

The Dog That Cornered Osama Bin Laden

When U.S. President Barack Obama went to Fort Campbell, Kentucky, last week for a highly publicized, but very private meeting with the commando team that killed Osama bin Laden, only one of the 81 members of the super-secret SEAL DevGru unit was identified by name: Cairo, the war dog. Cairo, like most canine members of the elite U.S. Navy SEALs, is a Belgian Malinois. The Malinois breed is similar to German shepherds but smaller and more compact, with an adult male weighing in the 30-kilo range.



(German shepherds are still used as war dogs by the American military but the lighter, stubbier Malinois is considered better for the tandem parachute jumping and rappelling operations often undertaken by SEAL teams. Labrador retrievers are also favored by various military organizations around the world)





Like their human counterparts, the dog SEALs are highly trained, highly skilled, highly motivated special ops experts, able to perform extraordinary military missions by sea, air and land (thus the acronym).



The dogs, equipped with video cameras, also enter certain danger zones first, allowing their handlers to see what's ahead before humans follow. As I mentioned before, SEAL dogs are even trained parachutists, jumping either in tandem with their handlers or solo, if the jump is into water. Last year canine parachute instructor Mike Forsythe and his dog Cara set the world record for highest man-dog parachute deployment, jumping from

More than 30,100 feet up — the altitude transoceanic passenger jets fly at. Both Forsythe and Cara were wearing oxygen masks and skin protectors for The jump.

Here's a photo from that jump, taken by Andy Anderson for K9 Storm Inc. (more about those folks shortly).



When the SEAL DevGru team (usually known by its old designation, Team 6) Hit bin Laden's Pakistan compound on May 2, Cairo's feet would have been Four of the first on the ground.

And like the human SEALs, Cairo was wearing super-strong, flexible body Armor and outfitted with high-tech equipment that included "doggles" — Specially designed and fitted dog goggles with night-vision and infrared Capability that would even allow Cairo to see human heat forms through Concrete walls.

Now where on earth would anyone get that kind of incredibly niche hi-tech Doggie gear?

From Winnipeg, of all places.

Jim and Glori Slater's Manitoba hi-tech mom-and-pop business, K9 Storm Inc., has a deserved worldwide reputation for designing and manufacturing Probably the best body Armor available for police and military dogs.

Working dogs in 15 countries around the world are currently protected by Their K9 Storm body Armor.

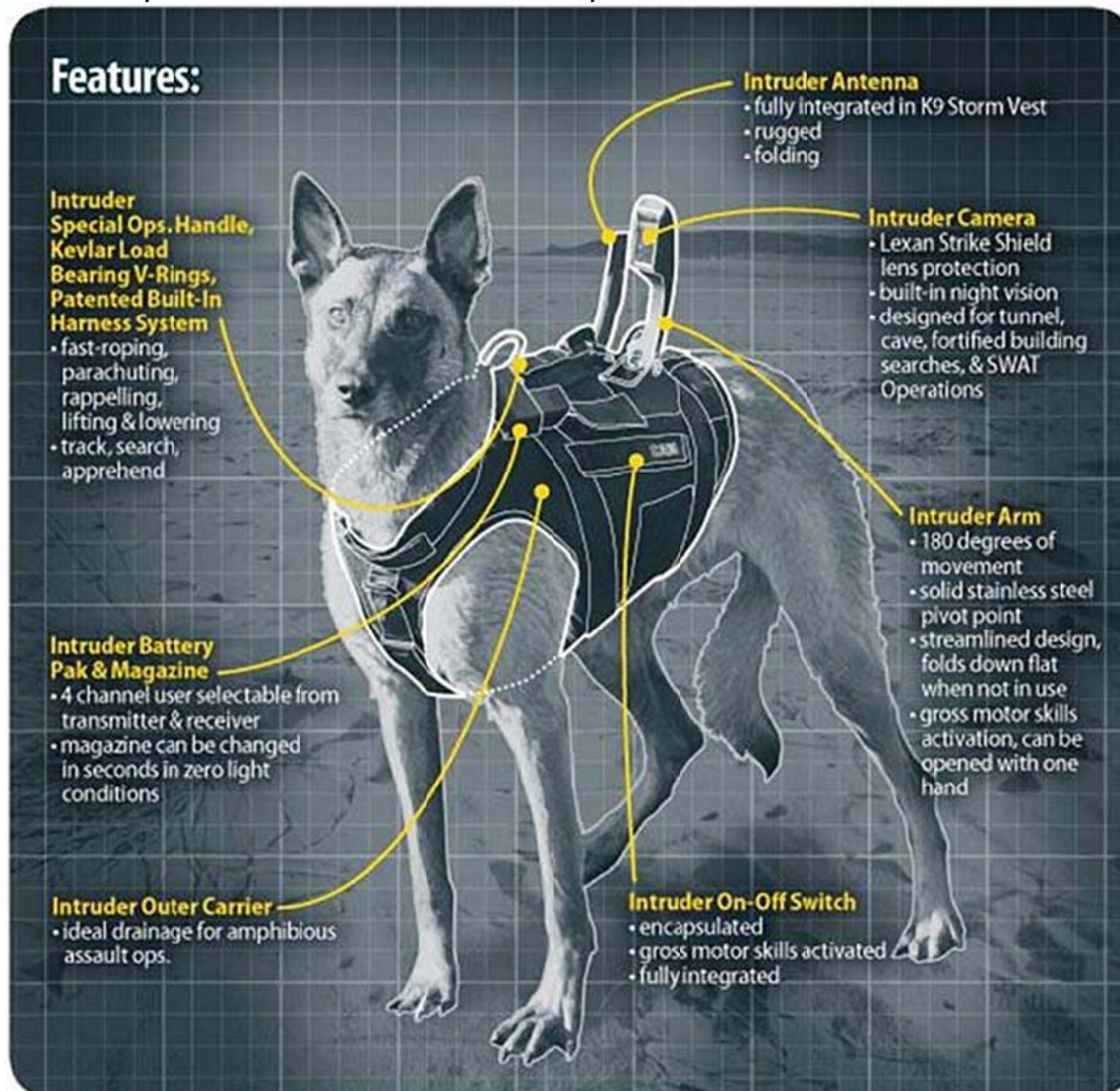


Jim Slater was a canine handler on the Winnipeg Police Force when he Crafted a Kevlar protective jacket for his own dog, Olaf, in the mid-1990s. Soon Slater was making body Armor for other cop dogs, then the Canadian Military and soon the world. The standard K9 Storm vest also has a load-bearing harness system that Makes it ideal for tandem rappelling and parachuting.



And then there are the special hi-tech add-ons that made the K9 Storm Especially appealing to the U.S. Navy SEALs, who bought four of K9 Storm Inc.'s top-end Intruder "canine tactical assault suits" last year for \$86,000. You can be sure Cairo was wearing one of those four suits when he Jumped into bin Laden's lair.

Here's an explanation of all the K9 Storm Intruder special features:



The U.S. Military currently has about 2,800 active-duty dogs Deployed around the world, with roughly 600 now in Afghanistan and Iraq. Several of the photos I have included here are from Foreign Policy, as you Will see. Other photos are from K9 Storm Inc.



As for the ethics of sending dogs to war, that's pretty much a moot point, don't you think? If it's ethical to send humans into combat, then why not Dogs?

At least the U.S. Now treats its war dogs as full members of the military. At the end of the Vietnam War, the U.S. Combat dogs there were designated As "surplus military equipment" and left behind when American forces pulled Out.