MAN'S BEST FRIEND

Beverley Webb *explains the continuing importance of dogs for the security industry*

Dogs can be used in a number of different scenarios, including sniffing out explosives in large public spaces

In an increasingly interconnected world, new threats to security seem to emerge almost daily. Cyber warfare and the omnipresent threat of terrorism are two of the most complex challenges to our safety and security in the 21st century. Technology plays an ever-greater role in fighting not only terrorism, but crime in general. It may surprise many that security and detection dogs – and their trained handlers – play as vital a role as ever in a myriad issues relating to security, from safeguarding the security of businesses to fighting the scourge of organised crime and terrorism. First, consider the visual deterrent; unlike a motionless security camera – which wily criminals might try to obscure or disable – a security dog is a physical presence of considerable stature. A properly trained security dog and its handler can respond to threats in real time.

The current UK threat level for terrorism is severe; ominous headlines of cyber security failures fill our newspapers daily. We place enormous trust in our government, emergency services and security services to prepare adequately for a doomsday scenario. In a state of national emergency – where power supplies, phone lines and internet connectivity may be paralysed – the steadfast reliability of a security dog and their handler is beyond reproach. During times of uncertainty, tried and tested security methods hold a unique value in protecting assets and the public. In what may strike some observers as ironic, in the digital age trained security dogs and their handlers are more relevant than ever before.

Security dogs, with their heightened senses, are able to see, smell and hear a hidden intruder long before even the most perspicacious human. With around 200 million sensitive cells in its nose, a typical security dog's olfactory system is roughly 40 times more sensitive than that of a human. Dogs can also taste smells; professionally trained security dogs can detect odours directly from the source or residual scents, as well as odours which persist in an area after the original source has long since disappeared. Tracing a specific scent to its original source, and the ability to distinguish between a variety of odours regardless of strength, are some of the innate advantages of security dogs when employed in the detection of drugs, firearms and explosives.

There are currently approximately 5,000 dogs employed in the security sector. Given the current terror threat level in the UK, it is vital for Private Security Companies (PSCs) to be assured that the security dogs and handlers they depend upon adequately meet their desired level of competency.

TAPPING THE 'INTERNAL PLAY DRIVE'

In order to professionally train a security or detection dog, the handler must tap into their 'internal play drive'. In practice, this means rewarding the animal for successful completion of a task, typically in such simple terms as gifting the dog a tennis ball or treat. To humans, the repetition of these exercises between the dog handler and the dog may seem simplistic, but in reality, the dog is being trained to sniff a bomb in an instant – potentially saving thousands of lives.

Moreover, the versatile capabilities of a security dog often mean a security firm will depend less on manpower alone, potentially providing cost savings for cash-strapped organisations that do not wish to compromise on security.

Security patrol dogs can be used to guard everything from critical infrastructure, building sites and parks and public areas where perimeters and access controls can span a large area and are often deployed where lone security officers may be both a security disadvantage and, potentially, at risk of patrolling the area alone. Increasingly, security dogs are deployed to work alongside police and local authorities to protect workers and members of the public in the night-time economy. Security dogs trained in drug detection not only make venues such as nightclubs safer for clientele, but also may be a prerequisite in order for a venue to be awarded a license. Thus, in preventing illegal substances and those that wish to distribute or abuse them from entering premises, security dogs are a valuable asset in protecting the integrity of a business. Potential insurance claims against a business could also be mitigated by the presence of a trained security dog and handler. Moreover, for businesses, insurance rate premiums could be reduced, as a business can demonstrate it has employed a proven method of security detection.

When it comes to guarding high-profile events and sporting venues, the organisers are required to conduct a thorough explosive search before, during and after an event. There can be no room for error in these high-stakes security challenges. Major security hubs are often large, complex and very busy; the screening of vehicles, people and belongings must be carried out in a systematic, efficient and timely manner. With immigration, legal and otherwise, a hot-button political issue, security dogs are the heart of the effort to secure the UK's border, where they are deployed 24 hours a day at Calais, Dunkirk and Coquelles. Humans have been found hidden in the engine compartments and axles of vehicles, often at great personal danger. Security dogs are at the forefront of fighting organised crime and illegal immigration.

