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[NY archbishop celebrates funeral for US soldier from Ghana:](#)
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[Soldier killed while saving lives in tragic Bronx house fire honored with medals:](#)
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[Soldier who saved his neighbors from deadly Bronx fire celebrated as a hero at his funeral:](#)
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[Soldier who died saving people from a Bronx fire is laid to rest:](#)
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[Bronx fire hero remembered for selflessness at funeral mass:](#)
NY Post , By Eileen AJ Connelly and Georgett Roberts, February 17, 2018

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[Soldier Who Died Saving People From Bronx Fire Is Hailed at His Funeral:](#)

New York Times, By ASHLEY SOUTHALLFEB. 17, 2018

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[Governor pledges to do whatever state can to help Newburgh with tainted water :](#)

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[Newburgh manager files notices to file lawsuits over city's tainted water:](#)

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[NY: Newburgh Set to Sue Feds, State Over Water Contamination:](#)

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World War I

[Rainbow Division Soldiers get ready for war in the winter of 1918:](#)

Army.mil, By Col. Richard Goldenberg, New York Army National Guard February 16, 2018

[100 years ago: Trained U.S. soldiers ready to fight:](#)

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[This hero was so deadly, they called him 'Black Death':](#)

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105th Airlift Wing

105th Airlift Wing Airmen hone aeromedical evacuation skills

Nationalguard.mil, By Senior Airman Terrence Clyburn | 105th Airlift Wing, New York Air National Guard | February 22, 2018:

GULFPORT, Miss.- Airmen assigned to the 105th Airlift Wing participated in PATRIOT South 2018, based out of the Gulfport Combat Readiness Training Center, Mississippi, from Feb. 12 to 15.

The PATRIOT South 2018 was an exercise that tested the ability of local, state and federal organizations to communicate and coordinate in response to a variety of federal emergencies.

Established in 2009, the PATRIOT exercises simulate disaster scenarios employing search, rescue, evacuation and medical treatment of victims.

This year's focus was of a mock earthquake due to Mississippi's location near the New Madrid Seismic Zone.

Capt. Robert McDonald, executive officer with the 105th Operations Group, served with the joint staff operations of PATRIOT South 2018.

"Planning for PATRIOT begins a year prior to the start of the exercise," McDonald said. "There were approximately 900 civilian and military personnel involved in this year's exercise."

The exercise occurs every year to prepare multiple areas across the United States for disaster relief response and validates the training for Federal Coordinating Centers, which are activated to organize mass evacuations from disaster locations to safety, McDonald said.

FCCs are divided into regions composed of multiple states. The centers have Patient Reception Areas staffed with nurses, doctors, litter bearers, transportation teams, joint patient tracking teams and additional medical team members for oversight.

Victims are triaged and sent to hospitals for more comprehensive care.

Sonja L. Stokes-Sumrall, the Area Emergency Manager for the Veteran Health Administration's Office of Emergency Management liaison, said the exercise is crucial to preparing for the hurricane season in Jackson, Mississippi.

"This particular exercise was set up to identify any short falls or deficiencies prior to the upcoming hurricane season on June 1,"

Stokes-Sumrall said.

A C-17 Globemaster III crew from the 105th Airlift Wing flew to Gulfport, Mississippi, which became a temporary base of operations during the exercise.

The crew flew missions to Nashville, Tennessee, Tampa, Florida and Jackson, Mississippi, working alongside aeromedical evacuation squadron members

Staff Sgt. Jaron Brown, a loadmaster with the 137th Airlift Squadron, 105th Airlift Wing, was among the crew. .

"You learn that everyone is willing to put in the effort to make sure they 're ready for the next natural disaster, because Mother Nature waits for no one," Brown said.

As the C-17 landed, the aeromedical evacuation squadron members on board would work with the civilians at the FCCs to move the victims into the reception areas, evacuating the most critical victims first.

Airman 1st Class Codi Norman, an aeromedical evacuation technician with the 156th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, was happy to participate in the exercise.

"I became a paramedic to save lives and I joined the military for the same reason," Norman said. "There is no greater thing that we can do than to serve mankind."

While at the FCCs, the aeromedical evacuation squadron members would talk with the civilian staff showing them proper procedures to get the patients off the jet safely.

"We've already seen [domestic operations] in action with Hurricane Katrina, Harvey and Maria," Norman said. "This is us perfecting the process, so that each subsequent operation runs even smoother than the last and we can move the most people in the safest and most efficient way possible."

<http://www.nationalguard.mil/News/Article/1447876/105th-airlift-wing-airmen-hone-aeromedical-evacuation-skills/>

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174th Attack Wing

UTC Subsidiary, Air National Guard Complete DB-110 Sensor Operational Assessment

Executive Biz, Feb. 22, 2018 :

A United Technologies Corp. subsidiary and the Air National Guard have wrapped up an operational evaluation of an airborne reconnaissance platform aboard the General Atomics-built MQ-9 Reaper drone.

The 174th attack wing of the New York Air National Guard conducted the assessment of UTC Aerospace Systems' DB-110 aerial sensor in fall 2017 to evaluate the platform's use in delivering defense support to civil personnel during natural disasters and other domestic missions, UTC Aerospace said Wednesday.

DB-110 is an electro-optic/infrared pod that works to generate high-resolution imagery during night and day at a slant range of at least 80 nautical miles.

The dual-band reconnaissance system is designed to gather over 10,000 square miles of imagery per hour to help users assess hurricanes, wildfires and other natural disasters in support of humanitarian relief missions.

The Air National Guard selected UTC Aerospace in 2017 to install and assess DB-110 systems on the 174th attack wing's Reaper drones.

The service will also evaluate the MS-110 sensor and its interoperability with the Reaper and C-130 Hercules aircraft.

MS-100 works to generate multispectral color imagery across seven bands to help users survey critical infrastructure in unfavorable weather conditions.

<http://blog.executivebiz.com/2018/02/utc-subsiary-air-national-guard-complete-db-110-sensor-operational-assessment/>

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Citizens Preparedness

Disaster preparedness training set for Monday in Whitehall

Glens Falls Post Star, Feb. 22, 2018 :

WHITEHALL - State officials and the Washington County Department of Public Safety will host a "citizens preparedness training program" Monday night at Whitehall Municipal Center in the village.

The program will include a 90-minute training session to teach residents the tools and resources to have for various disasters, how to respond and recover as quickly as possible to pre-disaster conditions.

Participants will be advised on how to prepare, including development of a family emergency plan and stocking up on emergency supplies, and how to register for NY Alert, the free statewide emergency alert system.

The training will be offered in conjunction with the state Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Services and New York Army National Guard.

The event will start at 7 p.m. in the Municipal Center at 57 Skenesborough Drive.

Those seeking more information can call 518-747-7520 or email publicsafety@co.washington.ny.us.

http://poststar.com/news/local/disaster-preparedness-training-set-for-monday-in-whitehall/article_9acefa61-6767-5286-bc07-b19ee5d9f258.html

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Orange Regional Medical Center to host free emergency preparedness training

The Photo News, Feb 22, 2018 :

MIDDLETOWN - Orange Regional Medical Center will host the New York Citizen Preparedness Training Program, a free disaster preparedness training program, on Monday, Feb. 26.

