



Sergeant Courtney Robbins  
and MWD Ago

# Connecticut's Top Dog

*By Private First Class Kristin A. Aldo*

When a Soldier thinks of the term “battle buddy,” he usually thinks of the Soldier standing next to him in formation. But what if the Soldier next to him is a canine? For dog handlers, this isn’t unusual but, rather, a way of life. Sergeant Courtney Robbins is the second military working dog (MWD) handler in the history of the Connecticut Army National Guard, and she has set a high standard for Soldiers following in her footsteps.

After completing training at the National K-9® Learning Center in Columbus, Ohio, to become a civilian dog trainer, Robbins joined the Connecticut Army National Guard. She enlisted in the Military Police Corps aware of the possibility that an MWD unit might soon be created.

The 11th MWD Detachment was activated on 1 September 2005. Shortly thereafter, construction began in Newtown, Connecticut, to convert an old piggery into a facility to train MWDs. When the 11th was established, Sergeant Robbins attended a 12-week training program at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas. The training included a variety of courses, from facing movements to detection training. With prior knowledge from her background in civilian dog training, Sergeant Robbins successfully completed training on the course and received Distinguished Honor Graduate of her class and Top Dog honors for her canine companion. Content with the knowledge learned from the training, Sergeant Robbins was confident that she could take this information and share it with the rest of her unit.

The building that the 11th uses to train dogs in Newtown is finished, and the dogs arrived in April 2006 to begin an intensive three-month training period. Sergeant Robbins looks forward to deploying and applying all of the knowledge learned. “It’s what I plan for . . . We’re training for a reason; and when we get deployed, we’ll be doing the work we’re supposed to do,” said Robbins.

Sergeant Robbins cannot stress enough the demands of an MWD trainer. “If you’re not 100 percent into the military and if you’re not 100 percent into the dogs, then it’s not for you. All your time is going to be here, with your dog. You have to be dedicated so that your dog will trust you and you will trust your dog,” said Robbins.