

Police Dogs of the Polish Police in the Eyes of Experts

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Abstract. *The article discusses issues related to the effectiveness of the use of police dogs in the Police in Poland on the basis of research conducted on a representative group of police experts all over the country. The research questionnaire was completed by police officers who perform their daily duties in the field of police cynology — coordinators in the uniformed departments of the Regional Police Headquarters competent for the implementation of tasks related to the use and maintenance of police dogs in the uniformed branch and experts in osmological research in forensic laboratories of Regional Police Headquarters. The author describes the issues in regard to alarming statistical data, which show a significant decrease in the number of police dogs at the disposal of the Polish Police. The research was based on a research hypothesis, in which it was assumed that police dogs in today's Polish Police are misused in the activities for public safety and order. In the author's opinion, the necessary regulations should aim at adapting new systemic and organisational and legal solutions in order to make the best and most effective use of police dogs in the work of the Polish Police.*

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Introduction

A dog is the only domesticated animal whose usefulness to humans does not decrease with time. In the professional literature, it is assumed that the dog was the first animal to accompany man.

Cynology distinguishes four phases in the process of domesticating a dog. The first assumes that the representatives of the canine animals were accustomed to getting food by eating leftovers left by man. As a result, the human left the remains of the food consciously and noticed that the pack, which feeds nearby, effectively deters other predators. Therefore the first function of the wolf-dog was to defend and accompany it during its journey. Over time, there was a development of cooperation between the two sides in order to achieve mutual benefits. The animal was helpful during the hunt, guarded and defended other already domesticated animals and in return received food and shelter. As a result of such cooperation between man and dog an emotional bond was born. The dog became a friend and companion of everyday hardship. The next stage includes the period when the dog was already domesticated and the man identified its qualities and skills, which he then developed by breeding and crossbreeding the most valuable individuals. The last phase of domestication of a dog is already centuries old, in which the dog constantly partners the human being. Just as human civilization has developed, so has the presence of the dog, and the range of its usefulness for man is constantly growing.

Main Part

The usefulness of dogs for maintaining order and safety was recognized many centuries ago. However, the true and almost universal duty of dogs in public safety forces dates back to the end of the 18th century.

In Gent, Belgium, a police brigade using dogs on duty was established already in 1889. For police purposes, dogs were also trained in England and Germany¹. Initially, their main task was to protect the police. Over time, however, their other values and capabilities were also appreciated and used. In Poland, dogs were accepted for duty to the Polish Police in the interwar period. In the structure created by the Act of 1919 of the State Police there was the National Police Headquarters, with its 4th Division — Investigation Service Unit, with departments dealing with: criminal cases, reconnaissance, registration and pursuit, investigative techniques, women's police, special cases². There was a separate department dealing with police dog issues. The training of dogs was then handled by the Department of Dog Training of the Headquarters in Poznań, and the training basis for their use were the appearing publications, mainly by Alojzy Grimm, a then highly respected specialist on the subject, the lieutenant of the State Police, the founder and long-term manager of the above-mentioned Department in Poznań.

At this point, the question should be posed as to what is the use of police dogs in the assessment of regional coordinators, whose official tasks include the organisation and management of the police dogs and their handlers in the Polish Police? Therefore, this article contains an attempt to answer this question and indicates the guidelines of legislative and organizational changes which should be introduced and applied in order to make the best and most effective use of police dogs in the work of the Polish Police. These guidelines have been outlined on the basis of practitioners' opinions.

Coordinators and experts in osmological research from forensic laboratories of the Regional Police Headquarters who were involved in the study answered questions about the use of police dogs in the Polish Police, assessing, among other things, the number of police dogs at the disposal of the Regional Police Headquarters and the extent of their use. They also conducted a diagnosis of organisational and financial difficulties in the area of recruitment and training of dogs and their handlers in relation to their needs, and indicated a course of action to be taken in order to improve the scope and level of use of police dogs at work.

