

# **SWGDOG SC9 – HUMAN SCENT DOGS**

## **Non-specific Human Scent Wilderness Area Search (Air scent)**

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**Non-specific human scent wilderness area searches** are used to locate live people in unpopulated wilderness areas through air scenting by a trained canine team. The goal of this type of search is for the canine team to utilize the wind by way of air scenting, to search for and detect live people within a defined search area. This differs from other types of searches where the canine follows the target's foot track.

**Statement of purpose:** To provide recommended guidelines for training, certification and documentation pertaining to non-specific human scent wilderness area search canines.

### ***1. INITIAL TRAINING***

- 1.1. The handler shall be trained by a competent, qualified, non-specific human scent wilderness area canine trainer from an entity that utilizes a structured curriculum with specific training and learning objectives.
- 1.2. The canine shall be trained by a competent individual or entity through a structured curriculum with specific training and learning objectives.
- 1.3. Initial training shall include a level of obedience to ensure the canine will operate effectively based on mission requirements.
- 1.4. The canine shall be trained to perform an effective, independent, controlled search on or off lead.
- 1.5. The initial training of the canine shall include training of a determined specific final response (active or passive) upon locating the victim.
- 1.6. Initial training shall include exposing the canine team to a variety of locations and expected situations.
- 1.7. The training shall be structured to meet the typical mission requirements of the canine team's department or organization.
- 1.8. Handler training shall include the following topics:
  - 1.8.1. Search techniques, tactics, and equipment.
  - 1.8.2. Environmental conditions that effect odor dispersion, in order to maximize the team's search efficiency.
  - 1.8.3. First aid for canine team and subject.
  - 1.8.4. Pertinent National Incident Management Systems (NIMS) classes (i.e., ICS 100 and 200, and IS 700 and any applicable updates) which can be taken online.

- 1.9. The canine team's training shall be continued until a level of operational proficiency is achieved and the team is certified.

## **2. CANINE TEAM ASSESSMENTS**

- 2.1. Assessments are part of certification, maintenance training and proficiency testing.
- 2.2. Assessment parameters should be appropriate to operational requirements. Non-specific scent wilderness area search canines can be deployed in a wide variety of circumstances.
- 2.3. Each assessment is the evaluation of a search.
- 2.4. The canine team shall be assessed as follows:
  - 2.4.1. Odor recognition assessments shall evaluate:
    - 2.4.1.1. The handler's ability to organize and articulate a logical and systematic search pattern utilizing the wind and terrain to the canine's advantage.
    - 2.4.1.2. The handler's ability to perform a systematic search with the canine.
    - 2.4.1.3. The handler's interpretation of the canine's behavior.
    - 2.4.1.4. The canine team's ability to locate all relevant human targets.
    - 2.4.1.5. The canine's ability to perform an effective independent search without continuous handler guidance.
    - 2.4.1.6. The canine's response to a human target.
    - 2.4.1.7. The handler's interpretation of the canine's response.
    - 2.4.1.8. The canine's ability to ignore distractions.
  - 2.4.2. An odor recognition assessment consists of a single search:
    - 2.4.2.1. The assessment shall occur in an environment similar to where the canine usually works in daylight hours. Typically, this is an unpopulated environment where animals and human scented objects may be present.
    - 2.4.2.2. The search area shall be approximately 20,000 m<sup>2</sup> (5 acres) in size.
    - 2.4.2.3. One target shall walk into the search area in such a way as to encourage the use of air scenting. The target shall hide in a stationary position, but not in an enclosed location (i.e., tents, caves, sleeping bags).
      - 2.4.2.3.1. The target shall not be a person routinely or recently used as a target to train the canine.
      - 2.4.2.3.2. The handler shall know the number of the targets, but not the placement.
    - 2.4.2.4. For multiple assessments run consecutively, the target position shall be different for each assessment. It is recommended that a new search area is used for each team.