Of course, any detection by a canine and their handler does not in itself confirm the presence of explosive materials, illegal devices, narcotics or humans. The initial detection by a security dog is supplemented by a robust confirmation process. Canines are particularly useful in the detection process of abnormal loads, complex vehicles or other large areas, which cannot be easily detected by other methods. As such, it is crucial the animals and their handlers are sufficiently trained and conform to the best practice of the day. The consequences of an insufficiently trained security dog and handler could at best be an oversight and at worst a calamity. When it comes to border control and public security, the public demands no margin for error.

When the first edition of BSI's dog security standard – BS 8517 – was launched in 2009, it was

> **A TYPICAL SECURITY DOG'S OLFACTORY SYSTEM IS ROUGHLY 40 TIMES MORE SENSITIVE THAN A HUMAN**

the first of its kind. On publication it was widely considered a leap forward for the security sector, many of whom where influential in shaping its development. With the advent of new advancements in this area, in 2016 the key stakeholders that created the original standard convened and agreed that the standard could benefit from updates with regards to recommendations for best practice and advice. When revising BS 8517, BSI convened a diverse group of individuals and organisations that use security dogs, such as construction site managers, police officers and the MoD to develop the standard. The National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) classifies security dogs as second only to firearms in 'use of force', demonstrating a critical safety need for a standard that provides comprehensive advice for professional dog handlers.

The new standards provide recommendations on how dog handlers should professionally handle a dog on a day-to-day basis and give detailed advice on how to comply with existing government legislation, such as The Guard Dogs Act 1975, The Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 and the latest Animal Control Bill 2015.

The standards were revised to provide comprehensive guidance for the many varied uses of security dogs, including in high-security environments were dogs trained in bomb detection must be expertly handled. Key additions to the revised version, which was launched back in October 2016, include recommendations for the compulsory micro-chipping of dogs and acknowledgement of the changes in dog breeds.

BS 8517:1&2 also acknowledges changes to the British standard BS 7499:2013 Static site guarding and mobile patrol service – Code of practice. BS 7499 provides recommendations for management, staffing and operation of an organisation providing security guarding services on a staffing site and/or mobile patrol basis, advising that organisations should possess a clearly defined management structure showing control and accountability at each level of operation.

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The revised BS 8517 also aligns with changes in UK legislation, namely the Animal Control Bill 2015 and changes to the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991.

Organisations also involved in the development of BS 8517 included the National Security Industry Authority, The Royal Army Veterinary, the National Association of Security Dog Users, the National Police Chiefs' Council and the Battersea Dogs and Cats Home ●

