



# Kennel Talk

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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 California, to the lovely mountains of Colorado, and on to sunny Florida, then to Southwest Asia and back to Georgia and lastly, on to beautiful Hawaii.

Our parting shot is from Kansas.

Subscribe at [MWD TSA.org](http://MWD TSA.org) to see where we connect next month!

## Superheroes— First Quarter Care Packages

Able to leap tall stacks of MWD TSA care packages in a single bound, MWD Rex, and the rest of the crew at his undisclosed location treasure the goodies sent to them in their superhero-themed boxes.



Care packing photos start on page 2. Additional recipient photos on pages 11-13.



Story by Jan Slotar. Photos by Jan Slotar, Shelli Patty, and Jodi Slotar.

On Friday, March 3, 2017, we packed MWD TSA 1<sup>st</sup>-quarter care packages on board Naval Base Ventura County, located in Port Hueneme, California. The theme for my care packages was "Superheroes."

We packed at Security HQ, and although we had to do everything that day—transport, set up the items along with the boxes, assemble, pack, tape the boxes, and apply the customs forms—we did get it done!!! We even

had a surprise visitor at our care packing event, base commander, CAPT Chris Janke.

I have always been a fan of superheroes – costumed heroes who face danger with bravery and strength, usually with a cape. Although MWD teams don't wear capes, they are heroes. They face danger and adversity with strength, bravery, and perseverance.

Superheroes continued on page 2

Superheroes continued from page 1



Top: Left to right, OFC Torrez, MA1 Lupo, MA3 Harris, MA2 Chandler, MWDTSA volunteer Jan Slotar, and base commander, CAPT Chris Janke. Also packing, but not in photo are: Shelli and Randel Patty, and Jodi Slotar.

Left: Eager to lend a helping paw, MWD JoJo enjoyed joining in with the pack.

Right: MA1 Lupo packs the Perky Jerky Beef Snack Sticks from Greenwood Village, Colorado.



Right: MA3 Harris added the Grinds Coffee Pouches for the handlers.



Left: OFC Torrez loved the That's It Zesty Fruit Bars donated by That's It of Los Angeles, California.

Our care packages take months to plan and assemble, and this one was no different. Several handlers helped me plan by sharing what they would like to see in the care packages for 1st quarter.

I would like to thank everyone who helped with this care packing event, our awesome corporate

donors, Amazon wish list donors, MWDTSA volunteers, NBVC handlers and personnel from Security HQ, and especially Naval Base Ventura County, for giving us permission to use their facilities to pack the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter 2017 boxes.

Superheroes continued from page 2



Spiderman cookies from D.O.G. Bakery, Traverse City, Michigan.



Elaine Byrne and friends donated handmade cards and Jan Slotar donated the handmade doggy bandannas.



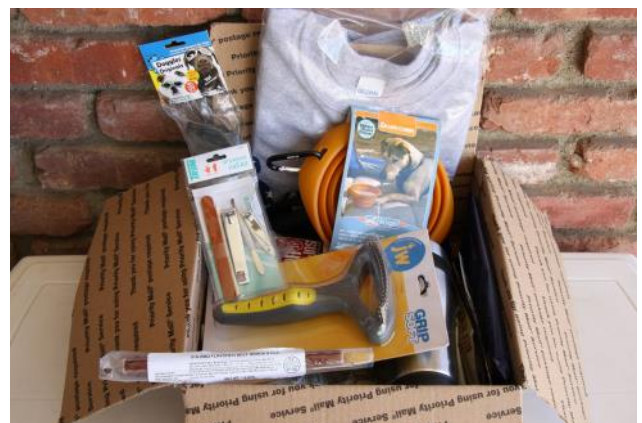
At the top of this box were NorthShore Care Supply of Buffalo Grove Illinois, Cleansing Towels; Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf of Los Angeles, California Support At Home Coffee; Delca Corp. of Laguna Niguel, California, Nana's Natural Chicken Jerky; Golden West Food Group of Vernon, California, Beef Jerky.



This photo highlights Squirrel Brand of McKinney, Texas, Gold Coast Almond and Fruit Mix; Gear Aid of Bellingham, Washington, Duct Tape Field Kits; Grinds of Oakland, California, Grinds Coffee Pouches; Entertainment Earth, Simi Valley, California, Superhero Playing Cards.



