

SiRT

SERIOUS INCIDENT
RESPONSE TEAM

Summary of Investigation

SiRT File # 2018-014

Referral from

RCMP – Lunenburg District

May 17, 2018

Felix Cacchione
Director
July 26, 2018

On May 17, 2018 SiRT was contacted by the Lunenburg RCMP and advised that the Affected Party (“AP”) suffered an injury as a result of being bitten by a police service dog while being placed under arrest. An investigation was begun that day and completed on July 7, 2018.

Facts

At approximately 10 p.m., on May 16, 2018, the RCMP received an emergency 911 call from a female advising them that her boyfriend, the AP, had assaulted her and had left the residence with a loaded rifle. Several RCMP members attended the residence and four members remained in the residence with the caller and her children for their safety. The Emergency Response Team (ERT), a police service dog handler, the Subject Officer (SO), and his police service dog were called in to locate and assist in the arrest of the AP.

The AP returned to the rear deck of the residence but fled upon noticing the presence of RCMP officers in the residence. At approximately 1:40 a.m. on May 17, the police service dog was deployed to track the AP. The track lead through backyards, an industrial area, across a small creek and eventually into a thickly forested area. At some point the SO noticed the 40-foot tracking line go slack. The SO heard and felt a struggle at the end of the tracking line. He pointed his service pistol and a light at the bush from where the noise was coming. He yelled “Police, stop you are under arrest, show me your hands.” Not having received a reply to his command and believing the AP to be armed, the SO gave the command to the police service dog to apprehend the AP who had yet to announce his location and could still not be seen. The SO heard the AP yell “ouch” and “I’m showing my hands”. The SO pulled on the tracking line and pulled the dog and the AP out from under the bush. The tracking line was completely wrapped around the AP. A Witness Officer (WO), who was present at the time and placed him under arrest at 2:20 a.m., noticed the AP struggling. The SO immediately stopped the dog’s hold on the AP’s lower right leg.

Shortly after his arrest, the AP was transported to the hospital where he received medical attention. The injury to the AP’s leg required approximately 40 sutures to close the wound.

Once the AP was in police custody, and before the police officers at his residence left the residence, some of the officers searched a shed located on the property looking for what was believed to be a 22-calibre rifle. They searched the shed because the AP had gone to the shed before fleeing into the bush. They did not find a 22-calibre rifle but instead found a pellet gun that resembled an assault rifle.

Conclusion

Police service dogs and their handlers are re-certified annually. The dogs are used to find missing persons and lost children, as well as suspects in criminal investigations. It is rare to hear of a police service dog biting a missing person or a lost child. The actions of the SO and his police service dog were lawful. They were in pursuit of the AP who had assaulted his common-law partner and who they believed was armed with a rifle. Once found, the AP offered some resistance, as evidenced by the tracking line being completely around the AP while being arrested, and as a result was bitten by the police service dog.

No basis exists for the consideration of any criminal charges against the SO.