

# K-9 COP

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MAGAZINE™

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## Rx K-9s

*putting the* **bite**  
*on prescription*  
**drug abuse**

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*unfailing*  
**obedience**  
*minimizes*  
**risk**

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*get more*  
**bark**  
*for your*  
**buck**

# VOHNE LICHE *kennels*

**FORGING** *the* **WAY**

*VLKCS team in Iraq.*

## *in* **K-9 TRAINING**

While driving straight north from Indianapolis, Indiana, on State Route 31 you will pass a sign that identifies a small town with a big name of Denver, where one of the largest and most productive kennel training facilities in the world is located. There's no sign advertising the name of the facility, but many people from all around the K-9 world know it and have made the trip to this location. Vohne Liche (pronounced



Von Lick) Kennels, commonly called VLK, was started in 1993 by Ken Lickliger, Senior Master Sergeant, USAF (Retired) who was stationed at nearby Grissom Air Force Base starting in 1986 and eventually retired from there in 1993. Ken spent his entire Air Force career in the Security Forces career field and the majority of that time working in the K-9 specialty as a handler, trainer and kennel master. Ken started

his kennel with one dog and has built the business over the last 18 years to a level where several hundred teams and nearly 1,000 dogs are trained and or sold annually to departments in 45 states and over 30 countries.

K-9 training and utilization isn't an additional service or business that was developed at VLK as a result of 9/11 or the subsequent demand for dogs. It's what they've been doing since day one of business in 1993. VLK is first and foremost a K-9 training facility and always will be.

## **MISSION STATEMENT AND PERSONNEL**

VLK has set a mission for themselves to produce the most effective and versatile Police/Military Service Dog Teams. They vow to work as hard as necessary to afford handlers the opportunity to leave their facility confident and prepared to meet the myriad of situations ready to challenge them.

Ken and his staff believe that K-9 training is as much an art as it is a science. Being able to train a dog to respond to a person is an individual endeavor. All dogs and handlers have individual personalities and the trick is to influence both behaviors so they respond positively to each other for maximum efficiency. They feel that this is what sets them apart from the rest. The VLK trainers work very hard to put a handler with a partner that fits him and meets the needs of the department or agency. It is a labor of love that their staff takes very seriously. As retired police and military officers who worked as handlers in the real world with a K-9, they do what they can to ensure that the teams they train will be able to meet the difficult challenges faced by law enforcement and military K-9 officers every day.

VLK is more than just several hundred dogs, dozens of buildings and hundreds of acres of land. It's the

quality, experience and dedication of the people and the unique training system that Ken Licklider has developed over the 34+ years that he has worked in the canine training field.

As a full-service K-9 training facility where the best of the best go for highly trained Police Service Dogs, VLK has trained Police and Military Service Dogs for over 5,000 law enforcement and government agencies, including the National Security Agency (NSA), Pentagon Police, U.S. State Department, U.S. Army and 500+ civilian and police agencies.

The training staff at VLK consists of 30 trainers, 16 of which are on-site. All are former military and/or law enforcement handlers or trainers. Their core staff possesses over 275 years of K-9 experience. They also have the advantage of utilizing several trainers who are considered subject matter experts in their career fields, and hundreds of trainers who have completed their extensive trainer's course and continue to serve as guest instructors on a regular basis. These experts and cadre trainers take time from their busy careers to contribute their expertise to the VLK classes throughout the year.