Suggested by handlers were Grinds; On The Go Towels of Rancho Cordova, California, Cleansing Towels; Nature's Joy of Fresno, California, Pistachios; Mariani Packing Company, Vacaville, California, Honey Bars; Premier Nutrition, Emeryville, California, Power Bars.



Special grooming and snack items were included from Pacific World Corp. of San Diego, California, Nail Kits; Kurgo Products of Salisbury, Massachusetts, Collaps-a-bowl; Perky Jerky of Greenwood Village, Colorado, Beef Snack Sticks; miscellaneous items donated by OOIDA and Amazon Wish List supporters from across the country.



Superheroes continued on page 4

Superheroes continued from page 3



The Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf of Los Angeles, Calif. donated one of their special blends, Support At Home Coffee, which they created especially to honor all of our troops.



All Purpose Nail Kits were one of the items that the handlers always need. Thanks to Pacific World Corporation, we were able to support their request.



One of the first companies I contacted last fall was Kurgo Products. I knew Kurgo's Collaps-A-Bowl would be a "super" addition. Not only did they donate their bowls for all of the deployed MWDs, but they also wrote an article for our website Blog - How To Keep Your Dog Active This Winter.



Mariani Packing Company of Vacaville, California, gifted us with their wonderful Honey Bars.



Elaine Byrne and friends donated handmade cards. To round out the packages, we included our own MWDTSA travel mugs, MWDTSA tactical patches for the dogs, MWDTSA carabiners for the dog bowls, KONG flyers and KONG balls, from our KONGs for K9s promotion last year and grooming wipes, Doggles, and Furminators from OOIDA and various donors to our Wish List.



Power Bars from Premier Nutrition were just one of the pocket-sized snacks suggested by handlers. Of course, I had to include some fun items in support of my superhero theme: for the handlers, superhero rubber duckies, a superhero t-shirt designed by MWDTSA volunteer Christa Ursini, and decks of Captain America playing cards donated by Entertainment Earth of Simi Valley, California.



## Base Visit

# MWD TSA visits USAF Academy

Story and photos by Anna Steere and Leigh Steere

We had never seen bushes shaped like German Shepherds. But someone had crafted chicken wire into the shapes of two military working dogs, coaxing evergreen bushes into distinctly canine profiles. These green “furry” sentries flank the entrance to the unassuming building that houses the United States Air Force Academy kennel.

In a third base visit made possible by a PetSmart Charities Regional Grant, three members of the Steere Family traveled to USAFA on President’s Day to deliver supplies ranging from thermometers to collapsible bowls. TSgt Kroll, the kennel master, greeted us, introduced us to two handlers on duty, and provided an in-depth kennel tour.

Nearly every wall pays homage to military working dogs. A board near the entrance displays professional photos of the MWDs who currently live there. Lining a second hallway: Pictures of every dog who has ever served at USAFA. A shelf in the conference room holds the urns of USAFA dogs no longer alive. This kennel exudes a palpable reverence for military working dogs—past, present, and future.

The handlers and MWDs at USAFA are part of Security Forces. They support the Secret Service in protecting visiting dignitaries, as well as providing security for NCAA athletic events and the Academy campus.

An MWD named “Crazy” hints at the nature of the USAFA dogs. TSgt Kroll displays fang marks received a month ago, which are still healing. When medics irrigated the bite, the antibiotic solution they injected into one puncture site squirted out of a second hole. The red border around the largest puncture still looks angry. TSgt Kroll refused stitches because, in his experience, sewing a bite wound often leads to infection.

One USAFA MWD has a bite so strong that he once bent the two steel rods in the sturdiest bite sleeve, pinning the decoy’s arm inside. After hearing stories like this, we gladly remained outside the training yard’s tall chain-link fence to watch a demonstration of the Six Phases of Aggression.

### **Warning: We did not make it through all six phases before an incident occurred.**

SrA Gabriel-Melendez led MWD Bert through Phase 1, the Field Interview, where she asked SrA Turner, decoy, to identify himself and produce ID. She progressed into the next phases, when the unexpected happened.

MWD Bert was exhibiting a little more agitation than normal, probably because of us visitors lurking outside the fence. Ra-

ther than unleash him to apprehend the “suspect,” SrA Gabriel-Melendez wanted the added control of the leash. She released Bert with his leash still on. Somehow, as Bert charged forward, the leash wrapped around the handler’s ankle, forcefully pulling her feet out from under her. In a flash, she was on the ground, motionless, the wind knocked out of her.

