

TRADOC Command Provost Marshal Directorate Sponsors Second Annual Military Working Dog Warrior Police Challenge

By Sergeant First Class Theodore G. McCall, III

Congratulations to the Soldiers and the military working dogs (MWDs) who competed in the second annual U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) MWD Competition, 15–19 October 2007. The event was sponsored by the Command Provost Marshal Directorate, Military Police Regimental Association, and hosted by the 217th Military Police Detachment, Fort Lee, Virginia.

The goal of the competition was to bring together the best dog teams the military police and our civilian counterparts had to offer, with the intention of sharing knowledge and techniques to improve MWD team skills and abilities. This enables MWD teams to be even more prepared for missions in support of the War on Terrorism (WOT) and security missions for visiting dignitaries.

MWD teams attending the competition represented TRADOC, U.S. Army Forces Command, U.S. Army Military District of Washington, U.S. Army Pacific, U.S. Army Europe, U.S. Forces Korea, and U.S. Marine Corps. Civilian competitors included the Colonial Heights Police Department from Colonial Heights, Virginia. Thirty-three working dog teams competed in—

- Narcotics detection.
- Explosive detection.
- Building searches.
- Area searches.
- Tactical obedience.
- Handler protection.
- Iron dog decathlon events.

Additionally, this year the competition included a specialized search dog (SSD) program, with teams competing in explosive-detection operations. Teams also competed for the titles of Top Specialized Search Dog, Top Kennel, and Top Dog.

MWD teams are currently deployed all over the world in support of the WOT. They are continually called upon to support federal agencies, providing protection for U.S. leaders and visiting dignitaries, and to provide security for events such as the Olympic Games and Super Bowl. At their home stations, MWD teams spend most of their time patrolling, guarding installations, training to maintain proficiency, and remaining on call to respond at a moment's notice. Sergeant Major Christopher Pickett,

TRADOC, said, "I never realized how much dog handlers are combat multipliers until I was assigned to this position. I want to do all we can to make commanders aware of the capabilities of the MWD team."

Sergeant First Class Jason Bird and his dog from the 217th Military Police Detachment, Fort Lee, Virginia, were named the Top Dog team. The team placed first in the narcotic detection event and, along with Specialist Matthew Hoffman, was awarded the Top Kennel award. Specialist Hoffman and his dog also earned a third-place award in the building and area search events. "It's amazing, really," said Sergeant Bird. "I was speechless when they called my name. It's a great honor, and we'll keep training and improving. Having been [sic] through a competition helps because we can see other competitors' levels of expertise. It's been a good get-together with the canine community." Staff Sergeant Jonathan Parsons and his MWD from Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, earned the Top Specialized Search Dog award. He said it is important for dog handlers to treat every event as a serious challenge. "You've got to spend as much time with your dog as possible. The more you put into training, the more you'll get out of it. And the longer you spend with your dog, the better a team you will be."

TRADOC Provost Marshal, Colonel Keith Blowe, said going beyond what the dog teams normally train is what ultimately puts them at the top of their field. "We pattern this competition on what these teams will be asked to do, whether in Iraq, Afghanistan, or on any installation. If anything, we make it more difficult to be sure the dogs are, in fact, doing their jobs and are tested to their fullest capabilities." Colonel Blowe went on to say, "This competition is all about sharing. When you bring everyone together like this, you see that exchange of information."

References:

Mike Strasser, "Lee Team Awarded Top Kennel," *Fort Lee Traveller*, 5 November 2007.

Jorge Gomez and Mike Strasser, "MP Teams Contend for Top Dog Award," *Army News Service*, 23 October 2007.

Sergeant First Class McCall is the TRADOC MWD Program Manager.