With regard to the number of dogs remaining in the police, coordinators and experts were almost unanimous. Out of 25 respondents in this research group, 17, i.e. 68% considered the number of dogs to be insufficient. At the same time, they indicated objective reasons for this. The most frequently presented basis were unsatisfactory financial means for the purchase of dogs.

The insufficient number of dogs remaining in service, according to the coordinators, is also influenced by other factors related to the organisational structure of police units, such as, for example, the lack of a post for a dog handler. Units with

¹ Psy w służbie policji, *Kwartalnik Policynjny*, 2016, No. 3, pp. 2–3.

² Dworzecki J, *Policja Państwowa w II RP (wybrane zagadnienia)*, [in:] Trzciński Ł at all, *Bezpieczeństwo jako wartość*. Kraków, 2010, pp. 64–65.

such a limitation use other police units to handle criminal cases, which has a negative impact on ensuring continuity of duty and is also quite a significant limitation in terms of the number of incidents where the dog is used and more specifically the number of incidents where it should be used and this is not the case. It is also sometimes the case that, due to their limited number, dogs which belong to a particular unit are overused, which is not favourable to the efficiency of both dogs and their handlers. In their statements, co-ordinators provide different arguments for the opinions presented, for example: *'Insufficient number of dogs means that police units often have one or two dogs in stock. The result is that handlers are overworked and repeatedly called on to do more work, which is not beneficial to the efficient use of dogs'*³.

The opinion of the coordinators and experts on the number of dogs corresponds to their opinion on the use of animals in police units. The same number of respondents, i.e. 68%, considered this level of use to be sufficient. The consistency of the two evaluations may be due to a simple relationship. Since 17 respondents considered that the number of dogs was insufficient, the number of dogs remaining in the police units was also theoretically high. If the indicated level was not sufficient, then there would be no justification for increasing the number of dogs. However, 8 coordinators surveyed (32%) considered that the level of this use could be higher. The reasons for their partial use are practically the same as those pointed out by dog handlers, i.e. mainly the fact that in small police organisational units the handlers are directed to other tasks not related to duty with their police dog. In the coordinators' opinion, who critically assess the level of use of dogs in the daily work of police units, there are deficiencies in this respect e.g. in the case of using dogs trained to search for drug odours. As an important reason for this, the coordinators pointed out the low level of knowledge of decision makers in the use of handlers with dogs due to the category of the incident, the extent and possibilities of the dog's work, and the tactics of action. The statement of one of the coordinators is worth quoting: *'The current shape of the regulations defining work with police dogs is not adapted to the conditions prevailing in the Polish Police today. Order No. 296 of the National Police Chief orders to keep such a number of dogs (patrol and sniffer dogs, as well as patrol dogs and sniffer dogs) in units in order to ensure their availability around the clock in a three-shift, eight-hour system. When adjusting the number of dogs to the regulations, it should be assumed that in each unit in the province there would have to be a minimum of five handlers with dogs trained for preventive actions. The employment and staffing levels of units at the County Police level exclude this possibility. [...] Very often the contribution of a dog to the handling of an event is underestimated, as evidenced by the fact that a dog is deployed to an event with a long time delay as a 'necessary evil', assuming failure in advance. Moreover, the use of the dog as a means of direct coercion in the light of recent changes in the regulations, in particular when restoring public order, does not facilitate its use'*⁴.

Insufficient number of dogs which are used to work in the police units results from specific reasons, of organisational and financial nature. This thesis is confirmed

³ Research conducted by the author of the article as part of the research task to maintain the research potential of the department, financed by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education: 'Efficiency of the use of police dogs in the Polish Police', No. IBiPP-11/2016/P/ZC within the Academy's statutory activity.