When she didn’t get up immediately, we all sensed something was wrong. TSgt Kroll spoke to her through the fence but did not go in. He explained that MWD Bert heavily guards his handler and won’t let others approach her—that going into the enclosure meant risking a nasty bite.

After what seemed like an eternity, but probably was only 30 seconds, SrA Gabriel-Melendez sat up and reported that she had injured her wrist. She stood up gingerly and proceeded across the training yard to call off MWD Bert, who was still hanging from SrA Turner’s bite sleeve. Unable to hold the leash with her right hand, she navigated with her left hand to remove MWD Bert from the training yard.

The nature of the injury still unclear, we all headed back into the building so TSgt Kroll could check on her. The accident served as a sobering reminder of how MWD handlers put themselves on the line, even during the training process.

### **Iced wrist for lunch**

SrA Gabriel-Melendez, clearly still in pain, held a blue icepack against her throbbing forearm as we transitioned into lunch. She assured us nothing was broken and that she was fine. A true stoic, she smiled in the group pictures and chuckled at light-hearted barbs about being “housed” by her own dog.

Over a meal of cold cuts, cheeses, and veggies on Panera bagels, accompanied by a fruit tray, chips, and brownie bites, the handlers answered questions about their backgrounds and hobbies. SrA Gabriel-Melendez and SrA Turner began their Air Force careers in the military police and then transitioned into K-9. Both had returned relatively recently from training at Lackland AFB.

TSgt Kroll, originally from the Buffalo, New York area, has been stationed in Guam, as well as deployed to Afghanistan (2013) where he received MWD TSA care packages. He joined USAFA as kennel master in October 2016.

We asked how his training compared to deployment scenarios, and he shared a tale that illustrates the impossibility of envi-

MWDTSA visits USAF Academy continued from page 5

sioning every contingency. Teamed with a group of Czech soldiers, he was responsible for briefing them on MWDs and the guidelines for working with them. They knew the terms “IED” and “pressure plate,” but this turned out to be the extent of their English language knowledge. They did not understand a word of the briefing.

## Demo: Take #2

SrA Gabriel-Melendez quietly excused herself during lunch for a commitment at 12:30. After stowing the leftovers in the fridge, we headed out once more to the training yard, where TSgt Kroll showed us more about the Phases of Aggression, this time with MWD Oodessa.

Just as humans sometimes “wash out” of the military, unable to complete the training requirements, so do four-legged enlistees. TSgt Kroll called Oodessa a “project dog.” The rest of her litter was deemed temperamentally unsuitable for military work, and she is at risk of the same. Transferred from Grand Forks, ND about 18 months ago, USAFA is Oodessa’s last stop. If they can’t train her sufficiently in Colorado Springs, she faces disposition.

Anxious Oodessa stays in a travel crate, huddled with a rubber ball. She does not tolerate the noise and stimulation in the more spacious kennel where the other dogs live. At the end of each exercise, TSgt Kroll rewarded her by stroking her, squatting beside her instead of standing over her.

The agility course includes a window-like structure. SrA Turner stood on one side of the “window,” while TSgt Kroll held Oodessa on the other side. On command, Oodessa leapt through the opening to grab SrA Turner’s bite sleeve.

She successfully completed all her tasks and earned a play session in the training yard to run off her pent-up energy.

## Rebuilding an MWD memorial

At the end of our visit, TSgt Kroll and his family led us to an MWD memorial site that he wants to restore. Located a mile or more from the kennel, up a pitted, unpaved gravel road with no signage, the memorial sits atop the original kennel location. A badly weathered marker explains the history.

USAFA’s first “kennel” was actually an “indigenous house built in 1952 and torn down in 2004.” MWDs “Aghbar, Ginger, Taint, and Tom occupied this house for one year while the new (current) kennel facility was being built. The dogs moved out of the house in Spring 2003.” One dog lived in the kitchen and three in the basement. The grave site is situated where the kitchen once stood.

Today, the memorial looks like an overgrown, forgotten garden. The glue affixing Taint’s name plate to a grave marker

cracked, and Colorado’s high winds had blown the metal plaque 50 feet away. TSgt Kroll found it and propped it up against the stone. Ginger’s marker is obscured by weeds.

