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Kennel Talk is an award-winning, free, digital publication of MWD TSA. Support MWD TSA now and you won't miss any of the photos, stories, news and highlights of 2017!

The Military Working Dog Team Support Association, Inc. touches the lives of dogs and people near and far. This issue's articles and photos take us from Iraq and Southwest Asia to Kuwait, and on to various U.S. locations in Florida, Arizona and Nevada.

Our parting shot is from Kuwait.

Subscribe at MWD TSA.org to see where we connect next month!

Sniffin' Out Danger

Military working dog serves in Iraq for second tour



Robiek, a Belgian Malinois military working dog, and his handler, Staff Sgt. Charles Ogin, 3rd Infantry Regiment, practice bite training Feb. 14 in Baghdad, Iraq. Robiek is a patrol and explosive detector dog who works with Ogin to ensure the safety of everyone inside the entry point gate at Union III in Baghdad, Iraq.

Story and photo by Sgt. Anna Pongo CJFLCC - OIR PUBLIC AFFAIRS

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Robiek, a 7-year-old Belgian Malinois, was born to be a hero. He was bred and trained to serve and protect the people he works with. Those people are members of the Combined Joint Forces Land Component Command in Iraq.

Robiek is a patrol and explosive detector dog and he, along with his handler, Staff Sgt. Charles Ogin, 3rd Infantry Regiment, work hard to ensure the safety of everyone inside the

entry-point gate at Union III in Baghdad, where the 1st Infantry Division headquarters and its battalion are deployed.

Robiek is one of several military working dogs who live and work with their handlers at Union III. These dogs work with their handlers to check each vehicle driving through the entry point.

They also do other behind-the-scenes work to keep Union III safe.

Sniffin' Out Danger continued on page 2

Sniffin' Out Danger continued from page 1

"While it may not quite be thinking like us, they think," said Maj. George Johnson, deputy for force protection, CJFLCC - OIR. "This enables them to help us enhance our force protection."

Ogin and Rrobiek started working together in 2014, after Rrobiek's last deployment to Afghanistan.

"At first, it was a bit of a rough relationship because it's two different conflicting personalities," Ogin said. "But we started meshing, and now I wouldn't have it any other way. He's a great partner."

While on a temporary duty trip to Kenya in 2015, the duo began to bond as they lived together for the first time. This opportunity brought the two together to form the connection they needed to become the partners they are today.

Rrobiek was born June 1, 2010, at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas. The MWDs are procured or bred specifically for their job. After he was born, Rrobiek lived in a foster home until he was old enough to go back to Lackland for training.

Through his basic training, Rrobiek learned obedience, patrol and detection. He became an adept asset to his Soldier counterparts.

"He's a piece of equipment in the Army's eyes, but he has his own personality, his own quirks," Ogin said. "He's very set in his ways, kind of like a person."

The relationship the 72-pound canine and his handler have is mutually necessary. They form a bond that is more effective than any machine at finding explosives, Ogin said.

"You got to understand that he's doing 90 percent of the work, but without me he can't do the 90 percent of the work," Ogin said.



Above: Rrobiek, a Belgian Malinois military working dog, and his handler, Staff Sgt. Charles Ogin, 3rd Infantry Regiment, play together after work on Feb. 14 in Baghdad, Iraq.

This partnership enables the two of them to protect their fellow service members and each other. "I have a dog that's loyal," Ogin said. "He's willing to work until he dies and he's willing to defend me. I can't say that about every Soldier ... but that dog will defend me until I die."

Deployed 380 ESFS Military Working Dogs develop, detect, deter, defend

Photos by Senior Airman Tyler Woodward



380th Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron working dog Rendi attacks a training aid held by Staff Sgt. Nicholas, 380 ESFS kennel master, during a water aggression exercise at an undisclosed location in Southwest Asia. "Our job is to be the first line of defense," Nicholas said. "We take a lot of pride in doing the extra work and going the extra mile to make the military working dog team the best it can be."



380th Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron working dog Liz locks down on a training aid during a water aggression exercise. "Liz is always working," 380 ESFS military working dog handler Staff Sgt. Dakota said. "She wants to work and she wants to get out there and get a reward."



