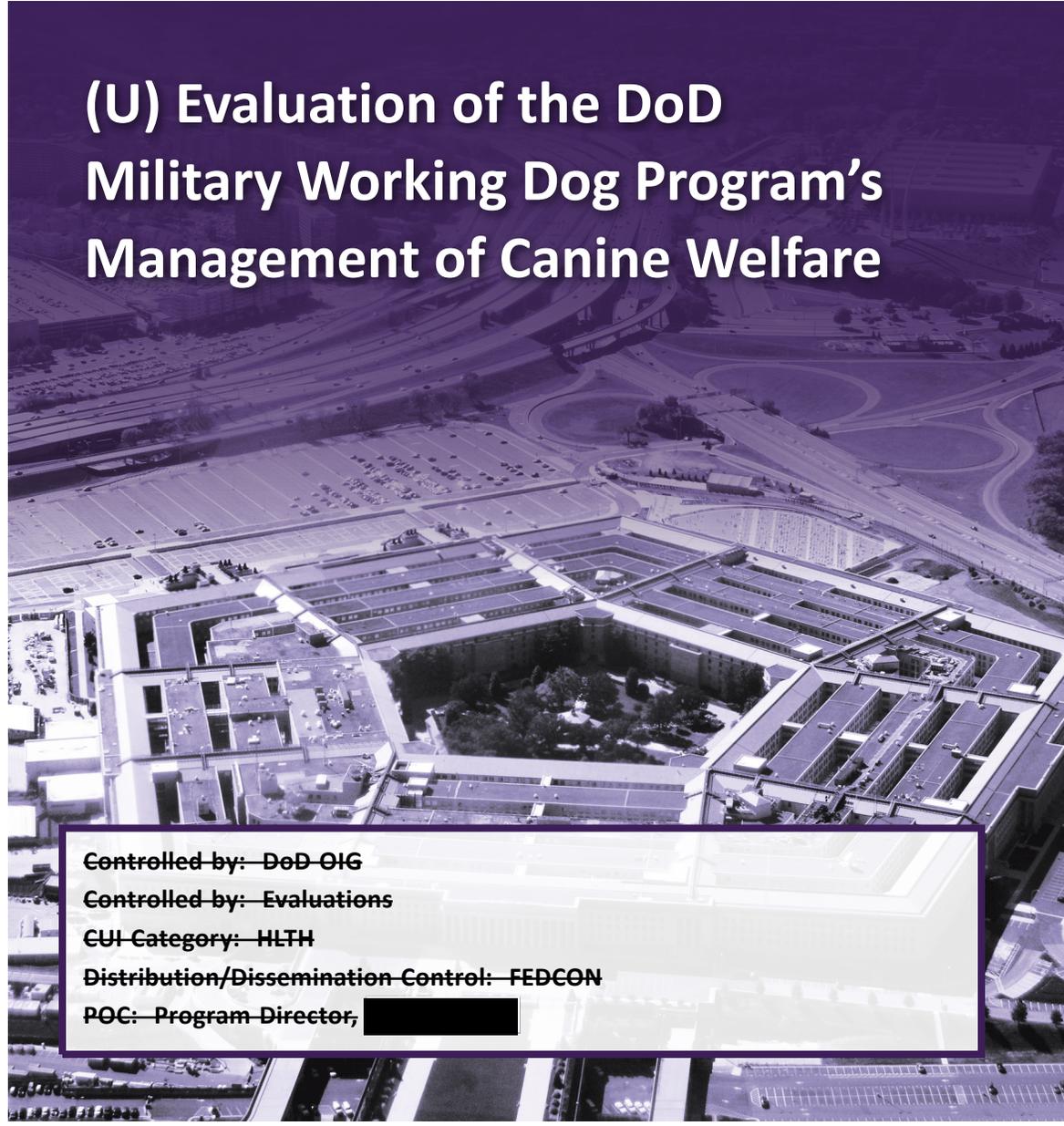


CUI

INSPECTOR GENERAL

U.S. Department of Defense

FEBRUARY 17, 2026



(U) Evaluation of the DoD Military Working Dog Program's Management of Canine Welfare

~~Controlled by: DoD-OIG~~

~~Controlled by: Evaluations~~

~~CUI Category: HLTH~~

~~Distribution/Dissemination Control: FEDCON~~

~~POC: Program Director, [REDACTED]~~

INDEPENDENCE ★ INTEGRITY ★ EXCELLENCE ★ TRANSPARENCY

CUI





(U) Results in Brief

(U) Evaluation of the DoD Military Working Dog Program's Management of Canine Welfare

February 17, 2026

(U) Objective

(U) Our objective was to determine whether the Air Force, as the DoD Executive Agent for the DoD Military Working Dog (DoD MWD) Program, and other oversight agencies are providing DoD MWDs with a high standard of canine welfare. Based on information we learned during our evaluation of the Air Force's 341st Training Readiness Squadron (341 TRS), we narrowed the evaluation to DoD MWDs in non-training status because DoD MWDs in training status generally receive sufficient physical activity, social, and cognitive enrichment during their training day activities. Our focus areas also included:

- (U) health care;
- (U) kenneling;
- (U) mental and physical wellness;
- (U) training and safety; and
- (U) ethical and humane treatment for DoD MWDs retired from, or not selected for, active service.

(U) Background

(U) DoD MWDs are highly trained canines that serve alongside the U.S. military and DoD law enforcement in a variety of roles, including security, explosive and drug detection, search and rescue, tracking, and patrolling. The DoD MWD Program involves DoD-procured working dogs that possess unique abilities that surpass conventional military technology in certain scenarios, such as search and detection missions, due to their ability to think and react intuitively.

(U) Background (cont'd)

(U) The 341 TRS, located at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas, is responsible for the acquisition, initial training, and sustainment of DoD MWDs and handlers for all U.S. military branches and select allied nations. The DoD MWD acquisition cycle involves carefully selecting canines with the desired temperament, drive, and physical attributes. Following selection, the canines undergo rigorous training at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, focusing on obedience, detection, and patrol skills. When their initial training is completed, DoD MWD teams are deployed to military installations and operational theaters worldwide where they provide vital support to combat operations, security missions, and various law enforcement activities.

(U) Findings

(U) We determined that the 341 TRS did not provide DoD MWDs in non-training status (awaiting deployment, medical disposition, or in training rejection status) with 5 hours per day of physical activity, social, and cognitive enrichment as required by Department of the Air Force Instruction 31-126. Instead, we found that DoD MWDs in non-training status are walked for approximately 10 minutes, four times per week or less. During our August 2024 site visit, 230 DoD MWDs were in non-training status at the 341 TRS. The lack of enrichment activity occurred because the 341 TRS does not have enough caretakers to manage the volume of DoD MWDs in non-training status, and as a result, the 341 TRS experienced higher rates of diseases, injuries, and behavioral problems than at other DoD MWD operational units.

(U) Additionally, we conducted site visits to 12 DoD Service Component DoD MWD programs and determined that the DoD needs to improve MWD kennel facility conditions across the DoD. Specifically, we found that the DoD MWD Program Manager and Service Components did not consistently protect DoD MWDs from extreme weather conditions and kennel mold issues, or manage quarantine and isolation areas for DoD MWDs. DoD Service Component officials told us that



(U) Results in Brief

(U) Evaluation of the DoD Military Working Dog Program's Management of Canine Welfare

(U) Findings (cont'd)

(U) the unsatisfactory kennel facility conditions occurred because the Service Component Commands did not prioritize renovation or new construction of the kennels over other mission requirements. As a result, many DoD MWDs are housed and trained in aging and unsatisfactory kennel facilities, which caused the death of four DoD MWDs from FY 2021 through FY2023, and can lead to canine health issues, injuries, and behavioral challenges.

(U) Recommendations

(U) We recommend that the Secretary of the Air Force, as the DoD MWDs Executive Agent, in coordination with the DoD MWD Program Manager, reduce the number of DoD MWDs at the 341st Training Squadron to meet Title 9 Code of Federal Regulation requirements until the number of caretakers meets the Department of Air Force Instruction 31-126 requirements for 5 hours per day of physical activity, social, and cognitive enrichment. In addition, we recommend that the Secretary of the Air Force, as Executive Agent for the DoD MWD Dog Program, and the DoD MWD Program Manager, in coordination with the Service Components, develop and implement an enterprise-wide plan to upgrade DoD MWD kennel facilities to meet current DoD standards.

(U) Management Comments and Our Response

(U) The Air Force Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics, Engineering, and Force Protection, responding on behalf of the Secretary of the Air Force and the Service Components, agreed with the intent of the recommendations. Therefore, the recommendations are resolved but will remain open until all corrective actions have been completed and verified.

(U) Please see the Recommendation Table on the next page for the status of recommendations.

(U) Recommendations Table

(U) Management	Recommendations Unresolved	Recommendations Resolved	Recommendations Closed
Secretary of the Air Force	None	A.1, B.1	None (U)

(U) Note: The following categories are used to describe agency management’s comments to individual recommendations.

- **(U) Unresolved** – Management has not agreed to implement the recommendation or has not proposed actions that will address the recommendation.
- **(U) Resolved** – Management agreed to implement the recommendation or has proposed actions that will address the underlying finding that generated the recommendation.
- **(U) Closed** – The DoD OIG verified that the agreed-upon corrective actions were implemented.





OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
 4800 MARK CENTER DRIVE
 ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA 22350-1500

February 17, 2026

MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARY OF THE ARMY
 SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
 SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE
 COMMANDER, 341ST TRAINING AND READINESS SQUADRON

SUBJECT: (U) Evaluation of the DoD Military Working Dog Program's Management
 of Canine Welfare (Report No. DODIG-2026-057)

(U) This final report provides the results of the DoD Office of Inspector General's evaluation of the DoD Military Working Dog Program's management of canine welfare. We previously provided copies of the draft report and requested written comments on the recommendations. We considered management's comments on the draft report when preparing the final report. These comments are included in the report.

(U) The Air Force Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics, Engineering, and Force Protection, as the DoD Military Working Dog Program Executive Agent and on behalf of the Service Component military working dog programs, agreed to address the recommendations; therefore, we consider the recommendations resolved and open. We will close the recommendations when the Air Force Deputy Chief of Staff provides documentation showing that all agreed-upon actions to implement the recommendations are completed. Therefore, please provide us within 90 days your response concerning specific actions in process or completed on the recommendations. Send your response to either [REDACTED] if unclassified or [REDACTED] if classified SECRET.

(U) If you have any questions, please contact [REDACTED]. We appreciate the cooperation and assistance received during the evaluation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Randolph R. Stone".

Randolph R. Stone
 Assistant Inspector General for Evaluations
 Space, Intelligence, Engineering, and Oversight

(U) Contents

(U) Introduction

(U) Objective 1

(U) Background 1

(U) Finding A. The 341 TRS Did Not Provide DoD MWDs in Non-Training Status with the Required Physical Activity or Cognitive and Social Interaction Time

(U) DoD MWDs in a Non-Training Status Did Not Receive the Required Physical Activity, Social Interaction, and Cognitive Enrichment Time 7

(U) The 341 TRS Does Not Have Enough Caretakers to Manage the DoD MWDs in Non-Training Status 9

(U) [REDACTED] 10

(U) Recommendation, Management Comments, and Our Response 12

(U) Finding B. The DoD Needs to Improve MWD Kennel Facility Conditions

(U) The DoD Did Not Consistently Protect DoD MWDs from Kennel Facility Hazards 14

(U) The Service Components Told Us That DoD MWD Kennel Facilities Are Considered Low Priority for Renovations and Military Construction 20

(U) Many DoD MWDs Are Housed in Aging and Unsatisfactory Kennel Facilities That Expose Them to Hazards 20

(U) Recommendation, Management Comments, and Our Response 21

(U) Appendix

(U) Scope and Methodology 22

(U) Use of Computer-Processed Data 24

(U) Prior Coverage 24

(U) Use of External Subject Matter Expert 25

(U) Management Comments

(U) U.S. Air Force 26

(U) Acronyms and Abbreviations

..... 32

(U) Introduction

(U) Objective

(U) The objective of this evaluation was to determine whether the Air Force, as the DoD Executive Agent (EA) for the DoD Military Working Dog (DoD MWD) Program, and other Service Component programs are providing DoD MWDs with a high standard of canine welfare. Based on information we learned during our evaluation, we narrowed the evaluation to DoD MWDs in non-training status because DoD MWDs in training status, generally receive sufficient physical activity, social, and cognitive enrichment during their training day activities. Our focus areas also included:

- (U) health care;
- (U) kenneling;
- (U) mental and physical wellness;
- (U) training and safety; and
- (U) ethical and humane treatment for DoD MWDs retired from, or not selected for, active service.

(U) Background

(U) DoD MWDs are highly trained canines that serve alongside the U.S. military and DoD law enforcement in a variety of roles, including security, explosive and drug detection, search and rescue, tracking, and patrol. The DoD MWD Program involves DoD-procured working dogs from both within and outside the United States. DoD MWDs possess unique abilities that surpass conventional military technology in certain scenarios, such as search and detection missions, due to their ability to think and react intuitively.

(U) DoD Military Working Dog Breeds

(U) The DoD typically selects German Shepherds, Belgian Malinois, and Dutch Shepherd breeds as they are considered ideal for detection and patrol dogs. They are bold, agile, have an exceptional olfactory capability, and are highly trainable. Specifically, the Shepherd and Malinois (and mixes of each) are versatile breeds, originally bred for livestock herding and flock and farm protection. Because of these traits, in the late 1800s, the breeds were cross-tasked to law enforcement and military duties, accompanying police officers and soldiers on foot patrols, acting as sentries, and performing a variety of other tasks. These breeds were subsequently purpose-bred for law enforcement and military service for both detection and patrol capabilities.

(U) In addition, the DoD selected “sporting breeds,” including Labrador, Golden, and Chesapeake Bay Retrievers, which have proven to be preferred breeds for their potential special purpose detector capabilities.¹ Furthermore, the Navy primarily uses terriers for internal drug detection purposes; they are small, agile, and capable of searching in the confined spaces of submarines and other vessels. All the DoD MWD breeds are high-drive dogs, which require significant daily physical, social, and cognitive enrichment.

(U) DoD Military Working Dog Program Organizational and Support Agency Roles and Responsibilities

(U) According to DoD Directive (DoDD) 5200.31E, the Secretary of the Air Force serves as the DoD MWD Program EA.² As the DoD MWD Program EA, the Secretary of the Air Force is required to identify the requirements and resources necessary to execute DoD MWD Program EA responsibilities and functions. The Secretary of the Air Force is also responsible for designating appropriate staff to provide management and oversight, among other duties.

(U) The Air Force’s 341st Training Readiness Squadron (341 TRS) is a training readiness unit assigned to the 37th Training Wing, Joint Base (JB) San Antonio–Lackland Air Force Base, Texas. The 341 TRS is responsible for procuring canines for the DoD and also managing the “puppy program” that breeds domestic canines to become trained DoD MWDs.³ Furthermore, the 341 TRS provides training for DoD MWDs used in patrol, drug and explosive detection, and specialized mission functions for the DoD and other Government agencies. The 341 TRS staff also conducts operational training for DoD MWD handlers and supervisors and sustains the DoD MWD Program through logistical support, veterinary care, and research and development for security efforts worldwide.⁴

(U) DoDD 5200.31E also requires the Secretary of the Army to provide veterinary policy and support to the DoD Service Components. Specifically, the Army serves as the DoD veterinary consultant for DoD MWD procurement and acceptance, physical standards, conditioning programs, training methods, and performance standards; kenneling standards and requirements; health and well-being; and DoD MWD research, development, test, and evaluation. Furthermore, the Secretary of the Army shall, provide the DoD Components veterinary guidance and veterinary

¹ (U) Sporting dog breeds are naturally active, alert, and make excellent companions. Sporting breeds were originally bred to work closely with hunters for locating and retrieving game.

² (U) DoDD 5200.31E, “DoD Military Working Dog Program,” September 21, 2020.

³ (U) From birth to 8 weeks, future DoD MWDs bred at the 341 TRS are reared at the Military Working Dog Center on JB San Antonio–Lackland whelping facility. Development specialists begin working with the pups from birth, imprinting and exposing the pups to a variety of simulations and activities that will prepare them for the next phase of their life.

⁴ (U) DoD Components with approved waivers do not procure, train, or manage canines from the 341 TRS, including the U.S. Special Operations Command and Pentagon Force Protection Agency.

(U) support, serve as the DoD veterinary consultant for MWD procurement and acceptance, physical standards, conditioning programs, training methods, and performance standards, kenneling standards and requirements, health and wellbeing, and provide training to DoD MWD handlers on veterinary medical care, including nuclear, chemical, and biological protection.

(U) The primary DoD veterinary medical facility supporting the DoD MWD program is the LTC Daniel E. Holland Memorial Military Working Dog Hospital (the Holland MWD Hospital), located at JB San Antonio–Lackland, Texas. The Holland MWD Hospital provides veterinary care to DoD MWDs, including emergency services, routine sick calls, internal medicine, radiology, surgery, dentistry, behavior, and rehabilitation.

(U) DoD Military Working Dogs in Non-Training Status

(U) DoD MWDs are considered in non-training status at the 341 TRS for:

- (U) undergoing initial medical processing,
- (U) awaiting initial training,
- (U) being on medical hold,
- (U) awaiting shipment to operational field units after completion of initial training,
- (U) use as 341 TRS training aids, or
- (U) being administratively held and awaiting disposition from service.⁵

(U) The duration of DoD MWDs at the 341 TRS in non-training status varies; however, the Holland MWD Hospital staff told us that they were aware of one DoD MWD that was on non-training status for 4 years. During our August 2024 site visit to the 341 TRS, at JB San Antonio–Lackland, Texas, 230 DoD MWDs were in non-training status.

(U) Policy for the Military Working Dog Program

(U) DoD Directive 5200.31E, “DoD Military Working Dog Program”

(U) DoDD 5200.31E specifies roles and responsibilities of the DoD MWD EA and states that the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security provides the DoD Components with policy guidance for implementation and oversees the DoD EA (the Secretary of the Air Force) for the DoD MWD Program providing for the end-user requirements.

⁵ (U) Non-training status is also referred to as “pool status” within the DoD MWD enterprise.

(U) A DoD MWD disposition is defined as the determination for the canine’s removal from the kennel facility by reason of return to duty, transfer to another location, termination of medical issue, adoption, or death.

