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[00:00:27] I'm thinking a child would be maybe, you know, 1, 2, 3. 3 year old maybe. Um, but this was a 18 day old child, a, a baby boy. That, that blew my mind because not only did we save that child that day, but we actually saved that child from a lifetime, lifetime of abuse. So, the mom had no idea.

[00:01:00] **Tim:** Hey guys. Tim Ballard here. This is in the trenches. These are the stories of Operation Undergo railroad, our successes, our challenges, our operations, and if you want to donate to make sure that we can continue to make these stories by doing real rescue operations, please go to ourrescue.org and help us out. Thanks so much.

[00:01:24] Hey everybody. Welcome back to In The Trenches. I have a really special and important guest here. This is, uh, investigator Joel Pabelico. And he has a very special assignment within the DA's office in Riverside County, and that is to be the handler of this hero right here, Chewy, one of our K9 dogs that we helped to train up together with Jordan Detection K9. And, uh, so we're gonna talk to, to, to Joel here also. Uh, Matt Cooper. How you doing over there, man?

[00:01:54] **Matt:** Hey, doing good.

[00:01:57] **Tim:** Thanks for coming in.

[00:01:58] **Joel:** Apparently he doesn't smell as good as us.

[00:02:00] **Tim:** He's got, he's got a smell. He's got, he's got a stinky problem.

[00:02:02] **Joel:** Hey, it's fine,

[00:02:03] **Tim:** but it's okay. We accept all people here at the table.

[00:02:06] **Joel:** Very well.

[00:02:06] **Tim:** So, um, so Joel, thanks for, for coming up. We, one of our very favorite, favorite projects, and I think one of the favorite projects of our

supporters and donors is these canines that, that go out and really they're rescuing kids. Explain for us cuz all people don't understand. How can you use a dog to fight child crimes?

[00:02:28] **Joel:** That's a great question. All the ESD, the electronic scent detection canines or electronic storage detection canines, they're pretty much trained to smell out anything that can store digital media. So the type of cases that we work, which is predominantly child pornography, child sex abuse material. Uh, the suspects that we come across, like to hide that type of material on devices that are easily hidden, like a small usb, an SD card on their iPad, you know, cell phone, some other, some, some device that can store digital media.

[00:02:57] **Tim:** So I've told this people, right? And they say, how does the dog smell out images of naked children? Like, no, no, no.

[00:03:03] **Joel:** Yeah, I get that as well too. So, uh, but then we used to say, It's, uh, it's not, they, they're finding the child pornography, they're finding the devices that the, the material or, uh, that illegal contraband is actually kept on. So, uh, again, so there's a specific chemical odor, um, called TPO, Trien Phosphine Oxide that is during the manufacturing process of these, um, devices that prevent circuit boards from overheating. So that small odor on all these type of devices are pretty much what the dogs are trained to smell.

[00:03:32] **Tim:** So it's so amazing. It's so amazing. So, Walk us through, like, so you roll up this dog, I understand Chewy, he's done, he's, he's probably one of the more famous of our dogs that we've helped deploy. Um, because he just puts up numbers, right? He's done over 200 search warrants, I believe. Right.

[00:03:49] **Joel:** And his, that's at least 200. Yeah.

[00:03:51] **Tim:** That's amazing. So walk us through like, how does it work? So they, they, they line up the, the stick. They breach the house. When does Chewy come in? How do you do it?

[00:03:59] **Joel:** The operation itself, when we execute a search warrant at, um, and sometimes it's a, at a residence, right or an apartment. Um, sometimes we, we have travelers that communicate with our undercovers and they'll come in vehicles. So sometimes he'll search vehicles as well.

[00:04:13] But, uh, for the most part, Enter the residence, um, hopefully with cooperation or we end up, you know, doing a full force, uh, banging the door open, kind of thinging and making sure that the, uh, interior is safe for, for us to

continue conduct the investigation. We'll kind of identify rooms, devices, who stays where, um, who's, who's living there, who's been there within the last so many months as based on the investigation that we're working.

