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WAR DOGS

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ARMY SERVICE FORCES  
OFFICE OF THE COMMANDING GENERAL  
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.  
Technical Intelligence Report

SUBJECT WAR DOGS  
FROM Hq 7th SC REPORT NO 1339 DATE 3 August 1945

Theater: Southwest Pacific

SOURCE:

ROBERT K. ROBERTSON, 2nd Lt. [redacted] War Dog Training and Reception Center, Fort Robinson, Nebraska. Platoon Sergeant War Dog Platoon until 9 January 1945 and then was field commissioned and assigned Executive Officer, 26th Infantry Scout Platoon. In Southwest Pacific from May, 1944 to 4 June 1945.

INTERVIEWER'S EVALUATION OF SOURCE AND INFORMATION. B-2

SUMMARY OF REPORT:

Lt. Robertson commented on the following items, which information is believed to be of interest to the Army Ground Forces:

- I. Use of War Dogs.
- II. Liaison Representation and Assignment of War Dog Platoons.
- III. New Tactics Developed by War Dog Platoons.
- IV. Daily War Dog Patrol Reports.
- V. Additional Duties for Veterinary Technician in War Dog Platoon.
- VI. Affect Upon Morale of Troops Accompanied by War Dogs.
- VII. Training of War Dog Platoons.

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EVALUATION OF INFORMATION AND DISTRIBUTION BY INTELLIGENCE DIVISION, ASF:

AGF -(5); G-3\*; Command & General Staff School\* -(2); Mil Training\*

Enclosures: None.

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## BACKGROUND OF SOURCE.

Lt. Robertson [REDACTED] He attended Northwestern University two years and then attended West Point two years as a member of the class of 1928. For over 15 years prior to his induction into the Army, he was self-employed as a fur buyer in Northern Canada, where he traveled extensively during the winter months using pack and sled dogs. During this time he retained his official domicile in Los Angeles, California. He enlisted in the Army on 9 April 1942, and received Infantry basic training at Camp Roberts, California. He was then assigned to the 87th Infantry Mountain Regiment and stationed for a short time at Front Royal, Virginia, and then at Camp Hale, Colorado. He went overseas in May, 1944, and served as Platoon Sergeant in the 26th Infantry Scout Platoon in charge of War Dogs and participated in numerous patrols and scouting parties in the Southwest Pacific. He received a Battlefield Commission on 9 January 1945 and was Executive Officer of 26th Infantry Scout Platoon. Lt. Robinson saw action in New Guinea, Bismark Archipelago, Dutch East Indies and the Philippine Liberation. He returned to the United States on 4 June 1945 and is at present assigned to War Dog Training and Reception Center as Technical Advisor on the Training Staff, Fort Robinson, Nebraska.

## I. USE OF WAR DOGS.

One of the most successful uses of the War Dogs in the Southwest Pacific was in scouting and patrolling. According to Source, the 26th Infantry Scout Platoon had made 700 patrols from May, 1944 to June, 1945, without an ambush reported. While with one regiment, Source's platoon made 223 patrols without an ambush when using the War Dogs, compared with 11 ambushes in 29 patrols made without the War Dogs. The dogs work, using an up wind scent, alert very readily and adequately warn the patrol of persons ahead. When the dog has alerted, his job is done and it is brought back to center of patrol while the Patrol Leader sends his scouts out to locate the ambush. The dogs proved particularly valuable in the jungle country where visibility is poor.

The War Dogs were also used successfully as messenger dogs and were valuable as a line of communication, particularly at the front when radios were not to be used to give away positions. This operated very well between pill boxes and mortar sections. When rapid withdrawals were necessary, as they were in Biak, the radios went out of commission and the dogs were used successfully as messengers. A particularly good use for the messenger dog is between patrols when silence of radio and other forms of communication is necessary. The dogs were very successful in getting communications through and would by-pass enemy or friendly groups to get to their handlers.

