Use of Police Canines on Perimeter Searches

Purpose
The purpose of this Training Bulletin is to provide officers with instruction on the dynamics and concepts of canine searches. This Training Bulletin provides officers with tactics that have been successfully used in containing and apprehending appropriate suspects who flee on foot. The Santa Ana Police Department uses trained police service dogs to enhance the safety of our officers and aid in the apprehension and arrest of appropriate suspects.

Introduction
Police officers are continuously confronted with circumstances where certain types of suspects flee on foot and attempt to avoid arrest by concealing themselves within the community. (Situations where canine deployment is appropriate include fleeing felons; a barricaded/hidden suspect whose position is known but refuses to surrender and weapons are unknown, etc.) When this occurs, there are times when the safest method for locating and apprehending the suspects is the use of the canine. With this in mind, the subject of perimeter tactics and the use of the canine team should be planned.

I. Perimeters
The key to a successful perimeter is speed. Patrol Officers must act quickly and communicate their intentions to establish a perimeter. The initiating officer must actively direct and coordinate responding officers into an effective and solid perimeter.

1. Request air support.
2. Once the initial perimeter is set, request that Communications assign an off channel (preferably green 3 or 4.) This allows Communications to monitor the progress and provides the ability to communicate with perimeter officers.
3. The size of the perimeter is a judgment call depending on the area to be searched. While establishing the perimeter, attention must be given to avenues of escape (alleys, riverbeds, cul-de-sacs, etc.) It is better to have a perimeter too large than too small.
4. Upon the arrival of the canine team, the handler shall consult with the supervisor or acting supervisor on scene where practicable to ensure that the use of the canine is within policy. The sergeant will have the ultimate responsibility of overseeing the operation.
5. Prior to beginning the search of the area, a search team and plan should be established. The search team should consist of officers that are not at perimeter locations.

6. The officers will be briefed on the initial crime and description of the suspect(s).

7. A canine announcement shall be made consisting of the following language, or language which is similar, where practicable:

"THIS IS THE SANTA ANA POLICE DEPARTMENT. WE ARE GOING TO USE A POLICE DOG. COME OUT IMMEDIATELY OR YOU MAY BE HURT."

"IF YOU COME OUT NOW AND SUBMIT TO ARREST. THE DOG WILL NOT BE RELEASED."

(It is acknowledged that there may be circumstances when an announcement, due to exigent circumstances will not be able to be made, or that the announcement can be shorter or longer, or contain different words as determined in the discretion of the handler, and as the situation and time permits).

In those situations where an announcement is given, perimeter officers shall acknowledge the announcement was heard and understood either by verbal affirmation or via radio telecommunication prior to the deployment of the canine. The handler shall advise communications and the other officers the search has begun and the starting location of commencement (physical location).

The incident supervisor and Communications shall be updated as the search progresses where practicable. During the search, radio discipline shall be maintained and radio traffic restricted to priority traffic only, where practicable.

II. Search Team Cell Concept

1. The search team cell concept is one that is used in many law enforcement agencies. The cell concept consists of either a three or four member search team. This concept affords the handler cover while allowing for movement during a canine search. It should be understood that no two canine searches will be the same.

2. The canine team will consist of the handler and canine. The search team will consist of a #2 officer whose responsibility is to search closely alongside the canine officer and maintain visual coverage of the area in front of the handler.

3. The #3 and #4 search team members shall be responsible for the left and right sides.

4. When deploying a shoulder-fired weapon, it is imperative that the officer deploying such weapon remain in a position to minimize the risk of injury to other members of the search team. Optimal positions may be directly next to or in some instances slightly in front of the handler. It is important that the officer not fall behind and cause an officer safety issue.

5. When deploying through open doorways or fenced gates, the canine shall be sent to search the area prior to entering, unless otherwise impracticable.
6. The handler shall have tactical control over the search team and its involvement. Search teams shall maintain visual responsibilities of their search area and not focus on the canine.

7. When the handler has read a possible alert by the canine, he/she shall inform the team verbally or by hand signal as predetermined. This will allow officers to locate tactical positions of advantage and move toward them while simultaneously providing cover for the handler.

8. When a suspect has been located and is concealed; **only the handler shall give verbal commands to the suspect to surrender.** If the suspect refuses to comply and does not surrender, the canine will be deployed.

9. While the canine has a bite hold of the suspect, only the handler shall give directions to the suspect to comply and surrender. Officers shall not take hold of the suspect until directed to do so by the handler.

10. If an emergency occurs during the search inside the perimeter, (shots fired or suspect running), officers should hold their position and maintain perimeter integrity unless directed to move by the handler or supervisor.

11. A [diagram](#) of the search team concept is attached to this Training Bulletin illustrating the area of responsibility.

**Summary**

The canine team is a valuable asset to patrol officers in the field. Officers should keep in mind that suspects who refuse to submit to arrest either by physically resisting or flee and conceal themselves, pose a threat of serious injury to the officers involved in the search for the suspect.

The use of the canine to search and locate suspects enhances officer safety and increases the chance for a successful apprehension.

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