

# Explosives Detection Canine Handler Course Receives Federal Accreditation

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Former Assistant Director Mark Logan (Training and Professional Development) came out of retirement on April 7, 2011, to witness an achievement for which he and his former staff worked tirelessly. Indeed, federal accreditation of the Explosives Detection Canine Handler Course was a high priority during his tenure as assistant director.

On April 6, 2011, in Charleston, South Carolina, the Federal Law Enforcement Training Accreditation's (FLETA) board members unanimously agreed that ATF's canine course successfully met all criteria for federal accreditation. In fact, this is the first FLETA accreditation of a canine course and the first FLETA accreditation of an ATF training course.

## Background/History of FLETA

Beginning in 2000, in an effort to increase the professionalism and quality of Federal law enforcement training, Congress established a task force of key training leaders from principal Federal and state law enforcement agencies, to include ATF, to collaboratively establish standards and procedures to evaluate the training academies and training programs used to train Federal law enforcement agents and officers. The intent was to develop an independent accreditation process that provides law enforcement agencies with an opportunity to voluntarily demonstrate that they meet an established set of professional standards and receive appropriate recognition. This independent accreditation process was entitled Federal Law Enforcement Training Accreditation (FLETA) and is administered by a board or representatives from a number of Federal organizations with law enforcement training responsibilities.

## What Is Accreditation?

Accreditation is the granting of approved status to an academic institution by an accrediting body after examination of its courses, standards and other criteria. FLETA's goal is to offer an independent process to ensure that education/training provided by institutions

of higher education/training meet acceptable levels of quality.

## The FLETA Process

James Scott, Chief of the Learning Management Branch in ATF's Office of Human Resources and Professional Development, is currently ATF's accreditation manager and has been involved in the accreditation of the canine course since the initial application was submitted with FLETA. Since then, he and his staff have worked closely with the Canine Academy Branch at the National Canine Training and Operations Center in Front Royal, Virginia, to prepare for the FLETA assessment.

Agencies must first conduct a self-assessment, preferably with external assessors, for a "dry-run" prior to the official assessment by FLETA, which is headquartered Glynco, Georgia. The results of the self-assessment are submitted to FLETA along with any requirements for corrective action. Once both parties believe a training course or program is ready for the official assessment, FLETA assigns a team of three experienced assessors and three shadow assessors (assessors in training) from across the nation to conduct the intensive review.

The FLETA assessment team leader, the applicant's accreditation manager, and the FLETA program manager present the results of the assessment at the next FLETA board review committee meeting and respond to any questions from board members. The board meets twice a year for the purpose of hearing FLETA accreditation assessment results.

If all standards are met, the Board will decide to award accreditation to the course or academy. The receiving agency must maintain the strict accreditation standards and submit evidence as such to FLETA each year. A FLETA re-assessment is required every 3 years to maintain accreditation.

Prior to their decision on April 6, 2011, the FLETA board members heard ATF's results and asked follow-up questions to James Scott, Mark Logan, and Training Specialist Gary Adams.



**Shown with the FLETA accreditation certificate for ATF's Explosives Detection Canine Handler Course are (left to right) James Scott, Chief, Learning Management Branch; Larry Gochenour, Chief, Advanced Canine Training and Operations Branch; Thomas Murray, Deputy Chief, Arson, Explosives, and International Training Division; Gary Adams, Training Specialist; Elizabeth O'Brien, Instructional Systems Specialist; and Mark Logan, retired Assistant Director (Training and Professional Development). Photo by Christiana Halsey of FLETA**

In the report issued by FLETA Executive Director Gary Mitchell following their decision, the board stated that

“ATF’s FLETA accreditation for the Explosive Detection Canine Handler Course is unique; it is the first program with canines to receive FLETA accreditation. The program requires students and canines to attend continuous training over ten weeks and be able to detect explosive odors in a variety of situations. Through FLETA accreditation ATF has demonstrated the course met 63 rigorous standards dealing with program administration, training staff development, curriculum development, and training delivery, providing superior training for its law enforcement officers.”

Mark Logan commented on this ATF milestone

“This is a significant milestone for ATF that recognizes our explosive investigation exper-

tise to protect the American public and interests both domestically and abroad. This confirmation through independent review showcases the dedication of the men and women of ATF to fighting violent crime and protecting the sovereignty of America.”

### What Next?

Two more ATF training courses are currently in the accreditation process. The Special Agent Basic Training Course and the Industry Operations Investigator Training Course are both vital to ATF’s mission and were selected as the next ATF courses to seek accreditation. Should the courses receive accreditation, then ATF will be able to apply for accreditation of the ATF National Academy.

For more information about FLETA and its accreditation process, visit the FLETA website at <http://www.fleta.gov/>. 