

Military Animals

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Military Animals

For transport, hauling, bomb detection, and bombs themselves, domesticated animals – dogs, pigs, oxen, camels, horses, elephants, camels, pigeons, rats and bats – have been used during wartime. Currently, dolphins and sea lions are being trained for possible use in protecting our shorelines.

War dogs

Dogs were used by the ancient Greeks in war; Spanish conquistadors used Mastiffs to kill warriors in the Caribbean, Mexico and Peru. Mastiffs, along with great Danes, were also used in England during the Middle Ages to scare horses into throwing off their riders or to pounce on mounted knights. They were used as bombs themselves by the Soviet Army, with explosives strapped to their backs as anti-tank weapons. They are trained to spot trip wires, mines and other booby traps; employed for sentry duty and to explore caves; relied on to find snipers or hidden enemy forces and to locate wounded soldiers. Last year's exhibit on "Loyal Forces: The Animals of WWII" at the National World War II Museum paid tribute to "Smoky," who had been found in a foxhole in New Guinea. She was a mascot who became a war heroine when engineers needed to run 70 feet of telegraph wire through an 8-inch culvert under an airfield. One end of the wire was tied to Smoky's collar and her owner had his buddies hold Smoky at one end of the culvert while he called her from the other. There was Kurt, a Doberman pinscher who alerted his handler to Japanese soldiers lying in wait above the Asan Point beachhead on Guam but was killed by a mortar shell. He is credited with saving the lives of 250 soldiers. Bronze statues of Smoky in a "pot" helmet and Kurt, lying down but on the alert, were part of the exhibit. Kurt's statue is a replica of one at the U.S. Marine Corps War Dog Cemetery in Guam. War dogs have served with distinction. The personal accounts in the following links will attest to that.

For more information ...

World War II and Korean War dog stories: <http://www.uswardogs.org/id26.html>
The War Dog Platoons: <http://worldwar2history.info/Marines/dogs.html>
War Dog Memorial: <http://www.vet.utk.edu/wardog/background.shtml>

The military's working dogs are being used increasingly in the war zones of Afghanistan and Iraq. Every year the 341st Training Squadron at Lackland Air Force Base in Texas produces about 300 military working dogs and about 540 handlers. Instructors focus on keeping training up to date to

meet the ever-changing tactics and materials used by enemies building and planting bombs. The dogs are also trained in specialized search, to run off their leashes and away from their handler, limiting their handler's exposure to hidden bombs. New in 2009 as a Marine Corps requirement is combat tracking training – tracking humans, whether to find missing friendly forces or hunt down a hidden insurgent.

The dogs that go overseas can sometimes develop canine PTSD and have trouble working. They're distracted by loud noises, show hyper-vigilance or interest in escaping or avoiding places in which they were previously comfortable. They can also become irritable or aggressive. Canine post-traumatic stress disorder is only diagnosed if the dog has combat exposure or repeated and prolonged deployments. They are treated with medication or therapy or a combination of the two. According to a report in *Army Times*, 25 percent of the dogs being treated are returned to service; another 25 percent are assigned to other jobs, while 25 percent are retired and adopted by families or go to work on a local police force. The remaining 25 percent need prolonged therapy from 90 days to six months. There is value in retrieving the dogs for the sake of the dogs themselves and for the Lackland program. These are war-hardened heroes responsible daily for saving lives.

War horses

The horse has been the most widely-used animal throughout the recorded history of warfare. Think of Ben-Hur and the chariots of centuries ago. Then think of King Arthur's Round Table and the jousting knights. The horse-mounted cavalry became a prestigious military arm in Europe for several centuries. The combination of the horse-mounted warrior armed with a bow made the steppe people's armies a powerful military force in Asian history. Likewise, the combination of the horse-mounted soldier armed with a gun doomed Native American Indians.

The German Army in World War II heavily depended on horses to haul artillery and supply carts. A mounted infantry squadron patrolled about six miles in front of every German infantry division. During the war, the Germans used over two and a half million horses and mules; and the Red Army almost three million on the plains of the Caucasus by fast riding troops of Cossacks and Red Army Guards. The cavalry of Poland in 1939 was the last complete strategic cavalry force in Europe to retain its original 19th century form, including lances. The Polish Lancers harassed German tanks, artillery and mortars, buying time for the broken defenses of Warsaw. The Japanese had four cavalry brigades, used mostly in China. And Manchuria put 25,000 men and horses in the field that served with Japan in northern China. Mao's Communist troops had about 100,000 horsemen.

The last U.S. cavalry regiment to serve was the 26th Cavalry (Philippine Scouts), part of Gen. Wainwright's Northern Luzon Force on Corregidor in 1942. Its 250 horses (and 48 baggage mules) met their end on March 15, 1942, not in battle but slaughtered for food for the then starving U.S. and Filipino armies.

The U.S. Coast Guard used more horses than any other branch of the U.S. military during World War II. Nearly 3,000 horses, provided by the Army Quartermaster Corps, served on shore patrol after German saboteurs twice landed on American beaches.

