enhanced surgery suite. It will ensure that the MWDs receive the best care available to keep them at their fighting best. With the veterinarian hospital being colocated with the kennel, engineers can cross-train with the Veterinary Corps to learn valuable medical skills to better care for the working dogs while deployed on missions. It will also enable military occupational specialty (MOS) 68T animal care specialists to further enhance their skills and proficiency in the hospital environment, as well as the combat environment.

CPL Wiens, who was dedicated to the MWD program, was named Kory after his grandfather, a canine handler in the Korean War. CPL Wiens and Cooper, a Labrador retriever, were the first MWD team killed in action together since the beginning of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. They were buried together in CPL Wiens' hometown in Oregon. 

Captain Karstensen is the commander of the FORSCOM Engineer Canine Company.

Mr. Waack, a writer for the Fort Leonard Wood newspaper, the Guidon, since October 2007, was a Soldier and broadcast journalist from 2001-2006. His last duty assignment was at the American Forces Network in Vicenza, Italy.

Photos by Luke Waack, unless otherwise indicated.