

PTE Gabriel Dewes provides cover for PTE Slade Jenkins and ISD Ari as they track the enemy



DOG DAYS IN 1 RNZIR

By Judith Martin

Bite work, scent tracking and being in the best possible shape – it's all part of being a dog in 1 RNZIR.

Not just any dog, mind you. These are the canines from the Infantry Support Dog (ISD) section from Reconnaissance and Surveillance Platoon, 1RNZIR – the Army equivalent of police dogs. The Battalion recently ran an internal course to qualify the infantry's newest Military Working Dog (MWD) handlers.

Ending its third year as part of 1RNZIR the section has established itself as a significant part of both Reconnaissance and Surveillance platoon and 1RNZIR as a whole. With often more jobs than dogs available the section has been busy supporting a wide variety of tasks, exercises and training opportunities both within 1 (NZ) Bde and the wider NZDF. The dogs and their handlers also get to hang out, work and learn from their other government organisation working dog counterparts.

The internal course was held to qualify the next generation of MWD handlers to future-proof the capability. This saw students covering ISD care, welfare, first aid, fundamental skills, obedience, scent tracking, bite work and maintaining their dog in peak physical condition.

Corporal Kane Ritchie has been working with military working dogs since the Army gained the capability in 2013. "The best thing about being a military working dog handler is there is always something to do. You are always working on some aspect of your handling – tracking, obedience, something you want to improve on."

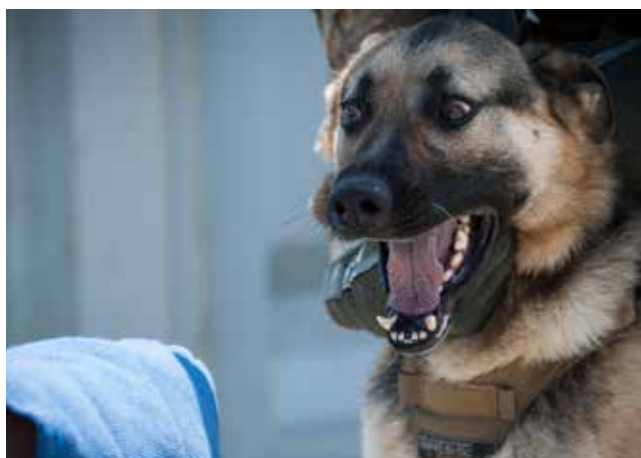
ISD dogs are usually German, Dutch or Belgian Shepherds, because of their temperament, trainability and aptitude for bite work. They are used to support the infantry in whatever way they can: crowd control, close and open country tracking, apprehension in the urban environment, or detection with cameras on their backs for whatever will help the soldier on the battlefield.

Students nominated for the course might have imagined they would be running around playing with dogs for the duration. Instead they found themselves textbook deep in the study of the psychology of training dogs to become highly skilled, and, for example, the effects climatic conditions have on scent. The students performed well, whether that be training as an independent ISD team to increase the chance of success in a working environment, working together with visual trackers as a combat tracker team or supporting infantry as a capability multiplier across the full spectrum of infantry operations.

"The section looks forward to continuing to promote the benefits military working dogs bring to the fight next year by supporting a wide variety of tasks and exercises," said CPL Ritchie.



LCPL Johan Breuer attempts to escape from ISD Ari

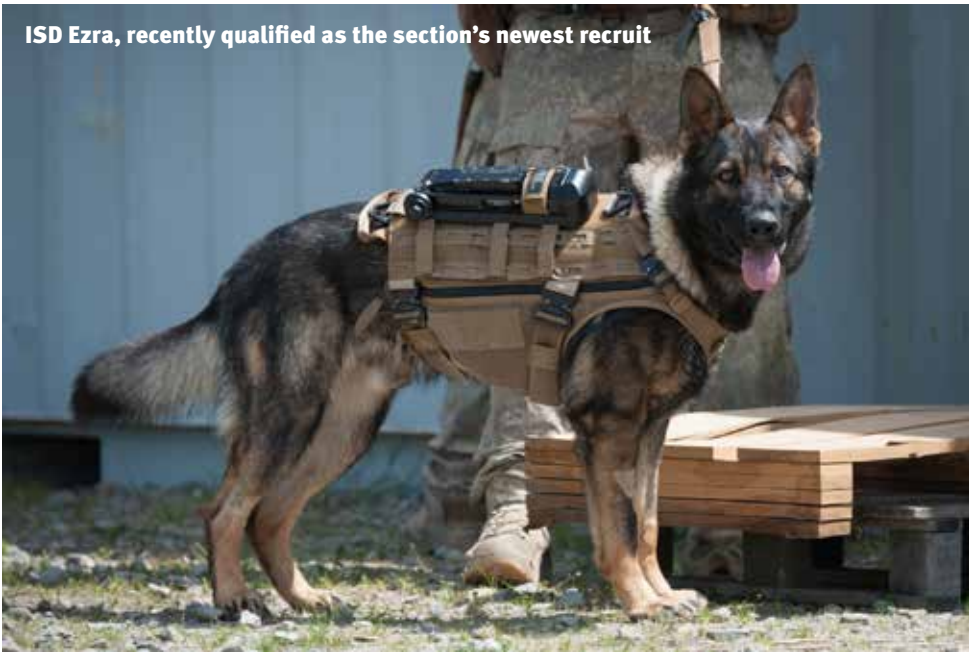


ISD Ari



PTE Dwayne Whaitiri guides ISD Bolt towards a building entry

ISD Ezra, recently qualified as the section's newest recruit



PTE Nehemiah Waikato and ISD Ezra disembark from NZLAV



PTE Jenkins covers PTE Whaitiri and ISD Bolt