(U) Furthermore, the directive names the Air Force Security Forces Director as the functional manager for the DoD MWD Program, responsible for appointing a DoD MWD Program Manager (PM). According to the policy, the DoD MWD PM, directors, and staff must coordinate with all DoD Component DoD MWD PMs and program participants to provide continuous, timely, and sustainable DoD MWD requirements. Specifically, DoDD 5200.31E outlines the budgetary and programming roles and responsibilities of the DoD MWD Program.

(U) DoDD 6400.04E, “DoD Veterinary Public and Animal Health Services”

(U) DoDD 6400.04E establishes policy and assigns responsibilities for veterinary public and animal health services and designates the Secretary of the Army as the EA for DoD Veterinary Public and Animal Health Services.⁶ In addition, this directive establishes policy for Army veterinary service personnel (including veterinarians and veterinary safety officers) with relevant training and specialization to plan and deliver food protection for DoD MWDs. The DoDD 6400.04E directive also sets policy for veterinarian service personnel to provide veterinary clinical medicine and diagnostic laboratory capabilities in support of DoD working animals; military communities and families; and DoD Components’ research, development, test, and evaluation and training. Specifically, DoDD 6400.04E states that the Secretary of the Army is responsible for the following veterinary activities.

(U) Train and equip Army veterinary service personnel, including veterinarians and veterinary food safety officers with relevant specialty training, to enable food protection, animal health and welfare, veterinary public health, and, when required by the DoD Components, for research, development, test, and evaluation and training.

(U) “Department of the Air Force Guidance Memorandum to DAFI 31-126, ‘DoD Military Working Dog (MWD) Program’”

(U) This Department of the Air Force Guidance Memorandum (DAFGM) provides requirements for DoD MWD welfare in the 341 TRS kennel environment.⁷ Specifically, the DAFGM specifies that DoD MWD wellness and wellbeing must be adequately addressed to support the mission effectiveness. The DAFI 31-126 applies to Military Services, DoD Agencies, and DoD law enforcement organizations with a military or contract working dog requirement or supporting role within the United States, its territories, and in foreign countries. The DAFGM addresses the application of canine enrichment time as: “DoD MWDs’ physical, social, and

⁶ (U) DoDD 6400.04E, “DoD Veterinary Public and Animal Health Services,” June 27, 2013 (Incorporating Change 2, August 29, 2017).

⁷ (U) “Department of the Air Force Guidance Memorandum to DAFI 31-126, ‘DoD Military Working Dog (MWD) Program,’” April 24, 2025. This memorandum prescribes practices and procedures that support an optimal “kennel environment.”

(U) cognitive needs must be met every day through enrichment. Rotation of the type of enrichment provided from each category shall be done to maintain novelty and engagement.”

(U) The DAFGM defines the following canine enrichment categories.

- **(U) Physical enrichment**—DoD MWDs will be provided with 5 hours a day of structured, safe, and varied physical activity. Any physical activity during training helps fulfill this requirement. All remaining physical activity must be accumulated outside of training. Examples of appropriate physical activity, including intentional play time with people and dogs; exploration of their environment during walks; and walking, running, retrieving, or machine-guided movement, such as walking on a treadmill.
- **(U) Social interaction enrichment**—Canines are a social species, and require physical and visual access to companions, including humans and other dogs. Any social interaction during training, physical activity, or cognitive engagement helps fulfill this requirement. If social interaction is not a part of these activities, the DoD MWD must receive dedicated social interaction. Examples of appropriate human social interaction include positive interactions during physical activity, play, and grooming. Examples of appropriate canine social interactions include visual access to other DoD MWDs and allowing proximity to other DoD MWDs during training or physical activity.
- **(U) Cognitive engagement enrichment**—DoD MWDs require cognitive stimulation to encourage creativity and learning. Any cognitive engagement during training or physical activity helps fulfill this requirement. Examples of appropriate cognitive engagement include training sessions, puzzle games, foraging opportunities, and food-releasing devices.

(U) Title 9 Code of Federal Regulations Section 3.1.

(U) The DAFGM highlights section 3.1., “Housing Facilities, General,” of Title 9, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), which sets the DoD standards for DoD MWD housing facilities and animal care. Specifically, the CFR addresses the construction and condition of DoD MWD housing facilities and states:

(U) Housing facilities for dogs and cats must be designed and constructed so that they are structurally sound. They must be kept in good repair, and they must protect the animals from injury, contain the animals securely, and restrict other animals from entering.⁸

⁸ (U) Title 9 Code of Federal Regulations, section 3.1., section a., “Housing facilities, general.”

(U) In addition, section 3.1. serves as the DoD standard and policy for managing DoD MWD housing facilities and categorizes DoD MWD housing management as: general maintenance and the replacement of surfaces, cleaning, water and electric power, storage, drainage and waste disposal, and washrooms and sinks within the kennel facilities.

(U) Army Regulation 40-905, “Veterinary Health Services”

(U) Army Regulation 40-905 assigns policies, responsibilities, and procedures for veterinary health services.⁹ The veterinary health objectives of the Army Veterinary Service include responding to the veterinary service requirements of all components of the DoD and providing complete veterinary medical care for all DoD-owned animals. Specifically, Army Regulation 40-905 states that veterinarians will:

(U) conduct inspections of kennels, animal stables, cages, pastures, enclosures, and other related support facilities, on at least a quarterly basis...the inspection will determine adequacy of animal husbandry practices and will evaluate construction, maintenance, and sanitation to prevent disease, injury, or adverse effects on the welfare of animals.¹⁰

⁹ (U) Army Regulation 40-905, “Veterinary Health Services,” August 29, 2006.

¹⁰ (U) AR 40-905, Chapter 4, “Injury and Disease Prevention and Control,” August 29, 2006.

(U) The term “husbandry” refers to the science of breeding and caring for animals or the management of resources.

(U) Finding A

(U) The 341 TRS Did Not Provide DoD MWDs in Non-Training Status with the Required Physical Activity or Cognitive and Social Interaction Time

(U) We determined that the 341 TRS did not provide DoD MWDs in non-training status, (awaiting training, deployment, medical disposition, or in training rejection status) with 5 hours per day of physical activity, social, and cognitive enrichment as required by DAFI 31-126. Instead, we found that DoD MWDs in non-training status were walked for approximately 10 minutes, four times per week or less. During our August 2024 site visit at the 341 TRS, 230 DoD MWDs were in non-training status. The lack of enrichment activity occurred because the 341 TRS does not have enough caretakers to manage the volume of DoD MWDs in non-training status. As a result, the 341 TRS experienced higher rates of diseases, injuries, and behavioral problems than other DoD MWD operational units. For example, in FY 2023, 22 percent of the 520 DoD MWDs under the care of the 341 TRS were infected with intestinal disease in comparison to 0.4 percent of the 1,527 DoD MWDs at other DoD locations.¹¹

(U) DoD MWDs in a Non-Training Status Did Not Receive the Required Physical Activity, Social Interaction, and Cognitive Enrichment Time

(U) The 341 TRS did not provide DoD MWDs in non-training status with 5 hours per day of physical activity, social, and cognitive enrichment as required by DAFI 31-126. Instead, we found that DoD MWDs in non-training status were walked for approximately 10 minutes, four times per week or less. During our August 2024 site visit at the 341 TRS, 230 DoD MWDs were in non-training status.¹²

(U) DoD MWD Behaviors Under the Care of the 341 TRS in Non-Training Status

(U) During our August 2024 site visit to the 341 TRS DoD MWD kennel facilities at JB San Antonio–Lackland, Texas, we found canine behaviors that resulted from a lack of enrichment time.

¹¹ (U) See Table 1.

¹² (U) It was outside the scope of our evaluation to determine why DoD MWDs at the 341 TRS were in non-training status for 6 months to a year. We focused our review on DoD MWD's welfare.

(U) Specifically, we observed the following DoD MWD behaviors.

- (U) Stress behaviors, such as continuous spinning, jumping, chewing on their metal water buckets, and excessive vocalization.
- (U) Physical signs of heat stress, including rapid panting with enlarged tongues and ears swept back.¹³

~~(CUI)~~ For example, the medical records for the DoD MWD shown in Figure 1 documented that it had been [REDACTED]



(U) Figure 1. Picture of DoD MWD Displaying Stress Behaviors with its Water Bucket at the 341 TRS Kennel Facilities, JB San Antonio–Lackland, Texas
(U) Source: The DoD OIG.

¹³ (U) According to the DoD MWD Veterinary Service, indications of heat injury include, inadequate observation and mitigation, inadequate enrichment, or inappropriate housing conditions.

~~(CUI)~~ We reviewed a nonstatistical sample of medical records for the DoD MWDs that we observed with signs of heat stress or displaying inappropriate behaviors during our site visit at the 341 TRS in August 2024. Specifically, the medical records showed that [REDACTED]

¹⁴

(U) The 341 TRS Does Not Have Enough Caretakers to Manage the DoD MWDs in Non-Training Status

(U) The 341 TRS does not have enough caretakers to manage the DoD MWDs in a non-training status. The DAFGM requires implementation of Title 9 CFR, subchapter A, part 3, as the “benchmark for welfare for all working dogs housed in the 341st Training Squadron (TRS) kennel environment.”