The dogs are also trained for use as sentries, but because there were so few dogs in the Southwest Pacific area they were used mainly at Command Posts and not on front lines. They were used close to the machine gun emplacements of the CP Guards and the handler would dig a fox hole within an arms length of the gun and stay in it and the dog would lie on the side of the hole. When the dog would alert during the night the guards at the gun would waken the dog handler and he would read the dog and advise the gunners the approximate position of the enemy and the machine gun would spray that area. In each instance, they would find several dead Japs the next morning. This tactic is particularly valuable in the Pacific Theater for the reason that the Japanese filter through the front lines often and attempt to get the CP.

The dogs were also used as pack dogs and were especially valuable to the S-2 Officer. After each engagement, the S-2 non-commissioned officers would make a search of the dead Japanese and when they found maps, directions, or any documents that might be of value they would write their report and send the report and documents back to the S-2 Officer by the pack dog. This proved to be a rapid means of communication and was very successful.

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## II. LIAISON REPRESENTATION AND ASSIGNMENT OF WAR DOG PLATOONS.

Lt. Robertson stated that one of the biggest problems with the handling of War Dogs is to maintain proper liaison from the time the dog is trained and leaves the training center until it gets into combat units, for the reason that such a long period of time elapses between the end of training and reaching the combat unit that much of the training is forgotten. In Lt. Robertson's opinion based upon his experience with handling the dogs in the Pacific Theater of Operations, a dog loses his keenness and enthusiasm in 30 to 45 days, and it is necessary to do considerable re-training. Effort should be made to continue the training at all times and makes the following suggestions to correct the present situation:

The War Dogs should be assigned directly to a Division and stay with it at all times and adequate facilities and area should be provided by the Division for the continued training and handling of the dogs.

Establish a Staging Center for War Dogs at the Port of Embarkation and continued training and handling of the dogs while waiting for shipment overseas. This is necessary as often there is considerable delay at the POB while waiting for suitable boats and shipping space to carry the dogs. The dogs in Robertson's platoon lost much of their training during the wait at the POB and it necessitated a great deal of work and re-training when they reached combat area and delayed the usefulness of the dogs, when they were badly needed.

It is Lt. Robertson's opinion that there must be a Staging Center in Theater of Operation with a Liaison Officer to greet the dogs and place them in training at once. An area should be provided where he could thoroughly test the dogs to see that they have been properly trained in the United States and are ready for combat use. This officer could then contact the Area Commander and advise as to what particular dogs could be used to the best advantage by particular regiments, and then accompany the dogs to the regiment and subsequently to the platoon to indoctrinate the dogs and the troops, and finally accompany the troops with the dogs as far as the front. In this manner, the dogs will be properly and quickly put to use, and troops that have had no opportunity to use the dog will be able to know and use it to the very best advantage. In addition, the dogs will have proper care and handling from the time they land until they go into combat and will be out of the way of Theater Operations.

If the War Dogs are assigned to a Division in the United States, the Division should have adequate area and plans to continue the work and training of the dogs and indoctrinate the troops with the dogs. Provision should also be made to train the dogs under practice fire.

## III. NEW TACTICS DEVELOPED BY WAR DOG PLATOONS.

Source mentioned the fact that two tactics were developed in the field after several weeks experience in handling War Dogs with Patrols. They are trained to scent up-wind, and at first when it was necessary to go down a steep hill the handlers would take the dogs directly down. On several occasions the patrol ran into trouble with enemy ahead, which would ordinarily have been pointed by the dogs. It was decided that the dog had no opportunity to get the scent when he was going directly down hill so the handlers tried making the descent in a criss cross which worked out very well and enabled the dog to work at full advantage with the wind. Therefore, all the War Dog Platoons in the South West Pacific were advised to never take a dog directly down hill but to work him back and forth across the hill and descend slowly.

It was discovered that the War Dogs were unable to always alert persons on opposite sides of streams, so rather than take the entire patrol across a stream when they reached it, in the event the dog had not alerted, the dog was held back with the patrol, and Scouts were sent across the stream first to determine if there

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was enemy and make sure that a crossing could be made safely. Most of the time the dog was accurate at a water crossing and if he did not alert they could be reasonably sure that nothing was on the opposite side, but by sneaking the Scouts across first they doubled the precaution, as the water did tend to hamper the efficiency of the dogs.

