

Tambo...a dog like no other.

As a past K9 Commander I can say that Tambo is one of the unique and comical dogs I have ever met, and I have met thousands of working dogs. As an explosive detection K9, I had the utmost confidence in his abilities while working with his third handler Chris. I say third handler since his first two weren't up to the challenge which was Tambo. Tambo is one of those dogs who commands respect from those around him. His first two handlers have no idea how to handle his strong personality, strong physique and even stronger expectations of his handler. Tambo needed someone to work with him, as he wanted no parts of being in service to anyone not worthy...enter Chris.

Chris had lost his working dog Tina suddenly and wanted an opportunity to work another dog, even though he was the K9 Unit Commander and we had recently stopped allowing the commanders to have working K9's due to their demanding jobs and the need to be available at all times, with little time for training and other responsibilities of a K9 Handler, let alone leader. Chris was convincing and mission dictated the need for additional dog teams, so Chris was given the opportunity to work Tambo. By this time, Tambo had a reputation of being an aloof and no-nonsense dog who couldn't be trusted around children (per his prior handlers). I'm not sure Chris was delighted in the choice of K9 for him, but he didn't show it and gratefully took on the challenge that was Tambo. One of their first details together was a trip to Texas to support mission. I believe it was there that their true story began, when Tambo jumped up on the bed in the hotel they were staying in. I'm sure there was an awkward moment between the two as they stared into each other's eyes, while Tambo decided whether Chris was cut out to be his handler. Tambo must have decided he liked what he saw as he decided to roll over on the bed and throw himself around in play. From that moment on, they were inseparable.

While working, Tambo was often found loose in the commander's office while Chris was working, and handlers and trainers alike had to decide whether they dared enter the office as some (not to be named 😊) were quite worried about what Tambo would do. I have witnessed this more times than I could count since Tambo and I had a very good working relationship based on mutual respect and I loved his quirky personality and would grab his tail and legs just to get a play growl from him which others misinterpreted as aggression. Don't get me wrong, if Tambo didn't feel you were man or woman enough, he could make someone very uncomfortable to say the least.

Over Tambo's working career, he became one of the most reliable detection dogs, who clearly loved searching vehicles and loved his training days. We were very lucky to have a dog such as Tambo on our team, and he was definitely missed when he retired to live his life fulltime with his family, including a toddler, that he loves dearly. He was the epitome of the difference the right handler can have on an amazing, free spirited dog like Tambo! #voteforTambo

Colonel Donna Cartier

Chief of Tactical Operations

443-413-7910