

K9 Officer Tactics (part 3), by Brian Woods

Again we will take up where we left off in the last two articles.

Now real tactics start. In an ideal world and if our training has been sound this is how things should go:

- 1.) Give a warning and send the dog.
- 2.) Calm down and take a breath.
- 3.) Notify dispatch and back up officer's the dog has been sent.
- 4.) Put your leash away and get it out of your gun hand immediately.
- 5.) Draw your weapon, then slowly with caution go from point of cover to point of cover. When you reach the location of cover where you have a good view of the apprehension scene, stop, look and listen.
- 6.) You can then advise the suspect to stand still and command the dog to release. The dog should release on command and do what it is told, such as down, heel, etc.
- 7.) The suspect can then be cuffed and patted down by you or another officer.

Easy right? Not in Brian's World ! Let's break each one of the above down and talk a little about each.

1.) **Give a warning and send the dog.** We discussed warnings in the last article. Shorting and sweet, right? After giving our warning from a point of cover, if possible, we are going to dispatch our dog. I suggest we use a send command that is none abusive. An example would be, "Stop him/her", "Hold him/her", Foran (German for "Go Forward") rather than "Kill him", "Eat him", or other more explicit terms. Reminder: it is the little things that will get you in trouble sometimes.

2.) **Keep calm.** I was given some very good advice when I first became an officer. One of the old timers told me, "Son, you have to keep a cool head even if your ass is on fire!". Funny but so true. We have to take a breath and make sure we do not get all caught up in the moment.

3.) **Notify dispatch and back up officers the dog has been sent.** Some officers have told me that they even go as far as giving their warning over the radio. They stated it would help them in court to show that a warning was given but also to notify the other officers that the dog has been deployed. I am not sure about the first part because if you give a warning like most people (discussed in the last article) it may hurt you. The defendant's attorney may make a big deal over the fact that no one could understand what you said. The second part I feel is important. We need to advise the other officers that the dog has been deployed. We do not need another officer getting bit because he tried to tackle the suspect just as the dog launched to engage. This will also let dispatch know your busy and to leave you alone.

4.) **Put your leash away and get it out of your gun hand immediately.** If I had a dime for every time I've seen an officer run after their dog with their gun in their leash hand I would be rich. Reminder: We do in real life exactly as we do in training. Get in the habit of putting your leash away and free up your gun hand. I like to use a leash that fits around my waist. It is a very good idea for 4 reasons. I have it with me all the time. I know exactly where it is. It is out of my way. It can't be used against me. The fourth one I would like to expound upon. I have seen several people who have 6 foot leashes wrapped around their waist and shoulder. I am not sure how they do it but I know I am not going to learn. In 16 years of this work I have never given anyone something to grab hold, throw or pull me around with. If the leash fits around your waist just above your gun belt, no suspect will have an easy time getting hold of it and choking you to death.

5.) **Draw your weapon and slowly with caution go from point of cover to point of cover. When you reach the location of cover where you have a good view of the apprehension scene stop, look and listen.** OK maybe you should not draw your weapon in all cases but I feel that if we deploy our dog on someone it was because he/she refused to comply. As a result they may be in the frame of mind to do you harm. No matter about the gun, move slowly, watch and listen. There may be more than one suspect and your dog can only hold one at a time. Do not go running into an ambush. Use cover and concealment as much as possible. When it's time to call your dog off here is something to think about. We call it "conflict yelling". All this means is in training we yell all sorts of things so the dog does not become patterned to let go just because I am yelling something. I personally like using, "Suspect please stop fighting my dog, don't hurt the dog, let go of my dog", etc. The whole time I am looking at my surroundings and making sure I want the dog off the suspect at this time. Think about this, you were awakened from a dead sleep with someone yelling outside your window for a person to stop hurting and fighting the dog. You get out of bed and looked out your window and observed it was the police and the police dog was biting the suspect, but it looked like he was fighting the dog while the officer was repeatedly asking the suspect to stop but the suspect refused. Or the reverse, you wake up to someone yelling to kill him, attack him, etc.. Which witness do you want in court? If anyone needs help in figuring out what or where we are going with this, call me and I will explain.

6.) **You can then advise the suspect to stand still and command the dog to release the suspect. The dog should release on command and do what he/she is told, down, heel, etc.** Some schools of thought believe that the dog should release when commanded even if the suspect is not submitting and continues fighting with the dog. This is a judgment call, but I agree. We must teach the dog that when I say it is over it is just that, over! There are times that the suspect is in so much fear of the dog that he or she is in survival while the dog is on them and they will not or can not stop fighting. If the suspect seems to be in this state we have to get the dog off him and I sure do not want to stand in the middle of this action to do it. If the suspect does not settle down after the dog gets off we can always allow the dog to re-engage. Now before you blow your gasket understand me. I am not a proponent of multiple bites on a suspect. As a matter of fact the dog should take one bite and stay there but you have to get the dog off and give the suspect a chance to calm down. If you don't the physical damage to the suspect may be considered excessive. This brings up another point. If you do like most people in training and call the dog off a still suspect that provides no movement and is quiet the whole time you are doing nothing to get the dog ready for the street. The dog has to accept some movement and a lot of verbiage in my opinion. The street bites I have had are a mixed basket. Some the suspect was very calm and quiet, almost like they were in shock and some the suspect freaked out. All complied to my commands but some were not very happy about being bit. It would not have been reasonable for my dog to re-engage the suspect because he was crying and asking to be treated for his wounds. I guarantee you that if you train with a calm, still, and quiet decoy, the first time your dog engages the loud, moving decoy that doesn't stop the dog will be out of control and keep re-engaging the decoy. Don't believe me, try it! The dog has to get used to seeing it in training.

I hope you found this series helpful. As always if you have any questions or ideas for an article please let me know. E-mail Jawpaws@ezworks.net or <http://www.Lynnwoodskennels.com> or call me at (419) 334-2085. Brian Woods, Master Trainer - NAPWDA...