



# ATF News

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives  
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## **ATF CANINES SNIFF OUT PEROXIDE-BASED EXPLOSIVES, IMPROVISED EXPLOSIVES DEVICES**

WASHINGTON -- The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) is the Department of Justice's lead agency for the training of explosives detection canines for other federal, state, local and international law enforcement agencies in the United States and around the world.

ATF operates the only DOJ canine training and operations program. 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.

ATF's explosives detection canines are procured from guide dog foundations. After 6-weeks of initial training with a canine trainer, during which the canines are taught to detect explosives, the canines are partnered with handlers for a 10-week detection course. During this initial training, the handler and canine live and work together 7-days a week. To be ATF-certified, a canine must pass an extensive odor recognition test, administered by an ATF forensic chemist, as well as practical examinations conducted by canine trainers. Currently, ATF has 34 explosives detection canine teams consisting of a special agent handler and a canine.

To date, ATF has provided the National Odor Recognition Test (NORT) training to more than 850 explosives detection canines and handlers. During the 2-day program, the canines become familiar with various explosives, to include homemade peroxide explosives such as TATP and HMTD. For a canine team to become NORT-certified, the canine must identify 10 explosives compounds, achieving a 100 percent detection rate.

ATF provides the following resources for the NORT/peroxide training:

- An ATF forensic chemist offers classroom lectures to canine handlers on the current trends concerning explosives trends used by violent criminals and terrorists, to include TATP and HMTD and other homemade explosives. The chemist also administers the National Odor Recognition Test.

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- An ATF-certified explosives specialist provides the TATP and HMTD training aid and ensures that the training aids are safely and properly transported, stored, handled and accounted for. The Certified Explosives Specialist provides classroom lectures concerning explosives recognition, storage and handling regulations and the safe use of explosives.
- Full-time ATF canine trainers with extensive canine training experience “imprint” the dogs to properly alert to TATP and HMTD, and work with each canine team to achieve their proficiency level and set up the training regimen so that target odors are recognized.
- An ATF veterinary technician provides canine wellness and basic canine first aid instruction.

The ATF canine training program has been scientifically evaluated by outside laboratories such as the Oak Ridge National Laboratory. The program has established protocols, policies and certifications, including the Odor Recognition Proficiency Standard for Explosives Detection Canines, commonly known as the National Odor Recognition Test (NORT). The test is designed to assess a canine’s ability to successfully recognize explosives odors.

ATF has trained canine explosives detection canines for the following countries through a U.S. State Department agreement: Argentina, Australia, Bahrain, Chile, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Egypt, Greece, Jordan, Italy, Israel, Malaysia, Mexico, Poland, Qatar, South Africa and Thailand.

During Fiscal Year 2007, ATF has certified 185 canine teams with the NORT standards, and imprinted approximately 226 canine teams with peroxide-based imprinting.

In 1990, ATF began a joint program with the U.S. Department of State’s Office of Anti-Terrorism Assistance to train explosives detection canines. Two years later, ATF launched a pilot program to develop explosives detection canines capable of detecting a greater variety of explosives than those under existing programs.

The ATF Canine Training Facility and Kennel are located in Front Royal, Va., on the grounds of the 250-acre U.S. Customs and Border Protection Canine Training Facility. 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 and its programs is at [www.atf.gov](http://www.atf.gov).

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