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SRT CANINE PROGRAM

Purpose

The Special Response Team (SRT) Tactical Canine Program of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) involves the use of hand-picked canines and handlers trained in areas that support the SRT mission of reducing violent crime and protecting the public. The SRT canine teams are trained and certified in the following six areas:

1. Obedience
2. Building Search
3. Area Search
4. Tracking
5. Evidence Search
6. Aggression Control

There are seven SRT-trained tactical canine teams throughout the country with ATF special agents/SRT operators as handlers. The SRT program trains its canines in-house, using the national North American Police Work Dog Association (NAPWDA), with no ties to ATF, as the certifying entity.

Goals

The SRT tactical canine program's primary goal is to provide each SRT with a tool to locate and/or apprehend hidden or fleeing suspects.

Locations

Since 2000, the ATF SRT program has trained a total of nine canine teams. Boomer, the SRT's first's canine, passed away in 2004, and canine Poncho retired in 2010. The dogs and their SRT-trained handlers are located in the following cities:

1. Detroit
2. Sterling, Va.
3. Miami
4. Dallas

5. Los Angeles
6. Brunswick, Ga. (training base)
7. Cleveland

Strategy

In 2000, the first canine team successfully completed an eight-week training program that culminated in the certification of SRT canine (Boomer) as a “patrol” dog. Throughout the last 10 years the program evolved with the formal institution of Standard Operating Procedures, a training lesson plan and program, maintenance training program for the remainder of the canine’s working life, and established the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) as the primary training base. Since its inception, eight additional canine teams have been trained at FLETC.

ATF Resources

The primary training base for the SRT Canine Program is located at FLETC in Brunswick, Ga. This base offers thousands of acres of secured tracking areas, more than 40 buildings with varied floor plans for building search training, an explosives range for neutrality to noise flash diversionary device and gunfire training, a counterterrorism training center used for both tracking and building searches (including small crawl spaces and attics), and secure indoor and outdoor obedience training locations.

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