The 90-minute session will begin at 4:30 p.m. in Conference Rooms 2 and 3 at Orange Regional's main campus, located at 707 East Main Street in Middletown.

All interested citizens may attend and no advanced registration is required.

The event is part of Gov. Andrew Cuomo's continuing Citizen Preparedness Corps Training Program, which provides citizens with the knowledge and tools to prepare for emergencies and disasters, respond accordingly and recover as quickly as possible from pre-disaster conditions.

The program is presented by New York National Guard troops, working with experts from the New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services and local emergency management personnel.

The Citizen Preparedness Corps Training Program covers a broad range of emergency preparedness topics, like developing a family emergency plan, stocking up on emergency supplies and registering for NY-Alert, the free statewide emergency alert system.

Following the session, participants will receive a training certificate and a wallet-sized "Z-Card" with emergency preparedness information.

"In the event of a natural or man-made disaster, the resources we frequently depend on may not be readily available. Being aptly prepared is crucial," said John Nowinski AEMT-P, Injury Prevention Coordinator/EMS

Liaison at Orange Regional Medical Center. "With severe weather events becoming increasingly common, we are thrilled to offer this free and important training event to our community."

For more information on the program and emergency preparedness, visit www.nyprepare.gov.

<http://www.thephotonews.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20180222/NEWS01/180229994/Orange-Regional-Medical-Center-to-host-free-emergency-preparedness-training&template=mobileArticle>

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Libraries plan emergency preparedness seminar

Eagle News, Feb 19, 2018 :

New York National Guard troops, in conjunction with the New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services, will be presenting a free disaster preparedness class at the Elbridge Public Library on Wednesday, March 7.

The two-hour program begins at 6 p.m. The library is located at 241 E Main St., Elbridge.

The event is opened to any interested citizen and no sign-up in advance is required.

The event is part of Gov. Andrew Cuomo's continuing Citizen Preparedness Corps Training Program, which provides citizens with the knowledge and tools to prepare for emergencies and disasters, respond accordingly, and recover as quickly as possible to pre-disaster conditions.

Working with the New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services (DHSES) and local emergency management personnel, troops are conducting these training events across the state.

Since the program's launch in early February 2014, troops have held more than 2,206 events statewide, and taught over 131,217 citizens how to be better prepared for emergencies and disasters.

The program, designed by DHSES, covers a broad range of emergency-preparedness topics, like developing a family emergency plan, stocking up on emergency supplies, and registering for NY-Alert, the free statewide emergency alert system.

The Citizen Preparedness Corps has equipped thousands of New Yorkers to respond better to emergencies and disasters, he stressed.

Emergency preparedness is part and parcel of the New York National Guard's mission and experience, according to New York State Adjutant General, Maj. Gen. Anthony German.

"The men and women of the New York Army and Air National Guard, who have responded to help their fellow New Yorkers during floods, hurricanes, and snow storms, know first-hand the value of being prepared for emergencies," German said.

"Our Soldiers and Airmen are proud to be part of Governor Cuomo's effort to help our fellow citizens prepare to cope with disasters and emergencies," German added.

For more information on the program and emergency preparedness, visit: nyprepare.gov.

On March 10, the Marcellus Free Library will host a New York State Citizen Preparedness Training Program led by the NY State National Guard at 10 a.m.

With severe weather events becoming more frequent and more extreme, it is more important than ever the New Yorkers are prepared for disasters. The NY Citizen Preparedness Training Program teaches residents to have the tools and resources to prepare for any type of disaster, respond accordingly and recover as quickly as possible to pre-disaster conditions. The 1.5 hour long training course will provide an introduction to responding to different types of disasters and Active Shooter/Active Violence situations.

Participants will be advised on how to properly prepare for any disaster, including developing a family emergency plan and stocking up on emergency supplies. Led by the New York State National Guard. Free and open to all.

<https://www.eaglenewsonline.com/news/new/2018/02/19/libraries-plan-emergency-preparedness-seminar/>

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New York Air National Guard

Stoquert takes helm at 109th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron

Utica Observer Dispatch, Feb. 19, 2018 :

Maj. Sandra Stoquert of Camden took command of the 109th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron at the New York Air National Guard's 109th Airlift Wing during a ceremony at Stratton Air National Guard Base on Feb. 12.

As the squadron commander, Stoquert is responsible for managing the safe, reliable and timely flightline maintenance and sortie generation of all 109th Wing-assigned LC-130H and C-130H aircraft. The Aircraft Maintenance Squadron's Airmen are responsible for supporting annual Operations Deep Freeze and Raven Dew which are conducted in the polar regions of Antarctica and Greenland.

Stoquert served as the New York Air National Guard's executive officer at Joint Forces Headquarters New York prior to taking command of the Aircraft Maintenance Squadron. Her awards include the Meritorious Service Medal, the Air Force Commendation Medal and the Air Force Achievement Medal.

On the civilian side, Stoquert is a licensed mental health counselor for the Adirondack Central School District. She leads, organizes and plans group and individual counseling for at-risk students.

<http://www.uticaod.com/news/20180219/community-news-for-tuesday-feb-20-2018>

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Roman top enlisted NY Air National Guard airman

Rome Sentinel, Feb 19, 2018:

Chief Master Sgt. Maureen Dooley, a Rome resident, is now the top enlisted airman for the 5,600-member New York Air National Guard.

Dooley served as the senior enlisted leader and group superintendent for the 224th Air Defense Group in Rome. She served in the active Air Force from 1979 to 1987 and has served in the Air National Guard since 1995.

In the role, Dooley will serve as the advisor to Maj. Gen. Anthony German, commander of the New York Air National Guard, on issues affecting enlisted airmen.

Dooley said, "Taking care of our Airmen is priority one to me by guiding and mentoring them through successful careers, and eliminating barriers to their progression."

The New York Air National Guard is located at five bases across the state, and operates the MQ-9 remotely piloted aircraft, the C-17 Globemaster III strategic transport, the LC-130 ski-equipped Hercules transport and the HH-60 search and rescue helicopter and the HC-130 search and rescue aircraft.

The New York Air National Guard also includes the Eastern Air Defense Sector, where Dooley had served, responsible for the air defense east of the Mississippi.

A formal ceremony will be held at New York State Division of Military and Naval Affairs headquarters on Feb. 26 to mark the transition.

<http://romesentinel.com/advancement/roman-top-enlisted-ny-air-national-guard-airman/QBqrbm!Z8geLekkSuC8gm7ME3vZBg/>

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New York Army National Guard

Jewish war veterans want the young warriors to tell their stories

Cleveland Jewish News, Feb. 20, 2018 :

ARLINGTON, Va. - Jews don't serve in the military. Jews shouldn't serve in the military. Forget about being Jewish - the mission comes first.

Like a lot of other Jewish dilemmas, what's old for Jews who serve in the U.S. military is new again, and the organization established in 1896 to dismantle myths and anxieties about Jews in uniform is still confronting them.