Only Aghbar’s memorial is clearly visible. Two wobbly benches need repair or replacement.

TSgt Kroll envisions shaping the site like a dog’s paw, to designate the “print” these dogs have left on the world through their service. There’s a planned cleanup during Police Week in May (exact date and time to be determined), where ten air-men are already on deck to help clear out the weeds and spruce up the area. “I want to give this memorial the level of respect it deserves,” says TSgt Kroll. “I don’t want it to fall by the wayside again.” His vision includes getting the memorial designated as a historic site and added to the visitor map so that people touring USAFA can learn about the role of military working dogs.

With the PetSmart Charities Regional Grant, MWDTSA will be providing some funding for the restoration of this MWD memorial.

*Note from the Steere Family: We are grateful for this opportunity to see the USAFA kennel and learn more about your work. And we are glad to know SrA Gabriel-Melendez is fine, only bruised. Many thanks, TSgt Kroll, to you and your team for your service to our country.*



MWDTSA brought a picnic lunch, gifts, and supplies for the USAFA handlers and dogs. From left to right: SrA Cooper, TSgt Kroll with his delightful daughter, and SrA Gabriel-Melendez.

MWD TSA visits USAF Academy continued from page 6



Left: Altitude at the Air Force Academy ranges from 6,200 feet above sea level near the entrance to 9,000 feet at Farish Recreation Area. Since the region can be snow-covered in February, MWD TSA was grateful to have warm, dry weather for the base visit.

Right: USAFA has indoor and outdoor runs for the dogs. TSgt Kroll and his daughter stand beside the immaculately maintained outdoor enclosures.



Left: SrA Gabriel-Melendez (handler), MWD Bert, and SrA Turner (decoy) demonstrate a "Running Bite," one of the Six Phases of Aggression.

Right: TSgt Kroll and 10 airmen will be renovating this MWD memorial during Police Week in May.





## Volunteer Corner

# *Our volunteers are vibrant and vital*



**Leigh Steere** of Boulder, Colorado helps with proofreading and article writing for Kennel Talk, as well as base visits and soliciting in-kind donations. She recently joined MWDTSA's

board as a Member At Large. She and her daughter Anna will be coordinating the Q1 2018 care package assembly.

A parent of three teenagers, Leigh reports "taxi driver" as her primary occupation. When she is not shuttling kids to activities or playing fetch with high-energy Caden at the dog park, Leigh oversees two small businesses. One of them, ManagingPeopleBetter.com, offers a free assessment tool that is being used by managers on six continents.

**Brittany Ursini** lives in Brooklyn, New York with her two German Shepherds, Bentley and Eli. She is an attorney, but her real passion is animals.

Brittany spearheads MWDTSA's grant writing team. She was drawn to MWDTSA because of her love for the military and for working dogs. She enjoys using her writing skills to solicit funds for such an important cause.

One day she hopes to open a rescue group for ill

and handicapped dogs, in honor of Eli, who is suffering from a neurological disease known as Degenerative Myelopathy. In her free time, she enjoys hiking, traveling and watching sports.



## Are You Our Newest Volunteer?



**MWDTSA** invites you to consider joining our ranks as a volunteer. Our impact is spread across the country and around the world so no matter where you are located, if you can donate time and energy online, you can connect with us.

For more information on joining one of the most powerful little non-profits around, please stop by our website:

<https://mwdtsa.org/volunteer-with-mwdtsa/>

# ***Robby's Law: Adopting K-9 Heroes***

Story and photos by Shelli Patty

In November 2000, President Bill Clinton signed a bill requiring that all military working dogs suitable for adoption be available for placement into forever homes after their service. "Robby's Law," as it came to be known, opened the door for former MWD handlers, law enforcement officers, and the general public to adopt these K-9 heroes.

Military working dogs are trained from puppyhood and work as long as they can perform to strict standards. The number of MWDs serving in the armed forces varies year to year. On average, 200-300 dogs rotate out of service annually for a variety of reasons, such as age or health. When a dog is no longer able to perform his duties, he is declared "excess" and his retirement process begins. Regardless of the dog's branch of service, he is processed through Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, TX. The MWD then undergoes a battery of tests, veterinary consultations, and evaluations to determine if he is a candidate for adoption.