Title 9 CFR, subchapter A, part 3 states:

(U) Each person subject to the Animal Welfare regulations (Title 9 CFR parts 1, 2, and 3) maintaining dogs and cats must have enough employees to carry out the level of husbandry practices and care required ... MWDs will be treated with dignity and respect throughout their lives and be cared for in ways that minimize fear, pain, stress, and suffering.

(U) Furthermore, the DAFGM requires 341 TRS to perform daily DoD MWD enrichment, regardless of the DoD MWD training status. Specifically:

(U) DoD MWD’s physical, social, and cognitive needs must be met every day through enrichment... which includes 5 hours of varied daily physical activity.

(U) As discussed earlier, during our site visit there were 230 DoD MWDs in a non-training status at the 341 TRS. During our site visit, 104 DoD MWDs received four 10-minute walks for the week. The remaining 126 DoD MWDs received three or less 10-minute walks for the week.

(U) During our interviews, the 341 TRS Kennel Master (KM) stated they “could not meet the 5 hours of enrichment required because of manpower challenges.” Additionally, the 341 TRS caretakers and trainers told us that they needed additional manpower to complete their assigned DoD MWD husbandry and kennel management duties. Because of the manpower challenges, the Air Force requested FY 2025 funding to increase caretaker positions to support DoD MWD exercise and enrichment requirements. It was outside the scope of our evaluation to determine the adequate number of caregivers required for the 341 TRS to meet physical enrichment requirements in DAFI 31-126.

¹⁴ (U) Sentinel refers to an indicator of the presence of disease or prevalence within the kennel facility.

(U) Before our site visit to the 341 TRS in August 2024, the Commander of the 341 TRS submitted a memorandum for record (MFR), "341st Training Squadron Non-Compliance with Military Working Dog (MWD) Kennel Temperatures and Enrichment Standards," to the 37th Training Wing Commander. The MFR requested 341 TRS waivers for both kennel temperature and enrichment standards in DAFI 31-126. Specifically, the MFR stated that:

(U) Due to 341 TRS manpower authorizations, it is not possible to provide five hours of physical activity to all MWDs. However, all MWDs are currently provided five hours of holistic enrichment through inflatables, audio books, music, and scented bubble machines.

(U) While at the 341 TRS kennel, we observed cognitive enrichment, such as music playing in some kennel areas and bubble machines on the kennel facility grounds. According to the DAFGM, DoD MWDs require cognitive stimulation to encourage creativity and learning during training or physical activity to help fulfill this requirement. However, cognitive enrichment in and around kennels is not sufficient to meet the requirement for cognitive enrichment during training and physical activity.

(CUI)

(CUI) As a result of limited physical enrichment and a shortage of caretakers, the assigned DoD MWDs experienced higher rates of sentinel diseases than any other DoD MWD locations. We reviewed medical studies conducted by the Holland MWD Hospital staff that compared the incidents of sentinel diseases and injuries at the 341 TRS with other DoD MWD operational locations in FY 2021 through FY 2023. The studies showed that DoD MWD sentinel disease diagnosis occurred at the 341 TRS at higher rates compared to other DoD MWD operational locations.

(CUI) Additionally, we reviewed medical records of the DoD MWDs listed in non-training status at the 341 TRS in FY 2021 through FY 2023 and found that

Table 1 compares the sentinel disease occurrences at the 341 TRS with other DoD MWD operational locations.

(CUI) The shortage of caretakers also led to a lack of disease prevention at the 341 TRS. Disease prevention requires that caretakers conduct thorough cleaning by disposing of fecal matter regularly and by thoroughly disinfecting the facility

(CUI) [Redacted]

(CUI) [Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]
[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]
[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	(CUI) [Redacted]

(CUI) [Redacted]

(U) Recommendation, Management Comments, and Our Response

(U) Recommendation A.1

(U) We recommend that the Secretary of the Air Force, as Executive Agent for the DoD Military Working Dog Program, in coordination with the DoD Military Working Dog Program Manager, reduce the number of DoD military working dogs in non-training status at the 341 Training Squadron to meet Title 9 Code of Federal Regulations requirements until the number of caretakers meets the Department of Air Force Instruction 31-126 requirements for 5 hours per day of physical activity, social and cognitive enrichment.

(U) Air Force Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics, Engineering, and Force Protection Comments

(U) The Air Force Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics, Engineering, and Force Protection, responding on behalf of the Secretary of the Air Force and the DoD MWD program managers, agreed with the intent of the recommendation. In addition, the Assistant Deputy Chief stated, “Over the past several months, the DoD MWD EA has taken action to address this recommendation, and plans to take action to ensure it is fully mitigated...” These actions included: updating the DoD MWD Program policy by revising DAFI 31-126, increasing DoD MWD Caretaker staffing for the 341 TRS and allowing the 341 TRS to achieve a 1-to-6 caretaker to MWD ratio, revising the Trained Dog Requirements Process, improving information technology to integrate data from various DoD MWD databases to ensure that all members of the DoD MWD program can access centralized data, and reducing DoD MWD Training Aids by 28 percent, which will reduce the number of DoD MWDs in non-training status and prioritize Caretaker support capacity.

(U) Our Response

(U) Comments from the Air Force Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics, Engineering, and Force Protection, addressed the specifics of the recommendation. The recommendation is resolved but will remain open until the Air Force completes efforts to reduce canines in all non-training status categories. We will close the recommendation when we verify that the DoD MWD Program Office has updated the DoD MWD Program policy by revising DAFI 31-126, increased DoD MWD caretaker staffing for the 341 TRS and allowing the 341 TRS to achieve a 1-to-6 caretaker to MWD ratio, revised the Trained Dog Requirements Process, improved information technology to integrate data from various DoD MWD databases, and reduced the number of DoD MWDs in non-training status.

(U) Finding B

(U) The DoD Needs to Improve MWD Kennel Facility Conditions

(U) We determined that the DoD must improve MWD kennel facility conditions across the DoD. DoDD 5200.31E requires that DoD Components with MWD programs shall oversee the sustainment, restoration, or modernization of MWD kenneling and training facilities to support the global security mission. During our site visits to 12 DoD MWD kennel facilities throughout the United States, we found that the DoD MWD PM and Service Components did not consistently protect DoD MWDs from extreme weather conditions, kennel mold issues, or manage quarantine and isolation areas for DoD MWDs. Service Component officials told us that the unsatisfactory kennel facility conditions occurred because the Service Component Commands did not prioritize renovation or new construction of the kennels over other mission requirements. As a result, at 10 of 12 kennel facilities we visited, DoD MWDs were housed and trained in aging and unsatisfactory kennel facilities, which caused the death of four DoD MWDs from FY 2021 through FY 2023, and could lead to canine health issues, injuries, and behavioral challenges.

(U) The DoD Did Not Consistently Protect DoD MWDs from Kennel Facility Hazards

(U) DoDD 5200.31E requires that the Heads of the DoD Components with MWD programs shall oversee the sustainment, restoration, or modernization of MWD kenneling and training facilities to support the global security mission.

(U) We visited 12 DoD MWD kennel facilities and determined that the DoD MWD PM and Service Components did not consistently protect DoD MWDs from extreme weather conditions, kennel mold issues, or manage quarantine and isolation areas for DoD MWDs.

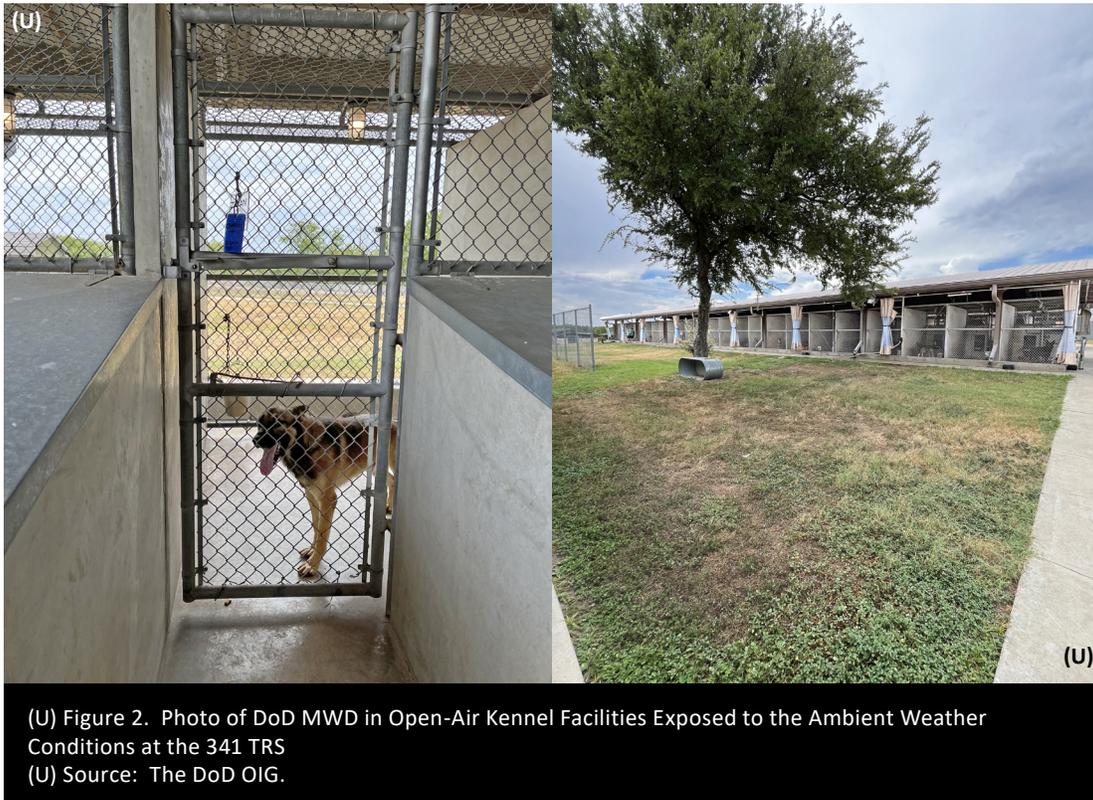
(U) Some DoD Service Components Did Not Shelter DoD MWDs from Extreme Weather Conditions