⁴ *Ibid.*

by almost all respondents from the group of coordinators and experts. Most of them, as many as 77.78% of the respondents, indicated financial factors which significantly hinder the process of acquiring dogs and conducting training for handlers and animals. Among the disadvantages of the organisational system, the coordinators included, among others, the lack of appropriate cynological facilities in the local units, as well as the reduction of posts intended for dog handlers and their transfer to other organisational units made by the local police chiefs. They also pointed out the lack of appropriate perks which would encourage police officers to take up the work as a handler, as well as those which would encourage handlers to continue working. A few coordinators' opinions on this issue are presented below. Despite the fact that coordinators considered the lack of adequate financial resources to be the biggest problem affecting the cynological economy in the police, their increase was not indicated as the main corrective measure. It was taken into account by four coordinators (16% of respondents). The others probably assumed that the need to solve financial problems is a matter of no doubt and focused on presenting such proposals for changes that can be implemented on the basis of already possessed financial resources, or assuming their increase.

The most frequently reported need (5 coordinators, i.e. 20% of the respondents) considered it necessary to equip police units with appropriate vehicles adapted to transporting dogs. Apart from the above mentioned increase in the level of financing, the coordinators were also (3 indications each, which constitutes 12% of the total number of respondents) in favour of centralising dog handlers in the structures of Regional Police Headquarters, developing a common infrastructure project for police dogs in police units and its implementation, as well as modifying the central selection of dogs, however, they did not indicate at this point, the exact solutions that this modification would offer. The coordinator's idea would be to coordinate, even with centralised procurement of equipment and supplies, to improve the adjustment of police units to the proper maintenance and use of dogs on duty. It is worth noting that the above mentioned draft corrective actions are related to financial issues, as they would undoubtedly improve the economic efficiency of the police.

When it comes to the use of dogs on duty, the respondents expect that dog handlers would only perform tasks related to working with the dog. Moreover, they would like to incorporate the issues related to cynology into training programmes at the basic, specialist level, covering all police officers, including the management staff of the police. The above mentioned proposal of conducting training courses in the field of cynology is related to the next section analysed, which was the assessment of usefulness of police dogs in performing basic tasks by the management of police units. A significant number of respondents (76%) concluded, that the management of police units underestimate the usefulness of police dogs in carrying out their basic tasks. A significant number of respondents (76%) concluded, that the management of police units do not appreciate the usefulness of police dogs in performing basic tasks, (20%) on average and (4%) highly appreciate. Such a situation, according to the coordinators, results from a lack of understanding of the specifics of work of dog handlers, including above all the lack of elementary knowledge in the field of cynology. The scale of this problem is best reflected in the statements of the coordinators quoted below: *'The attitude of police units to the*

usefulness of police dogs in performing basic police tasks is best illustrated by the need to equip the units with particular categories of police dogs. The analyses show that 1/3 of police units do not have dogs at all, which reflects an understanding of the usefulness of having police dogs by officers and the managers’.

‘I believe that police cynology is the most undervalued and least understood branch in our organization.’

‘The qualities of police dogs are underestimated, but without changing the attitude of police officers themselves, and in particular their superiors, there is a fear of their slow decline in the police. We should be aware that certain natural qualities useful in service cannot be replaced by any device⁵.’

It is clear from the previous research that the regional coordinators notice various difficulties related to the duty of dogs in the police. However, it should be remembered that within their competence, they have tools which they should use to improve the extent of use of police dogs in the work of their subordinate police units. In the whole range of issues raised, the coordinators’ actions which they have undertaken and are undertaking in order to improve the existing state of affairs are important. It can be concluded from responses to the survey that such actions are frequently undertaken by regional coordinators and these actions are of various nature. Some of the actions are just an essential minimum, and are within the basic competence and responsibility of regional dog handlers’ coordinators. However, there are also activities that can even be considered innovative and worth propagating within all garrisons.

Within the most frequently undertaken activities, the coordinators indicated the following:

- organising training for police dog handlers — 76%,
- attempt to introduce a central system for the work of handlers- 8%,
- improving the facilities for police dogs — 4%,
- raising funds — 4%.