At the same time, prospective adopters must navigate an application process and meet the federal requirements for adopting a retired MWD. They must sign documentation guaranteeing that the dog will not be "working" in any capacity; his sole purpose is to be a companion pet. Civilian adoptions are meant to be "forever homes" for a dog who has served his country well.

Robby's Law gives preference to former handlers and law enforcement officers before allowing the general public to adopt retired dogs. Most MWDs have multiple handlers throughout their career and over 90% of retiring dogs will go home with one of those handlers. Very few retiring dogs are adopted outside of handler homes in any given year.

In addition to dogs who have actively served, adoptions are also possible for dogs who fail a training program. These "wash outs" are unable to perform to the high standards of the military, but they may still have plenty to offer. These dogs are generally younger than a retiring MWD and some are adopted by law enforcement agencies, where standards and timelines for working dogs differ from the military. Others are adopted by military members or civilians to just be family pets. In recent years, the number of civilian applications to adopt wash-out K-9s has skyrocketed, resulting in wait lists. It is common to wait 12-18 months for an application to result in an adoption.

There is no charge to adopt a retiring MWD. However, the adopter must meet the standards set forth by the DOD:

- Provide food and shelter
- Obtain and pay for veterinary care

- Appropriately handle the dog (depending on his certification)
- Pick up the dog in person at Lackland AFB or current duty station

After months of military-style "hurry up and wait" processing, the adopter signs all necessary paperwork and is finally able to drive away with what is sure to be his new best friend.



Above: MWD Haris on his retirement day. The leash was handed over from his handler J. Beauchamp to his new parents and his forever home.



Above: MWD Haris & Handler J. Beauchamp being interviewed by the local news on retirement day at MacDill AFB.

For more information on how to adopt a military working dog:

Please email [mwd.adoptions@us.af.mil](mailto:mwd.adoptions@us.af.mil) or  
Call 210-671-3153



## Donor Spotlight

# Join our Donor List for 2nd Quarter



MWDTSA is asking for your help with our 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Care Packages. Please see the attached links to find our Amazon Wish List, featuring three items we need: Coffee Candy, dog toys, and thermometers.

If using a Mac or PC, please use the following link:  
[https://www.amazon.com/gp/registry/wishlist/ref=cm\\_wl\\_search\\_rvp\\_wl?ie=UTF8&cid=A31AV9MNMZ11HZ](https://www.amazon.com/gp/registry/wishlist/ref=cm_wl_search_rvp_wl?ie=UTF8&cid=A31AV9MNMZ11HZ)

If using a mobile device, please use:  
[https://www.amazon.com/gp/aw/l/ref=aw\\_wl\\_sr\\_res\\_1\\_2?ie=UTF8&lid=3DBNK8NXFLSLE](https://www.amazon.com/gp/aw/l/ref=aw_wl_sr_res_1_2?ie=UTF8&lid=3DBNK8NXFLSLE)

## 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:**

Toni Albert	
American Legion Havana Post #138	Havana, Illinois
Animal Grace LLC	Mancos, Colorado
Richard Baumer	
Bruce Bockman	
Stanton Bost	
Elaine Byrne	
Patricia Carter	
Christian Print Shop	John's Creek, Georgia
Dairy Queen	Wentzville, Missouri
Laura Dobson	
Doc Spartan	Portsmouth, Ohio
Rick Dreibelbis	
Kyle and Ashley Dunkle	
Ford Gum and Machine Co.	Buffalo Grove, Illinois
Beate Frank	
Elizabeth Greenberg	
Impact Confections	Janesville, Wisconsin
Sarah Lagasse	
Jackie Lochridge	
Linda Macintyre	
Mammoth Pet Products	Mammoth Lakes, California

Margaret Merkle	
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	San Juan Capistrano, California
Patriot Pet Products	Port Orange, Florida
Patricia Armstrong Dressler Foundation	
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Raeann Patton	
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Nikki Rohrig	
Robert Schnell	
Phyllis Springfield	
Andy and Leigh Steere	
Angie Stramaglio	
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Pamela Wadsworth	
Jerry and Dixie Whitman	
Jamie Wright	
John Wyatt	
Zuke's	Durango, Colorado
Suzanne from the Amazon Wish List	
Kristen V. from the Amazon Wish List	
Anonymous donations from Amazon Wish List	

## *Our Superhero boxes received rave reviews*



MWD TSA care packages sent in early March reached their destinations around the world. Join us as we share some of the photos that we have received back from our amazing "Superhero" dog teams.

