

GO-VAP, South Viet Nam--German shepherd dogs purchased in the United States are being ~~train~~ trained here to follow orders issued in Vietnamese for combat use against Communist Viet Cong guerrillas.

The Military Dog Training Center, where steel kennels and small wooden dog houses are nestled among shady trees, is situated in this suburban area five miles from central Saigon.

Commanded by ~~Mar~~ Maj. Le-Thanh-Do, a former veterinarian, the center consists of training and administrative sections, plus a clinic where dogs are vaccinated for hepatitis, distemper and rabies. From 6 to 7 ~~am~~ every morning, the dogs have sick call for such ailments as prickly skin rashes which develop under their thick coats in this tropical climate.

~~Amherst College, Massachusetts~~
The primary mission of the center is to train volunteer Vietnamese soldiers to be masters of their dogs and to train the dogs to understand ~~h~~ their handler's orders by gesture or voice," explained Lt. Nguyen Duc Chi, who returned recently from an eight-month study program at the Dog Sentry School, Lackland Air Force Base, San Antonio, Tex.

Such close teamwork is developed between dog and man that if the master ~~is killed~~, the dog must be re-trained to obey another handler.

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Maximum price for the selected German shepherds, purchased throughout the United States, is about ^{2.5}U. S. \$150 each.

A breeding center of bloodhounds and Dobermann Pinschers, counseled by the U. S. Air Force, will be brought under control of the training center, which functions under the Vietnamese Army General Staff and is advised by the U. S. Army.

Much of this canine story is ~~shar~~^{is} shrouded in military secrecy. The number of dogs now in Viet Nam is classified although the Vietnamese military is known to have asked that 3,000 be sent to this small country. Future deployment of the dogs throughout the republic and total cost of the program is also unauthorized public information. A permanent training center is being built ten miles from Go-Vap for 300 military dogs--"quan khuyen" in Vietnamese.

"We don't want to tell the Viet Cong any more than they know," said Capt. Robert Stecker, of Iowa City, Iowa, senior U. S. advisor here. "If they know our tactics, it ~~won't~~^{is} won't surprise them."

In the early morning hours, a barrage of barks rips through this quiet suburban area of expensive homes and poor refugee huts. ~~The~~^{Do} The Rovers of Viet Nam are demanding their breakfast ~~of~~^{of} rice, vegetables, commercial meat and a ^{sprinkling of} little salt.

The canine corps is then muzzled for protection and trucked three miles to a field training area where they work in the cool morning hours or at night on security problems.

The dogs are trained ~~in~~^{to} either sentry or scouting work, depending on their future use in warfare against the Viet Cong.

"Sentry teams are trained to guard and protect ammunition depots, aircraft bases, radio control centers and other tactical sites," Lt. Chi, head of the training section, said.

Rolf, No. 482 R, demonstrated the problems of a sentry dog.

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From behind a thicket waddled a Maſs-like man covered from head to foot with 50 pounds of thickly padded burlap. The 90-pound canine attacked the "enemy" on the command of "Can no" and gnashed at the burlap until his master shouted "Thoi" (stop). Barking feverishly, he was ordered to "Coi chung" (watch him), as the handler searched the intruder. At the slightest ~~jump~~ movement by the "enemy", Rolf automatically attacked him again to protect his master.

"In Texas I've seen dogs bite right through the padding and draw blood," Lt. Chi said. "A dog's bite can break a man's arm."

Harry, No. 481, had an even more delicate task as a scouting dog "to detect decoys, to discover enemy ambushes or raids, to facilitate intelligence and combat patrols and hence to reduce our casualties."

Through the straggly bushes at the training center, he was expected to "tell" his handler where two "Viet Cong" were hiding behind a ~~Spanish~~ distant banana tree. He casually, but silently stalked through the underbrush.

"Look at him. You'd think he was goofing off," Capt. Stecker said.

Then, suddenly, Harry's nose sniffed the wind. His ears pricked up. His head towered in the air as he made a 180-degree turn in the direction of the hunted. He had detected the "enemy." So he just sat down—a signal for the patrol behind him to take cover.

In combat conditions, the patrol leader would decide whether to attack or avoid the enemy. But in training, Harry could get only one or two rewards: an affectionate pat from his master or the opportunity for an exciting chase of the "let's pretend" ~~enemy~~ foe.

"Scouting is very important in Viet Nam," Lt. Chi explained. "The terrain features are real tough—such as mountains, jungles and swamps, where guerrilla tactics are very successful."

He said in a January operation, one unit of the 5th Inf. Div., aided by dogs graduated from the training center, captured 50 Viet Cong with important documents hidden in trenches and camouflaged beneath the ground.

A two-week session of training common to both sentry and scouting dogs is basic obedience drill, where the canine is taught to follow his master's instructions.

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"Obedience drill is hard work for a dog," ~~said~~ Capt. Stecker said.

"He must behave all the time. It takes time and patience by the handler because it is the heart of later training."

A few of the dogs balked at orders to lay down. "It's hard to get them to stretch out on the ground when it's hot," said an American sergeant. "They like to lay in the shade."

~~He~~ Capt. Stecker added, "If they are out in the sun too long, they get mean. It's like with a person, they can easily get a sun stroke and heat exhaustion."

Capt. Stecker and nine other Americans, including veterinary staff, ~~represent~~ ^{years} from here the U. S. Military Advisory Assistance Group (MAAG). They act as instructors to both dog handlers and future training center tutors.

Capt. Stecker, whom his friends call "Bow-Wow," has worked with dogs for four ^{years} in Ft. Benning, Ga., Ft. Carson, Colo., and Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. Other MAAG staffers here have used dogs in the Pacific in World War II and in Korea.

During the Korean War, the soldiers in one company using dogs were so confident of their canine companions that a twitch of the ears alerted the unit to the enemy. One night the company commander saw his whole detachment ~~had~~ grab their guns. One dog had inadvertently yawned.

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Dog captions

Pix 1-3: A sentry dog attacks a well-padded "enemy" in field training exercises.

Pix 4-7: A scouting dog silently stalks through the underbrush to find a hidden foe.

Pix 8: The temporary quarters of some of the dogs at the training center.

Pix 9: The dogs at the training center are taught to be mean--to attack anyone on his handler's command. The dogs will be ~~xxx~~ ^{Vietnamese} parcelled out after graduating from the training center to the Airborne Brigade, the Marines, Navy, Air Force, Ranger Command, Army of Viet Nam, Civil Guard and a national geographic survey team.