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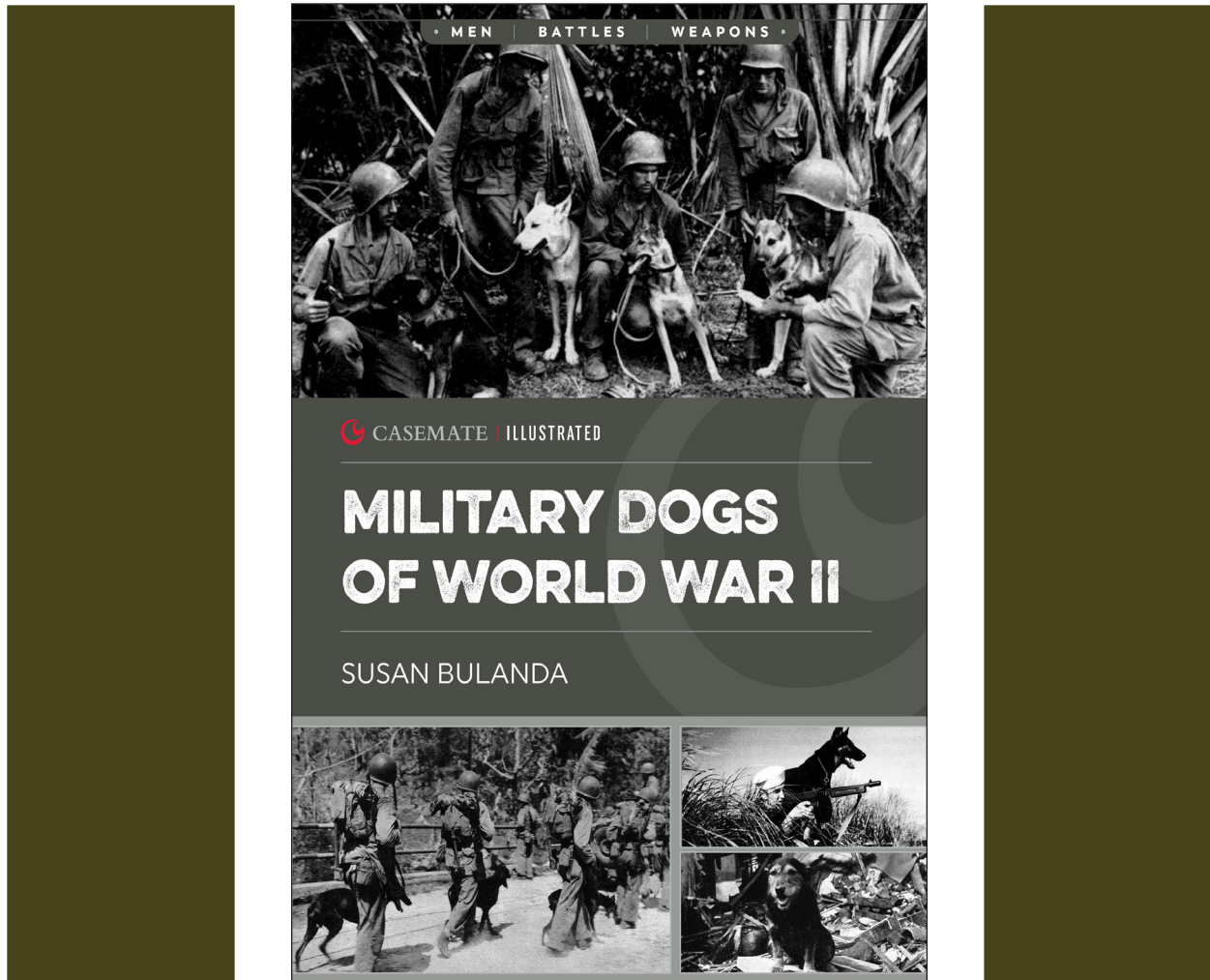
Book Review: Military Dogs of World War II

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After Congress's recent consideration of a new decoration for military working dogs "that are killed in action or perform an exceptionally courageous act" (*Army Times*, October 23, 2023, 42), the release of *Military Working Dogs of World War II* is well-timed. Susan Bulanda, a certified animal behavior consultant and author of several books, provides a delightful black-and-white photographic history of war dogs. The book is divided into helpful sections examining the use of military dogs from a historical perspective to investigate the breed choices, training methodologies, and the many military applications of dogs in the field.

The American military's change in its dog-training regime is a prevalent theme throughout *Military Dogs*, as it was cruel at the start of World War I. American trainers, such as William Koehler, implemented a standard method of dog training known as "jerk and hurt," while the British established a reward-based training system after recognizing the dogs responded well to that sort of instruction. Subsequent studies demonstrated these animals have a high level of understanding, feelings, and intelligence, and "today, informed dog trainers and canine behavior consultants adhere to the LIMA training philosophy, which is the acronym for 'Least Intrusive, Minimally Aversive'" (14).

The introduction reviews the history of trained dogs serving as draft animals, sentries, messengers, telephone wire layers, sled dogs, and mercy dogs during World War I. Originally, the American program limited acceptance to 30 breeds with profiles in strength, size, and intelligence, though neither the United States nor the United Kingdom would begin the official development of war dog programs until 1942. During the war years, the two countries relied heavily on individual donations. Canine recruits for the British military were scarce because no active breeding programs existed and the government had encouraged its population to euthanize their pets to ration food. Not all working dogs were trained by their respective militaries; some began their wartime service as mascots and pets and demonstrated an aptitude for assisting, caring for, and protecting servicemembers.

The subsequent sections delve into World War II participants—the United States, Great Britain and the Commonwealth, the USSR, and the Axis Powers. Here, Bulanda concentrates on individual dogs, their exploits, and the services they provided. The names of K-9 units, handlers, and tactics are given as background information to the canines' stories. The dogs served in the front and rear areas of battlefields—as well as on board naval vessels and airships—and assisted in combat, boosted morale, and saved lives throughout the years of conflict between nations. For example, on the vicious battlefields between the belligerents, mercy dogs were highly valued for their ability to locate wounded warriors. The dog would carry a backpack filled with needed first-aid equipment to injured soldiers so they could tend to their wounds. If the soldiers were unable to treat themselves, the dogs would lead rescue teams back to the men. In another example, a chaplain carried a small pet dog when he visited casualties in the hospital. One soldier felt bitter and hopeless until the chaplain's dog hopped onto his cot and brought him comfort that changed his attitude and promoted healing.

At the end of World War II, many dogs had suffered serious wounds or died in action. Surviving dogs returned to their prewar owners or retired to civilian life with their handlers. Some dogs became famous and received either official or unofficial medals for their service; some nations erected monuments in gratitude to a few notable dogs.

Military Dogs of World War II examines a heartwarming but serious topic and reminds senior leaders and servicemembers of all ranks of the critical contributions made by every level of the force. It is an illuminating quick read on an often overlooked and ongoing part of the overall military effort.

Havertown, PA: Casemate, 2023 • 128 pages • \$28.95

Keywords: World War II, Least Intrusive Minimally Aversive (LIMA), K-9, mercy dogs, training

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