Jewish War Veterans, a group that advocates for Jews in the military and for the military in the Jewish community, set aside a Shabbat at its annual conference this month to discuss strategies to remind Americans (and Jewish Americans particularly) that there is a proud tradition of Jewish service.

"Time and time again, we have to remind our fellow Americans, 'Yes, we were there,'" Col. Rich Goldenberg of the New York National Guard said at a session at the Feb. 10 Shabbaton. "This goes back to the Civil War."

One of the reasons for the conference theme was simply organizational survival: JWV officials say they have about 20,000 members, many of them veterans of long past wars, although there are likely hundreds of thousands of living Jewish veterans eligible to join its ranks.

"Jewish War Veterans is slowly dying," said Sheldon Goldberg, a docent at the JWV museum in Washington, D.C.

Three obstacles to spreading the word emerged during the conference from speakers and participants, who represented the breadth of the U.S. armed forces: the persistent stereotype that Jews are underrepresented in the military; the ongoing reluctance of Jewish families to send their sons and daughters to the military; and a military culture that encourages the repression of any expression of identity unrelated to the military.

Dan Rosenfield, a recent graduate of Texas A&M University and now a second lieutenant at Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota, talked about bringing around his family to the prospect of an extended stay in a corner of the country with virtually no Jews.

"My mother wasn't happy," he said. "It was two more years without a Jewish girl."

"There is an undertone in Jewish society that Jewish service is undesirable," Goldenberg said. "One of the most important groups we should be talking to is other Jewish Americans - they have become less and less tied to our service."

One way to overcome that reluctance is to tell stories that are heroic, both from a Jewish and a military perspective. Goldenberg recalled a meeting between two Jewish veterans who served as prison guards - one of Nazis at Nuremberg and one of accused terrorists at Guantanamo Bay. Each recalled endeavoring to treat the prisoners humanely, setting examples for other guards - and for the prisoners.

"They both tell the story that they found the right opportunity to remind the prisoners - at Nuremberg and at Guantanamo - that they were being guarded by American Jews," he said.

Marc Wolf, a former Navy officer who is now the chairman of Warriors and Veterans society of the UJA-Federation of New York, said reaching younger veterans who may not be aware of JWV was vital.

"Talking to the younger generation is one of the most important conversations we can have," Wolf said. "This is our Jewish fraternal organization. It's the voice of Jewish warriors. To not figure this out would be a shanda [shame]."

Matt Bernstein, until recently an officer in the Army's Judge Advocate Corps, said he only learned about JWV when he moved to Washington, and he passed by its small museum near Dupont Circle.

"I didn't know about it and it was three blocks from my house," said Bernstein, who included Bowe Bergdahl, the sergeant who was captured after walking off his base in Afghanistan, among his clients.

Rosenfield said service members who meld their service with their Jewish activism is one way of reaching other Jews. Last year at Texas A&M, he brought together the university's Corps of Cadets and its Hillel, as well as the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, JWV and the Jewish Welfare Board, to organize a Jewish Warrior's Weekend for Jewish ROTC members and cadets from across the United States as a means of highlighting Jewish service. At Fort Ellsworth in December, he helped organize the first Hanukkah lighting on the base in 22 years.

Isolation and the pressure while on duty to subvert everything to the mission also contribute to Jews not identifying.

"You do not want to create friction with your leadership over Shabbat, you do not want to create friction over the High Holidays," Goldenberg recalled of his own younger days in the military. "You desperately want to fit in, whether it's with your shipmates or your platoon."

Shari Berger, the wife of an active duty service member based at the Norfolk, Virginia, naval base, said she immediately sought out a Jewish community when they moved to the midsize city - a strategy she said helps smooth frequent moves during a military career.

"I went spinning one day at a spin studio," she said. "I looked around and made sure I found the one Jewish person who would make me feel at home."

That helped ease her transition, and also helped the family sustain Jewish involvement - which in turn "makes myself feel at home when we move."

Jewish care packages - often organized by the JWV, but also informally on Jewish military listservs - help sustain a sense of belonging, said Lt. Col. Naomi Mercer, the Army's chief of command policy who is developing gender integration. "When I was deployed, I got tons and tons of care packages" that she could share with other Jews.

Anti-Semitism still persists, with JWV taking up cases of discrimination.

Jewish service members have at times claimed they were singled out against being promoted. There also are persistent claims of proselytization at the military academies.

An irritant is the perception that Jews underserve. At the JWV conference, the consensus was that there are 30,000 Jews currently serving - more than half a percent of the estimated 5.5 million Jews in the United States, and outpacing the 0.4 percent of the U.S. population currently in uniform. If the count is correct, and taking into account demographics - the Jewish population is older on average, so a smaller portion would be eligible to serve - Jews, as they have in the past, have a higher representation in the U.S. armed forces.

Goldenberg said the same contradiction has historically been true of Jews in Diaspora militaries, noting that around the same time Jewish War Veterans was established toward the end of the 19th century, German and British Jewish veterans groups were being established to combat the same misperception.

"We've always been the outsiders looking in in the lands we've lived in," he said.

https://www.clevelandjewishnews.com/news/national_news/jewish-war-veterans-want-the-young-warriors-to-tell-their/article_9a5d8640-e552-5ba9-92f5-3f207fc7169c.html

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jta.org, Feb 20, 2018 :

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<https://www.jta.org/2018/02/20/news-opinion/united-states/jewish-war-veterans-want-the-young-warriors-to-tell-their-stories>

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Olympics

The 2-man event behind him, Monterey's Nick Cunningham turns his attention to the big sled

The Californian, feb. 20, 2018 :

PYEONGCHANG, South Korea — Before Nick Cunningham takes off hurtling his bobsled down an ice chute in speeds nearing triple digits, he provides some dark humor for his teammates that he hopes loosens up everybody.

“I threaten to crash them all the time,” said Cunningham, of Monterey, smiling.

That doesn’t sound so funny, especially given the dangerous nature of the sport. It’s also probably not the most shocking thing for a former bull rider to say. But his two-man teammate, Hakeem Abdul-Saboor, says it works.

“He’s like ‘Oh, I’m gonna dump you,’” Abdul-Saboor said. “It’s that humor that keeps us at ease. He says, ‘Let’s go have some fun’ and that’s what we do.”

Cunningham, who is the pilot of one of three U.S. two- and four-man bobsleds here in Pyeongchang, continued to explain his approach.

“I like to have fun,” he said. “It’s kind of a coping mechanism for me, too. Do I want them to relax? No chance. But I need to say it because it’s very easy to stress out at this level when

you're looking down and your job is legitimately to not kill anybody. So you know, to go out there and be in that position, I calm myself down and try to be in the moment and just try to enjoy it. I don't get paid enough not to enjoy it. I'm gonna take it all in and have some fun."

This coping mechanism must work since Cunningham and Abdul-Saboor, who didn't have a strong enough finish in their first three heats to qualify for a final run, were in really good moods in the interview area after the race, despite finishing one spot out of the top 20, which would have qualified them for one last run.

They finished their third run in 2:29.69, which was .19 seconds slower and one spot behind than a 20th place sled of the Olympic Athletes from Russia.