- 2.4.2.5. Set time and search time shall be determined by the certifying authority and shall be dependent on the terrain, vegetative cover, and by operational requirements. A typical search time for approximately 20,000 m<sup>2</sup> (5 acres) would be under 30 minutes.
- 2.4.2.6. The evaluating official shall inform the handler of the search parameters which will include the area to be searched and the number of human targets to be located.
- 2.4.2.7. The handler shall decide to work with the canine on or off lead depending on the operational requirements, training, and trained canine response.
- 2.4.2.8. The handler shall advise the evaluating official of his or her decision. Should conditions necessitate a change in that decision, the handler shall notify the evaluating official what prompted the change to his or her original decision.
- 2.4.2.9. The handler must disclose the canine's response prior to the start of the assessment.
- 2.4.2.10. The handler shall demonstrate a logical, systematic search pattern utilizing the wind and terrain to the canine's advantage.
- 2.4.2.11. The evaluating official shall know the location of the target(s) and desired outcome of the search.
- 2.4.2.12. The canine must locate and alert on the target(s) independent of specific directions from the handler.
- 2.4.2.13. Any false response constitutes a failure.
- 2.4.3. Comprehensive assessments test the following:
  - 2.4.3.1. The handler's ability to set up a logical, systematic search pattern utilizing the wind and terrain to the canine's advantage.
  - 2.4.3.2. The handler's ability to perform a systematic search with the canine.
  - 2.4.3.3. The canine team's ability to locate all relevant human targets.
  - 2.4.3.4. The canine's ability to conduct a search pattern.
  - 2.4.3.5. The canine's response to a human target.
  - 2.4.3.6. The handler's interpretation of the canine's response.
  - 2.4.3.7. The canine's ability to ignore distractions.
  - 2.4.3.8. The handler's ability to conclude the search (no one left to find).
- 2.4.4. Comprehensive assessments (single-blind assessments) examine a level of competence based on an average-sized search area. Larger search areas can be tested through proficiency testing.
  - 2.4.4.1. The assessment shall occur in an environment similar to actual search conditions (including day or night). Typically, this is an unpopulated environment where animal and human scented objects may be present.
  - 2.4.4.2. The assessment area shall be between 0.16 km<sup>2</sup> – 0.24 km<sup>2</sup> (40-60 acres) in size unless the certifying agency specifies a search area more appropriate to the regional terrain.
  - 2.4.4.3. One to three targets shall walk into the search area in such a way as to encourage the use of air scenting. The target(s) may hide in a stationary position, in an enclosed location (i.e., tents, caves, sleeping

- bags) or may be moving as specified by the assessing agency, but shall not deliberately evade.
- 2.4.4.3.1. The target(s) shall not be a person routinely or recently used to train the canine.
  - 2.4.4.3.2. The handler shall not know the number or placement of the targets.
  - 2.4.4.4. The target positions shall be unique for each assessment. It is recommended that a new search area be used for each team.
  - 2.4.4.5. Set time and search time shall be determined by the certifying agency and shall be dependent on the terrain, vegetative cover, and by operational requirements. Typical search times for 0.16 km<sup>2</sup>- 0.24 km<sup>2</sup> (40 - 60 acres) would not exceed two hours including rest periods.
  - 2.4.4.6. The handler shall be provided with a map of the search area.
  - 2.4.4.7. The handler shall decide to work with the canine on or off lead depending on the operational requirements, training, and trained canine response and shall advise the evaluating official of his or her decision. Should conditions necessitate a change in that decision, the handler shall notify the evaluating official regarding the reasons for the change.
  - 2.4.4.8. The handler must articulate the canine's response to the evaluating official prior to the start of the assessment.
  - 2.4.4.9. The evaluating official(s) shall know the location of the target(s).
  - 2.4.4.10. The evaluating official(s) shall know the outcome of the search.
  - 2.4.4.11. The handler shall demonstrate a logical, systematic search pattern utilizing the wind and terrain to the canine's advantage.
  - 2.4.4.12. If there are multiple targets, the handler shall restart at a location of their choosing to ensure efficient coverage of the search area.
  - 2.4.4.13. Once a target has been located, the certifying agency shall specify whether the target stays in place or leaves the area.
  - 2.4.4.14. The canine must locate and should perform its trained final response on the target independent of specific directions from the handler.
  - 2.4.4.15. Any false indication or non-find constitutes a failure.
  - 2.4.4.16. The assessments shall include a blank search.
  - 2.4.4.17. The team must locate all targets.
  - 2.4.4.18. The handler must be able to determine when there are no targets left to find.
  - 2.4.4.19. At the conclusion of the search the handler shall document the following on the map provided: the area covered, and the number and position of all targets found.
  - 2.4.5. Double-blind assessments demonstrate the proficiency of the canine team in an operational setting.
    - 2.4.5.1. A double blind assessment shall consist of a single search.
    - 2.4.5.2. The assessment shall occur in an environment similar to where and when the canine usually works. Typically, this is an unpopulated environment where animal and human scented objects may be present.

