



ATF News

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives
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SEVEN CANINE TEAMS GRADUATE FROM ATF CANINE TRAINING CENTER

WASHINGTON — The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) graduated a new class of canine handlers today at its Canine Training Center in Front Royal, Va. The ceremony was the culmination of an intensive, 10-week training course completed by federal officers from the CIA, Department of Defense, U.S. Marshals Service and the Federal Protective Service, in which ATF canine trainers spent six weeks “imprinting” the dogs, giving them the capability to locate 19,000 explosive odors – including peroxide-based explosives.

These handlers and their ATF-trained canine partners will be deployed throughout the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area and other parts of the country, where they will be used for criminal investigations, protective search and sweep operations, and safeguarding national special events such as the Republican and Democratic National Conventions, G-8 summits, the World Series and the Super Bowl. A major advantage of canines is their mobility, a significant improvement over fixed detector installations that can be circumvented by a terrorist placing a bomb or smuggling explosives.

“These dedicated students have been training for seven-days-a-week since Jan. 7,” noted ATF Acting Director Michael Sullivan. “They and their highly-trained canine partners are now prepared to use their skills to protect the public and prevent terrorism.”

The handlers and their canines train extensively together for 10 weeks, learning how to search out explosives in vehicles, schools, train stations, concert venues, warehouses and retail stores. The dogs can also detect firearms and ammunition. Prior to graduation, each canine must pass an odor recognition test with 100 percent accuracy. This certification test is conducted by a forensic chemist using the National Odor Recognition Test developed by ATF.

ATF trains approximately 90 new canine teams each year and places them, without cost, with local, state, federal or foreign law enforcement agencies. Teams are recertified each year and receive continuous support from ATF throughout the approximate eight-year working life of the dogs.

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The ATF Canine Training Center and kennel are located in Front Royal. The 14,000-square-foot training building allows for climate-controlled, year-round training and has office space for support personnel. The state-of-the-art kennel facility can accommodate 100 canines and incorporates the latest technology in kennel design.

More information on ATF's Explosives Detection Canine Program can be found at www.atf.gov.

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