

The Goldsboro News-Argus

Covering Wayne County since 1885

The 'bite' wing

By Kirsten Ballard

Published in News on May 11, 2015 1:46 PM

"Sir, may I see your ID," Sgt. Nicole Gilley asks.

It is a routine check. But instead, the man backs away.

Sgt. Gilley's K-9 partner Kuli stands at a tense attention.

"Come back, sir," she commands.

She warns him a few more times. Kuli's hair prickles up.

She lets the dog off the leash and he charges after the man.

His ears tuck back as he rockets forward.

"Stop, he's going to bite," Sgt. Gilley calls out after the perp.

The man does not heed the warning.

Kuli launches up and grabs a mouth full of the man's forearm. It is a calculated bite, a full mouth bite so his front teeth don't wear out.

There is no readjusting. Just one gripped bite and a take down. It has been rehearsed.

Sgt. Gilley sprints up to apprehend the suspect.

The practice is over.

Staff Sgt. Barton Gonzales stands up smiling -- his upper body safely encased in a bite jacket.

They run drills like these daily to make sure the dogs are trained for the real danger.

At the Wings Over Wayne Air Show on Saturday and Sunday at Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, Kuli and other military working dogs stationed at the Goldsboro installation will demonstrate their obedience and bite tactics for fans.

The demonstrations will be at 10 a.m., 12:30 p.m., and 3 p.m. each day. The handlers will walk the dog through basic commands before moving into the more exciting bite work. After the performance, the handlers will answer audience questions.

Staff Sgt. John Makripodis and Tech Sgt. Forrest George have planned some exciting appearances and surprise tricks to debut at this year's show.

"Everyone loves the bite work, especially the kids," Makripodis said.

"We want to do something a little different this year," George said. "A little looser."

They joke that the dog show is the most interesting thing at Wings Over Wayne.

"You can't pet a plane," Makripodis said.

While the show is exciting, the dogs are extensively trained in narcotic or explosive detection.

"Explosive detection is our bread and butter," George said.

1 / 2

 Full Size



NEWS-ARGUS/CASEY MOZINGO

Staff Sgt. Barton Gonzales, left, receives a bite from military working dog Kuli as Sgt. Nicole Gilley conducts a demonstration.

The dogs' superior sense of smell can pick up 2,503 million scent detectors. They have been clocked at 32 mph compared to man's ability to reach 17 mph.

"No machine could ever replace them," Makripodis said.

Although considered a piece of equipment, the dogs work for up to 10 years, and then are deprogrammed and adopted.

"They do have a life after the military," George said.

Retired dogs will be at the air show as well, as a symbol of life after service.

George says a lot of people assume the dogs are put down after retiring, but that is not the case.

Both he and Makripodis have adopted former security force dogs.

At the center on base, the men drill the dogs and handlers daily, to keep them sharp. Sgt. Gilley and Kuli are the newest pair to join the team, still going through validation.

"They love this stuff," Makripodis said. "They challenge us as much as we challenge them."

This publication copyright ©2015 Goldsboro News-Argus, all rights reserved.