A 380th Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron military working dog team completes a detection training scenario at an undisclosed location in Southwest Asia.



Military working dogs complete weekly training scenarios to maintain the standards needed to protect military installations. "There's always that chance that the only thing between you and an explosive is your dog and 26 feet of leash," SSgt. Dakota said. "We rely on our dogs and have faith that they are going to do their job."

Base Visit to Tyndall

Story by Maani Schnell. Photos by Robert and Maani Schnell.

A visit to an airbase is always an exciting prospect, especially for a civilian, and when it is combined with visiting a few well-trained dogs, the allure is even more so. Tyndall Air Force Base, home of the 325th fighter wing, commanded by Colonel Michael Hernandez, is in Panama City, Florida. The 325th FW is home to the F22 Raptor, a stealth-like super cruiser with superior maneuverability and integrated avionics.

Tyndall Air Force base is named after Lieutenant Francis B Tyndall, who was a fighter pilot during WW1 and shot down four German planes in 1918. He was killed when his plane crashed while inspecting Army fields near Mooresville, North Carolina on July 15, 1941. The War Department then named the new installation Tyndall Field.

Tyndall AFB is guarded and protected by the exceptional military working dogs and their handlers. Our family was honored and privileged to visit the Tyndall MWD kennels on a bright sunny day. Armed with gifts for the dogs and their handlers, we reached the Air Force base and were welcomed into the training facility.

There was a care basket for the airmen, donated by San Francisco Bay Gourmet Coffee, a Keurig coffee machine and 50 pounds of gourmet coffee. In addition, we presented insulated coffee travel mugs, MWD TSA patches and MWD TSA 10th anniversary T-shirts. We met the dogs and learned about two who had recently been deployed.

Tyndall's Kennel Master TSgt. Hoffman explained to us about their extensive training and diets and daily routines. The dogs, one German Shepherd and the rest Belgian Malinois, were assigned to their individual handlers who monitored their



Left to right, standing: Rob Schnell, KM TSgt. Hoffman, TSgt. Beuligman, SSgt. Lofton, SrA. Foster, and SSgt. Smith.

Left to right, kneeling: SSgt. Harris, SSgt. Rundle, and TSgt. Jones.

training and their feeding and other activities. We were treated to an exhibition of the dogs' tracking and apprehension techniques inside their training facility.

Following a group photo, we then treated the handlers to lunch, and were entertained by individual training and combat deployment stories. The group assembled were Kennel Master TSgt. Hoffman, TSgt. Beuligmann, TSgt. Jones, SSgt. Rundle, SSgt. Harris, SSgt. Pigg, SSgt. Smith, SrA. Foster, SSgt. Lofton, and SSgt. Ornelas. These seasoned professionals not only handle and train these disciplined dogs; they were also capable of keeping our three-and-a-half-year-old daughter entertained during our memorable visit to Tyndall Air Force Base. Thank you for your service and sacrifice.

Tyndall Visit continued from page 4



Left: Prepping for an apprehension exercise, SSgt. Rundle, TSgt. Beuligman, SSgt. Lofton and MWD Semmi.

Right: SSgt. Lofton and MWD Semmi.



Above: Part of the Tyndall AFB Kennel Team posed for us outside.

On podium, left to right:
SSgt. Rundle and MWD Atila; SSgt. Harris and MWD Zippo; SrA. Foster and MWD Aik; and SSgt. Smith and MWD Kino.

In front of podium, left to right:
TSgt. Beuligman, SSgt. Lofton and MWD Semmi, KM TSgt. Hoffman, and TSgt. Jones.



Above: MWD Semmi snags a reward.



Volunteer Corner

A passion for life, a passion for MWDs.



High school sophomore **Anna Steere** of Boulder, Colorado aspires to become a veterinarian, possibly for military working dogs. She and mom Leigh came across a MWDTSA job posting at VolunteerMatch.com. The rest is history.

The pair applied as a team to help with writing projects, and their involvement has expanded to include base visits, soliciting product donations, and proofreading Kennel Talk.