An example of an innovative measure is the use of modern information technology for better coordination and deployment of dog handlers and their dogs. A special application has been developed in the Silesia Province, which contains a list of all the handlers from the garrison in question, including a list of handlers who are on duty on a given day, taking into account the category of dogs. This application contains information about e.g. sending a handler to the crime scene, sick leave of dog handlers or dogs, secondments and dog training activities. Access to this application is available to duty officers so that they can determine at any time, if necessary, where a handler with their dog is located and their availability, whether they are on duty or on duty on call (e.g. whether they are not currently attending a scene). The Silesian garrison shall have a common dog handler roster for the relevant category of a police dog, which shall be established by the coordinator of the uniformed department dealing with tasks related to the use and maintenance of police dogs. This schedule shall be created in such a way as to ensure that events are handled by dog handlers on a 24/7 basis.

Another activity in the area of the same Silesian garrison was to divide it into training zones for police dog handlers, which allows for integrated training activities

⁵ *Ibid.*

for dog handlers and exchange of training methods and training equipment. Once a month, the training of dog handlers in the explosive scent search category is conducted by the coordinator with the assistance of the Independent Counter-Terrorist Squad. An important element of these exercises is the fact that the handlers train dogs using real explosives. The Silesian Department of Policing has also developed a system for selecting candidates for dog handlers. At the beginning, an initial interview with the candidates is conducted. When the interview is successful, there is a monthly practice under the supervision of an experienced handler. During this practice, the candidate shall become acquainted with the legal regulations and procedures related to the daily duties by a handler, as well as with the training for police dogs. This monthly 'Initial Training' allows the trainee to have confidence in his or her professional plans, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, is an additional element in verifying his or her suitability for the job as a handler. In the course of such an internship, the guardian is obliged to keep a logbook of the internship, at the same time assessing the candidate and drawing up an opinion at the end of the internship, which is read by the locally competent head of the police unit. The internship is completed with an exam, the positive result of which decides on referring a candidate for a specialist course for dog handlers to the Police Cynology Department in Sułkowie. The Department is part of the Police Training Centre in Legionowo.

Other activities which are worth noting and following and are implemented in different garrisons are as follows:

- professional training with the superiors,
- disseminating information on dog handlers, by promoting their achievements not only within individual garrisons, but also on a national scale,
- participation in training courses of dog handlers with officers from other law enforcement agencies, e.g. from the Customs Office, the Border Guard, or other non-police entities, e.g. the Municipal Guard,
- training of mid-level executives in the use of police dogs,
- training for duty police officers on active and effective dispatch of police dog handlers to crime scenes.

As part of the survey, osmology experts and the coordinators also evaluated the work system for police dogs on several other issues:

- central selection of dogs by the Department of Police Cynology in Sułkowie defining it in 32% as rather bad and very bad, while 28% as rather good,
- the rules for withdrawing dogs from police service: 44% rather good, 16% bad and very bad.
- system of training for dog handlers, including types of training courses conducted: 60% rather good, 32% bad and very bad,
- the pragmatics of using police dogs in the day-to-day work of police: 60% rather good, 32% bad and very bad,
- the level of use of police dogs for the current tasks of the police unit: 64% rather good, 20% bad and very bad,
- the number of police dogs used by the police: 36% rather good, 48% bad and very bad,
- adjusting police units to tasks related to the use of police dogs in terms of equipment: 40% rather good, 40% rather bad and very bad,

The fundamental core of coordinators' assessments are the system changes they propose, the implementation of which would improve the effectiveness of the use of police dogs in police work. The proposals of the surveyed coordinators and experts in the field of osmology concern:

- changes in procedures in the central selection of dogs through the introduction of rules for the purchase of dogs by police units which finance this purchase,
- increase the number of fragrance bases, transport and training equipment and a social and welfare for dogs and their handlers,
- regular training for dog handlers from the entire garrison,
- common and centralised rules when purchasing transport equipment for police dogs,
- increase the number of dogs on duty in order to increase the mobility of individual police units in terms not only of patrol duty to ensure public order and security, but also of detection activities including tracing, looking for missing or wanted persons, searching for objects, drugs, explosives.