It was found to be of great advantage to have the War Dog Handler work closely with the S-2 Officer. After a very short time the S-2 knew what could be expected of the dogs and by briefing the Handler, carefully on the mission and permitting him to study the overlays and assist in planning the routes of the Patrol, the missions were carried out much more quickly and successfully.

Lt. Robertson stated that he found it much more satisfactory to take in a small echelon of dogs upon landing. This avoided confusion in having too many dogs on the beach and consequent noise. It was much easier to sell the dogs to the troops, indoctrinate them and get the few immediately started to work than if they had the entire group. This also permitted the War Dog Platoon to make up a roster and plan the assignment of the balance of the dogs. Then about D Day plus 20 bring in the balance of the dogs and immediately assign them and put them to work without any confusion or delay.

#### IV. DAILY WAR DOG PATROL REPORTS.

Lt. Robertson stated that due to the fact that a historical record of the War Dog Platoons must be kept, together with a record of the action of the dogs, how they were used, and any new use or tactic developed in the field, he developed a daily patrol report that was mimeographed. This report had the dog designated and the patrol it performed. The time of leaving and the time the mission was completed was designated and a space provided for the Handler to make comments on the alerts, the time the dog was alerted, the location, and the results, as well as data on enemy contacted and the number killed or captured. The report was signed by both the Handler and the Patrol Leader and turned in at Headquarters. From this form a diary can be kept for the historical data, and any errors, complaints or new tactics can be noted at once and the proper action taken. He suggests that a standard Patrol Report be adopted and the Handlers be instructed in the information desired and the proper use of the report.

#### V. ADDITIONAL DUTIES FOR VETERINARY TECHNICIAN IN WAR DOG PLATOON.

Lt. Robertson stated that Veterinary Technician was assigned to each War Dog Platoon, and was a vital part of the unit. However, his duties as Veterinary Technician took only a very small part of one man's time and left opportunity to be of real assistance in administrative work. He suggests that each Veterinary Technician be trained in field clerk duties and be assigned as the Platoon Clerk in addition to his duties as Veterinary Technician. In this manner he could be acquainted with the motor vehicles assigned to the Platoon and be responsible for the care and dispatching the vehicles. This would take considerable administrative work from the Platoon Leader and designate one person to be responsible for those duties, and yet it would keep the Technician at Headquarters where he could be available for his work as Veterinary Technician when needed.

#### VI. EFFECT UPON MORALE OF TROOPS ACCOMPANIED BY WAR DOGS.

Source stated that one very noticeable effect upon the Troops in combat when they were accompanied with War Dogs was that they became more confident, subject to less strain from the danger of ambush and snipers. The efficiency of the Troops and their general morale was much higher. This was particularly true with the use of messenger dogs when the troops realized that they were in contact with the rear areas through these dogs and that the messenger dog got through the lines quickly and efficiently. The fact that the dogs became almost a mascot with the Troops was a large factor in raising the morale and gave them an outlet for their emotions. The men became very fond of the dogs, and when the dogs became wounded or killed they felt it almost as keenly as they did when their buddies were hit.

## VII. TRAINING OF WAR DOG PLATOONS.

According to Source, a serious defect in the training of the War Dogs in the United States to immediately show up in the combat area was the lack of training under fire. The dogs that were trained at Fort Robinson, Nebraska, and also in California, had never been indoctrinated to heavy weapons fire and they were ruined the first time they tried to work them in combat, as they were afraid of the Artillery fire. A large percentage of the dogs went crazy with nerves almost at once and could never be used. The others were much less effective in combat than if they had been familiar with the noise and flash of the big guns. In addition to that it took considerable time to work with the dogs to get them accustomed to the guns which caused delay in the combat theaters. Lt. Robertson mentioned that on one occasion he was on a patrol with one of the dogs, and his patrol was pinned down with machine gun fire and then the Japs opened up very accurately with mortar fire. He was handling the dog, and had an almost impossible time to keep the dog down and quiet. Finally he had to leave his position and make a run for it, and the dog got away and was lost to the unit for over two weeks. It is his opinion that the dogs should be indoctrinated to fire during the training period in the United States. He suggested that War Dogs be trained with a division under battle conditions in order that they might get used to combat conditions. Those that were too nervous to make good dogs under battle conditions could be screened out during the training period. In addition the War Dog Platoon will operate in combat with Infantry Scouting Platoons, and should train with the organization in order for the officers and the men to know the dogs, what they can do, and how to best use them.

