

Montana Trooper

MHP Canine Vision

Criminal interdiction has become a vital part of the everyday life of a trooper. In fact, it is our number two strategic goal as an agency, but we are lacking one of the resources, a canine program.

Properly selected and trained canine teams are an invaluable asset to law enforcement. The mere presence of a canine team can deter crime and reduce the likelihood of use of force by troopers. A dog's excellent scenting ability can quickly locate the presence of contraband, evidence, concealed suspects, or missing or endangered persons. Through asset forfeiture, canine programs have paid for themselves many times over.

We, as an agency, have come a long way in the past seven years with regard to criminal interdiction and attribute that to being a part of the Rocky Mountain Highway Patrol Network. Having a canine program will increase the capabilities of our criminal interdiction program and assist in the disruption and dismantling of drug trafficking organizations throughout Montana, the United States, and Canada.

We work closely with Canadian Customs, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, U.S. Border Patrol, DEA, and the FBI on homeland security issues and international drug trafficking. The northern border in Montana runs approximately 452 miles, and Montana has 16 ports of entry. Montana has seven Native American Reservations, and several of these are on or in proximity



Sgt. Mantooth and K-9 Tika.

of the U.S. border with Canada. Additionally, we have seen a huge increase in traffic and criminal activity due to the Bakken Oil-Fields in eastern Montana and western North Dakota.

We are one of the few states in the nation who currently doesn't have canines. This program is essential to increase the effectiveness of our program and increase the efficiency of our troopers working criminal interdiction.

The benefits of canine troopers is evident from the highway interdiction seizures of our neighboring states who are using canine units and the canine units in Colorado, Utah and Wyoming (Rocky Mountain Highway Patrol Network).

Having canines will increase the effectiveness and efficiency of our program and contribute substantially

to the overall efforts of combating criminal activity. Additionally, it will increase our arrests/seizures and support further investigations through the HIDTA Task Forces to whom we turn over our cases. We will also be able to offer narcotic canine resources to the local task forces and regional law enforcement agencies upon request. We have very few drug detection canines in our state.

Overall, it will bring the Montana Highway Patrol more in line with "industry standard" of highway enforcement.

To that end, in 2013, Sergeant Kelly Mantooth was selected as the MHP's first canine sergeant, and he traveled to Alaska to undergo training as both a handler and instructor, courtesy of the Alaska State Troopers. Upon his return with his canine partner Tika, Sergeant Mantooth will be responsible for initiating the canine program for the MHP.

For 2014, the Montana Highway Patrol has a goal of five drug/patrol dogs, which includes the canine sergeant and four canine troopers.

A HIDTA grant will initially pay for the first two of the dogs and equipment, which also includes upkeep and maintenance of them from year to year. It is the MHP's plan to request two additional dogs through the HIDTA grant in 2014.

We hope to sustain this program with forfeiture funds and continuing HIDTA grants.

Eventually, our goal is to have one narcotics/patrol canine in each of the MHP's eight districts. □