Team Canada and Germany tied for the gold medal with identical times of 3:16.86 through four heats. Latvia took home bronze. A lone American sled made the final, with Justin Olsen and Evan Weinstock finishing 14th.

After the race, Cunningham expressed his disappointment. The three-time Olympian and former Boise State sprinter, who is now a sergeant in the New York National Guard, was sure he'd be able to improve his time after his last two Olympics. His two-man sleds finished 11th in Sochi and 12th in Vancouver.

"Yeah, finishing 21st, I'm happy because we went in the right direction," Cunningham said, looking for a silver lining. "We moved up some spots. So it's hard — that was our goal to get a fourth run. And to be two-tenths away from that is hard. But I know that (Abdul-Saboor) gave it his all, I gave it my all and that's why we were still smiling at the end."

Cunningham said if they had raced the first two runs on Sunday like they had the third, they would be competing in the fourth heat.

"Oh man we'd be way in the mix," Cunningham said. "Do I think we'd be in the medals? Probably not, but would we be comfortably in a fourth run? Oh yeah. It's almost like everyone else that got that velocity from the start and all that going down into curve three, you might as well stop my sled and let me go from there because that's how bad my two runs were yesterday. I probably left a second out there over the two runs."

So what happened earlier?

"Today I didn't mess up the whole top of the track," Cunningham said. "I fixed (curves) one to two and two to three, and that's gonna be huge when I get to the four-man (on Friday) and try to get the sled through there.

"I messed up that part of the track every single training run and every run that I took previous to the Olympics. To come out here and finally nail it, that's a huge confidence booster."

Unlike many of his U.S. teammates, Cunningham only had six practice runs heading into this race. He wasn't on the national team last year and paid his own way to get training runs in

Pyeongchang so he could be somewhat familiar with the track. The team wasn't flown to South Korea for a preseason test event last year, "so we were behind the eight ball," he said.

Now he thinks he's finally mastered some of the treacherous curves, which have given all sliders at these Olympics — luges and skeleton included — issues.

Cunningham will turn his focus to four-man bobsled — the "glory event" as he calls it — which runs Feb. 24 and 25. He's hoping to build on the mistakes and success gleaned from the last few days working on two-man.

"We're learning," Cunningham said. "It's not the way I wanted to go out this season, but what the hell."

<http://www.thecalifornian.com/story/sports/2018/02/20/2-man-event-behind-him-montereys-nick-cunningham-turns-his-attention-big-sled/355238002/>

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Fort Hood soldier to compete this week at Winter Olympics

KDH News, Feb 19, 2018 :

A Killeen resident and Fort Hood soldier will compete this week in the four-man bobsled event at the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea.

Maj. Christopher Fogt, 34, a soldier the with 3rd Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, is returning to the Olympic stage for the third time, this time as a brakeman for a four-man team including Carlo Valdes and fellow soldiers Sgt. 1st Class Nate Weber, 10th Special Forces Group, and Sgt. Justin Olsen of the New York Army National Guard.

Fogt competed in the 2010 Vancouver Winter games and won bronze during the 2014 Sochi games.

In an Associated Press interview Feb. 2, Fogt said soldiers do well at sliding events because of the teamwork involved.

"In the Army, you have to be part of a team from your very first day of basic training. On top of that, we've been through worse situations," he said in the interview. "When you're bobsledding, and it's minus-20 degrees on the hill and it's snowin' and blowin', you remember you've been on the field without meals in this kind of weather, hanging out in a foxhole. So that mental toughness helps us a lot."

The men's four-man bobsled events begin at 6:30 p.m. Friday, and will continue through Saturday.

Medals will be presented beginning at 7:40 p.m. Saturday.

http://kdhnews.com/military/fort-hood-soldier-to-compete-this-week-at-winter-olympics/article_ae51c3c0-15b8-11e8-b4ca-039b89f5b79a.html

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'More Than War Fighters': Active-Duty Athletes Compete In Olympics Bobsled And Luge

NPR, February 19, 2018:

Nick Cunningham grew up far from the snow in Monterey, on California's central coast. He ran track at Boise State University.

None of that hinted at the route he would take after graduation - trying out for the U.S. bobsled team.

"I figured it would be a graduation gift for myself to kind of do something that's outside the box, outside my comfort zone," said Cunningham, 32. "Just try something none of my friends could ever say that they tried out for. And so I went and tried out. And 18 months later, I went to my first Olympics."

That was eight years ago in Vancouver, Canada, where Cunningham competed in the two- and four-man bobsled events.

After that, he did something else outside the box.

Cunningham joined the New York Army National Guard. He's now a sergeant and part of the Army's World Class Athlete Program (WCAP), an elite group of soldiers who have unique orders.

"They told me, 'Go win medals for this country,'" Cunningham said. "And that's my job at this moment."

Cunningham is competing in Pyeongchang - his third Olympics - as a driver in the two- and four-man bobsled events. He's one of seven soldier-athletes on the U.S. Winter Olympic team. Four are competing in bobsled and three in luge.

The Army's World Class Athlete Program accepts soldiers who show they can compete at the elite level of Olympic or Paralympic sport. They undergo basic training and advanced individual training like every other soldier.

After that, winter athletes head to Lake Placid, N.Y., and the summer athletes go to Fort Carson, Colo.

"I think the biggest thing about the program is it affords you the time," says Col. Sean Ryan, the WCAP director of communications and a coach for the program's distance runners in Fort Carson. "But with that time comes the responsibility to maintain your proficiency in that sport, and be eligible to make an Olympic or international team. If you don't do that, you get released from the program."

Active duty soldier-athletes began competing in the Olympics after World War II. The first athletes were boxers.

WCAP became a more formal program in 1997. Now its members compete in events ranging from track and field to taekwondo.

Since 1948, soldier-athletes have won 118 medals in the Olympic and Paralympic games.

"That's what we are looking for," Ryan says. "When they raise the flag and play the anthem, we want it to be the United States anthem - and that's what we want, our soldier with their hand over their heart with our flag being raised. That's the mark of success."

The program is financed by a mix of government funds, fundraising and private sponsorships.

"We want to show that we're more than war fighters," Ryan says. "These soldier-athletes are incredible. So I think it just goes to show you how well-rounded the U.S. Army is."

For Cunningham, the California bobsledder, the program makes being an Olympian possible.

"Without the World Class Athlete Program, I would not be bobsledding still.

I would be out of the sport easily four years ago, just 'cause of the financial commitment it takes," said Cunningham. "So to be able to have them as kind of a backing and their support for me and everything that the Army brings - it has been phenomenal."

After Pyeongchang, Cunningham is not sure what's next: another Olympics, a career in the military - or something else out of the box.

<https://www.npr.org/sections/thetorch/2018/02/19/586476047/more-than-war-fighters-active-duty-athletes-compete-in-olympics-bobsled-and-luge>

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Military athletes serve US at Olympics (Video)

Web Center 11, Feb 21, 2018 :

Sgt. Taylor Morris; U.S. Army World Class Athlete >> "It's pretty wild out there."

A sport that not many know about.

Sgt. Emily Sweeney; New York National Guard >> "Luge is a Winter Olympic sport. We are sliding on our backs on a sled that's a little smaller than we are. It's kind of like ultimate sledding."