Top Left: A Navy dog at an undisclosed location poses with the boxes received by handlers at his kennel.

Top right: A dynamic duo shows off the Black Widow bandanna created by Jan Slotar.

Bottom row: Jerry poses in his handler's new shirt, a dog balances his new KONG flyer toy, a lab balances his Spiderman cookie on his forehead and handsome GSD Mirko poses with his new Doggles.



Superhero Boxes Received continued from Page 11

Photos courtesy of deployed handlers



Above: "Another great day overseas thanks to MWD TSA. Not all heroes wear capes! Toni and I really can't put into words how much we appreciate packages, especially this one! It means so much to have that support system for our four legged heroes!"



Above: Teams at an Air Force kennel open boxes designed especially with their needs in mind and show off their new T shirts, designed by our MWD TSA graphic artist, Christa Ursini.



Left: Celebrating a box full of goodies.



Left: Wowza! Look at all of these goodies. Speaking of balancing acts, this guy has both the KONG Flyer and the rubber duck on his head.

Right: Both ends of the leash received jerky appropriate for their species, thanks to Delca Corp. and Golden West Food Group.



Superhero Boxes Received continued on Page 13

Superhero Boxes Received continued from Page 12

Photos courtesy of deployed handlers



MWD looks good in his new Doggles and bandanna with a stash of goodies on the table behind him.



Navy handlers give our 1st Quarter T shirts a "thumbs up."



Spiderman cookies were another hit.



A whole lot of something good going on here for this adorable lab.



## Base Visit

# MWDTSA Visits Kings Bay

Story and photos by Lisa Eiser

For all the moving around military families do, it can actually be quite difficult to travel for fun. Plans have a way of being hijacked at the last minute by TDYs (Temporary Duty), deployments, and additional duties. So when the stars line up just right to make an awesome trip possible, it's basically a miracle. This is exactly what happened for my family last month. I'm the proud mom of a sailor stationed at Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay in Georgia. We already had a trip planned to visit our son when Nikki Rohrig, the MWDTSA President, offered us the chance to visit the MWD kennels at Kings Bay while there—serendipity!

Along for this adventure were my husband, Mike, our son, Cole, and fellow MWDTSA volunteer Beate Frank. The four of us were welcomed on base by Master-at-Arms (MA) Michael Fites, who then escorted us to the kennels and introduced us to the crew. The handlers and dogs are part of two separate, but joint units on base. The security unit provides anti-terrorism protection for the entire base and commanding officers, while the K-9 Military Police dogs perform narcotic detection on base. Together, the two units keep each other on their toes with teamwork and good-natured ribbing.

Three MAs received MWDTSA care packages while they were deployed in Afghanistan and Bahrain. They were all very grateful for their boxes, especially the hand-written letters and artwork from children who have learned about MWDTSA in school. The handlers and their MWDs also appreciated the assortment of goodies that Beate brought along, particularly the pretzels, which the handlers called "heaven."

After our meet and greet with the crew, they took us on a tour of the kennels. We met MWD Deny, an American Bulldog and Belgian Malinois mix. He

instantly captured our hearts with his big personality. Deny didn't need any prompting to attack his new peanut chew toy, quickly displaying why his breeds are known to be aggressive chewers. Deny, who is retiring soon, then gave us his salute, as if to say he approved of all the loot.

After the tour, MA Mitchell and MWD Maggie gave us a demonstration. Maggie is a very active eight-year-old black lab, who showed us her amazing abilities from the police side of the kennel. Next, MA Nobles, MA Stiles (both recipients of boxes while deployed), and MWD Pad demonstrated several takedown techniques. MWD Pad was on alert as soon as MA Stiles donned the bite jacket, and Pad showed us exactly why MWDs are so effective in subduing a fleeing suspect.

Afterwards, the kennel master, Master Chief Norunner, let us chat with the handlers for a bit. Lt. Fogel, who heads the K-9 division, also stopped in to thank us for our continued support of the MWDs and handlers. All in all, it was a wonderful visit that this Navy mom was thrilled to share with her son. Thank you to the crew at the Kings Bay kennels for your hospitality and for sharing your amazing dogs with us.



And my patch is going right here!

