

The Bandera PROPHEET

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K-9 Veterans Day honors service dogs, past and present

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The Bandera Prophet

National K-9 Veterans Day is celebrated on March 13, the birthday of the United States Army K-9 Corps.

During World War I, U.S. allies utilized canines as message carriers, sentries, and many other functions. Observing the dogs' keen skills, trainability and intelligence, the U.S. Armed Forces took a page from the Europeans' handbook, and implemented the K-9 Corps on March 13, 1942. By November of that year, the first formally trained dogs were activated for duty in the North African campaign of the second World War.

In the years since that inaugural installation, the military, police, border patrol, medical and rescue organizations have developed and tailored K9 unit training to meet the demands of those specific fields.

In 2010, New Jersey was the first state to pass legislation designating March 13 as National K-9 Veterans Day to honor active duty and retired service dogs, past and present throughout history, for their tireless service and sacrifice.

In 2000, President Bill Clinton signed Robby's Bill into law, which allows retired military working dogs to be adopted by their former handlers or civilians. The law is named after Robby, a military working dog that served in Vietnam. Regarded as equipment, Robby was euthanized after the war, despite his handler's fight to adopt him. Fifteen years later, President Barack Obama signed the Military Dog Retirement Bill into law, which requires the U.S. Department of Defense to fund transportation home for military dogs deployed abroad, and grants their military handlers first rights of adoption.

Air Force Military Working Dog Handler, Technical Sergeant Leonard Anderson and his dog Azza.