## **PROCUREMENT**

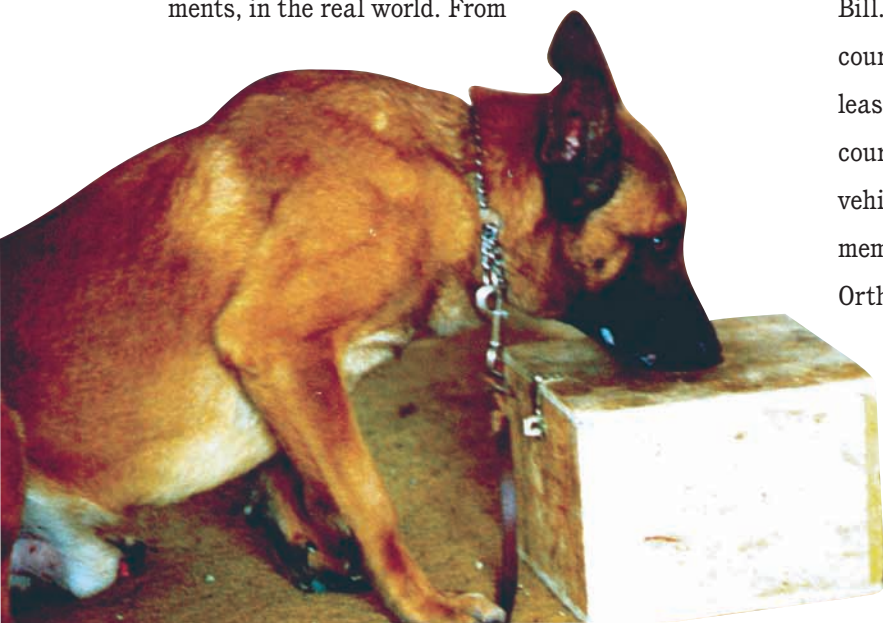
VLK is the largest importer of Military and Police Service dogs in the United States. They keep over 200 dogs on hand at their facility at all times, in various stages of training. They receive 12 to 24 new dogs from Europe approximately twice a month so their clients' needs can be met immediately. They have a multi-resource screening facility in Holland that they use to identify potential K-9 candidates, allowing VLK to cater to unique and specific client needs in real time and provide their kennels the flexibility to select as many dogs as needed on request. Two VLK trainers are

assigned in Holland with the ability to prescreen all dogs coming into the largest police dog center in that country. VLK has the ability and resources to provide handlers, K-9s and the most up-to-date training at a moment's notice.

## TRAINING

Ken Licklider's training methods are world-renowned. VLK K-9s are pre-trained and reliability tested, easily adapting to a new handler. As handlers and trainers with real-world experience, they know the tremendous pressure of having to make the call. Their methods take the guesswork out of the equation. A key ingredient to their training is in keeping the instructor/student ratio at 5:1. Their training methods have consistently resulted in officers' K-9s being successful on the street and the battleground.

An inordinate amount of time is spent on detection work, because they want to be sure that when a client's dog responds, there are drugs or explosives there. With their system, there is no such a thing as a false response. They train all of their dogs in real environments, in the real world. From



the beginning, their dogs are exposed to distractions such as animal and human odors. They don't train their dogs in a vacuum. When they hit the streets, they have been exposed to a myriad of situations.

Their dogs have become recognized by their ability to pinpoint source. VLK trains their dogs to work to source and maintain that position until rewarded. The dog actually stares at where the strongest source of odor has accumulated. It takes a little more training on their part, but they feel it is worth the effort to see one of their trained dogs put his nose on a package and not move a muscle until he is released with his reward.

VLK offers a three-week basic patrol handler course, a three-week single purpose narcotic/explosive detector handler course, a five-week dual purpose narcotic/explosive detector handler course, and an eight-week trainer's course. These courses are certified by the Indiana Law Enforcement Training & Standards Board. The facility is also certified through several states, including the Ohio Peace Officer Training Commission and Kentucky Law Enforcement Council as a law enforcement training provider and the DOD enabling veterans to use the GI Bill. The course content for these intensive hands-on courses includes grooming and health, first aid/safety, leash control, legal update and obedience. Detector dog courses cover detection search patterns for buildings, vehicles, warehouses, and open areas. Ken is a charter member of the Scientific Working Group on Dog and Orthogonal Detector Guidelines (SWGDOG) committee working to establish standards for all detection dog in the U.S.

*VLK trains their dogs to work to source and maintain that position until rewarded, resulting in the "stare."*

They wrote and trained the first Combat Tracker Dog program for the U.S. Army since the Vietnam War, and developed a multi-purpose K-9 program for U.S. Army Special Operations Forces. VLK currently trains all K-9 teams for the United States Marine Corps Special Operations Command (MARSOC). They've assisted other military services special operations forces in the implementation and training of their K-9 teams. VLK was contacted by the Pentagon, who envisioned a program for every battalion to have their own improvised explosive device (IED) detection teams. The first and only Tactical Explosive Detector Dog (TEDD) program was created by VLK. Currently they're finishing up the training for the last two classes that will round out the total to 300 teams that have successfully run missions for a year without any casualties.