Sergeant Emily Sweeney, Sergeant Matt Mortensen and Sergeant Taylor Morris are all part of the Army's World Class Athlete Program.

This program allows reserve and active duty soldiers to continue service while training for elite-level athletic competition.

Sgt. Matt Mortensen >> "Honestly without the World Class Athlete Program -or WCAP, as we call it - I wouldn't have been able to continue my life as an athlete."

Sweeney says joining the National Guard has truly helped in her in career.

Emily >> "The support that the National Guard has given me has been great. It's allowing us to do our dream that we've had from a young age while also giving us another career to work for."

And for any soldier interested in pursuing an athletic career,

Taylor >> "I would say to the future soldiers that want to be athletes, just keep your eye on the prize, that anything is possible and if you can work hard enough and that you can go through, the outlets that you can, find those doors, open them and see what's behind them."

<http://www.webcenter11.com/content/news/Military-athletes-serve-US-at-Olympics-474805193.html>

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Meet the recent Fort Hood soldier competing in the Winter Olympics

KDHNEWS, Feb 21, 2018 :

Maj. Christopher Fogt, a military intelligence officer, formerly with 3rd Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division - whose family is still in Killeen - is returning to the Olympic stage for the third time to compete this week in the four-man bobsled event at the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea.

The men's four-man bobsled events begin Friday at 6:30 p.m. Central and will continue through Saturday, when the medaling run will begin at 7:40 p.m. Central.

Fogt, 34, will be the brakeman for a four-man team including Carlo Valdes and fellow soldiers Sgt. 1st Class Nate Weber, 10th Special Forces Group, and Sgt. Justin Olsen of the New York Army National Guard. Fogt competed in the 2010 Vancouver Winter games and won bronze during the 2014 Sochi games.

In an Associated Press interview on Feb. 2, Fogt, a Killeen resident, said soldiers do well at sliding events because of the teamwork involved.

"In the Army, you have to be part of a team from your very first day of basic training. On top of that, we've been through worse situations," he said in the interview. "When you're bobsledding and it's minus-20 degrees on the hill and it's snowin' and blowin', you remember you've been on the field without meals in this kind of weather, hanging out in a foxhole. So that mental toughness helps us a lot."

Fogt and fellow soldier Olsen are members of the Army's World Class Athlete Program and train full-time for their sport. According to an interview with DoD News, Fogt is considered one of the fastest athletes in the men's program.

He helped put his team in medal contention after placing in the top six during competition at the 2010 Vancouver games, but his squad failed to medal. After the 2010 games, Fogt deployed to Iraq for a year.

Fogt's team went on to win bronze in the 2014 Sochi Games and he decided to leave the bobsled program due to another pending deployment. He rejoined the squad shortly after finding out that deployment was cancelled.

Tragedy strikes

Less than a year before leaving for the 2018 Games, tragedy struck the bobsled team, however.

Steven Holcomb, a former soldier with the Army World Class Athlete Program and Fogt's driver during the 2014 bronze-winning run in Sochi, died in his sleep in May 2017 at the age of 37. He was found with alcohol and sleeping pills in his system in what is believed an accidental, yet fatal, mix.

In a remembrance posted on teamusa.org, Fogt said he and his fellow athletes were in shock when they found out.

"When we come together for team trials we'll miss the wisdom he brings to the table - his knowledge, his experience, his attitude, his laughter and just him as a person," Fogt said in the teamusa.org article. "We've all grown so close to him. My plan in my comeback was to be on his team because why not slide with the best."

"When we won bronze, I was the only one on the team who hadn't medaled yet," he added. "He was just so excited for me that day; even though he was a three-time Olympic medalist, he could not stop congratulating me and saying how happy he was for me for winning my first Olympic medal. That, to me, was a big one, to see his drive and ambition and see how happy he was for me. It was not about him at all."

Personal life

Fogt is an Eagle Scout who served as an assistant Scoutmaster with Boy Scout Troop 239 of the Longhorn Council while at Fort Hood. He is a father of two whose family lives in Killeen, even though he calls Alpine, Utah his home. He graduated from Utah Valley University with a degree in Business Management.

He has spent the last several months in Colorado with the Army World Class Athlete Program - his immediate assignment after Fort Hood - training for the Olympics, according to a 1st Cavalry Division spokesman.

But of all his titles - soldier, Olympian, Eagle Scout - the one he is most proud of is "dad," according to an interview with Deseret News on Monday while in Pyeongchang.

"My family is just one more motivating factor," he said in the Monday interview. "There are times when I'm so tired, and I'm in a workout, and I just think, I want to be able to tell my son when he is a teenager, 'I did not take the shortcuts.' I want him to know when things got hard, you just don't quit. Having (children) holds me a little bit more accountable. I have to set an emotional example for someone else."

In an interview for the Deseret News article, his wife, Rachel, said being a dad is something he's extremely good at.

"Even though we're not with him, he FaceTimes the kids twice a day, tells them stories, and we still feel like (we're) involved in each other's lives," she said. "It is awesome to see him as a father. If there is one job that he does well, he's definitely dedicated to fatherhood. He's not the come-home-sit-on-the-couch kind of dad. He's really active, and it's really awesome to see him with the kids."

http://kdhnews.com/fort_hood_herald/across_the_fort/meet-the-recent-fort-hood-soldier-competing-in-the-winter/article_337ec984-168c-11e8-b253-e3c4f166a5bd.html

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Army bobsled action to cap Olympics

Army.mil, By Gary Sheftick, Army News Service, February 20, 2018:

FORT MEADE, Md. -- Four-man bobsled competition this weekend will be one of the final medal events of the PyeongChang Olympics and it will culminate years of training for four Army athletes.

Sgt. 1st Class Nathan Weber practiced for the winter games while deployed in Afghanistan last year, while Sgt. Justin Olsen, Sgt. Nick Cunningham and Capt. Chris Fogt were already training with the U.S. National Team.

"Every free moment I had, I'd be in the gym or I'd be running sprints or pushing sleds," Weber said of his tour in Afghanistan.

The Special Forces medic even ran laps around the forward operating base during a mortar attack.

"You can say I'm a little bit of an adrenaline junky," Weber said, explaining with a smile that the mortar attack raised his adrenaline levels and helped him clock a faster time than ever before.

This week Weber will be pushing a new bobsled across the starting gate at the Olympic Sliding Center along with two fellow Soldiers in the same sled.

THE BIG FOUR

Three-time Olympian Fogt, who earned a bronze medal at the last games in Sochi, will be the sled's brakeman. Another three-peat Olympian and gold-medalist from the 2010 Vancouver games, Olsen will drive the sled.

Olsen, at 6-foot-2 and 235 pounds, is Team USA's largest bobsled pilot.

"For bobsled, you have to be fast and big and strong," Fogt said. "The bobsled weighs about 400 pounds. You have to get that thing going from zero to as fast as you can ... in a short period of time."

Fogt himself is six feet and 205 pounds while Weber is six feet and weighs 223 pounds. The fourth member of their bobsled team is civilian Carlo Valdes, 6-foot-2 and 220 pounds. He played wide receiver for the UCLA football team a year before moving to track and field and earning prominence throwing the javelin.