Lt. Robertson stated that the failure of training the War Dog Platoon was primarily in the inadequate training of the men rather than any lack of training of the dogs. The reason for this is that there has been little knowledge of the use of War Dogs prior to this time, and what might be expected of them and how they would work under battle conditions. Therefore, too much attention, during the training period has been devoted to the dogs and not nearly enough attention to the training of the handlers. The men have had very little opportunity to handle the dogs on practical problems, and have only handled the dogs under the direct supervision of a trainer when he was accompanying the dog and handler. Practical courses and problems should become a major part of the training program and a man should be assigned his dog and should go out with him for several days at a time, sleep with the dog, feed him and get to know the dog and what he can and will do. In addition to that, the men should have a series of lectures and instructions on the use of War Dogs in combat, thorough training in Infantry scouting and patrol, and a good knowledge of all operations of the branches in a division. It is only in that manner that he may be of real use to a division and make his dogs available for every use that they can perform.

The War Dog and his handler are with an Infantry Patrol, and the handler does not have nor should he have the leadership of the patrol. It is therefore very important that the men in the patrol, particularly officers, should be thoroughly indoctrinated to the use of War Dogs. In combat many instances arose where the Patrol Leader had no confidence in the dogs, or the handler, and he himself could not read the dog or understand what his alert meant. Consequently the Patrol Leader would insist on pushing forward, rather than taking cover and sending out scouts to determine the position of the humans the dog had scented, thus properly protecting the patrol, as well as the dog. This caused the loss of some well trained dogs and also men.

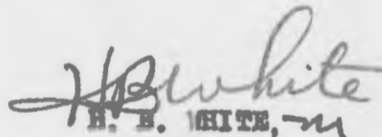
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Equally bad was the over confidence some leaders and men had when the dogs were with them, becoming careless in patrol discipline. Lt. Robertson again suggested that the best training possible was the assignment of the War Dog to a Division rather than an Army and train the unit in the use of the dog during the training program in the United States.

Lt. Robertson suggested that more careful selection of War Dog Handlers be made. They should be well trained Infantrymen and a man at least 25 years of age, that is interested in dogs and has high qualities in leadership. The occasion will often arise when a good handler will have to suggest methods of using the dog, and should be able to transmit his knowledge of reading the dogs alert signs to his Patrol Leader. It is his opinion that the most successful method of training men would be to have a regiment that desired dogs, pick 20 to 25 of their best scouts and return them to the United States for a 12-weeks training in the use of dogs and assign each of these men a dog to take back with him. In this manner you would have men that are highly interested in the training and the needs of the dogs. In addition a man will be sent back to his own organization who knows him and has confidence in his knowledge of scouting and the working of the unit and will follow his advice and skill in using the War Dog. At the present time several War Dog Patrols at Fort Robinson, Nebraska, are activated for overseas duty in the Pacific Theater of Operations. The dogs are trained and the handlers are well trained in handling the dogs, but are completely at a loss to know what is expected of them in combat. An example occurred within a few days prior to this interview when a Platoon Sergeant who is about to take his Platoon overseas asked Robertson, "Just what am I supposed to do?"

If it is impossible for a regiment to furnish their own men for training with the dogs, and they continue requesting both men and dogs, then Lt. Robertson suggests that the training program be separated so that the dogs are trained separate from the men. After the period of time that the dogs are trained for their work and the men are thoroughly trained in scouting, patrols and combat organization, assign each man his dog from a pool of trained dogs and continue the training program as a unit with as many practical problems in the use of dogs as possible. This final period of training should be done with an Army Ground Force Unit so that the dogs and their handlers are working under fire and battle conditions.

FOR THE COMMANDING GENERAL:



H. H. WHITE, *m*  
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Chief, Intelligence Branch,  
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Report prepared by  
FWK/me



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