- 2.4.5.3. The search area size shall depend on operational requirements.
- 2.4.5.4. One to three targets shall walk into the search area in such a way as to encourage the use of air scenting. The target(s) may hide in a stationary location, an observed location (i.e., tent, cave, sleeping bag), or may be moving, but shall not deliberately evade.
  - 2.4.5.4.1 The targets shall not be persons routinely or recently used to train the canine.
  - 2.4.5.4.2. The handler shall not know the number or placement of the targets.
- 2.4.5.5. The target positions shall be unique for each assessment.
- 2.4.5.6. Set time and search time shall be determined by the certifying agency and shall be dependent on the terrain, vegetative cover, and by operational requirements.
- 2.4.5.7. The handler shall be provided with a map of the search area, but not the number of human targets to be located.
- 2.4.5.8. Neither the handler, the evaluating official if used, nor any individual present shall know the correct outcome of any portion of assessment.
- 2.4.5.9. The handler will set up a logical, systematic search pattern utilizing the wind and terrain to the canine's advantage.
- 2.4.5.10. The canine team will perform a systematic search.
- 2.4.5.11. The handler shall decide to work with the canine on or off lead depending on the operational requirements, training, and trained canine response and shall advise the evaluating official of his or her decision. Should conditions necessitate a change in that decision, the handler shall notify the evaluating official what prompted the change to his or her original decision.
- 2.4.5.12. The handler shall start at a location of their choosing.
- 2.4.5.13. If there are multiple targets, the handler shall restart at a location of his or her choosing to ensure total coverage of the search area.
- 2.4.5.14. The canine must locate and should perform its trained final response on the target independently of specific directions from the handler.
- 2.4.5.15. The handler must articulate the canine's response to the evaluating official prior to the start of the assessment.
- 2.4.5.16. Any false indication or non-find constitutes a failure.
- 2.4.5.17. The assessments may include a blank search.
- 2.4.5.18. The team must locate all targets.
- 2.4.5.19. The handler must be able to determine when there are no targets left to find.
- 2.4.5.20. At the conclusion of the search the handler shall document the following on the provided map: the area covered and the number and position of targets found.
- 2.4.5.21. The evaluating official shall compare the documented search results with the parameters of the search at the conclusion of the assessment.
- 2.4.5.22. Neither participant nor observer present at the assessment location shall be aware of the desired outcome of the search.

### **3. CANINE TEAM CERTIFICATION**

- 3.1. Certification for the named canine team shall be valid for one year.
  - 3.1.1. Certification does not relieve the canine team from regular maintenance training, periodic proficiency assessments and following other recommended SWGDOG guidelines.
  - 3.1.2. The certifying official(s) shall not be routinely involved in the day to day training of the canine team being evaluated.
  - 3.1.3. Handler errors, when excessive may result in failure of the team.
  - 3.1.4. A mission oriented test environment shall be used.
- 3.2. Certification shall consist of a number of assessments that together form the full test.
  - 3.2.1. Each assessment is the evaluation of a search.
  - 3.2.2. Targets used in the day to day training activities of the team being certified shall not be used in the certification process.
  - 3.2.3. The certification shall be comprised of a comprehensive assessment together with either an odor recognition assessment or a double blind assessment, or both.
- 3.3. A canine team that fails the certification process shall complete a corrective action plan before making another attempt to certify.

