

# Chief, the Friendly War Dog, Likes Helicopter Rides

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SAIGON, South Vietnam, July 2—The war dogs, too, are out of Cambodia.

One of them is Chief. A three-year-old black and silver, 80-pound German shepherd, Chief is one of 15 scout dogs that have been on patrol in Cambodia with units of the Third Brigade of the First Cavalry Division (Airmobile).

Chief has no rank, but his handler is Specialist 4 Roy McCaskill. Both are with the 34th Scout Dog Platoon at the Bienhoa Army camp, near Saigon.

"Chief loves helicopters—he always wants to get on them," Specialist McCaskill said last week at a fire-support base in Cambodia. The dog, indeed, tried to, but he was on leash.

Soldiers at the base did not come over and pat Chief. Americans, like North Vietnamese, fear the dogs.

Scout dogs, which have been going out on patrol since 1965, detect the enemy by "alerting" on scent, sound or movement.

## Prancing Like a Horse

"You have to learn how a dog alerts," Specialist McCaskill said. "Now Chief, he raises his nose high and starts sniffing and prances like a horse with those front legs going up high."

Specialist McCaskill, who has just become Chief's handler, is indignant at the widely held idea that scout dogs are trained not only to detect the enemy but to kill.

"He is just like a regular old dog around the house," his handler said. "Why, the Air Force tried to use him as a sentry dog, but old Chief wasn't mean enough. Some scout dogs are aggressive and bite, but not him."

Dogs and handlers take a

12-week training course at Fort Benning, Ga., and another shorter course in Vietnam.

Only German shepherds are scout dogs with the 34th. Other breeds are used as detectors of mines, as tracker dogs trained to both detect and pursue the enemy, and as tunnel dogs.

Lieut. Charles Greer, the platoon leader, said shepherds were sturdy, with well-developed senses and a tendency to be curious.

"Any shepherd, as they enter the program, smells 40 times better than a normal man, sees 10 times better—the dog is color blind, for one thing, which helps him detect movement—and they can hear 20 times better than we can," the lieutenant said.

## Tranquilizer for Fatigue

Scout dogs that suffer combat fatigue can be given a tranquilizer to help them sleep. The dispensary also has a special tincture used to toughen the paws.

"They get better medical attention than soldiers do," said Specialist 4 Donald Lumpkins, a veterinary technician — or the dogs' medic, as the men put it.

"A dog and a handler have priority over everyone in the Army except a wounded soldier," Specialist Lumpkins said. "Each dog is valued at \$5,000. Boy, let me tell you, a grunt isn't!"

The dogs cannot be returned to the United States because of a canine disease prevalent in Vietnam called tropical canine pancytopenia, for which there is no known prevention or cure.

Scout dogs also suffer from what is known as red tongue. "They mind the heat and they pant a lot," a han-



John Harnett for The New York Times

Specialist 4 Roy McCaskill with Chief, who is 3 years old

dlar said, "so their tongues get sunburned."

Since the handlers, like other soldiers, serve a year in Vietnam, the dogs must adjust to new masters.

"Sure, some dogs cry in their own way when the handler goes," Specialist Lump-

kins said. "Some men do. It depends. Some are so happy to get out of here they don't even take the time to say good-bye to the dog, but other guys are so cut up they start writing their Congressmen trying to get the dogs home with them."