(U) We determined that 5 of 12 DoD Service Component kennels did not shelter DoD MWDs from extreme weather conditions, particularly in geographical locations like Texas and California, that experience extreme heat conditions during the summer season. Specifically, during our site visits to 12 Service Component DoD MWD Programs, we found that 5 of 12 DoD MWD kennels did not shelter their DoD MWDs from extreme weather conditions during the summer and winter months,

(U) as required by the CFR. Specifically, Chapter 1 of Title 9 CFR requires the DoD MWDs to be sheltered in facilities that keep the temperature from falling below 45 degrees or above 85 degrees Fahrenheit for more than 4 consecutive hours.

(U) U.S. Climate Data history showed that the 341 TRS is in an area that experienced 740 days of temperatures above 85 degrees Fahrenheit during calendar years 2021 through 2024. Despite these high temperatures, the DoD MWDs at the 341 TRS were housed in an open-air facility with chain-link outer walls and a corrugated metal roof and were exposed to this extreme weather without effective provisions to protect them from prolonged, excessive heat during the hottest parts of the day. Additionally, we reviewed the Holland Veterinary Hospital Heat Injury Study, which showed that 22 DoD MWDs at the 341 TRS sustained heat injuries in their kennels from FY 2021 through FY 2023.

(U) Figure 2 shows the open-air DoD MWD kennel structures at the 341 TRS kennel facilities, JB San Antonio–Lackland, Texas. The figure demonstrates the open-air facility structures with chain-link outer walls and a corrugated metal roof that exposes DoD MWDs to extreme weather. In addition, we observed the DoD MWD shown in Figure 2 was displaying signs of heat stress at the 341 TRS kennel facilities.



(U) In another example, U.S. Climate Data history showed Naval Base San Diego and Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, California, experienced 30 days of temperatures above 85 degrees Fahrenheit and 94 days of temperatures below 45 degrees Fahrenheit during calendar years 2021 through 2024.¹⁶ We found the DoD MWDs at the San Diego, California locations were housed in an open-air facility with chain-link outer walls and a corrugated metal roof and were exposed to the extreme weather. As with the facility at the 341 TRS, the facility had no provisions to protect them during periods of prolonged, excessive heat or cold.

(U) Furthermore, KMs at both Camp Pendleton Marine Corp Base and Naval Base San Diego told us that because of the open-air facilities, the DoD MWDs get wet due to rain and standing water from inadequate shelter and drainage. In addition, the San Diego KM also told us that during rainy conditions, solid waste backs up into the kennel runs, which exposes DoD MWDs to fecal matter. We reviewed DoD MWD medical records at Naval Base San Diego, that dated from 2021 through 2024 and found 9 of 19 DoD MWDs (47 percent) suffered from a sentinel disease, likely because of the poor kennel conditions.

(U) DoD Service Components Did Not Correct Mold Issues in the DoD MWD Kennel Facilities

(U) DoD Service Components did not correct mold issues in the DoD MWD kennel facilities, as required by the DoD's Unified Facility Guide Specification 85, "Mold Remediation."¹⁷ Specifically, DoD's Unified Facility Guide Specification-02 states:

(U) Use proper cleaning procedures, engineering controls, and apply best management practices to remove microbial growth and spore fallout from all surfaces and building materials to minimize the further release of microbial spores.

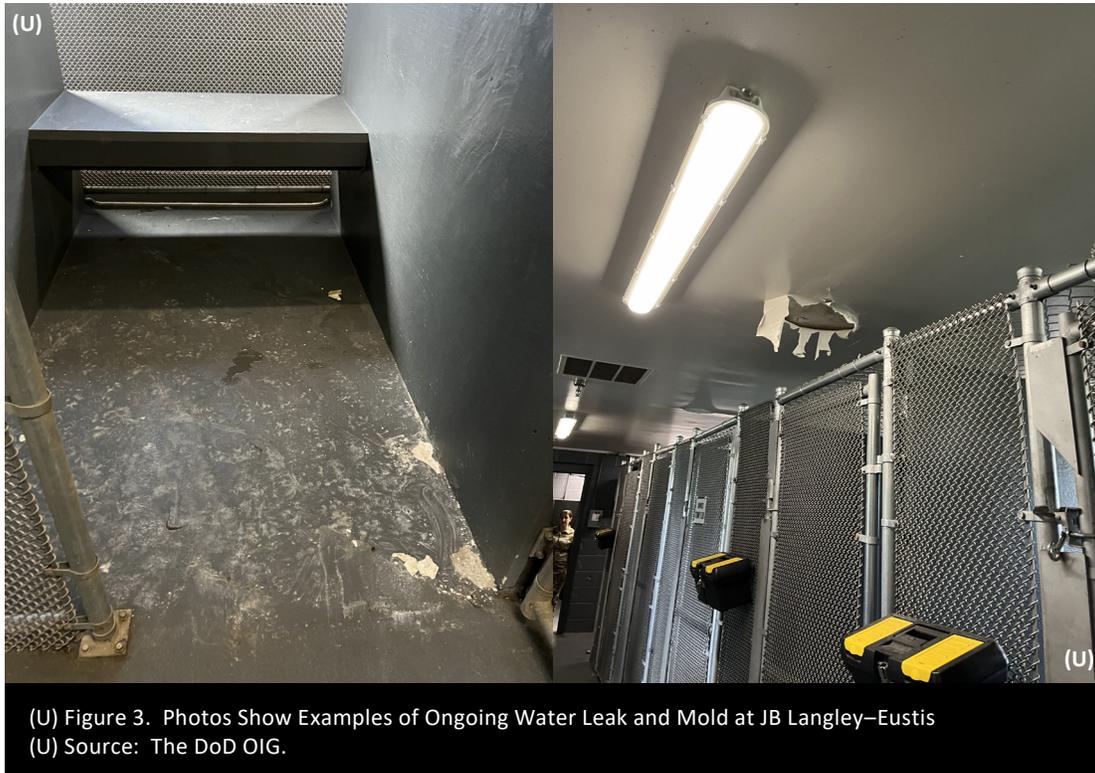
(U) During our July 2024 site visit to the JB Langley-Eustis's DoD MWD kennel facilities in Virginia, we found significant water damage in the ceiling of the KM's office and kennel run area. The water damage caused subsequent mold growth within the facility. As a result, the kennel runs below the affected ceiling area were closed to keep the DoD MWDs from being exposed to toxic debris that fell onto the floor.¹⁸ However, due to limited space, the kennel facility area was still used

¹⁶ (U) We referenced U.S. Climate Data (www.usclimatedata.com) for annual weather data in San Antonio, Texas, and San Diego, California.

¹⁷ (U) The DoD's Unified Facility Guide Specification (UFGS) UFGS-02 85, "Mold Remediation," August 13, 2025, is a specification used by DoD Components that covers the requirements for the demolition, cleaning, removal, and disposal of mold contamination materials. UFGS-02 85 provides guidance for managing mold remediation in military facilities. In addition, to this guidance, the DoD leverages information provided by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the American Industrial Hygiene Association.

¹⁸ (U) Kennel runs are fenced areas provided for the use of the canines being housed in a kennel facility.

(U) to house DoD MWDs, while the administrative office was being used by DoD MWD staff personnel for routine business, exposing both the DoD MWDs and staff to mold (see Figure 3).



(U) Figure 3. Photos Show Examples of Ongoing Water Leak and Mold at JB Langley–Eustis
(U) Source: The DoD OIG.

(U) Similarly, during our August 2024 site visit to Fort Bragg’s DoD MWD kennel facilities in North Carolina, we found mold in the light fixtures, ceiling tiles, and equipment room of one building (see Figure 4).¹⁹ In addition, the second building was closed before our site visit due to mold growth. Furthermore, the third building contained one closed kennel run. This kennel run was not used because of water damage to the ceiling, which caused debris to fall into the kennel and mold to grow on the ceiling above the kennel run.

¹⁹ (U) Initially named Fort Bragg in 1918, the installation was renamed to Fort Liberty in June 2020. In February 2025, the installation was renamed back to Fort Bragg.



(U) Some DoD Service Component MWD Kennel Facilities Did Not Have Quarantine and Isolation Areas That Met DoD MWD Standards

(U) During our site visits to 12 DoD Service Component MWD Programs, we found that 7 of 12 DoD Component MWD kennels did not have quarantine and isolation areas, or measures in place to separate DoD MWDs that were diagnosed with a contagious disease, or returning from deployments, as required by DAFI 31-126.²⁰ Quarantine and isolation areas provide medically segregated areas until the DoD MWDs are medically vetted and cleared to train or operate in the common areas of the facilities. DoD MWD quarantine and isolation areas serve as an important animal disease control and management practice.