In addition to studying and helping MWDTSA, Anna is a sound engineer for her school, providing assistance for drama, choir, and instrumental performances, as well as special events. Certified in Wilderness First Aid, she also serves on her school's Emergency Response Team. Anna's hobbies include cyr wheel, backpacking, reading, and playing with Caden (the Australian Kelpie mix pictured left).

Jerry Whitman is a retired Vietnam-era veteran of the U.S. Air Force. He contributes to MWDTSA in a variety of areas, including material management, logistics, and load-planning — or as Jerry likes to call it, “toting, lifting, running errands, and packing with a purpose.” His favorite MWDTSA activity is visiting bases to meet the dog teams in person. To date, Jerry has visited bases in more than ten states.

Jerry also enjoys road tripping, trout fishing, and gardening with gusto. His horticultural specialties are

heirloom tomatoes and the preservation of biodiverse seeds for ensuring future sources of healthy food. Jerry's latest project is the installation of a pollinator garden, which has spurred him on to support endangered pollinator species.



Robert Schnell, a native of New York City, was first introduced to military working dogs via *Soldier Dogs*, a book by Maria Goodavage. Robert wanted to support these heroes and reached out for guidance from the experts — dog handlers themselves. After speaking with GySgt Knight at Yuma Proving Grounds,

Robert connected with MWDTSA.

Over the years, Rob has had the honor of meeting with Gold Star families. He's heard many touching stories about dog handlers killed in action. He has also been part of two base visits and one care package event. Most recently, Rob and a few other volunteers coordinated a public education event at Citi Field, home of the New York Mets. “Bark in the Park” was a great success that included dog handlers from Naval Weapons Station Earle, as well as a retired Army dog handler who was supported by MWDTSA on deployment in Afghanistan. In his personal life, Rob is a financial advisor with Morgan Stanley and volunteers with organizations in his community. His daughter, Ishanika, and wife, Maani, and their dogs make his life complete.



Donor Spotlight

Petco Foundation Supports U.S. Military Working Dog Teams

Spotlight article by Leigh Steere

On February 27, MWDTSA announced receipt of a \$5,000 grant investment from the Petco Foundation. This award will help fund MWDTSA's 2017 care packages.

This grant was made possible through the Petco Foundation's annual Helping Heroes fundraising campaign, in partnership with Natural Balance Pet Foods. Each October during the campaign, customers are invited to donate online and in Petco stores across the country to support the life-changing work of service, therapy and working animals.

The Petco Foundation investment will help MWDTSA purchase items like eye protection, thermometers and grooming supplies for the dogs, as well as comfort items and necessary equipment for handlers.

"We are thankful for this generous Petco Foundation grant," says Nikki Rohrig, MWDTSA's President. "Many MWD teams are stationed in remote areas without easy access to replacement supplies. This grant helps us in our mission to support these handlers and MWDs."

For more information about the Petco Foundation, visit www.petcofoundation.org.



Keeping dogs on their paws

Photos by Staff Sgt. Dalton Smith



Pfc. Heaven Southard, an Army military working dog handler with the Directorate of Emergency Services, Area Support Group - Kuwait, releases her military working dog (MWD) "Jerry" during a demonstration of MWD capabilities at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait.



Pfc. Elizabeth Adrian, an Army military working dog handler with the Directorate of Emergency Services, Area Support Group - Kuwait, walks with her military working dog (MWD) "Freddy" during the demonstration.



Jerry, left, grabs hold of Staff Sgt. Daniel Sullivan, public affairs noncommissioned officer in charge with U.S. Army Central.



Spc. Michael Coffey, an Army military working dog handler, practices obedience with his military working dog (MWD) "Diana" at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait.

Deployed military working dogs show-off skills

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Eboni Reams

(UNDISCLOSED LOCATION)

332nd Air Expeditionary Wing

The 332nd Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron military working dog section and Dutch coalition counterparts hosted a MWD demonstration on base.

The event showcased MWD capabilities and the interoperability of coalition forces which are key elements to defeating ISIS.

“MWDs provide the wing enhanced explosive detection capabilities along with a physiological deterrent while on patrol,” said Tech Sgt. William Townsend, 332nd ESFS kennel master. “Also, MWD teams are a force multiplier that can reduce manning shortfalls due to the multi-faceted capability they provide.”

