

Newsday Editorial: **Dogs will help ease pain of injured U.S. soldiers**  
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Here's a military deployment no one could oppose: Two black Labrador retrievers from Long Island, trained as guide dogs, have been enlisted for the mission of easing combat stress for U.S. soldiers at medical units in the Iraq cities of Tikrit and Mosul.

This is a creative and humane use of these types of affectionate and devoted dogs, which have proved amazingly useful in such settings as nursing homes and mental health units, to alleviate the isolation of emotionally damaged or blocked patients.

The Labs, trained at the Guide Dog Foundation for the Blind in Smithtown, met this week with two U.S. Army sergeants who will accompany them to Iraq. Then they were put through two grueling tests few dogs ever endure: the sounds of assault rifles and handguns fired at Brookhaven National Laboratory's shooting range and - perhaps far worse - a daunting stroll through the Smith Haven Mall's frenzied clutches of holiday shoppers, to get them used to unruly crowds.



SGT Mike Calaway with his Black Labrador, SGT First Class Boe.

They passed with flying colors, were given the rank and insignia of sergeant first class and are now ready to wag and lick their way to the hearts of soldiers traumatized by Iraq's horrors. Who could resist a nudge from a big wet nose and a sloppy kiss from these new recruits? As Maj. Arthur Yaeger, an occupational therapist at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, put it, "These dogs are stress sponges." This deserves two woofs of cheer.