[00:04:41] Um, from there we'll try to focus, um, Chewy's deployment on the suspect, maybe bedroom or the main common area where that person uses or access devices. And so we've done it both ways. We've had Chewy go in and searched the entire area prior to having investigators go in and search because Chewy will alert to certain areas.

[00:05:05] And I'll tell the investigators to focus, um, in this particular, you know, corner or whatever. Um, I won't do any further searching other than him giving me a change of behavior that he's on an odor. He, until he likes to dig, he likes to really try to get an odor and put it in his mouth. So if there's something there, He's pretty aggressive at trying to get it.

[00:05:24] But then there's other times where we would have, um, investigators go in and search, uh, a location, a bedroom or common area. And then if they pick up a device, they'll put like a post-it down. And then at least I know of chewy alerts, there's been a device there and he is not wrong, and then he can get fed because he alerted to an odor.

[00:05:44] **Tim:** So I've noticed that these dogs, um, they kind of all alert different ways. Right. I've seen some go down on all fours. What, what is, what is Chewy's alert? He pisses on it? Yeah. I wanna see that as one of the alerts?

[00:05:56] **Joel:** Yeah. No, he's, he's pretty aggressive, um, at times where, uh, he is really on an odor and he can't physically see it, he'll try and dig his mouth as far deep into like the, the crevice of a couch. Yeah. Um, he'll move boxes, he'll move furniture. He'll, he's, he's pretty aggressive to try and get the odor cuz he wants to put it in his mouth. Yeah. And I know that, uh, there's different, uh, opinions in regards to, you know, having a passive alert, making sure that he sits and kind of just stares at the odor or, you know, that change of behavior in, in that regard, he'll do that as well, but for the most part, if he really wants something, it's a, it's a very good indicator for me that he's like, all right, there's something right here.

[00:06:39] And there's been many times when we've seen that like firsthand with, especially when we did a resort at, uh, with Todd Jordan, I think it was a couple years back. They ended up having this basket of like fake fruit and uh, they put an SD card taped to bottom of one of these fake apples at the very bottom of this basket. Chewy would not stop until he got to the actual apple. So

he ripped apart the whole thing. So it's, it was, it was pretty funny. But, uh, but yeah, no, so that's, that's how I know he's for sure on an odor.

[00:07:11] **Tim:** Now Chewy stays with you always. Right? He goes home with you. Why is it it's important that you have this relationship with him, right?

[00:07:17] **Joel:** Well, for sure. Yeah. I mean, the, the bond that we have is, uh, you can't, you can't compare to any other type of relationship. Um, you know, at, at times. You know, we're definitely together more than anyone else in the family or even the team ourselves, just because we, we're always traveling together. We're wherever we go if it's surveillance or doing some type of work coming here today. Right. You know, the team's not here, but me and Chewie are. Yeah. It helps build that trust relationship with the dog. And, um, it's, it's very early on when we get teamed up with our dog from day one.

[00:07:54] Todd Jordan is very, uh, adamant about that. He kind of meets us at the hotel. He has dogs and he goes, all right, well this, this is your dog. All right, cool. So do you want a kennel? For what? Uh, he's, he's spend the night, he's staying with you. I'm like, where? In your hotel room. I'm like, well, don't we get some foreplay?

[00:08:15] Isn't there any any kind of, is there dinner first or something? I'm like, it's is. They just throw you right in the fire and it makes a huge difference though. Yeah, it does make a huge difference in building that relationship early on.

[00:08:26] **Tim:** How has your perspective of just fighting child crimes changed with the introduction of, of these, of these ESD canines?

[00:08:36] **Joel:** I don't, I don't know if it's really changed cuz I've, I've always been pretty passionate, uh, about working these type of cases. Um, I promoted to the investigator ranks back, uh, in 2009 when I was with the Riverside County Sheriff's Department and I was assigned to our sexual assault child abuse unit. So I did that for about five and a half years and really, You know, felt it was necessary to pretty much be a voice for, for kids who have been victimized and maybe not believed initially.