(U) For example, the Marine Corps Base Quantico DoD MWD kennel facilities in Virginia did not have quarantine and isolation areas that met DoD MWD standards. Instead of being physically separated and isolated, the DoD MWDs were kept in travel crates in the administration offices, which were in the same building as the

²⁰ (U) DAFI 31-126, paragraph 2.15.6.3., mandates that Veterinary Corps Officers, in conjunction with the DoD MWD's unit, conduct quarantine procedures for DoD MWDs redeploying within 72 hours of arrival from OCONUS missions due to the potential introduction of foreign animal diseases, as well as the health of the DoD MWD. Specifically, the unit will separate the DoD MWD from other DoD MWDs as much as possible for 14 days. The DoD MWD may continue to work during this time provided it does not show any signs of illness.

(U) kennel runs for healthy DoD MWDs. This practice placed healthy DoD MWDs at risk of contracting sentinel diseases or other injuries. Furthermore, the Veterinary Corps Officer (VCO) told us that the kennel experienced three outbreaks of Giardiasis during the past year.

(U) In another example, we reviewed an April 30, 2024 MFR from Department of the Army Veterinary Readiness Activity to Marine Corps Base Quantico, the VCO documented her concern:

(U) The isolation/quarantine kennels are in an unusable state of disrepair. DoD MWDs requiring isolation or quarantine are crated in an administrative space or kitchen...MWD health and welfare is directly harmed by the above deficiencies, the outcomes of which include undesirable behaviors, lost medical days, and early termination from service.

(U) In the third example, the VCO assigned to JB Langley-Eustis, Virginia, issued repeated reports to the KM identifying deficiencies on the facility's animal preventive health care measures and inadequate quarantine measures. The Langley facility uses open trenches to wash out canine waste from the kennel runs. During our site visit, we found that these trenches had standing water and canine waste. We also observed DoD MWD kennel staff hosing out kennel runs without removing the DoD MWDs from the kennel, which exposed them to contaminated water. Title 9 CFR requires the DoD MWDs to be removed from the kennels when using water to clean their enclosure to ensure that they are not harmed or distressed during the cleaning process.

(U) Furthermore, while we were conducting our site visit at the JB Langley-Eustis kennel facility, we sensed strong odors due to the heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems recycling the air in the kennels and not providing fresh air exchange. By not addressing these strong odors and solving the air ventilation issues, this facility was in violation of Title 9 CFR § 3.2(b), which requires indoor kennel facilities to be sufficiently ventilated at all times when animals are present to minimize odors, drafts, ammonia levels, and moisture condensation. These odor issues created unhealthy conditions and put the kennel facility at serious risk for disease outbreaks. Lastly, during our July 2024 site visit, we found that the assigned VCO for the kennel facility documented in an animal facility checklist, "current kennels are not appropriate...they do not allow for appropriate welfare and humane concerns to be addressed and maintained."

(U) The Service Components Told Us That DoD MWD Kennel Facilities Are Considered Low Priority for Renovations and Military Construction

(U) DoD Service Component officials told us that the unsatisfactory kennel facility conditions occurred because the Service Component Commands did not prioritize renovation or new construction of the kennels over other mission requirements. DoD MWD kennel facilities are aged, with some being constructed over 40 years ago. In addition, many DoD MWD kennel facilities no longer meet current DoD construction standards.

(U) For example, during our July 2024 site visit to the DoD MWD kennel facility at JB Langley–Eustis, Virginia, the staff told us that the facility was originally constructed in 1984. In addition, the civil engineer official told us they are working to get a new kennel facility design approved for military construction funding. However, the civil engineering officers assigned to support the JB Langley unit told us that it is challenging to obtain approval for DoD MWD kennel facility military construction project requests because the kennel facility is considered low priority compared to other critical mission requirements at the installation.

(U) In another example, during our August 2024 site visit to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, we observed that the kennel facility had problems with black mold. Specifically, during our interview with the installation’s Public Works Department, they told us that although black mold is a priority for base leadership, the command is currently focusing its mold remediation efforts on the installation’s housing and dining facilities. As a result, on May 2025, the Army MWD PM told us that the issues at the kennel facility remain unresolved and without a definitive timeline to address the black mold for the DoD MWD kennel facility.

(U) Many DoD MWDs Are Housed in Aging and Unsatisfactory Kennel Facilities That Expose Them to Hazards

(U) As a result, for 10 of 12 kennel facilities that we visited, DoD MWDs were housed and trained in aging and unsatisfactory kennel facilities. This caused the death of four DoD MWDs from FY 2021 through FY 2023 and could lead to canine health issues, injuries, and behavioral challenges. In addition, unsatisfactory kennel facilities do not meet current DoD standards and expose DoD MWDs to extreme weather conditions, cultivate preventable diseases, and preventable injuries.

(U) Recommendation, Management Comments, and Our Response

(U) Recommendation B.1

(U) We recommend that the Secretary of the Air Force, as Executive Agent for the DoD Military Working Dog Program and the DoD Military Working Dog Program Manager, in coordination with the Secretary of the Army and the Secretary of the Navy, develop and implement a plan to upgrade military working dog kennel facilities to meet current DoD standards.

(U) Air Force Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics, Engineering, and Force Protection Comments

(U) The Air Force Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics, Engineering, and Force Protection, responding on behalf of the Secretary of the Air Force and the DoD MWD Program Managers, agreed with the intent of the recommendation. In addition, the Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff stated, “On 17 November 2025, the DoD MWD EA announced the beginning of the Under Secretary of the Air Force approved DoD MWD Program Governance Structure. This initiative was created to ensure that DoD MWD decisions are made at the appropriate risk acceptance levels.”

(U) Furthermore, the Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff highlighted other corrective actions, including the following initiatives: updating the Standard Kennel Facility Design Guide, implementing intermediate structural improvements to the 341 TRS following the approval of \$142 million in FY 2025 funding, revising Veterinarian Facility Inspection Checklists, and implementing the “K9S” information technology capability across the DoD MWD program. The K9S implementation will integrate the new Veterinarian Facility Inspection Checklist and the holistic facility health assessment based on the new 2026 Working Dog Facility Design Guide.

(U) Our Response

(U) Comments from the Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff addressed the specifics of the recommendation. Therefore, the recommendation is resolved but will remain open. We will close this recommendation once we verify that the DoD MWD Program Office has implemented all planned corrective actions.

(U) Appendix

(U) Scope and Methodology

(U) We conducted this evaluation from April 2024 through September 2025, in accordance with the “Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation,” published in December 2020 by the Council of Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency. Those standards require that we adequately plan the evaluation to ensure that objectives are met and that we perform the evaluation to obtain sufficient, competent, and relevant evidence to support the findings, conclusions, and recommendations. We believe that the evidence obtained was sufficient, competent, and relevant to lead a reasonable person to sustain the findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

(U) To successfully accomplish the objective of this evaluation, we focused on the DoD’s MWD Program, including its management and execution of policies, processes, and procedures that ensure canine safety, wellness, and wellbeing. Based on information we learned during our assessment of the 341 TRS, we narrowed the evaluation to DoD MWDs in non-training status because DoD MWDs in training status generally receive sufficient physical activity, social, and cognitive enrichment throughout the course of a standard training day with their handlers.

(U) Interviews with Officials

(U) We met or interviewed individuals at the following organizations.

- (U) 341 TRS
- (U) DoD MWD Program Manager
- (U) LTC Daniel E. Holland Military Working Dog Hospital
- (U) Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security, Law Enforcement Division
- (U) U.S. Air Force, DoD MWD Program Manager
- (U) U.S. Air Force Security Forces Center, Law Enforcement Division
- (U) U.S. Army, DoD MWD Program Manager
- (U) U.S. Army Office of Inspector General
- (U) U.S. Marine Corps, DoD MWD Program Manager
- (U) U.S. Navy, DoD MWD Program Manager

(U) Site Visits

(U) We selected 12 DoD Service Component DoD MWD programs to conduct physical site visits. We selected these 12 locations based on Service Component DoD MWD programs, different variants of units and DoD MWD program sizes, geographical locations, and weather extremes. At these locations, we interviewed unit leadership and kennel management and training staff, observed the assigned DoD MWDs, inspected the kennel facilities, and inspected the DoD MWD transport vehicles and supporting veterinary clinics located at the following locations.

- (U) Fort Belvoir, Virginia
- (U) Fort Bragg, North Carolina
- (U) Fort Myer–Henderson Hall, Virginia
- (U) JB Andrews, Maryland
- (U) JB Langley–Eustis, Virginia
- (U) JB San Antonio–Lackland, San Antonio, Texas
- (U) JB San Antonio–Lackland, Chapman Training Annex, San Antonio, Texas
- (U) Marine Corps Base Pendleton, California
- (U) Marine Corps Base Quantico, Virginia
- (U) Naval Base Norfolk, Virginia
- (U) Naval Base San Diego, California
- (U) Naval Station, Miramar, California

(U) In August 2024, during a site visit to the 341 TRS at JB San Antonio–Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, we selected a nonstatistical sample of 37 of 491 DoD MWDs that we observed with signs of heat stress or displaying inappropriate behaviors. We obtained the health medical care records for the 37 DoD MWDs to determine whether the DoD MWDs were seen by veterinary personnel or had documented health issues.