Their new 400-pound sled was tested earlier this year at the Olympic training center in Lake Placid, New York, before going on the World Cup circuit. The team of four placed ninth in Koenigssee, Germany, Jan. 18 as they qualified the sled for the Olympics.

"We've made some advancements with this new sled," Olsen said. "Overall it's just a larger sled. It allows for a bigger team to be relatively hidden inside the sled and be more aerodynamic. I'm one of the larger pilots on tour and with the four-man, you can't really tell that."

NASCAR AND REMEMBRANCE

Olsen compared bobsled to the NASCAR racing circuit, due to the importance both place in aerodynamics, vehicle design and maintenance. In fact, the sled in which Olsen earned his Olympic gold medal in Vancouver was designed by former NASCAR racer Geoff Bodine.

That sled, Night Train, was driven by the late Steven Holcomb. So was Night Train 2, the sled in which Fogt earned bronze four years ago in Sochi.

Holcomb himself was a former Army World Class Athlete Program, or WCAP Soldier who broke a 60-year drought for Team USA in four-man bobsled when he snagged gold in Vancouver. The last USA Olympic gold in that sport had been in 1948.

Holcomb was a member of the Utah National Guard from 1999 to 2006 when he began having health issues and almost went blind. Even after his vision improved, he felt that the sight issues had enabled him to "feel" the bobsled course better than other pilots.

He was found dead in his room at Lake Placid May 6, 2017, with a diagnosis of fluid in his lungs. This year USA bobsledders have dedicated their performance in PyeongChang to Holcomb's memory.

MENTOR AND ROLE MODEL

Weber feels resilience is one of the most important qualities he brings to the team. He's had to overcome a number of obstacles to make the Olympic team, he said.

"Aside from having to train while running missions and being deployed, it's not always easy walking into a new place where you're working and tell the people ... 'hey, I want to do this absolutely crazy thing because I think I can go to the Olympics.'"

Weber is a member of the 10th Special Forces Group at Fort Carson, Colo., and said leaders there have given him tremendous support and allowed him time to train in bobsled.

While going through the Special Forces Q Course about eight years ago, Weber picked up a magazine and read about fellow Soldier Olsen winning a gold medal in bobsled and it inspired him to take up the sport.

Later, Olsen became his mentor and role model. "I joke with him all the time: If he's going to scrape his knee on the way into the sled, I'm like OK, I need to scrape my knee on the way into the sled," Weber said.

Now he's pushing the sled right behind Olsen.

"Having him be the reason that I came into the sport and now being in the sled with him at the Olympics, it's 100 percent unreal," Weber said. "It's come full circle and it's awesome."

Weber was actually in back of the bobsled when Olsen made his first run as a pilot three years ago, moving up from brakeman to driver. "He believed in me," Olsen said.

"He just got back from a deployment, and he was right in the back of the sled, torn hamstring, he didn't care," Olsen said.

Weber said nothing will stop him from competing.

"Anything can happen and I'll get out there and perform the next day," he said. "It doesn't matter what it is."

VETERAN LEADERSHIP

Weber feels Fogt brings veteran leadership to the team.

"He got us so fired up at the line, it was absolutely incredible," Weber said of the captain at the starting gate in Koenigssee. "He really helps bring out the best in everybody on the team."

Fogt, a military intelligence officer, deployed to Iraq for a year after competing in the Vancouver Olympics. He said the work ethic there and elsewhere across the Army translates well to sports.

He believes hard work is the biggest factor to success in the Olympics.

Athletes, like Soldiers, must keep trying to improve themselves, he said.

"What the Army has taught me the most is mental toughness," Fogt said.

"There's times you're in the field, there's times you don't eat for a couple of days, there's times you don't sleep."

He went to the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California, twice.

"You don't shower for 15 days, you eat maybe one hot meal a day and you realize that your body can do it," Fogt said.

Brand new privates came to NTC and it was easy to see them grow and develop while in the box," he said.

You realize the mental toughness, that you can do hard things if you put your mind to it -- and bobsled is the same way, Fogt said.

"The support that the Army gives us is huge," he said.

WORLD-CLASS ATHLETE PROGRAM

Both Fogt and Olsen said that without the support the Army provides, they wouldn't be able to compete.

"WCAP allows for us to train pretty stress-free and do our sport," Olsen said. "I think that's one of the reasons why we've got myself as a medalist, Chris Fogt's a medalist from Sochi and hopefully we can keep that medal train rolling."

Olsen said he's glad to have the opportunity to wear the uniform and represent Soldiers around the world. "We just hope that we can make Soldiers proud," he said.

(Editor's note: Sgt. Nick Cunningham, WCAP, will pilot USA Sled #2 in PyeongChang, Feb. 24-25, with three other athletes.)

https://www.army.mil/article/200853/army_bobsled_action_to_cap_olympics

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PFC Emmanuel Mensah

New York Soldier's heroics recognized with posthumous medal

Nationalguard.mil, By Col. Richard Goldenberg | New York National Guard | February 20, 2018:

NEW YORK - Army National Guard leaders came together to honor a New York Soldier who died in a massive fire in the Bronx on Dec. 28, 2017, with the Army's highest award for bravery outside of a combat zone.

Pfc. Emmanuel Mensah, the Soldier who died in a massive apartment house fire, posthumously received two medals for valor in a ceremony for the family on Feb. 16 at Fordham University in the Bronx.

Mensah is credited with saving four lives, rescuing people three times before he returned to the building and did not come out.

Lt. Gen. Thomas Kadavy, director of the Army National Guard, presented the Army's Soldier's Medal to Kwabena Mensah, father of Emmanuel Mensah.

"Difficult though it may be," Kadavy said, "please think of this ceremony as an opportunity not to mourn, but to celebrate Private First Class Mensah, an unselfish Soldier of incredible bravery, who sacrificed his own life to save several others, and while attempting to save more."

Secretary of the Army Mark T. Esper approved the posthumous award of The Soldier's Medal for Pfc. Mensah on Jan. 1, 2018.

"The Soldier's Medal is an award that no one sets out to receive," Kadavy said. "If any of us could change the circumstances that bring us together this morning, we certainly would do so."

Thirteen New York City residents died in the fire. Fire department investigators say the blaze was started by a young boy playing with a gas stove. The fire spread after the child's family escaped the apartment and neglected to close the apartment door behind them, according to investigators.

"After quickly escaping the fire, Private First Class Mensah could have remained safely outside," Kadavy said. "But, knowing that residents were still inside, it was not in his nature to stand by without doing whatever he could to help them escape the deadly inferno that was raging through their homes."

When firefighters were able to enter the building, they discovered Mensah's remains and believe that based on the location of the body, he was still seeking to rescue people, according to statements provided to New York Army National Guard officials.

"Private 1st Class Mensah's heroic actions are in keeping with the highest traditions of military heroism and selfless service and reflect great credit upon himself, the New York Army National Guard and the United States Army," the award citation says.

