

FORT LEE POLICE DEPARTMENT PRESS RELEASE

Date: 4/15/2014

Authority: Chief Keith M. Bendul

Type of Incident: Introduction Ceremony Donated K9 Ajax

Location: Fort Lee Borough Hall

Date and time of occurrence: 4/10/2014 / 2000 hours

At the 4/10/14 Mayor & Council Meeting K9 Ajax and his handler PO John Reuter were formally introduced to the public by Chief Keith Bendul.

Chief Bendul opened the ceremony by thanking the governing body on behalf of the department members and stated "Fort Lee is fortunate to have a Mayor and Council that are committed to public safety." The department's Command Staff were present: Deputy Chief Ford, Captain Zon and Captain Zevits.

During the introduction ceremony the chief stated that K9 Ajax is the seventh dog in the K9 Unit's history which was established in 1990. A plaque in headquarters lists each K9 Team by name. The K9 Unit's responsibilities range from criminal apprehension to searching for suspects or lost persons to community based programs with residents and school children.

K9 Ajax was purchased through a \$6,500 grant received from the Ben Roethlisberger Foundation. Ben Roethlisberger is the quarterback for the Pittsburgh Steelers. During the ceremony the entire Mayor and Council donned black and gold Pittsburgh Steelers caps. The K9 vehicle and equipment for the new K9 team was purchased using grant or confiscated drug funds instead of tax payer money.

As a result of the selection process PO John Reuter a 6-year veteran of the department was chosen. PO Reuter graduated from Ramapo

College with his Bachelor's Degree. He is a member of the department's Emergency Services Unit. PO Reuter has been involved in over 400 criminal arrests during his career. He has received two commendations from the Merit Board: a Life Saving Award and a Unit Citation for Valor.

K9 Ajax was selected after numerous dogs were evaluated by Fort Lee K9 handler, PO Ricky Hernandez and Bergen County Sheriff's Department Lead K9 Instructor, Sgt. Timothy Scannell. K9 Ajax was named after "Ajax the Great" from Greek mythology who was known for his great personal strength and leadership.

PO Reuter and K9 Ajax graduated the next morning from the 11-week Scent Work (Narcotics) K9 Academy at a ceremony in Hackensack. PO Reuter was the President of the Academy Class. The K9 Academy was conducted by the Bergen County Sheriff's Department in compliance with the New Jersey Attorney General's K9 Guideline. PO Reuter and K9 Ajax will complete the 16-week Patrol K9 Academy in the fall.

The chief presented PO Reuter with his partner's police officer badge, K9-7. K9 Ajax's badge is the same silver color as all the other Fort Lee Police Officer's badges. Retired Deputy Chief Jack Reuter and the rest of PO Reuter's family were present during the ceremonies. Chief Bendul stated "We are confident in PO Reuter and his partner's abilities. Deputy Chief Ford and I had the opportunity to observe PO Reuter and K9 Ajax during their final evaluation earlier this week."

The addition of K9 Ajax to the department will enhance the level of service the police department can provide the community in the case of a crime in progress or a missing person. The department's two K9 teams will work different shifts allowing up to 16 hours of protection a day. Their availability will be over seven days a week. A second K9 will also increase the department's efforts to detect drugs especially heroin, which is having a pandemic effect on the region and the residents on New Jersey.

Chief Bendul stated in closing, "The Fort Lee Police Department will serve each and every day to the best of our ability with passion and

total commitment to improve safety and the quality of life for our community.”



(Left to Right Wearing Pittsburgh Steelers caps)
Councilmen Cervieri, Sohmer, Pohan, Councilwoman Kasofsky,
Police Liaisons Councilmen Goldberg and Sargenti, Mayor Sokolich,
PO Reuter & K9 Ajax, Capt. Zevits, Chief Bendul, Deputy Chief Ford,
Capt. Zon)