Pack mules

When World War II entered its fourth year, there were almost 10,000 mules in the U.S. Army. The mule's flinty feet, inborn caution and patience made him ideal for traversing precipices, stony roads and jungles where wheeled transport could not penetrate. They proved their worth in the mountains of Italy, Greece, the Balkans, and the dense island jungles and high mountains of the Pacific. In North Africa, the rains stopped everything but the mules. Philippine mountains were no challenge to their goat-like characteristics. They served bravely through the slaughter of Bataan. And, in their ultimate sacrifice, provided meat for troops that had been cut off from supplies.

Elephants

Most of us probably first heard about the use of war elephants with the story of Alexander the Great in his battle with Persia in 331 BC. Size alone made them formidable warriors in charging the enemy, trampling them and breaking their ranks. In World War II, elephants not trained for battle were used for other military purposes – not only as transport, but also to build bridges and roads in remote areas. The Germans used elephants from the Hamburg Zoo to plow their fields in an effort to conserve the gasoline used in tractors. The last recorded use of elephants was in 1987 when Iraqis were alleged to have used them to transport heavy weaponry.

Camels

The U.S. Army's most successful experiment in overland transportation before the development of four-wheel drive vehicles powered by internal combustion engines was the camel corps. You read that right – camels, the Bactrian two-humped kind of pack animals that could thrive and survive on the vegetation in the deserts of the American Southwest. The experiment began in May of 1856 at Powderhorn, Texas, and just ten years later it ended, a strange bit of history.

Though the idea of using camels as overland transport was floated around for a few years, it was U.S. Secretary of War Jefferson Davis, who made it an official recommendation. A camel could carry 1,000 pounds and survive on less water than the horses, mules or oxen that were the Army's only transportation at the time. Camels could survive and even prosper on desert vegetation. And compare that pack load to the 300 pounds of a mule load. The camels were ideal for the purpose of carrying freight across the remote desert frontier. Davis authorized the purchase of 30 camels and their transport after a delegation from the U.S. Army to the Middle East reported on their usefulness. Camel handlers, or "drovers," were employed, as well.

Their usefulness was proven time and time again. On one occasion, the camels hauled freight from the supply depot in San Antonio to Camp Verde in a driving rainstorm that would have

halted wagon freight operations for days, until the ground dried enough for wagons to move forward without bogging down in the mud. The camels not only carried supplies for the troops but corn and grain for the horses and mules. They were also used for surveying trips and, while in California, rescued a snowbound wagon train high in the Sierras.

They weren't particularly popular with the soldiers, however. The camels were difficult to manage and bad tempered; they spit; their odor was strong and unpleasant.

Their usefulness to the Army waned with the change in American politics. Some of the camels were sold at auction. Some were used to transport mail and haul harbor baggage in California. Some were sold to circuses, mining companies, or other freight services. Others were released to wander in the deserts and survived for years. Some camels were shot by prospectors and hunters. Legends of phantom camels popped up throughout the Southwest.

Camels as transport animals were also used in the desert wars of North Africa, Burma, India, China, and southern Russia. In the early 1900s, France created a Méhariste camel corps made up of local tribesmen as part of their army in the Sahara. In World War II, locally recruited camel corps were also maintained by the Spanish and Italian armies in their North African territories.

Pigeons

During World War II, the Army Signal Corps had 54,000 military pigeons on duty in every theater of combat serving with ground troops, on submarines, in bombers, and within the intelligence service. There were multiple challenges: bad weather, flying at night, different home lofts, bullets, and birds of prey.

In World War I, carrier pigeon Cher Ami was credited with saving the lives of 200 men in the Lost Battalion of the 77th Division in the battle of the Argonne, October 1918, and was awarded the *French Croix de Guerre*.

For more information ...

The Story of Cher Ami: http://www.homeofheroes.com/wings/part1/3b_cherami.html

Another heroic pigeon named G.I. Joe saved the lives of a thousand soldiers in World War II after British troops had established a position within an Italian town that was due to be bombed by allied planes. Communication equipment was down and the only means of stopping the raid was to attach a hastily written message to G.I. Joe with news of their new position and send him to headquarters. G.I. Joe flew 20 miles in 20 minutes arriving at the air base while the bombers were taxiing on the runway, about to begin their saturation bombing mission. For this, G.I. Joe was awarded the Dickin Medal For Gallantry by the lord mayor of London.

Dolphins and Sea Lions

Dolphins have been declared the world's second most intelligent creatures after humans. Utilizing their blowholes, air sacks and valves, dolphins can emit a very wide variety of sounds – and the frequency levels range 10 times beyond what humans can hear! This system is called "echolocation" or "sonar" – similar to what a submarine uses to navigate while underwater. Yet dolphin sonar is much more advanced than human technology and can pinpoint exact information about its surroundings ranging from size, distance and even the nature of the object. Some scientists have suggested that dolphins are so bright they should be treated as "non-human persons"!

Sea lions identify objects using sight and sound. They can see in almost total darkness and have vision that is five times better underwater than that of humans. They also have excellent directional hearing, which means they can find divers and moving objects based on the sounds they make.

For decades, the U.S. Navy has capitalized on the superior sensory skills of the dolphins for long-range work and the diving abilities of sea lions by using them to locate underwater mines and hostile divers. Current training and testing is ongoing.

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