(U) In addition, we conducted supplemental analyses on other working dog programs by coordinating site visits to the following Federal agencies. The purpose of these site visits was to observe and compare their practices, processes, and procedures with the DoD MWD Program.

- (U) Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives
- (U) Pentagon Force Protection Agency
- (U) Transportation Security Administration
- (U) U.S. Department of State
- (U) U.S. Secret Service

(U) We reviewed the following DoD MWD reports.

- (U) Joint (DCR) for “Department of Defense Working Dog Enterprise Management,” December 9, 2021
- (U) Government Accountability Office (GAO), Report to Congressional Committees, “Working Dogs–Federal Agencies Need to Better Address Health and Welfare,” October 2022
- (U) OUSD(I&S) “Trip Report, Oversight Visit to DoD Military Working Dog Schoolhouse,” December 14, 2022

(U) Criteria

(U) We obtained and reviewed the following regulations and guidance.

(U) Federal Regulations

(U) Title 9 Code of Federal Regulations Section 3.1., “Housing Facilities, General.”

(U) DoD Directives, Instructions, Manual, and Memorandums

- (U) DoDD 5200.31E, “DoD Military Working Dog Program,” September 21, 2020.
- (U) DoDD 6400.04E, “DoD Veterinary Public and Animal Health Services,” August 29, 2017.

(U) DoD Service Component Instructions

- (U) Department of the Air Force Policy Memorandum to Air Force Instruction 31-126, “Military Working Dog Program,” April 24, 2025.
- (U) Army Regulation 40-905, “Veterinary Health Services,” August 29, 2006.

(U) American Medical Veterinary Association

(U) We reviewed American Medical Veterinary Association standards and regulations, located at www.avma.org.

(U) Use of Computer-Processed Data

(U) We did not use computer-processed data to perform this evaluation.

(U) Prior Coverage

(U) During the last 5 years, the GAO issued one report addressing military working dogs. Unrestricted GAO reports can be accessed at <http://www.gao.gov>.

(U) GAO

(U) GAO-23-104489, “Working Dogs: Federal Agencies Need to Better Address Health and Welfare,” October 2022.

(U) The GAO identified 18 issues that they determined important to the health and welfare of working dogs, analyzed working dog program documents to determine whether they addressed these issues, and interviewed agency officials. The GAO made 19 recommendations to agencies to ensure that their policies and future contracts address, as appropriate, all 18 health and welfare issues. Specifically, the GAO recommended that the DoD should, through the Secretary of the Air Force as the executive agent for the MWD Program, direct all of the DoD’s agencies, as necessary, to ensure that they address all of the 18 issues the GAO identified as important to the health and welfare of working dogs. In November 2024, DoD informed the GAO that it was in the process of revising DoDD 5200.31E to direct DoD components with working dogs to ensure that their policies address the 18 issues the GAO identified as important to the health and welfare of working dogs. On September 25, 2025, we reviewed the recommendation follow-up data listed on the GAO’s official website, which indicated that the recommendation remains open.

(U) Use of External Subject Matter Expert

(U) To accomplish this evaluation, we requested assistance from an external subject matter expert who specializes in canine medical care, safety, wellness, and well-being of working dogs. The subject matter expert serves as a working veterinarian, assigned to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives Canine Training Center, in Front Royal, Virginia. In addition, our external subject matter expert accompanied our team during our site visit to the 341 TRS in July 2024. The subject matter expert helped us evaluate the safety, wellness, and wellbeing of DoD MWDs assigned to the 341 TRS, JB San Antonio–Lackland, Texas, and provided us with professional, independent analysis, as well as feedback based on her observations of the 341 TRS DoD MWDs, assessments of their care and behavior, and interviews with the 341 TRS staff.

(U) Management Comments

(U) U.S. Air Force



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON DC

22 December 2025

MEMORANDUM FOR DEPARTMENT OF WAR INSPECTOR GENERAL

FROM: AF/A4
1030 Air Force Pentagon, Suite 4E154
Washington, DC 20330

SUBJECT: Department of the Air Force Response to Department of War Office of Inspector General Draft Report, Evaluation of the DoW Military Working Dog Program's Management of Canine Welfare (Project No. D2024-DEV0SV-0071.000)

References: (a) DAFI 31-126_DAFGM 2025-01, 23 April 2025, *DoD Military Working Dog (MWD) Program*
(b) United States, Department of Agriculture. "Animals and Animal Products." *Code of Federal Regulations*, Title 9 (2025)
(3) DODI 4000.19, 16 December 2020, *Support Agreements*

1. This is the Department of the Air Force's (DAF) response to the DoW Office of Inspector General (DoWIG) Draft Report, Evaluation of the DoW Military Working Dog Program's Management of Canine Welfare (Project No. D2024-DEV0SV-0071.000). The DAF *agrees with intent* of the report as written and welcomes the opportunity for continued action and advocacy toward improving and ensuring the health, welfare, and safety of Working Dogs.

2. The AF/A4, in coordination with SAF/AG, will correct issues identified in this report, and develop and implement a corrective action plan outlined in the following recommendations:

RECOMMENDATION A.1: The DoWIG recommends that the SecAF, as Executive Agent (EA) for the DoW's Working Dog (WD) program, in coordination with the DoW WD Program Manager, reduce the number of DoW WDs in a non-training status at the 341st Training Squadron (341 TRS) to meet title 9 Code of Regulations requirements until the number of caretakers meets the Department of Air Force Instruction (DAFI) 31-126 requirements for 5 hours per day of physical activity, social and cognitive enrichment.

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE RESPONSE: The DoW WD EA *agrees with intent* of the recommendation. Over the past several months, the DoW WD EA has taken action to address this recommendation, and plans to take continued action to ensure it is fully mitigated, which includes:

- 1) **Updated DoW WD Program Policy:** The DoW WD Program Office is currently revising DAFI 31-126 to provide clarification and guidance on acceptable enrichment activities. Moreover, the revised guidance will specifically replace the

(U) U.S. Air Force (cont'd)

2

5-hour enrichment requirement with the requirement for an Individual Enrichment Plan (IEP) for each WD, enabling a more tailored and effective approach to enrichment intended to increase WD capability and enhance canine welfare. WD personnel will develop these tailored IEPs in conjunction with Army Veterinary Services' (AVS) input to maximize the effectiveness of the assigned enrichment activity. Enrichment is critical for WDs, but each WD requires specific enrichment measures which necessitates a tailored IEP developed to intentionally benefit the specific needs of each WD to optimize its welfare and operational effectiveness. Additionally, there will be a specific requirement for the 341 TRS to develop and monitor enrichment Standard Operating Procedures to optimize the welfare of its training population. The 341 TRS is unique given its quantity of WDs and its WD population, which consist of WDs awaiting training, in training, and its WDs assigned to execute WD training courses. This requires specific enrichment requirements tailored to its highest risk WD population. Finally, the revised DAFI 31-126 will provide specific examples of enrichment activities with recommended frequency to meet enrichment requirements.

Estimated Completion Date: June 2026.

- 2) **Increased Working Dog Caretaker Staffing for the 341 TRS:** In FY25, OUSW approved a Program Budget Decision (PBD) authorizing \$26.6M over the FYDP to fund an additional 51 Caretakers for the 341 TRS. This will allow the 341 TRS to achieve a 1:6 Caretaker to WD ratio required to improve WD enrichment activities. \$5.2M is authorized for FY26. Currently, 25 Requests for Personnel Action (RPAs) have been submitted, and the remaining 26 RPAs are estimated to be submitted within the next 90 days. Unfortunately, hiring actions have been slower than expected due to the current government hiring freeze. However, the DoW WD Program Office worked with SAF/A1 and successfully obtained a SecAF hiring freeze waiver specifically for enabling the hiring of the additional Caretakers to support enrichment requirements at the 341 TRS.

Estimated Completion Date: September 2026.

- 3) **Revised Trained Dog Requirement (TDR) Process:** The TDR process is how components identify their WD requirements both annually and across the FYDP. It is the process that informs the EA's WD acquisition strategy, ensuring the appropriate number of WDs enter the training pipeline to meet component requirements while minimizing the potential to over-purchase resources. Unfortunately, the DoW WD Program Office had not revised the TDR process in more than a decade, potentially leading to inefficiencies and over-population; however, we revised the TDR process for FY26 to take into consideration production limiting factors, such as Holland Veterinary Hospital's (HVH) medical processing capacity and the 341 TRS' production capacity based on manpower and funding constraints. These factors directly contribute to the amount of WDs that reside in non-training status. The DoW WD Program Office's analysis also identified the negative impact the existing Interservice Support Agreement (ISSA) between the DoW and the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) is having on the health and welfare of DoW WDs. The DoW currently funds the procurement of TSA WDs, and they receive medical support from HVH. This

(U) U.S. Air Force (cont'd)

3

relationship creates longer processing times for DoW WDs and increases the time DoW WDs reside in an undesirable non-training status. In many cases, the medical waiting times for DoW WDs exceeded four months due to TSA's medical processing requirements. The DoW WD Program Office is currently drafting a new Interagency Agreement (IAA) to replace the existing ISSA. IAW DoDI 4000.19, an IAA is required along with full cost reimbursement to ensure the partnership with TSA is compliant with required directives without negatively impacting the DoW. Additionally, the new IAA will ensure DoW WDs receive priority access to HVH to reduce non-training status timelines for DoW WDs.