### **4. MAINTENANCE TRAINING**

- 4.1. The canine team shall conduct regular objective-oriented training sufficient to maintain and enhance operational proficiency. Maintenance training shall include the following:
  - 4.1.1. Correcting identified deficiencies or operational concerns.
  - 4.1.2. A variety of search location areas and environmental conditions in which the team may be deployed.
  - 4.1.3. Varied duration of search times.
  - 4.1.4. Varied times of day or night.
  - 4.1.5. A variety of blank searches.
  - 4.1.6. A variety of distractions in the search areas.
  - 4.1.7. A variety of set times.
  - 4.1.8. A variety of targets and number of targets.
  - 4.1.9. A variety of hiding or concealment locations.
- 4.2. Training conducted solely by the handler to maintain the canine's proficiency is acceptable, but should be periodically combined with supervised training.
  - 4.2.1. Supervised training, by a qualified trainer or instructor, is recommended in order to monitor and improve performance, identify and correct training deficiencies and perform proficiency assessments.

- 4.3. A canine team shall spend a minimum of 16 hours per month training to maintain and improve the proficiency level of the team.
- 4.4. The canine team shall perform periodic proficiency assessments as outlined in section two - the Canine Team Assessments. These assessments should include a variety of odor recognition assessments, comprehensive assessments and/or double-blind assessments.

## **5. RECORDS AND DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT**

- 5.1. The handler, department, or organization shall document training, certification, proficiency assessment, and discipline-related deployment data.
  - 5.1.1. Proficiency assessments and training records may be combined or separate documents.
  - 5.1.2. Discipline related deployment records shall be maintained separately from training, certification and proficiency assessment records.
  - 5.1.3. Training and discipline related records should be standardized within the department or organization.
- 5.2. Training records may include, but are not limited to, the following data:
  - 5.2.1. Name of handler and canine.
  - 5.2.2. Names of individuals conducting or assisting in training.
  - 5.2.3. Time and date of training.
  - 5.2.4. Location and environmental conditions of training.
  - 5.2.5. Training design (non-blind, single-blind or double-blind).
  - 5.2.6. Description and number of targets.
  - 5.2.7. Location of targets.
  - 5.2.8. Set time.
  - 5.2.9. Size of search area.
  - 5.2.10. Length of training session.
  - 5.2.11. Search results.
  - 5.2.12. Deficiencies and corrective measures implemented.
  - 5.2.13. Other information required by the team's department or organization.
- 5.3. Certification records shall be maintained by the certifying authority and the handler and include the following information:
  - 5.3.1. Name of handler and canine.
  - 5.3.2. Date team certified.
  - 5.3.3. Certification authority (i.e., agency, professional organization or individual).
  - 5.3.4. The standard or guideline to which the canine team is certified.
  - 5.3.5. Name of individual(s) awarding certification.
  - 5.3.6. Search area types included in assessment certification.
  - 5.3.7. Location of certification.

- 5.3.8. Set time.
- 5.4. Proficiency assessment records maintained by the handler, department or organization may include, but are not limited to, the following data:
  - 5.4.1. Name of handler and canine.
  - 5.4.2. Names of individuals conducting assessment.
  - 5.4.3. Time and date of assessment.
  - 5.4.4. Location and environmental conditions of assessment.
  - 5.4.5. Assessment design (single-blind or double-blind).
  - 5.4.6. Search area types included in the assessment.
  - 5.4.7. Description and number of targets.
  - 5.4.8. Location of targets.
  - 5.4.9. Set time.
  - 5.4.10. Size of search area.
  - 5.4.11. Proficiency assessment results.
  - 5.4.12. Other information required by the team's department or organization.
- 5.5. Supervisory review of all records is recommended
- 5.6. Digitally formatted records are recommended to facilitate compiling and analyzing data.
- 5.7. Records may be discoverable in court proceedings and may become evidence of the canine team's reliability. Record retention policy shall be determined by the team's department or organization guidelines.
- 5.8. Training records are necessary to illustrate the type and amount of training that the team has experienced before and after certification.
- 5.9. Confirmed operational outcomes can be used to determine capability.
- 5.10. Unconfirmed operational outcomes shall not be used to determine capability in that they do not correctly evaluate a canine team's proficiency.
- 5.11. Veterinary records.
  - 5.11.1. Veterinary records shall be maintained in a manner allowing accessibility to the handler, department or organization.
  - 5.11.2. Vaccinations required by state or local law should be documented in the veterinary record of the canine.