Osg4 2012-08-21 SERVICEDOGS

TOF

The suicide rate among soldiers is a national tragedy. The Army is struggling to do something about it… what’s strange is that the brass seems reluctant to adopt a treatment that – while it may be unorthodox, saved the life of a soldier who was about to pull the trigger:

“And I believe 100 percent he saved my life."

More after this from Charlie:

(((SPOT)))

Like so many soldiers, Army Specialist David Bandrowsky was hit by a roadside bomb.. which caused a brain inujury, and left him suicidal. Until one day he finally took out his gun:

"I was just basically sitting on the couch, playing Russian Roulette with it.”

But as he was about to pull the trigger, Benny – his service dog, decided … not today:

“And right before I pulled the trigger to take my life, he jumped up on me and knocked the gun out of my hand.

Benny is one of the service dogs provided free by volunteer trainers like Debbie Kendall to at least 120 soldiers.

"The reality of my anecdotal experience has been that within two weeks of placing a soldier with a service dog, they no longer are considering suicide as an option." (:08)

CBS’s Anna Werner reports that for a while, any soldier could get a dog on a doctor’s recommendation:

But in January, the Army issued a new policy that also requires a panel review, commander approval - and only approves dogs from providers accredited by Assistance Dogs International, a group that sets training standards.

\*\*\*\*\*SOT - Col. Ted Cieslak (CEEZ-lack)\*\*\*\*\*

"We all want what's best for soldiers - and again, if that's a dog, that's great." (:04)

Colonel Ted Cieslak is the Army doctor who wrote the new policy. He says the Army had no formal policy, and wanted to set minimum requirements.

But since the new policy took effect in January, dog providers at four bases say they've not been able get dogs to soldiers who requested them.

And not only that. Specialist Bandrowsky is worried that the army is about to take Benny:

"I'm on medication like crazy for the symptoms. But now, since I got him, he took 99 percent of all the symptoms away." (:09)

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