Estimated Completion Date: September 2026.

- 4) **Modern IT System and WD Data Collection:** The DoW WD Program Office is spearheading the development and fielding of an improved information technology solution enterprise wide. A revolutionary system called K9S is in the process of fielding across the department. K9S will enable the integration of data from various WD databases to ensure all members of the DoW WD program (handlers, program managers, veterinarians, the EA) can access a centralized platform to retrieve holistic data required to make informed decisions on DoW WD's health, welfare, safety, and operational effectiveness. This includes real-time data on all WD's health, location, enrichment activity, operational or support deployments, and status within the 341 TRS training pipeline. K9S will be accessible via web browser, and a government approved mobile device application to instantaneously aggregate data from across the program. This system will enable proper program management and directly lead to reducing the time WDs reside in non-training status at the 341 TRS.

Estimated Completion Date: September 2026.

- 5) **Reduction in WD Training Aids:** Beginning in FY26, the DoW WD Program Office and the 341 TRS leadership reduced the total number of Training Aids housed at the 341 TRS. WD Training Aids are critical in supporting the execution of courses conducted at the 341 TRS for the joint force. The Training Aid authorizations are dictated based on the aggregated handler course seat requests from the joint force, which necessitates a total of 179 WD Training Aids. However, due to component fill rates being well below the requested seat allocation requirement in recent years, the 341 TRS accepted risk and reduced the WD Training Aid quantities by 28%. This action reduces the amount of WDs in non-training status and assists with the prioritization of Caretaker support to ensure enrichment of the 341 TRS' high-risk WDs. We are working with the 341 TRS and the joint force program managers to more accurately project their required seat allocation for courses to potentially further reduce the Training Aids at the 341 TRS. These actions collectively improve the 341 TRS' ability to implement the required enrichment of its WD population. **Estimated Completion Date: September 2026.**

RECOMMENDATION B.1: The DoWIG recommends that the SecAF, as EA for the DoW's Working Dog (WD) program, in coordination with the DoW WD Program Manager, the Secretary of the Army, and the Secretary of the Navy, develop and

(U) U.S. Air Force (cont'd)

4

implement an enterprise-wide plan to upgrade DoW Military Working Dog kennel facilities to meet current DoW standards.

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE RESPONSE: The DoW WD EA *agrees with intent* of the recommendation. Over the past several months, the DoW WD EA has taken action to address this recommendation, and plans to take continued action to ensure it is fully mitigated, which includes:

1) **New WD Program Governance Structure:** On 17 November 2025, the DoW WD EA announced the beginning of the USecAF approved DoW WD Program Governance Structure. This will ensure WD decisions are made at the appropriate risk acceptance level. The new Governance Structure began at the working group level on 5 November and will culminate with the Defense WD Council chaired by the EA on 22 January. The new WD Governance Structure will be the vehicle to assess kennel standards and WD health and welfare to prioritize funding while providing an authoritative means to close kennel facilities deemed uninhabitable due to poor conditions. The DoW WD Program Office worked with OUSW (I&S) to ensure the WD Governance Structure is captured within the draft version of DoWD 5200.31E, which is in the process of publication. Due to each component having their own corporate structure for planning, programming, and budgeting for their WD programs, the DoW WD governance is the mechanism that will ensure DoW WD kennel facilities meet current DoW standards by highlighting risks and allowing decisions to be made at the appropriate 1-star risk acceptance level.

Estimated Completion Date: 22 January 2026.

2) **Updated Standard Kennel Facility Design Guide:** The DoW WD Program Office is in the process of updating the 2018 Facility Design Guide to establish a standardized 2026 WD Facility Design Guide aligned with applicable Code of Federal Regulations, Unified Facility Criteria, Unified Facilities Guide Specifications, and mission-driven best practices. The updated Facility Design Guide will provide a single, enforceable, modernized standard design across the department. The Facility Design Working Group is scheduled to meet 15-16 December 2025, and will include program managers, subject matter experts, and engineers from across the joint force. Once the working group finalizes all requirements, the DoW WD Program Office will present it to the Defense Working Dog Council, chaired by the DoW WD EA, on 22 Jan 2026 for approval. Once approved, the Air Force Civil Engineer Center (AFCEC) is prepared to publish the updated design guide, effectively standardizing kennel construction and refurbishment requirements across the department. The updated Standard Design Guide will enable the DoW to effectively oversee the sustainment, restoration, or modernization of WD kenneling and training facilities to support security missions IAW DoDD 5200.31E.

Estimated Completion Date: June 2026.

3) **Intermediate Kennel Improvements at the 341 TRS:** In FY25, OUSW approved a \$142M PBD across the FYDP to fully fund intermediate structural

(U) U.S. Air Force (cont'd)

5

improvements at the 341 TRS. This funding will ensure the kennel facilities are in compliance with regulations and policy for clean and safe kennel facilities no later than the fourth quarter, FY27. In FY25 alone, \$45M was obligated for kennel improvements, which included the installation of portable/temporary cooling units and generators for six kennels in immediate need, while awarding multiple contracts to fully mitigate all 26 kennel facilities by August 2028. The PBD also authorized \$47.25M in FY26 for intermediate kennel improvements, ensuring the 341 TRS' kenneling and training facilities are compliant with DoW standards. Additionally, two MILCON projects are being developed for the 341 TRS. The Lackland MILCON project for \$160M is currently in the FY28 POM & the Chapman MILCON for \$180.3M is pending FY27 POM insertion.

Estimated Completion Date: August 2028.

- 4) **Revised Veterinarian Facility Inspection Checklist:** AVS is currently revising the 2013 Veterinary Inspection Checklist to adequately communicate facility and WD health risks related to kennel facilities. An Animal Facility Inspection Working Group, led by AVS with DoW WD EA support, is creating a new process that establishes inspection frequencies and updates the inspection checklist. This information will be documented and readily accessible in our modern IT system, K9S, to promote transparent communication and collaboration across the DoW WD program. The revised requirement will be formally captured in DAFI 31-126 and Army Regulation 40-905. The checklist will provide the documentation and justification necessary to potentially close high risk kennel facilities and prioritize funding to bring facilities in compliance with DoW standards.

Estimated Completion Date: June 2026.

- 5) **Modern IT System and WD Data Collection:** An improved information technology solution, K9S, is in the process of being rolled out across the DoW WD program. K9S will integrate the new Veterinarian Facility Inspection Checklist as well as a holistic facility health assessment, based on the new 2026 Working Dog Facility Design Guide, into the system to allow for real-time analysis between AVS WD health data and facility health to enabling decision makers to effectively address and prioritize funding to fix facility issues that potentially are leading to health issues for the WDs. Additionally, K9S will close a decade-long gap in data sharing between operational forces and veterinary data. Currently, there is no bidirectional flow of WD data between AVS and WD databases. K9S will ensure real-time bidirectional dataflow to maximize the welfare and operational effectiveness of WDs. Furthermore, identified within the DoWIG report was the lack of "computer-processed data to perform this evaluation." Our modern IT system will allow for real time data analysis to create unbiased risk assessments augmented with Artificial Intelligence to assist with command action and decisions made through the WD Governance Structure.

Estimated Completion Date: December 2026.

(U) U.S. Air Force (cont'd)

6

3. The HAF/A4 point of contact is [REDACTED], HAF/A4S and DoW WD EA, [REDACTED], or via email at [REDACTED]; additional questions or concerns may be addressed to his office.

BAITY, ANTHONY RAY
Digitally signed by
BAITY, ANTHONY RAY
Date: 2025.12.22 12:18:13 -0500

ANTHONY R. BAITY, SES, USAF
Asst DCS/Logistics, Engineering & Force Protection

(U) Acronyms and Abbreviations

CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
DAFGM	Department of the Air Force Guidance Memorandum
DAFI	Department of the Air Force Instructions
DoD MWD	Department of Defense, Military Working Dog
EA	Executive Agent
KM	Kennel Master
PM	Program Manager
OUSD(I&S)	Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security
VCO	Veterinary Corps Officer
WD	Working Dog
341 TRS	341st Training Squadron

Whistleblower Protection

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Whistleblower Protection safeguards DoD employees against retaliation for protected disclosures that expose possible fraud, waste, and abuse in Government programs. For more information, please visit the Whistleblower webpage at www.dodig.mil/Components/Administrative-Investigations/Whistleblower-Reprisal-Investigations/Whistleblower-Reprisal/ or contact the Whistleblower Protection Coordinator at Whistleblowerprotectioncoordinator@dodig.mil

For more information about DoD OIG reports or activities, please contact us:

Legislative Affairs Division
703.604.8324

Public Affairs Division
public.affairs@dodig.mil; 703.604.8324



www.dodig.mil

DoD Hotline
www.dodig.mil/hotline



CUI



DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE | OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

4800 Mark Center Drive
Alexandria, Virginia 22350-1500
www.dodig.mil
DoD Hotline 1.800.424.9098

CUI