

The Honorable Adam Smith  
Chairman  
Committee on Armed Services  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mac Thornberry  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Armed Services  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

October 7, 2020

**RE: National Dog Bite Victims' Organization Opposes NDAA Provision that Eliminates Breed Safety Policies in Military Housing**

Dear Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Thornberry:

My nonprofit organization, DogsBite.org, is a 501(c)(3) not-for profit corporation founded in October 2007 and incorporated in December 2009, becoming the first national dog bite victims' organization in the United States dedicated to reducing serious dog attacks. I write to urge your committee to eliminate Section 2863 in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for 2021 (Department of Defense Policy for the "Regulation of Dangerous Dogs" in Section 2863 of H. 6395). This amendment, driven by special interest groups—none of which have a mission to protect human lives—eliminates breed safety policies that have been protecting military personnel in family housing areas for over ten years.

In 2009, the U.S. Army and U.S. Marine Corps each developed breed safety policies after children were injured and killed by dangerous dog breeds in privatized military housing. The Marine Corps policy specifically states, "Pit bulls, rottweilers, canid/wolf hybrids, or any canine breed with dominant traits of aggression present an unreasonable risk to the health and safety of personnel in family housing areas."<sup>1</sup>

Since this time, at least 14 peer-reviewed medical studies from Level 1 trauma centers spanning all major geographical regions in the United States—Northeast, Southeast, South, Southwest, Midwest, West Coast and Northwest—all report similar

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<sup>1</sup> Military breed-specific policies, DogsBite.org, Marine Corps Order P1100.22 Ch 6 (<https://www.dogsbite.org/legislating-dangerous-dogs-military-bases.php>).

findings. Pit bulls are inflicting a higher prevalence of injuries than all other breeds of dogs. The majority of these scientific medical studies (12 of 14) also report that pit bulls are inflicting the most severe injuries, requiring a higher number of operative interventions—up to five times higher—than all other dog breeds.<sup>2</sup>

Pit bulls and rottweilers have long been the leaders in fatal dog attacks in the United States. From 2005 to 2019, canines killed 521 Americans. Pit bulls inflicted 66% of these deaths. Combined, pit bulls and rottweilers inflicted 76% of the total recorded deaths (attached). In 2000, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recognized this breed-specific problem in their own 20-year dog bite fatality study, stating:

“The data indicate that rottweilers and pit bull-type dogs accounted for 67% of human dog bite-related fatalities in the United States between 1997 and 1998 ... thus, there appears to be a breed-specific problem with fatalities.”<sup>3</sup>

### **Each Military Branch Already Has a Unified Pet Policy**

Between 2009 and 2012, each major military division—U.S. Army, U.S. Marine Corps and U.S. Air Force—adopted a uniform pet policy. It is a false argument that the Department of Defense (DoD) needs to supersede these military branch unified pet policies, whereby nullifying them and preempting each military branch from protecting personnel in family housing areas. The goal of a breed safety policy is to prevent “first attacks” by dog breeds that have well-identified risks. “Breed-neutral” policies deliberately ignore the severity of first attacks by pit bulls and rottweilers, which can cause severe injury and disfigurement—mauling injuries—or death. Wolf-dog hybrids are so dangerous to young children that multiple states ban them outright.

It is reasonable for military branches to impose restrictions on classes of dogs that statistically cause more harm to humans, especially children, when they attack.

Sincerely,



Colleen Lynn  
President & Founder, DogsBite.org

cc: Chairman and Ranking member, Senate Armed Services Committee

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<sup>2</sup> Level 1 Trauma Center Studies Characterizing Dog Bite Injuries Across Major U.S. Geographical Regions (2011-2019), DogsBite.org (<https://www.dogsbite.org/dog-bite-statistics-studies-level-1-trauma-table-2011-present.php>).

<sup>3</sup> Breeds of Dogs Involved in Fatal Human Attacks in the United States Between 1979 and 1998, by Sacks JJ, Sinclair L, Gilchrist J, Golab GC and Lockwood R, J Am Vet Med Assoc, 2000 Sep 15;217(6):836-40.

## Summary of Nonfatal Dog Bite Injury Studies (2011 to 2019)

“The data showed that compared with other dog breeds, pit bull terriers inflicted more complex wounds, were often unprovoked, and went off property to attack ... The probability of a bite resulting in a complex wound was 4.4 times higher for pit bulls compared with the other top-biting breeds ... and the odds of an off-property attack by a pit bull was 2.7 times greater than that for all other breeds.”

Dog-Bite Injuries to the Craniofacial Region: An Epidemiologic and Pattern-of-Injury Review at a Level 1 Trauma Center, by Khan et al., MS J Oral Maxillofac Surg, March 2020.

“Thirty-nine percent of all dog bite-related emergency department visits at our facility resulted in an injury requiring orthopaedic treatment. Pit bull terrier bites were responsible for a significantly higher number of orthopaedic injuries and resulted in an amputation and/or bony injury in 66% of patients treated, whereas bites from law enforcement dogs and other breeds were less associated with severe injuries.”

Dogs and Orthopaedic Injuries: Is There a Correlation to Breed?, by Brice et al., Husak L, Journal of Orthopaedic Trauma, Volume 32, Number 9, September 2018.