These highly-trained K9s are a huge U.S. Air Force asset; however, they are so much more than that.

“We employ MWD teams in support of a rapidly deployable, multi-functional, globally-mobile response to anywhere in the

world,” said Townsend. “We don’t just deploy in support of the U.S. Air Force but all DoD branches.”

The 332nd ESFS MWD teams also partner with Dutch dogs and handlers whenever possible as the lessons learned enhance their mission sets.

“It means a lot to us to work with them because we are able to gain invaluable training opportunities and exchange tactics and techniques to enhance both of our nations’ MWD capabilities,” Townsend said.

After the demonstration, attendees were afforded the opportunity to wear a decoy suit and feel the force and bite of the dogs.

“I knew it was coming, so I dug my heels into the sand and braced myself,” said Master Sgt. Victoria Kenny, 332nd Expeditionary Civil Engineer Squadron first sergeant. “I felt some pressure where the dog bit me, but no pinching because of the padding. I always knew K9s were intelligent, but was blown away at how they sensed to move on to another target that was more threatening.”



Staff Sgt. Jeffrie Kennedy, 332nd Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron military working dog handler, acts as a decoy during a demonstration scenario, Feb. 25, 2017, in Southwest Asia. MWDs are globally-mobile and multi-functional assets.



Security forces members from the 332nd Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron detain a subject during a demonstration, Feb. 25, 2017, in Southwest Asia. The demonstration showcased military working dogs skills and coalition partnership.

National K-9 Veterans Day



bellet634 Today is National K9 Veterans' Day! Thank you to @mwdtsa for honoring me with an amazing care package full of treats! Today is meant to honor all military and working dogs for their service and sacrifice for our nation. The United States K9 Corps was established March 13, 1942. An effort began to honor those who served in the military as well as working dogs. This day honors those K9's working in military, police, customs, border patrol, service, therapy and other dogs who work to protect and serve.

Dad and I served overseas together searching for IEDs in 2011. It wasn't easy, but we had each other! I was reunited with him thanks to @missionk9 once I retired from the USMC. Now at home I live a very full life with a family and all the kongs my heart desires. I served as @dogsondeployment 2016 mascot promoting my mission of no dog left behind and help dad train future service labs for veterans with @labsforliberty! I couldn't be a happier dog to be home and have such an amazing life! 🐾🐾🐾🇺🇸



Photos on this page:

MWD TSA celebrated K9 Veteran's Day by sending out Honor Boxes to some special retired MWDs.

More details to come next month!





Donor Spotlight

Owner Operators Independent Drivers Association's Truckers for Troops

Spotlight article by Jeanne Dedrick

The Owner Operator Independent Drivers Association (OOIDA) was founded in 1973 by a handful of truckers. It was created to fight for the rights and meet the needs of truck drivers and small, independent trucking businesses. My husband, Bob Dedrick, is a long-time member, so I can personally attest to OOIDA's effectiveness and sincere desire to help their members.

Ten years ago, OOIDA began an annual fundraising campaign to provide care packages for U.S. troops stationed in "hot spots" overseas. This program, known as Truckers for Troops, has become very successful, due in large part to the fact that many truck drivers are military veterans. After launching Truckers for Troops, OOIDA member Bill Casey sought to make sure that dog handlers were included in the program. As a former Combat Tracker Dog Handler in Vietnam, Bill was familiar with MWDTSA and its mission. So, he contacted OOIDA's marketing coordinator, Nikki Johnson, and suggested she get in touch with then-president of MWDTSA, Dixie Whitman. A partnership was born.

Truckers For Troops has maintained its commitment, most recently by purchasing items off of our wish list. Nikki Johnson declared that OOIDA will continue its support of MWDTSA so long as funds permit. She also announced that Truckers for Troops is expanding its mission to assist VA hospitals and nursing homes with special needs. The 10th annual fundraiser begins this November.

MWDTSA appreciates the support of organizations like OOIDA.



Top: Truckers for Troops proudly pose after a packing event.

Bottom: Truckers for Troops hard at work packing their care packages.