"Today is about the recognition of a family's sacrifice and the military recognizing their own," said Command Sgt. Maj. Javier Lugo of the 104th Military Police Battalion, the higher headquarters of Mensah's intended unit. "This is the highest non-combat award given by the U.S. Army for going above and beyond the call of duty to save another person's life."

The family of Emmanuel Mensah says his lifelong dream was to join the military.

"He fulfilled his dream, what he wanted to do," Kwabena Mensah said. "He was proud of being (in) the American military. He was so proud of that."

Richard White, New York State's deputy secretary for public safety, additionally presented the New York State Medal for Valor to the Mensah family on behalf of Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo.

His family immigrated to the United States from Ghana and Mensah was a permanent legal resident. He became a naturalized United States Citizen on Sept. 21, 2017.

"He came to exemplify what is best about his adopted country and Ghana, his country of origin," White said. "What that means is that when others would run from the inferno, our Pfc. Mensah ran into the blaze."

"It's given we, the family members, some peace and some joy and hope that even though we have lost him physically, his memory still lives on," Gloria Addo Nuamah, his sister, said. "People will remember him for this bravery and that's what this ceremony stands for me."

Mensah, who enlisted in the New York Army National Guard in December 2016, had recently completed training to serve as a wheeled vehicle mechanic.

He was slated to begin drilling with the New York Army National Guard's 107th Military Police Company at Fort Hamilton in Brooklyn in January 2018. Mensah was still assigned to Company A of the New York Army National Guard's Recruiting and Retention Battalion prior to joining the 107th MP Company.

Pfc. Mensah was buried with full military honors Feb. 17, 2018, at Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx.

"Every Soldier has a story," Lugo said, "this just goes to show how all of our Soldiers are special."

<http://www.nationalguard.mil/News/Article/1445134/new-york-soldiers-heroics-recognized-with-posthumous-medal/>

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New York Soldier's heroics recognized with posthumous medal

Army.mil, By Col. Richard Goldenberg, New York National Guard February 20, 2018:

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https://www.army.mil/article/200819/new_york_soldiers_heroics_recognized_with_posthumous_medal

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Pair of guinea pigs need home after turning up at funeral for soldier who died saving four people in Bronx fire

NY Daily News, Feb 21, 2018 :

Two Guinea pigs that may have belonged to the soldier who died saving four people from a fatal fire mysteriously appeared on the steps of a Bronx church during his funeral - and they need a new home.

The two critters - huddled inside a cat carrier - were discovered outside Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Church on Saturday, during the final services for New York Army National Guard Pfc. Emmanuel Mensah.

Now animal rescuer Marie Palladino is trying to find a home for the two furry friends.

"There they were, the two little babies in a cat carrier," said Palladino. "They're adorable."

Timothy Cardinal Dolan officiated at the packed Belmont funeral for Mensah, 28, lauding him for demonstrating "the most noble calling of the human person, to give ourselves in sacrifice and love to others."

The immigrant from Ghana was among the 13 people killed by the fast-moving inferno that engulfed a five-story building Dec. 28, the city's deadliest fire in more than a quarter-century.

The young soldier was home for the holidays when the blaze broke out on the first floor. He raced in and out of the burning building at least three times - carrying his neighbors to safety. He was found dead on the fourth floor, overcome by smoke.

The soldier's father and roommate both said they didn't think the animals were his. But grieving dad Kwabena Mensah said his son was an avid animal lover.

"It doesn't bother me that people want to take care of them in my son's name," the grieving dad said. "I know he would have appreciated that."

Palladino has recruited Animal Care Centers of NYC and Sean Casey Animal Rescue in Brooklyn to help search for a new home for the guinea pigs, one jet black, the other brown and white. She named them Thelma and Louise.

"At first they were very scared, but now they are used to me," Palladino, 68, said. "They squeak when they want to eat."

"Maybe they didn't know what to do with them," Palladino said of whoever left the pets there. "Maybe they thought they would be safe with God."

Before his funeral, Mensah posthumously received the New York State Medal of Valor and the Soldier's Medal, which is the Army's highest award for noncombat bravery. Both awards were buried with him.

Anyone interested in adopting Thelma and Louise can reach out to Animal Care Centers of NYC at www.nycacc.org or Sean Casey Animal Rescue at (718) 436-5163.

<http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/guinea-pigs-home-turning-hero-marine-funeral-article-1.3833279>

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Guard Salutes Fallen New York City Apartment Fire Hero

Defense.gov, Feb 21, 2018 :

NEW YORK CITY, Feb. 21, 2018 - Army National Guard leaders recently honored a New York Army National Guardsman who died while rescuing his neighbors during the deadliest fire here in more than 25 years.

Army Pfc. Emmanuel Mensah is credited with saving four lives as he returned to the building three times before he was overcome by smoke. Including Mensah, 13 people died in the blaze.

Mensah posthumously received two medals for valor during a ceremony for the family at Fordham University here Feb. 16, including the Army's highest award for bravery outside of a combat zone.

Army Lt. Gen. Thomas J. Kadavy, director of the Army National Guard, presented the Soldier's Medal to Kwabena Mensah, Emmanuel's father.

'Unselfish Soldier'

"Difficult though it may be," Kadavy said, "please think of this ceremony as an opportunity not to mourn, but to celebrate Private First Class Mensah, an unselfish soldier of incredible bravery, who sacrificed his own life to save several others, and while attempting to save more."

Army Secretary Mark T. Esper approved the posthumous award of the Soldier's Medal for Mensah Jan. 1.

"The Soldier's Medal is an award that no one sets out to receive," Kadavy said. "If any of us could change the circumstances that bring us together this morning, we certainly would do so."

Fire department investigators say the blaze was started by a young boy playing with a gas stove. According to investigators, the fire spread after the child's family escaped the apartment and neglected to close the apartment door behind them.

"After quickly escaping the fire, Private First Class Mensah could have remained safely outside," Kadavy said. "But, knowing that residents were still inside, it was not in his nature to stand by without doing whatever he could to help them escape the deadly inferno that was raging through their homes.

When firefighters were able to enter the building, they discovered Mensah's remains and believe that based on the location of the body, he was still seeking to rescue people, according to statements provided to New York Army National Guard officials.

"Private First Class Mensah's heroic actions are in keeping with the highest traditions of military heroism and selfless service and reflect great credit upon himself, the New York Army National Guard and the United States Army," the award citation says.

"Today is about the recognition of a family's sacrifice and the military recognizing their own," said Army Command Sgt. Maj. Javier Lugo of the 104th Military Police Battalion, the higher headquarters of Mensah's intended unit. "This is the highest non-combat award given by the U.S. Army for going above and beyond the call of duty to save another person's life."

Lifelong Dream to Serve

Mensah's dream was to join the military, the fallen soldier's father said.

"He fulfilled his dream, what he wanted to do," Kwabena Mensah said of his son. "He was proud of being [in] the American military. He was so proud of that."

Richard White, New York State's deputy secretary for public safety, presented the New York State Medal for Valor to the Mensah family on behalf of Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo.

Mensah's family immigrated to the United States from Ghana and Mensah was a permanent legal resident. He became a naturalized U.S. citizen on Sept. 21, 2017.

