



Fact Sheet

Public Affairs Division - Washington, DC



Contact: Public Affairs Division

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February 2015

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ATF'S National Canine Division

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), National Canine Division (NCD) trains explosive and accelerant detection canines for Federal, state, local and international law enforcement and fire investigation agencies. ATF is a leading source of specially trained explosives and accelerant detection canine teams. Once trained, the canine teams are assigned to local, state and other federal law enforcement agencies, as well as selected foreign countries; and regularly lend support to investigations and security efforts. Congress has recognized the National Odor Recognition Testing Standard (NORT) as the proficiency standard used by ATF as a benchmark for effective canine explosives detection.

ATF is a principal law enforcement agency within the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) dedicated to preventing terrorism, reducing violent crime and protecting our nation. ATF is committed to working to investigate and reduce crime involving firearms, explosives, and acts of arson.

The Omnibus Consolidated Appropriations Act of 1997, PL 104-208, 110 Stat. 3009-369 § 653(a) reads: "The Secretary of the Treasury is authorized to establish scientific certification standards for explosives detection canines, and shall provide, on a reimbursable basis, for the certification of explosives detection canines employed by Federal agencies, or other agencies providing explosives detection services at airports in the United States." This authority was transferred with ATF upon the agency's move to Department of Justice (DOJ).

On Aug. 11, 2004, the Office of the Attorney General issued a "Memorandum Regarding the Coordination of Explosives Investigations and Related Matters." This memorandum outlines the coordination of explosives investigations by DOJ law enforcement components. Item number 20 of this memorandum reads, "*As soon as practicable, all Department components that use explosives detection canines shall use only canines certified by ATF.*"

Homeland Security Presidential Directive 19 (HSPD 19), Combating Terrorist Use of Explosives in the United States, directs federal agencies to research, develop, test, and evaluate "activities relating to the detection and prevention of, protection against, and response to explosives attacks and the development of explosives render-safe tools and technologies."

ATF developed the Explosive Detection Canine Program to combat the explosives threat in the United States and abroad. The Arson Detection Canine Program fights the threat domestically. ATF also trains Federal, state, local and international law enforcement explosives detection canines on homemade explosives (HME). Since 1990, ATF has trained approximately 872 explosives detection canines and 224 accelerant detection canines. These dogs and their ATF-trained handlers are located throughout the United States in local police and fire departments, fire marshal offices and federal and state law enforcement agencies. To date, the NCD has trained explosive detection canine teams for 22 foreign countries.

In 1984, ATF developed an accelerant detection canine pilot project that resulted in the creation of an accelerant detection system that offered an immediate advantage over field instruments. In 1990, ATF began a joint program with the U.S. Department of State's Anti-terrorism Assistance Program to produce a more effective explosives detection canine capable of detecting a greater variety of explosives than those under existing programs. The canines are capable of detecting 19,000 explosives formulations. A major advantage in using the canine is their mobility, a significant improvement over fixed detector installations that can be circumvented by a terrorist placing a bomb or smuggling explosives.

Beginning in March 2009 through December 2014, ATF NCD staff has successfully imprinted an estimated 3,735 Department of Defense military working dogs (MWD) on HME.

NCD initiated the ATF Search Enhanced Evidence K-9 (S.E.E.K) program in 2013. Developed to provide explosive detection canine handlers with a canine that possess the same detection capabilities as our current Explosive Detection Canines but with the ability to work independently and at greater distances in a variety of circumstances to include the detection of firearms, explosive and post-blast evidence. Teams are unique to ATF and to the Special Agent Canine Handler, which will provide a law enforcement asset that can support the ATF mission, the Frontline Initiative, and support criminal investigations involving violent crimes at the federal, state, and local levels.

In April 2014, in response to the Boston Marathon bombing, ATF canine trainers and chemists trained and tested 62 explosives detection canine teams with the National Odor Recognition Test (NORT). Handlers were given classroom instruction on the dangers of HME and, subsequently, their canines were imprinted on HME.

The ATF National Canine Center is located in Front Royal, Va., and consists of two facilities, one is a 20,000-square-foot climate controlled training building that allows year-round training with office space for support personnel. The second is a 25,000-square-foot kennel facility that can accommodate 100 canines and incorporates the latest technology in kennel design. ATF is DOJ's detection canine component.

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