K-9 demonstration thrills Phoenix students

Photo by Alun Thomas



Joker, a 4-year-old military working dog assigned to Fort Rucker, Ala., attempts to apprehend Sgt. Oscar Rodriguez (left), military working dog handler, 483rd Working Dog Detachment, Fort Huachuca, Ariz., during a demonstration for students at Paradise Valley High School, Phoenix, AZ. Holding Joker back is Pvt. Christopher Cyphers (right), military working dog handler, 906th Military Working Dog Detachment, Fort Rucker, Ala..

Donor Spotlight

Thanks to our great donors

MWDTSA relies on the generosity of our donors, without whom we would be unable to complete our missions and prepare care packages. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the following companies and individuals who gave recent donations:

Anonymous donations from Amazon Wish List
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Deployed US Marines, Air Force sustain joint relationship, boost EOD tactics

Story and photos by Senior Airman Tyler Woodward

Deployed explosive ordnance disposal and military working dog teams with the U.S. Marines and U.S. Air Force completed various improvised explosive ordnance training scenarios at an undisclosed location, Feb. 9, 2017.

The 380th Air Expeditionary Wing hosted the joint-service training between the 380th Explosive Ordnance Disposal, 380th Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron and Commander, Task Group (CTG) 56.7.

“We take any and all opportunities to train with the different entities of the Department of Defense,” U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Bradley, 380 EOD Non Commissioned Officer in Charge, said. “The more we know about one another’s responsibilities the more information we can provide one another to stay safe and complete the tasks at hand.”

During the training the EOD and MWD teams were able to train for real world scenarios that may occur in day-to-day operations while in a deployed environment.

U.S. Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Charles Rutledge, CTG 56.7 military working dog handler, discussed the importance of developing joint-service relations in the area of responsibility.

“We never know who we’re going to get attached too,” Rutledge said. “I’ve worked with several agencies while a part of the military working dog community, and we have one goal— to find explosive devices to prevent people from being injured.”

U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Nicholas, 380 ESFS kennel master, organized the joint-service training.

“These opportunities build relationships among services that we might not get at home,” Nicholas said. “With dog training, there are so many ways to develop

our dogs and working with other services to share training ideas always makes training that much better.”



Above: A U.S. Marine Corps dog handler with Commander, Task Group (CTG) 56.7 completes a detection training exercise with the U.S. Air Force at an undisclosed location in Southwest Asia.

Below: U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Dakota, 380th Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron dog handler, completes a detection training exercise at an undisclosed location in Southwest Asia.



2017 AF Trials hopeful: Tech. Sgt. Ben Seekell

Story by Senior Airman Charles Pons Abascal

NELLIS AIR FORCE BASE, Nev. – Airmen from across the nation journeyed here for their chance at becoming members of the 2017 Warrior Games team during the AF Trials February 24 - March 3.

The Air Force Wounded Warrior Program is a congressionally mandated, federally-funded program that provides personalized care, services and advocacy to seriously wounded, ill or injured Total Force recovering service members, their caregivers and families. AFW2 focuses on specific personal and family needs, and includes programs that cover various situations throughout the recovery process and beyond.

Representing Air Education and Training Command, and vying for a spot on the AF team is Tech. Sgt. Ben Seekell, instructor supervisor for the Security Forces officer course at Joint Base San Antonio-Camp Bullis, Texas.

During a 2011 deployment to Afghanistan, Seekell, who served as a military working dog handler at the time from Seymour Johnson AFB, North Carolina, fell victim to an improvised explosive device attack, which forever altered his life.

“Amidst the clouds of dust and the horrible smells, all I could think about was the location of my rifle and my dog,” Seekell recalled. “While I was disoriented, I never lost consciousness. I attribute my survival to the quick action of my amazing team as my leg was pretty much amputated out in the field. Self-aid buddy care definitely saved my life that day.

“After the incident, I spent roughly five months at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Maryland,” he continued. “While there, I didn’t know if I would ever walk again. I had a lot of people encouraging me during my recovery, but I had to make the choice

that no matter what, I was going to make it for myself. I knew two things for certain: I wanted to walk again and find a way to wear the uniform again.”