[00:09:05] And then when we put a good case together, the, uh, suspects go to jail for, you know, lifetime sometimes, which is, um, great for the kids to, you know, know that they've been believed that they can get services, they can, you know, help to maybe start the healing process. But after about five and a half years, I was, um, asked if I was interested in going to the back, in, back then it

was called the Sexual Assault Felony Enforcement Internet crimes Against Children task Force, SAFEICAC, um, and really learned a different, um, type of investigation in regards to child exploitation.

[00:09:45] The SACA, the sexual assault child abuse unit that I was working, it's kind of always after the fact, right? They've been victimized, some family member who they trusted had totally violated trust and took advantage of them. And, um, it, it could have been years of abuse on the child exploitation side.

[00:10:05] Um, With the internet, crimes against children type stuff, the stuff that's trafficked through the internet, we now are identifying individuals who have that sexual propensity for young children, right? My goal of working the ICAC type cases is learning, um, learning or, or identifying, shall I say, these individuals who, who have that, um, already sexual interest in children and stopping them from going to that next step of hands-on offenders to actual children.

[00:10:38] But then with Chewy, we have technology that continue to advance. So as technology advances, we have to actually provide resources and be able to combat technology. And so these dogs are huge in regards to being able to find devices that might look like a toy that doesn't look like it can store digital evidence.

[00:11:00] There's so many things that are out there. I mean, we train on us, um, mint coins that are like hollow coins that can fit a micro SB card that holds like a gigabyte of data, which is thousands and thousands of images. So, um, again, these guys are super important, um, and having the dog actually makes our job a little bit, I wouldn't say easier, but it's, we know that we have the opportunity to get all the evidence that we need to continue, uh, with the prosecution of the case.

[00:11:31] **Tim:** I love what you said about, you know, it's preventative rescues. It's like the best kind of child rescues are the ones where the children never had to know about it.

[00:11:39] **Joel:** True.

[00:11:39] **Tim:** And that's what, and that's what you and Chewy do. Yes. Right. You, you, you go out in front and get these guys before it's, it's a preventative strike. Yeah. And, and I love that. Of course, there's oftentimes where you, I'm sure you find victims.

[00:11:52] **Joel:** Yeah. You know, for sure.

[00:11:53] **Tim:** That's sometimes the only clue that a child has been hurt is on this little micro SD card hidden inside a coin or the, the hollow of a book or something right? Yeah. Yeah. And so it's just, it's really, really heroic work. Um, any cases come to mind as like some of your favorite working with Chewy?

[00:12:09] **Joel:** Well, when you say favorite, it's kind of weird, right?

[00:12:12] **Tim:** Notable, let's say Notable.

[00:12:13] **Joel:** Yeah. No, I totally get what you mean. Again, with work in these type of cases, right? We, we, we have a, a different sense of humor, right? Yeah. Just because of the content that we see on a day-to-day basis, the people we come across. So you can laugh or you can cry. So, and, and you know, sometimes you do both. Um, but at the same token, um, yeah, I, I mean there's, there's actual several cases that are pretty, uh, memorable.

[00:12:36] Um, one of the ones for sure was. Uh, this was back in, um, I believe it was late, late, uh, 2020. We were actually working in operation for a child sexual abuse material, um, investigation in a city within Riverside County. And because we, a lot of us are, um, TFOs task force officers, so we were either cross sworn with, uh, FBI or, um, sometimes with HSI or the US Marshals.

[00:13:05] Um, so we had an individual who was on the FBI side who was actually on a social media platform, and there was a live streaming of this dad who was, um, sexually assaulting a child. And it was, people were in this room, people were paying to, to watch this live stream and, uh, so what ended up happening was, We got the immediate call, um, because our task force was part of this inland regional child exploitation human trafficking task force.