MWDTSA visits Kings Bay continued on page 15

MWD TSA visits Kings Bay continued from page 14

## Scenes from the Kings Bay visit



The way to a sailor's heart. Pretzels.



This is MY ball!



First come, first served RIGHT?



Some very happy recipients of a MWD TSA Kennel Visit at Naval Submarine Base, Kings Bay, Georgia.



Navy MWD Deny gives a salute.



You'd better not run.... I gotcha covered.



Navy MWD Maggie at the ready.

# MWD Riki R.I.P.

Story by Linda Costa-Bryan. Color photos by DoD photographers.

Black and white photos by Tech. Sgt. Heather Redman.

Heaven now has another angel to watch over us all on earth. Following an illness, MWD Riki (P618) crossed the rainbow bridge on 2 March. Two weeks later, I had the honor of attending his memorial service. I was greeted by many sad, familiar faces. We shared hugs, handshakes, and tears, as a digital slideshow of MWD Riki's life flooded the auditorium with memories. The stage was transformed into a memorial fit for a K-9 king. Riki's empty travel crate signaled that he was no longer in residence at the kennel. Next to the crate were his lead and collar, no longer in use. An upside-down food dish signified that Riki no longer needed human care. Lastly, the American flag and the state flag of Hawaii were set next to a formal photo of MWD Riki.

Chaplain Jones delivered the invocation. Several people spoke fondly of their experiences with MWD Riki, and none more so than Petty Officer 3rd Class Cortland Woods, Riki's last handler. An emotional Petty Officer Woods recounted his time with MWD Riki, who was Woods' very first canine partner after completion of his training. Woods ended his talk with a quote from Roger Caras: "Dogs are not our whole life, but they make our lives whole."

The service continued on as another handler recited a parable:

## THE CREATION OF MAN'S BEST FRIEND

"God summoned a beast from the field, and He said, 'Behold, man is created in My image. Therefore, adore him. You shall protect him in the wilderness, shepherd his flocks, watch over his children, accompany him wherever he may go, even into civilization.

You shall be his companion, his ally, and his slave. To do these things, I endow you with the instincts uncommon to other beasts: faithfulness, devotion, and understanding, surpassing those of man himself. Lest it impair your courage, you shall never foresee your death. Lest it impair your loyalty, you shall be blind to the faults of man. Lest it impair your understanding, you are denied the power of words. Speak to your master only through your mind and your honest eyes.

'Walk by his side; sleep in his doorway; ward off his enemies; carry his burden; share his affliction; love and comfort him. And in return for this, man will fulfill your needs and wants, which shall be only food, shelter and affection. So be a friend of man. Guide him through the perils along the way to this land I have promised him. This shall be your destiny and your immortality.'

The dog heard and was content."

By that point, I was a blubbering mess, along with everyone else in attendance. But we weren't done with the tissues just yet. Five MWDs and their handlers gave Riki a final K-9 salute. Petty Officer Sosa then read "Guardians of the Night," as an American flag was folded and placed on MWD Riki's empty crate. The memorial service concluded with the playing of Taps, and we were all invited to pay our final respects to Riki.

Rest in Peace MWD Riki—forever in our hearts.

MWD Riki R.I.P. continued from page 16



Above: U.S. Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class Cortland Woods, Joint Base Security, JB2 dog handler, and his military working dog Riki, walk through a cordon of security forces members to the veterinary treatment facility.



Above: U.S. Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class Cortland Woods pets military working dog Riki at the veterinary treatment facility on Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii.

Right: U.S. Army Capt. Anna-Maria Travis and Capt. Jeramie Abel, Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam veterinarians, transfer military working dog Riki's remains to a security forces vehicle.



Below left: Two weeks later at the memorial, an emotional Petty Officer Woods recounted his time with MWD Riki, who was Woods' very first canine partner after completion of his training.

Below right: An American flag was folded and placed on MWD Riki's empty crate. The memorial service concluded with the playing of Taps, and we were all invited to pay our final respects to Riki.



## Sit. Stay. Support.

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## Parting Shots

## Kansas



Senior Airman Brandon Proctor, 22nd Security Forces Squadron military working dog handler, walks with Iras, an MWD, as he proudly drags the bite suit that was used during his training session March 23, 2017, at McConnell Air Force Base, Kan. Iras was allowed to carry the jacket as a reward for doing well. (U.S. Air Force photo/Airman 1st Class Erin McClellan)