



PRESS RELEASE

Tacoma Police Department
Tacoma, Washington
cityoftacoma.org/police

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 13, 2020

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Line of Duty Death: K9 Ronja

Tacoma, Wash. – We are heartbroken to report that one of our beloved K9's was killed in the line of duty overnight. Tacoma Police K9 Ronja was tragically shot during the pursuit and capture of an armed suspect who was being sought for a homicide that occurred a few hours earlier in the City of Tacoma.

K9 Ronja was a 2-year-old purebred German Shepherd and had served with the Tacoma Police Department for 8 months in training and on patrol. She was born in the Czech Republic, so our first look at Ronja was in videos that came from her breeders overseas; while there were many dogs to choose from, Ronja's work ethic and tenacity stood out above the rest.

K9 Ronja came to the United States in January 2020 to begin her career with K9 handler Officer Jennifer Syler, who had been selected as our newest K9 handler at the time. From their first day together, the bond between K9 Ronja and K9 Officer Syler was undeniable - it is rare to have a female tracking K9, and to have the dog be partnered with a female handler is something truly special.

K9 Ronja was trained throughout the winter alongside two other new patrol dogs: TPD's K9 Vortex and Pierce County Sheriff's Department's K9 Brix. Ronja's trainers were impressed with her abilities to keep up with, and even outdo, the male K9s in her class. She was easy to train and her motivation was exceptional.

In April 2020, K9 Ronja completed over 400 hours of intensive training and began to work on patrol as a tracking dog. She hit the ground running with a big capture just two weeks later, when Ronja located three suspects who burglarized a school in east Tacoma.

In July 2020, she made headlines for tracking and capturing a suspect who broke into the Boys & Girls Club. K9 Ronja expertly sniffed out the fleeing suspect's trail, located the suspect, and recovered several stolen computers. Ten days ago, the children at the Boys & Girls Club held a celebration for Ronja to thank her for helping recover their laptops.

K9 Ronja's death is heartbreaking for her handler and our department. K9s hold a very special place in our hearts – their loyalty, bravery, and dedication is inspiring. K9 Ronja sacrificed herself to save the life of her partner and her fellow officers.

Ronja was her given name in the Czech Republic and it means "bringing victory". To us, Ronja will forever mean bringing valor. And for that we are eternally grateful.

K9 Ronja, End of Watch: August 13, 2020. Gone But Not Forgotten.

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