[00:13:38] It's a pretty big name, but, uh, they reached out to us and said, Hey, are you guys able to go, um, up to, I believe it was Yucca Valley, um, which is about an hour and a half from where we were, um, doing our current operation. So half of us stayed finishing up our case. The other half of us went up to uh, to the location because they were able to capture the IP address of where the live streaming was coming from. And through search warrants at, you know, exigent, search warrants and stuff like that for the unit service provider, they identified a particular house of where it was coming from. So long story short, we were able to identify the house, um, made entry to the house, contacted all parties, or when I finally got to the house, um, there was a mom, there's the, the suspect, the bio dad who was in the garage being interviewed, and then mom

had a child, right? I'm thinking a child would be maybe, you know, 1, 2, 3, 3 year old maybe. Um, but this was a 18 day old child, a baby boy. So that, that blew my mind because not only did we save that child that day, but we actually saved that child from a lifetime, lifetime of abuse. So, and the mom had no idea so that's pretty memorable.

[00:14:58] **Tim:** Yeah. So, and then I love how you kind of commemorate these operations, cuz I, I follow Chewy. Everyone needs to follow Chewy. Okay. He's, he has his own social media. I'm gonna be posting something, look at my posts and, and follow him. What's his handle?

[00:15:12] **Joel:** It's at the letter K, the number nine underscore chewy. @k9_chewie

[00:15:20] **Tim:** follow this guy. And, uh, Joel does these awesome kind of trophy picks. Um, I, I, you were telling me this earlier, how you, I, I just thought that was the original idea, but you were kind of following certain protocols, right? Yeah. How you, how you set these pictures up. They're the coolest pictures. Now, other, other, uh, units are, are kind of following your lead. So explain how you, how you set these trophy shots up.

[00:15:39] **Joel:** So, So the biggest thing for us is really, um, getting information out there to, to let people know that this is happening in your backyard, right? So because of certain legislation within California, they, um, pretty much, um, said that you're not allowed to blast an individual's face on, you know, on social media. Although we know that we have this guy or girl, uh, with all the evidence related to the case. Um, I had to figure out a workaround and, uh, we kind of just went, I'm like, well, hey, they can't see their face right, but what if we turn 'em around and we just take a picture with Chewy and, uh, kind of worked its way into what it is now.

[00:16:23] Um, and we just wanna make sure that we, we highlight some of our, um, affiliate, uh, folks that help us in the fight of child exploitation. So the Riverside Sheriff's Department, um, we have, uh, Riverside Police Department. We have Menifee PD, Marietta Police, we like. There's, there's a lot of local agencies that also understand the need to fight this type of crime and so they've joined, uh, our task force. Some on a part-time basis, some on a full-time basis.

[00:16:53] But you'll see like in the photos, there'll sometimes will be a sheriff, um, a sheriff jacket on the, or our vest on the back, along with the DA investigator thing. Again, it's been funny because um, I've recently seen, uh, other law enforcement agencies kind of using the same format of the photo,

[00:17:14] **Tim:** and they probably don't have the same restrictions you do. It's just a badass picture. It's, it's cool. You've got the cuffs cuffs and then Chewy's, you know, the dog and just in this case, Chewy's sitting there just like, what's up? Yeah. It's just, they're just great.

[00:17:25] **Joel:** Yeah. Sometimes you know, his head's kind of slumped or he is like, again, I'm like, come on dude, you want food, right? So it's, but yeah, no, it's great.

[00:17:33] **Matt:** I actually, I just started following Chewy right now. I see. Sweet. He's got, uh, He's got, he's got over 8,000 followers, which is impressive. And I'm just, I'm looking at some of these pictures you're talking about, like, here's one right there. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

[00:17:46] I can see that. Yeah. It's pretty awesome. Um, I, I was wondering like, have any of the perpetrators like been upset with the way that he treated their house? Like have there been complaints? Has he have this dog outta here? Does he have a file at the department? Like in the HR department?