Team re-certification courses are conducted throughout the year at the kennel for teams to return to ensure their detection competency has not diminished. Ken, along with Danny Parker, Director of Law Enforcement Operations, and Bobby Roettger, Director of Military Operations, hold training seminars throughout the country each year which may include re-certification for teams that aren't able to return to the kennels.

## FACILITIES

VLK has a large training facility that enables them to offer an unprecedented learning environment. From their equipment store to the student dorm facilities, K-9 "Hogan's Alley," multiple full-scale complex buildings, schools, and warehouses, to 400+ acres of property, no operational or training objective is too small or too large. VLK's kennel facility has a full obstacle course, an office building that contains an administrative area, store, trainer's offices, two training classrooms,



*One of several kennels onsite.*



*Another kennel located on the property.*



*Full-service hotel for students owned by VLK.*



*One of several buildings used for training at VLK.*

lunchroom and a workout room for students and staff. They also have two onsite warehouses for training, as well as a 200' x 40' indoor training facility set up with 20 fully-furnished rooms, depicting actual search scenarios, and a patrol work area. Outside, there are cars, trucks, buses and heavy equipment for narcotic/explosives detection and handler protection work.

Offsite VLK utilizes over 20 different training areas in the vicinity. These areas include warehouses, hotels, schools, lumberyards, impound lots, jails and private residences. VLK trainers expose the teams to simulated "real life" experiences that handlers will encounter on the street or during potential combat patrols and operations. One training property is a remodeled 18-acre, 45-classroom grade school and a real lumberyard with 11 acres and 11 buildings on the property.

VLK holds licensing with the ATF to possess live explosive aids and they have an ATF-approved explosive storage facility on property. They're also licensed with the DEA for live narcotic aids.

In 2010, VLK purchased a vacant hotel and refurbished it, providing 52 private rooms for students. The hotel also has a full service kitchen that provides three meals a day. The dayroom has a pool table, two big screen televisions, jukebox and video games for the student's enjoyment. There is also an onsite kennel allowing the handlers to be close to their K-9s while in training.

## **VOHNE LICHE CANINE SECURITY, LLC**

To provide a full spectrum of canine services, Ken created Vohne Liche Kennels Canine Security (VLKCS), LLC in 2004. VLKCS is responsible for providing single and dual purpose K-9 and handler security services worldwide. These services include Canine Personal Security

Detachments (Executive Protection), Fixed Site Security, and other areas using their highly trained dogs. VLKCS is prepared to provide handler and dog teams that can conduct operations in advance of a cordon, open area sweeps for Improvised Explosive Devices (IED's) and/or mines, as well as operations during static and mobile vehicle check points.

## **VLK ULTIMATE K-9 TRANSPORTERS**

In 2009, Ken Licklider purchased Riverside Travel Trailers, a company that has been designing and building recreational vehicle towable products for 37 years. He combined his K-9 knowledge with the RV experts and started manufacturing the VLK Ultimate Canine Transporter. The Vohne Liche "K9 Carrier" concept forged a new market for K-9 transportation.

## **AMERICAN WORKING DOGS, INC.**

To help meet the needs of the K-9 industry, Ken Licklider established American Working Dogs, Inc. (AWD). AWD offers membership and certification to K-9 teams across the globe. Since the first publication of the AWD magazine, AWD has steadily grown into a 500+ member organization. AWD publishes four magazines a year and hosts the annual AWD Seminar and Certification Trials at the VLK training facilities in Indiana.

## **PHILOSOPHY AND OUTLOOK**

Vohne Liche Kennels works tirelessly to service their clients' needs. The K-9 career field is at an all-time high. Never before have the opportunities been there for dog handlers worldwide. We take it as a challenge and a privilege to forge the way in K-9 training, pushing the boundaries of our chosen profession. ■