



UNCLASSIFIED//LAW ENFORCEMENT SENSITIVE

Information Bulletin

(U//LES) Deployment of an Explosives Detection Canine



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UNCLASSIFIED//LAW ENFORCEMENT SENSITIVE**(U) INTRODUCTION**

(U) The explosives detection canine is a very useful tool to an investigation. When properly deployed, it can be very effective in locating explosives, Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), firearms, shell casings and other evidentiary materials. Just as with other tools law enforcement personnel have at their disposal, it can only be effective if the knowledge exists to know how and when it should be deployed.

(U) On a regular basis, canine handlers are called upon to deploy their canines to search lone packages or items that have been purposely or accidentally left behind. These requests come from law enforcement, or other personnel, that may have never been instructed in the proper procedures for dealing with unattended and suspicious package incidents.

(U) This information bulletin is published to inform law enforcement personnel when to request explosives detection canine support based on a distinction between unattended and suspicious packages.

(U) ATF has developed Suggested Guidelines and Procedures for their canine teams concerning packages, items, or vehicles that have been declared suspicious by a credible source (see attached guidelines).

(U//LES) DEFINITIONS

(U//LES) *Suspicious package*: Any package, based on the totality of the circumstances, which may not belong in the environment in which it has been located. Furthermore, any action or circumstance that makes the package suspicious; e.g., packages that are witnessed to have been purposely abandoned, backpacks or bags left in a secure area, and items that by their mere existence cannot be logically explained.

(U//LES) *Unattended packages/items*: Any item, which when looking at the totality of the circumstances, would normally be present in the environment in which the item was found; e.g., a briefcase left in a conference room or a beverage cooler at a football game.

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UNCLASSIFIED//LAW ENFORCEMENT SENSITIVE**(U//LES) BACKGROUND**

(U//LES) Explosives detection canines are trained to discriminate between explosives odors and other normally occurring odors. When an item is located and determined to be unattended and *not* suspicious, and a canine search is warranted, the item should be incorporated into the normal search pattern for the venue in which the item is located. If the item is determined to be suspicious, then the local police department and/or bomb squad should be notified and the area evacuated and secured.



(U//LES) *Some reasons not to search suspicious packages are:*

- Availability of explosives odors from the item or package
- Complexity of the IED, such as anti-disturbance.
- Unnecessary Time on Target (TOT)
- Making a non-life threatening incident life threatening
- Ability or quality of the canine itself could be less than 100% effective due to various conditions.

(U) INTERNATIONAL INCIDENT

(U) Open source reporting indicates that the employment of explosives detection canines may be a problem in other countries as well. CNN reported that, “A small bomb has exploded in Barcelona at an Italian government cultural institute, injuring a Spanish police officer and killing a police dog.”^a The Spainherald.com reported that, “When the dog touched

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the bomb, it went off, killing the dog and wounding the policeman in the arm and side”.^b Although not all of the details of this incident have been publicly released, incidents like this could be avoided if departments adhere to strict guidelines for the employment of explosives detection canines, like the ones listed in this advisory.

(U//LES) SUGGESTED GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES

(U//LES) ATF has issued standard operation procedures (SOPs) to all ATF Certified Canine Teams. These SOPs may also be helpful to other State, local and Federal law enforcement agencies.

- A. (U//LES) ATF canine teams will not search packages, items, or vehicles that have been declared suspicious by a credible source.
- B. (U//LES) The canine handler shall make a distinction between suspicious items and unattended items.

1. Suspicious Items

- a. There is a threat associated with the item and/or location.
- b. Suspicious circumstances or persons are affiliated with the items.
- c. There are outward signs of an explosive device, such as oily stains; discoloration; protruding wires; tinfoil; strange odors; or visual indicators.
- d. There is unusual or excessive exterior packaging.
- e. Another device has already been located and identified within the location or event.

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2. Unattended Items

- a. There is not a specific threat associated with the item.
- b. There is not a suspicious activity associated with the item.
- c. The “unattended item” is consistent with the particular venue.
- d. There are no external indicators typically associated with an explosives device.

C. (U//LES) The canine handler’s action on a find:

1. Prior to conducting the search, establish the necessary resources to deal with any find.
2. When a suspicious item is found, it is not to be touched or moved. Certified bomb technicians should be alerted and evacuation measures started.
3. If an item of evidentiary nature is found and is not an improvised explosives device or of suspicious nature, then it is marked and identified to those responsible for evidence collection and the search should continue.

(U) **CONCLUSION**

(U) The canine team is a very useful tool that represents only one of the many elements of the explosives detection process. The explosives detection canine is not to be considered an instant solution to every explosives detection problem. Canines will only locate explosives odors that they have been trained to detect, therefore if a suspicious package is searched using a detection canine, it cannot be guaranteed 100 percent that the package does not contain another potentially hazardous material. By searching a suspicious package, the canine team is put at unnecessary risk without any benefit or definitive outcome. When in doubt, err on the side of safety and contact your local hazardous devices unit.

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(U) ATF Canine Training and Operations Support Branch

(U) The primary mission of ATF's Explosives and Accelerant Canine Programs is to support the overall goals of ATF's Explosives, Firearms and Arson programs. The program provides an investigative tool for use in explosives, firearms and arson investigations, National Response Team activations, and for public security.



(U) The ATF Canine Center located in Front Royal, VA, is a state of the art facility that includes ATF explosives experts and other technical expertise. The program trains canines in the detection of accelerants and explosives to support Federal, State and local agencies domestically and internationally.

(U) For more information on the program, contact the Canine Training and Operations Support Branch at 540-622-6560 or email us at CanineProgram@ATF.gov.

^a Goodman, Al. 07/12/2005. *Bomb at Italian institute in Spain.*

http://www.cnn.com/2005/WORLD/europe/07/12/spain.italy.blast/index.html?section=cnn_latest. Retrieved on 02/06/2005.

^b Madrid, Spain. 07/13/2005. Bomb blast injures policeman in Barcelona; anarchists suspected.

<http://www.spainherald.com/2005-07-13news.html>,. Retrieved on 02/06/2005.

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