The geopolitical conditions clearly indicate that national security and public order, both on a regional and global scale, will be increasingly threatened, as it cannot be ruled out that, without increased migration on the territory of the Republic of Poland, people may appear whose aim is to carry out a terrorist attack. The fact that so far on the territory of our country no terrorist incidents with tragic consequences have been recorded does not mean that Poland is not exposed to them. It should be remembered that Poland is involved in the activities of almost all major international organisations (i.e. NATO, UN, EU) and has ratified practically all the most important international agreements, becoming a participant in the global anti-terrorist coalition, which may provoke a retaliatory reaction, mainly from Islamic fundamentalists. The above considerations lead us to conclude that the reorganization of the police structure excluding dog handlers and creating a separate, specialised unit, i.e: 'The regional teams of police dog handlers' should not only solve a number of currently occurring problems, which are pointed out by the handlers and experts, but will significantly contribute to increasing the level of effective use of police dogs in everyday duty, now and in the future.

Conclusions

The implementation of the main demand mentioned above requires numerous legislative changes, starting with the Police Act and other executive legal acts, which regulate the methods and forms of performing tasks using police dogs. The procedure of implementing legal acts is an arduous and time consuming process for the legislator. It seems appropriate, therefore, that both practitioners and theorists, experts in police cynology and other issues related to security, should join forces to form a strong support group. There is no doubt that the dog plays an indirect role and the police should be able to play this role in a fully effective manner.

The proposals concerning organisational and legislative changes offered by the author certainly do not present the real and potential actions which will contribute

to improving the existing state of affairs. However, it seems certain that their implementation should put the Polish police cynology on the right track to avoid many difficulties along the way.

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Streszczenie. W artykule omówiono zagadnienia związane z efektywnością wykorzystania psów służbowych w jednostkach organizacyjnych Policji w Polsce na podstawie badań przeprowadzonych na reprezentatywnej grupie ekspertów policyjnych na terenie całego kraju. W badaniu wzięli udział policjanci na co dzień wykonujący obowiązki służbowe w zakresie kynologii policyjnej — koordynatorzy w wydziałach prewencji komend wojewódzkich Policji właściwych w sprawach realizacji zadań związanych z wykorzystaniem i utrzymaniem psów służbowych w służbie prewencyjnej i eksperci badań osmologicznych w laboratoriach kryminalistycznych komend wojewódzkich Policji. Autor opisuje zagadnienia w związku z alarmującymi danymi statystycznymi, które pokazują znaczny spadek liczby psów służbowych, pozostających w dyspozycji polskiej Policji. Podstawą badań stała się hipoteza badawcza, w której przyjęto, że współcześnie w polskiej Policji psy służbowe są niewłaściwie wykorzystywane w działaniach na rzecz bezpieczeństwa i porządku publicznego. Zdaniem Autora, niezbędne uregulowania powinny pójść w kierunku dostosowania nowych rozwiązań systemowych i organizacyjno-prawnych w celu jak najlepszego i najefektywniejszego wykorzystania psów służbowych w pracy Policji polskiej.

Резюме. В статье обсуждаются вопросы, связанные с эффективностью использования служебных собак в организационных подразделениях полиции в Польше на основе исследований, проведенных на базе репрезентативной группы полицейских экспертов по всей стране. В исследовании приняли участие сотрудники полиции, выполняющие

свои повседневные обязанности в области полицейской кинологии — координаторы в отделениях службы охраны общественного порядка воеводских управлений полиции, отвечающие за выполнение задач, связанных с использованием и содержанием служебных собак в службе по охране общественного порядка, а также эксперты — специалисты в области осмолгических исследований, сотрудники криминалистических лабораторий воеводских управлений полиции. Автор описывает проблемы, связанные с тревожными статистическими данными, которые свидетельствуют о значительном уменьшении количества служебных собак, находящихся в распоряжении польской полиции. Исследование основывалось на гипотезе, в которой предполагалось, что служебные собаки сегодняшней польской полицией используются ненадлежащим способом при выполнении заданий, связанных с обеспечением общественной безопасности и порядка. По мнению автора, необходимые урегулирования должны направляться на приспособление новых системных и организационно-правовых решений с целью наилучшего и наиболее эффективного использования служебных собак в работе польской полиции.

