

Training the Elite

At Adlerhorst Police K9 Academy, dog training is serious business.

By Kristopher Wardwell

David Reaver, founder of Adlerhorst International Police K9 Academy in Riverside, Calif., which procures, trains and sells police K9s, wants people to know that the dogs that come out of his school are not vicious attack dogs. As a man who has spent decades combating misconceptions about the safety of his dogs, the distinction is of primary importance.

“They are not lethal weapons,” Reaver says. In fact, he says none of the thousands of dogs Adlerhorst has placed since its inception in 1976 are responsible for any deaths.

However, the dogs’ undeniable power to inflict injury, mixed with a political climate that is, Reaver says, sympathetic to criminals’ rights, makes dog bites a potential liability issue for Adlerhorst and its clientele, which consists mostly of law-enforcement agencies. With this in mind, Reaver is painstaking about which dogs are allowed into service. “A dog doesn’t leave here unless I know I can show it to a jury,” he says. In fact, Reaver says he has demonstrated the obedience and functionality of dogs to courts in several police-dog bite cases.

If anybody is aware of the injuries his dogs can administer, it’s Reaver himself, who estimates he’s been bit “well over 1,000 times” in his 40 years of training. His forearms, a faint mosaic of scar tissue, testify to the statement. “It’s like when you work with electricity, you’re going to get shocked,” says Reaver, who was a professional electrician before he started Adlerhorst. “When you’re training dogs for this kind of work, it’s not a question of if you’re going to get bit, but when.”

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