

Therapy Dogs Deployed to Iraq to Comfort Troops

Two professionally trained Labrador Retrievers will fly to Iraq to help troops deal with combat stress.

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For the first time in United States Army history, the military is sending two therapy dogs to Iraq – professionally trained and flown from the United States – to help relieve soldiers' combat stress, according to guide dog service provider America's VetDogs.

The black Labrador Retrievers, Boe and Budge, will provide emotional support for the troops, as they'll be allowed to play with the dogs, or simply pet them. The dogs will work with their handlers and Army professionals to help address soldiers' mental health issues as they arise.

"Dogs have been the unsung heroes of our war efforts," said Major Stacie Caswell, commander of the 85th Medical Detachment. "Bringing therapy dogs will be another method that our combat stress teams can use to break down mental health stigma."

America's VetDogs, a division of the Guide Dog Foundation for the Blind, is providing the dogs to the Army's 85th Medical Detachment. VetDog officials said they've been assured the dogs will be safe in Iraq.

A formal ceremony takes place Thursday, Dec. 13, at the VetDogs headquarters in Smithtown, N.Y., where the dogs will be handed over to the Army's 85th Medical Detachment.