“Our data were consistent with others, in that an operative intervention was more than 3 times as likely to be associated with a pit bull injury than with any other breed. Half of the operations performed on children in this study as well as the only mortality resulted from a pit bull injury. Our data revealed that pit bull breeds were more than 2.5 times as likely as other breeds to bite in multiple anatomical locations.”

Characteristics of 1616 Consecutive Dog Bite Injuries at a Single Institution, by Golinko et al., Clinical Pediatrics (Phila), April 2017.

“Of the more than 8 different breeds identified, one-third were caused by pit bull terriers and resulted in the highest rate of consultation (94%) and had 5 times the relative rate of surgical intervention. Unlike all other breeds, pit bull terriers were relatively more likely to attack an unknown individual (+31%), and without provocation (+48%).”

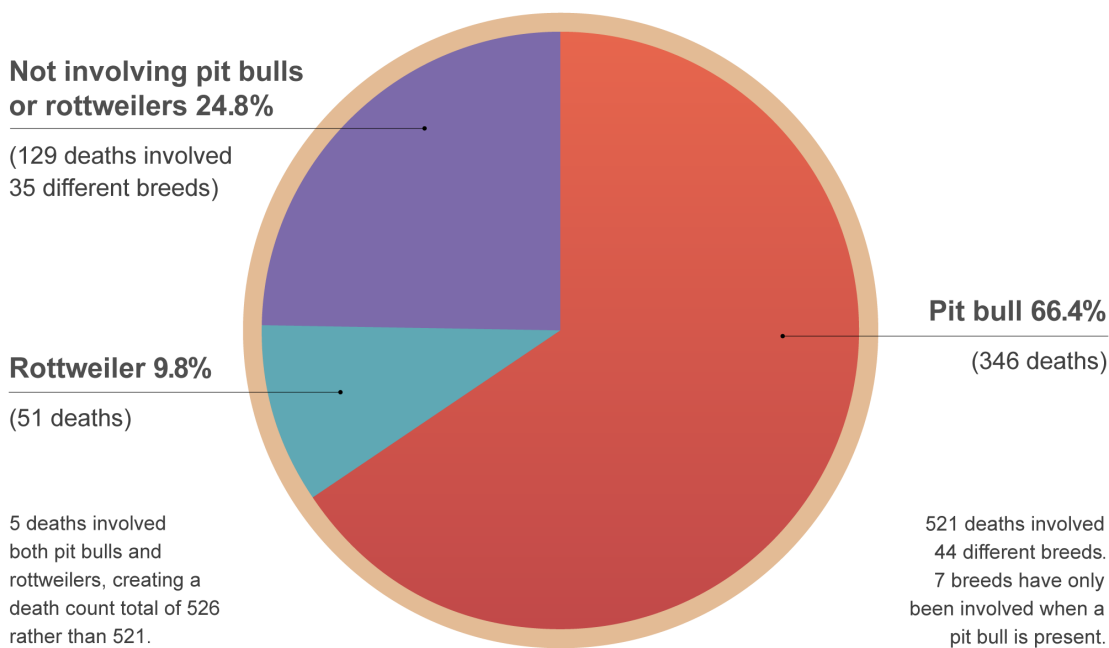
Dog Bites of the Head and Neck: An Evaluation of a Common Pediatric Trauma and Associated Treatment, by O'Brien et al., Otolaryngol, 2015 Jan-Feb; 36(1): 32–38.

“Attacks by pit bulls are associated with higher morbidity rates, higher hospital charges, and a higher risk of death than are attacks by other breeds of dogs. Strict regulation of pit bulls may substantially reduce the US mortality rates related to dog bites.”

Mortality, Mauling, and Maiming by Vicious Dogs, by Bini JK, Cohn SM, Acosta SM, McFarland MJ, Muir MT, Michalek JE; TRISAT Clinical Trials, Annals of Surgery, April 2011;253:791-797.

## 15 Year U.S. Dog Bite Fatality Chart - 2005 to 2019

During this 15-year period, 521 Americans suffered death due to dog bite injury.



### Breeds of Dogs Involved in the Most Human Fatalities

Dog Breed	Fatalities	% of Total
Pit bull	346	66.4%
Rottweiler	51	9.8%
Mixed-breed	27	5.2%
German shepherd	22	4.2%
Mastiff/Bullmastiff <sup>†</sup>	18	3.5%
American bulldog	16	3.1%
Husky	14	2.7%
Combination of 37 dog breeds <sup>‡</sup>	≤ 9	

DogsBite.org contains verifiable information about U.S. citizens killed by dogs including the name and age of each victim, location of attack, dog breed and up to 25 other factors. Source citations are available at [www.DogsBite.org](http://www.DogsBite.org).

<sup>†</sup> This category includes: Italian, English, South African and Neapolitan mastiffs, bullmastiffs and mastiff-mixes. This category excludes: cane corsos, presa canarios and Dogo argentinos.  
<sup>‡</sup> 7 dog breeds contributed from 9 to 4 deaths, 9 breeds contributed from 3 to 2 deaths, and 21 breeds contributed to 1 death. 10% of all fatal attacks involved multiple breeds, thus the total number of deaths attributed to each breed will always exceed the actual number of deaths.



DogsBite.org