NAF Atsugi K9 Teams Conduct Joint Training

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CAMP FUJI, Japan (Feb. 12, 2019) – K9 Handlers from Naval Air Facility (NAF) Atsugi joined members of the three sister services as well as Japanese police from Saitama prefecture for a series of combined military working dog (MWD) training scenarios at the foot of Mt. Fuji, Feb. 12.

The training covered a broad scope of disciplines including veterinary treatment, suspect intervention and narcotic and inert explosive searches. The latter provided a rare opportunity for the Army, Air Force and Navy units more accustomed to urban installations.

“We had units from Atsugi, Yokota Air Base, Camp Zama, Yokosuka (Naval Base) and Japanese trainers from Saitama Prefecture. They were exposed to different environments that their base may not have,” said Atsugi’s Kennel Trainer, Master-at-Arms 2nd Class Joseph Adames, a Kissimmee, Florida native.

According to Adames, the wooded area in Camp Fuji, along with the capabilities provided by the Marine Corps Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) technicians helped build on the skillset of the handlers, especially in environments unfamiliar to many Navy K9 teams.

“We have some dog teams getting ready for deployment and I wanted to set them up for success. We scoped out the training area at Camp Fuji and we noticed EOD was there and inquired about
the training evolution we were trying to accomplish. The EOD aspect brings a lot more to the table than we as dog handlers can provide,” said Adames.

Master-at-Arms 1st class Gregory Pannullo, from Clark, New Jersey felt his partner, MWD Aki, performed well, in spite of the unfamiliar circumstances of the training.

“Aki did really well at the bridge. He had a really nice pattern on throughout the area, especially on the road and in the housing areas, giving passive responses (to detection aides),” noted Pannullo.

For Burbank, California native, Master-at-Arms Seaman Rachel Higuera, the highlight of the training was developing the complimentary attributes that make a handler and K9 team successful.

“It was my first time in an EOD evolution. I’m a brand new handler and brand new to the Navy so the training was really helpful in being able to pick out signs of any IED and knowing how to use the dog and his nose. Taking the trails and using my sight and his nose to decipher where any potential IEDs could be located,” said Higuera.

Adames echoed those feelings, stating, “The training definitely exposed what areas the dog and handler team were good at or need to work on. The training helped the teams mesh together as a single unit. Every branch does things differently so the unity that the kennels are showing is great. Something the whole Navy should strive for.”

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