[00:17:59] **Joel:** No, not at all. Uh, not at all complaints against him.

[00:18:03] **Tim:** They're investigating, they're internal investigation in Chewy's. He was too rough. He's too with the furniture

[00:18:09] **Joel:** The one that was kind of funny was, uh, The individual ended up showing up. We thought he was supposed to have a truck. Um, and that's what we were looking for when we're all, you know, kinda like in the, in the area doing surveillance.

[00:18:23] Um, but he ended up showing up in a Tesla. So, um, so my, my partner was like, Hey, is can Chewy search a car? I'm like, He's gonna sit on the entire car but, so I'm like, you know what? Yeah, let's, let's search. So he got in there and you know, the Tesla uh, went the front seat, backseat and all this other stuff.

[00:18:43] And it was just funny cuz I, I did overhear, uh, my partner when he was interviewing, uh, the suspect, he's like, is that a dog in my car? So, but there's no damage. It's just, uh, you know, we just, again, we just want to be sure that we get all the evidence we need. So, yeah.

[00:18:58] **Matt:** I, I would ask. It's such a new concept, you know, like dogs for smuggling drugs is, I think common smugglers come up with

countermeasures for that is have any of the, um, perpetrators come up with anything like countermeasures? Do they even, they even think or expect that a dog would be coming to their house?

[00:19:14] **Tim:** Some, maybe some kind of spray like neutralizer, like that gets rid of the odor or something.

[00:19:18] **Joel:** We, uh, We haven't really, um, experienced any of that kind of issues of, but again, just because these devices are very small and easily hidden mm-hmm. There are times where people try to be a little sneaky and on one of our traveler cases, um, chewy alerted to the back right trunk of a vehicle and I had him inside the trunk searching around, and he actually was putting his nose down in the back, back right corner, and there was a bag with a book. And so I'm like, oh, okay, well maybe there's something in this book or this bag.

[00:19:53] I go through it, nothing. I'm like, is this a hollow book? I sift through the whole thing, nothing, and I'm like, show me. He's like, boo punches his nose in the back right corner again. So I lift up that little floorboard that's, you know, kind of like where the spare tire and stuff is at. And there was a cell phone in the back right corner.

[00:20:11] So, um, again, these dogs are, are very good on the odor and sometimes as handlers, you know, we gotta make sure that we trust our dogs and, uh, make sure that we, we definitely check what they're alerting to. So, but yeah, no, we, other than that, you know, there hasn't been any countermeasures that I know of at this point.

[00:20:30] Um, but technology is continuing to advance. So who knows what, uh, odor or what, what kind of chemical compound they might use in the future.

[00:20:39] **Tim:** But thank you so much for giving the bad guys an idea. We're gonna edit that part out. All your pedophile followers that I thank you for giving 'em a heads up.

[00:20:51] **Matt:** Hey, he didn't have to tell me what they were doing. I just wonder if they were catching on. That was all.

[00:21:00] **Tim:** Yeah. Well, Joel, thank you so much for, for coming but mostly for the service that you are, uh, rendering to, to the world, to the children of Riverside County, which is an enormous area you have to cover, which we're, we're so glad that we are able to help get a second dog.

[00:21:15] Yep. In Riverside County, cuz you guys really are that busy and yeah, we're just grateful that, that we get to support you, who, who are doing the heroic work and you and Chewy and, and, and your, your entire department. So Yep. Thanks for your service and we're always here, you know that to, to support and anything we can to, to help fight child crimes with you

[00:21:34] **Joel:** For sure. I, I mean, like I said, we always, um, appreciate the support that you guys provide. Us, you know, mainly with Chewy, um, and, uh, just in general. Um, there's, uh, it's, it's always good knowing that there are a bunch of, uh, folks out there that are trying to combat this type of crime. So,

[00:21:53] **Tim:** and we're in it. We're in it until the end. So thank you so much, and thank you guys for showing up to in the trenches, and we'll see you next time.