Surrounded by his support system, Seekell knew his personal road to recovery wasn’t going to be without struggle, but made the choice early on to not let his injury define him.



U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Ben Seekell, 2017 AF Trials competitor, poses for a photo after the 1,500-meter run during Track and Field qualifications at the Warrior Fitness Center Feb. 28, 2017 at Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada. During a 2011 improvised explosive device attack in Afghanistan, Seekell attributes his survival to the quick action of his teammates. (Photo by SrA Charles Pons Abascal.)

“When I found myself at that crossroads, I knew I could either accept my condition or fall victim to it,” he said. “You have two choices in life: to be defined by your adversity or be defined by how you overcome it.”

Seekell not only overcame his adversity, but in just five short months following the explosion that took his leg, completed the medical board process to return to active duty and scored a 94.5 percent on the Air Force physical fitness test. Realizing his drive and competitive nature

Tech. Sgt. Benjamin Seekel continued on page 15

Tech. Sgt. Benjamin Seekell from page 14

was one of a kind, a former commander introduced the Rhode Island native to the AFW2 program.

“Competition was what initially piqued my interest and got me here,” he said. “For a short time, I was status quo and complacent at work and during my recovery. I realized that I had the chance to improve and to try each day to get stronger. What is great about this program is that friendly competition drives us all to push harder and in turn, to heal. This is the one place where all of us can come together and share that common ground.”

For Seekell, the competition goes hand-in-hand with a once-in-a-lifetime camaraderie.

“These trials and the games bring together all of these warriors who have served their countries and are now together in one spot,” he said. “When we are in our respective units, in a sense we are alone standing out amidst our teammates. But here, when you look to your left and right, the warriors standing next to you look back with a sense of understanding to what you are going through. The bonds we share are unlike anything I’ve experienced and that is why I compete - for the people by my side and for those who have helped get me here.”

Despite the challenges he has faced, Seekell remains optimistic that through hard work and a hardiness of spirit, there is nothing he can’t handle.

“Regardless of whether you are a wounded warrior, injured or completely healthy, it is all about knowing that you can always do a little more,” he stated. “Beyond the individuals here, this lesson of resilience is for every Airman and every member of the Department of Defense; we can always push beyond our boundaries. People have bad days which is unavoidable, but just remember that there is always someone out there who is having a worse one.

“These events are one-of-a-kind and they are an excellent display of the strength of the human spirit,” he con-

tinued. “Let this serve as a reminder that regardless of what is going on in our day-to-day, we have the choice to be resilient. And for me, that is the only choice.”



Above: Tech. Sgt. Ben Seekell stretches before the 1,500-meter run. (Photo by SrA Charles Pons Abascal.)

Below: From the left, Col. Jeannie Leavitt, 4th Fighter Wing commander, Staff Sgt. Benjamin Seekell, 4th Security Forces Squadron military working dog (MWD) trainer, Charlie, 4th SFS MWD and Maj. Gen. Jake Pumbo, 9th Air Force commander, pose for a group photo during Charlie's retirement at Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, N.C., Aug. 23, 2013. Charlie retired after 10 years of dedicated service, including seven deployments and receiving the Purple Heart for injuries he endured in Afghanistan (Photo by A1C Brittain Crolley.)



Sit. Stay. Support.

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All of our volunteers sign a code of ethics, which outlines how we do our business. We are committed to transparency, but also handle the monies and goods you donate with efficiency, respect and appreciation.

Our missions include supporting active duty dogs and handlers, veteran dog handler causes and events, and war dog memorials where handlers can gather to remember, recognize and heal. We offer educational opportunities for the general public and advocate on behalf of retired military working dogs. Please support us!

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To learn, volunteer, engage or subscribe, click here for info:

<http://mwdtsa.org/about/links/>

Parting Shots

Kuwait



CAMP ARIFJAN, KUWAIT

Photo by Staff Sgt. Dalton Smith

316th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary)

Freddy, a military working dog (MWD) with the Directorate of Emergency Services, Area Support Group - Kuwait, searches for a training aide during a demonstration of MWD capabilities at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, on Mar. 7, 2017.