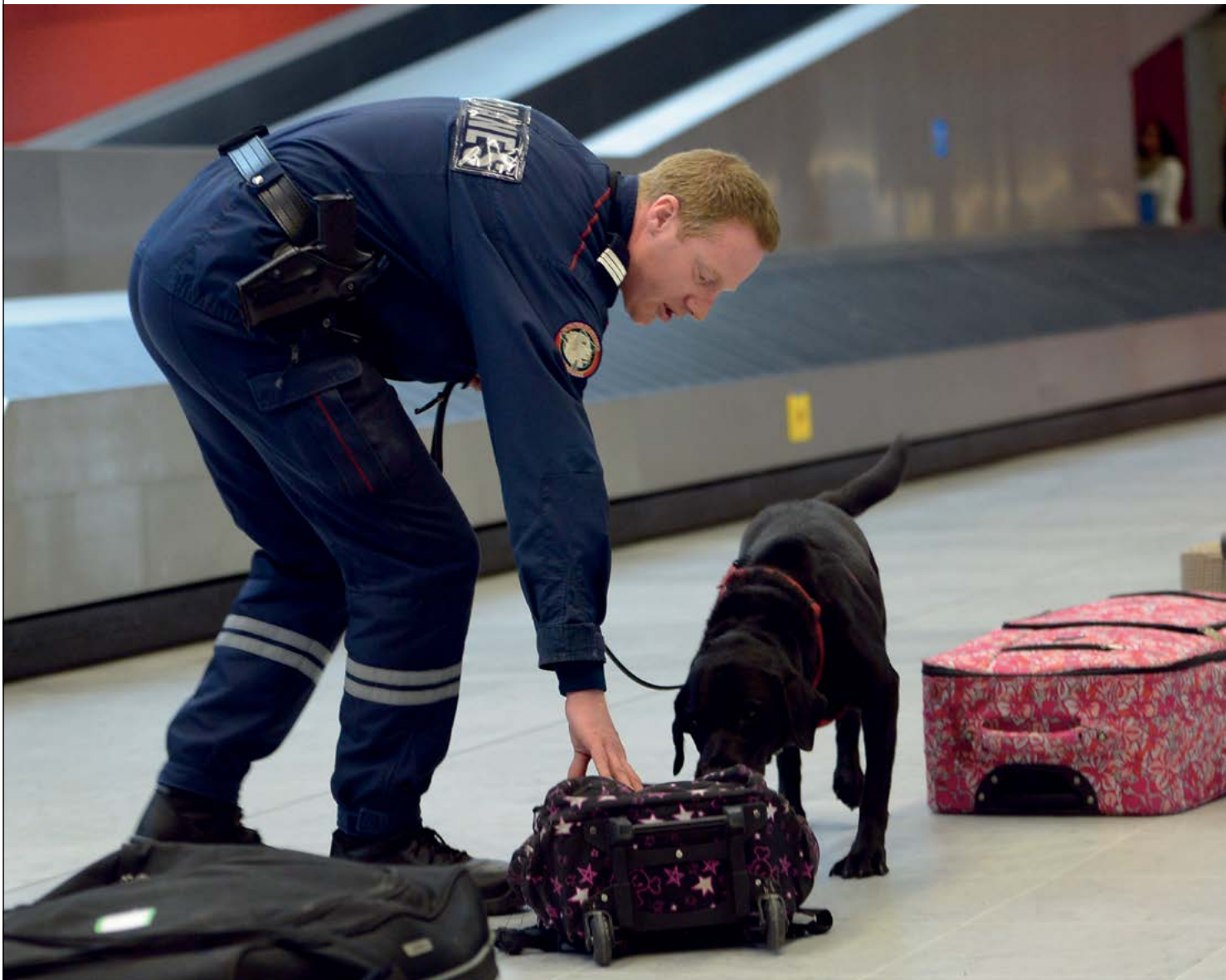### THE STANDARD COMES IN TWO DISTINCT PARTS:

BS 8517-1 The code of practice for the use of general security dogs, this covers all aspects concerning the general welfare of the dog, including kennelling and veterinary guidance. Recommendations in the standard take into account recent changes in dog breeds and the requirement for compulsory micro-chipping in security dogs. The need for dog handlers to obtain specific insurance and equipment – including the use of correction collars – are also covered in the standard.

BS 8517-2 The code of practice for the use of detection dogs was developed for more advanced users of security dogs, such as those that require dogs in the detection of drugs, firearms, munitions and explosives. Part 2 also includes issues relating to the welfare of the animal covered by Part 1 of the standard and recommendations for procuring security dog services to ensure the service meets the unique requirements of dog handlers.

Compliance with part 1 or part 2 – or, indeed, both – demonstrates an adherence to the latest standard on dog security compiled by experts in the private security industry.

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Dogs are frequently used for indicating the presence of illegal substances in and around transport hubs

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