

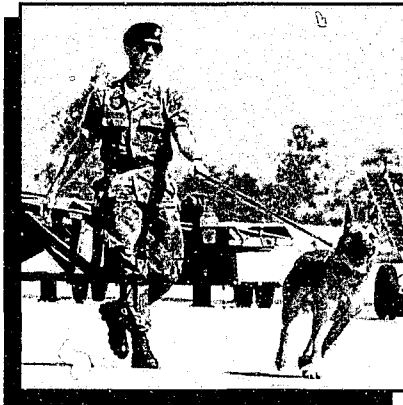
# FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin

July 1999

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*Lateral Entry  
A Move Toward the Future*

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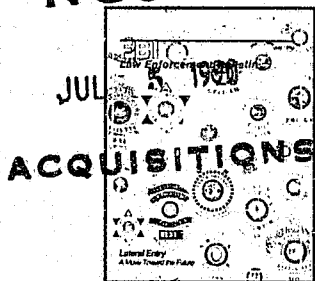
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William S. Sessions, Director

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# Police Practices

## Bomb Dog Teams



**T**here are times when police departments may require the services of an explosives detection dog team. When such an emergency occurs, the U.S. Air Force Security Police can respond to such requests with military dog teams. However, there is one condition that accompanies each response—the Air Force cannot be held liable for any damages or consequences arising from the search.

Most Air Force security police squadrons have bomb dog teams, which consist of an experienced handler, a highly trained

explosives detection dog, and a spotter who assists the handler and acts as backup. Each team is proficient in detecting several common types of explosives and can provide detection capability for bomb threats, suspicious packages, airport security breaches, and terrorist incidents.

### Team Response

During the past 2 years, explosives detection dog teams from the 63d Security Police Squadron (63d SPS) at Norton Air Force Base in California assisted Federal

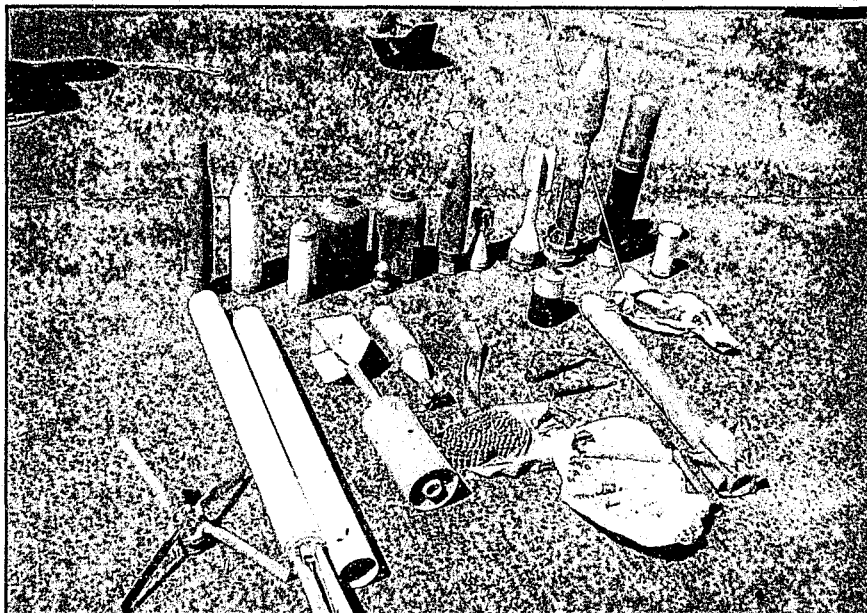
and local authorities in over 20 incidents. The teams responded to bomb threats at local government buildings and shopping centers and cleared VIP platforms and routes for such dignitaries as former President Reagan, the Duchess of York, and the President of Colombia.

After receiving a call for assistance from the California Highway Patrol, an explosives detection dog team searched a vehicle used by an arrested grenade-tossing driver who terrorized several miles of California freeway. In another incident, a 63d SPS team conducted a baggage and commercial airliner search when notified by airport police that the carrier received several bomb threats on an inbound aircraft.

### To Request Assistance

Civilian police agencies should coordinate requests for assistance with local Air Force Security Police. The law enforcement desk sergeant is the designated point of contact for bomb dog requests. The sergeant, in turn, obtains permission from the chief of security police and the base commander to dispatch the dog team off base. The base commander is advised of the nature of the request and any impact it would have on base operations. Unless the team is conducting a search on base, or there is an

*A military dog team recently discovered this cache of explosives in an automobile located on the Norton Air Force Base in California.*



impending military mission, the request is honored within a matter of minutes. Military necessity governs the priority of the dispatch.

For example, on February 19, 1990, the 63d SPS received a request for assistance from the San Bernardino Sheriff's Office. There was the possibility that three explosive devices had been planted in the county courthouse. Within 3 minutes, the law enforcement desk officer received permission to dispatch the team. Thirteen minutes later, the team was on its way to the courthouse. With this particular incident, a team was on duty and available for immediate dispatch. When a team is off duty, the handler maintains contact with the law enforcement desk officer by informing the desk officer of location and telephone number at all times. This is to ensure the handler is in constant contact with the law enforcement desk in the event of an emergency. When off duty, team response time is less than 1 hour.

### **On the Scene**

Once the team arrives on site, it reports directly to the commanding law enforcement officer for a final situation report. The handler then briefs the commanding officer on the search pattern, the method to be used for alerting and marking the device, and any other information that may be pertinent to the search. If the dog

alerts to an explosive device, the handler marks the area or item where the explosive device can be found. The explosives detection dog team does not deactivate the device. That responsibility rests with law enforcement bomb disposal experts. The length of the search, which may take up to several hours, depends on the area or the item being searched. After completing a search, or in the event an explosive device is located, the handler then debriefs the on-scene law enforcement commander.

### **Conclusion**

Air Force explosives detection dog teams constitute a valuable resource that is available to law enforcement agencies. Use of this service can counter potentially dangerous situations that threaten the safety and well-being of citizens in any community.

**LEB**

*Information for this column was obtained from Capt. James L. Setzer, 63d SPS/Operations Officer, Norton AFB, California.*

*Police Practices* serves as an information source for unique or noteworthy methods, techniques, or operations of law enforcement agencies. Submissions should be no more than 750 words (3 pages, double spaced and typed) and should be directed to Kathy Sulewski, Managing Editor, *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*, Room 7262, 10th & Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20535.