"He came to exemplify what is best about his adopted country and Ghana, his country of origin," White said. "What that means is that when others would run from the inferno, our Pfc. Mensah ran into the blaze."

"It's given we, the family members, some peace and some joy and hope that even though we have lost him physically, his memory still lives on," Gloria Addo Nuamah, Mensah's sister, said. "People will remember him for this bravery and that's what this ceremony stands for me."

Mensah, who enlisted in the New York Army National Guard in December 2016, had recently completed training to serve as a wheeled vehicle mechanic.

At the time of his death, he was still assigned to Alpha Company of the New York Army National Guard's Recruiting and Retention Battalion, but was slated to begin drilling with the New York Army National Guard's 107th

Military Police Company at Fort Hamilton in Brooklyn in January.

Mensah was buried with full military honors Feb. 17, at Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx.

"Every soldier has a story," Lugo said, "This just goes to show how all of our soldiers are special."

<https://www.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/1446452/guard-salutes-fallen-new-york-city-apartment-fire-hero/>

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NY archbishop celebrates funeral for US soldier from Ghana

Associated Press , Feb 17, 2018:

NEW YORK (AP) — Cardinal Timothy Dolan, the Roman Catholic archbishop of New York, celebrated the funeral Mass for an Army National Guard soldier and native of Ghana who died rescuing some of more than a dozen people trapped in the deadliest fire in the city in quarter of a century.

A funeral was held Saturday for 28-year-old Emmanuel Mensah, whom the U.S. government honored by posthumously awarding him two military valor medals.

In December, Mensah escaped the blaze that engulfed his apartment building in the Belmont section of the Bronx. He kept going back into the inferno to bring out a family that included four children.

Mansah's funeral was at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church in Belmont.

Fire officials say the blaze was started by a child playing with a gas stove.

<https://townhall.com/news/us/2018/02/17/ny-archbishop-celebrates-funeral-for-us-soldier-from-ghana-n2450838>

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Funeral held for soldier who saved lives during fatal Belmont fire

News 12, Feb 17, 2018 :

THE BRONX -The Bronx hero who lost his life trying to save others during the December Belmont fire was laid to rest Saturday.

Services were held for Pvt. Emmanuel Mensah, the former Army National Guard soldier who died in the fire on Prospect Avenue.

Members of the FDNY lined 187th Street as the body of 26-year-old Mensah was carried into Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church. Cardinal Timothy Dolan thanked Mensah during his homily, telling congregants that Mensah took up his cross the day he died saving lives.

As News 12 has reported, Mensah ran back into his burning apartment building several times to save other tenants during the Dec. 28 fire. A total of 13 people died, marking the city's deadliest fire in years, but officials say there could have been more victims if it wasn't for Mensah's selfless actions.

Cardinal Dolan recognized that Mensah's first name, Emmanuel, means "God is with us."

Mensah had been training to be a military police officer. He was stationed in Virginia and home for the holidays when he made the ultimate sacrifice.

Mensah was buried at Woodlawn Cemetery.

<http://bronx.news12.com/story/37530510/funeral-held-for-soldier-who-saved-lives-during-fatal-belmont-fire>

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Belmont fire victim posthumously honored for saving lives

News 12, Feb 16, 2018 :

BELMONT - Emmanuel Mensah, the Army National Guard soldier who died while saving neighbors in last year's Belmont fire, was honored posthumously today with the Soldier's Medal and the New York state Medal for Valor.

Mensah, 28, was awarded the high honors after losing his life while saving lives during the deadly fire on Dec. 28. As News 12 has reported, 13 people died in the fire at an apartment building on Prospect Avenue, but the number could have been higher if it was not for Mensah.

After saving a family of six and four additional people, he ran back into the burning building to help others, but ended up losing his life.

"We hope that his legacy is remembered and he died a hero and we find solace in that we're very proud of that," said Emmanuel Oppong, Mensah's cousin.

The family of Emmanuel Mensah says his lifelong dream was to join the military. The Soldier's Medal is the Army's top award for valor outside of combat and the New York state medal is the highest military award.

A memorial service will be held Saturday morning at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church.

<http://bronx.news12.com/story/37526916/belmont-fire-victim-posthumously-honored-for-saving-lives>

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SOLDIER WHO DIED SAVING OTHERS IN BRONX BLAZE AWARDED MEDALS FOR VALOR

New York 1, By Van Tieu | February 16, 2018:

A soldier who died saving several residents of a burning building in the Bronx is honored posthumously.

A ceremony was held earlier today, during which the family of 26-year-old Emmanuel Mensah was given two medals.

They were presented with the soldiers Medal, which is the army's highest award of valor outside combat,

As well as the New York State Medal of valor, the state's highest military award.

It was back on December 28 that Mensah ran into a burning building four times, saving four lives before he died.

It was the deadliest fire in decades, claiming 13 lives.

"Emmanuel would have been so proud and happy because he was that kind of person," his sister said. "He always wanted to give out his best for people to know he was a good person."

Mensah became a naturalized citizen last September.

He emigrated from Ghana about 5 years ago and his family says it was his American dream to help others.

He will be buried tomorrow with his medals.

<http://www.ny1.com/stories/2018/02/16/s/soldier-who-died-saving-others-in-bronx-blaze-awarded-medals-for-valor/>

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Funeral for soldier killed saving lives in deadly Bronx fire

WABC Sunday, February 18, 2018:

THE BRONX (WABC) -- Funeral services were held Saturday for a hero who died saving people from the deadliest residential fire in New York City in decades.

Soldiers carried the coffin of 28-year-old Emmanuel Mensah out of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church in the Bronx.

Cardinal Timothy Dolan celebrated the funeral Mass.

Thirteen people killed when a child playing with a stove ignited a blaze that tore through a five-story apartment building in the Belmont section in November.

Mensah, an Army soldier, was home for the holidays after finishing basic training in Georgia. The private first class was staying in the building, and that night, as the flames raged, he got out safely. But he made the decision to go back to help his neighbors, and each time, he brought someone out of the building.

Then, he went back for more, saving at least four residents before he didn't make it back outside.

Mensah was honored Friday for going above and beyond the call of duty.

His family gathered at Fordham University, where they were presented with the Soldier's Medal, the Army's top award for valor outside of combat, and the New York State Medal for Valor, the state's highest military award.

"He was the kind of guy who always wanted to help people out," dad Kwabena Mensah said. "His courage and his bravery, I'm always going to carry that with me."

Emmanuel Mensah, a permanent legal resident, emigrated to the U.S. from Ghana with his family. He enlisted in the New York Army National Guard in 2016.

"He had a lot of plans, he had a lot of aspirations," cousin Emmanuel Oppong said. "He wanted to serve his country, and I hope that his legacy will be remembered."

<http://abc7ny.com/hero-in-deadly-bronx-fire-honored-with-medals-of-valor/3096210/>

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Hero Soldier Who Died During Bronx Fire Honored

WCBS, February 16, 2018 :

NEW YORK (CBSNewYork) — A hero soldier who died rescuing people from a massive fire in the Bronx was honored on Friday.

Army National Guard soldier Emmanuel Mensah, 28, was posthumously awarded two valor medals at a ceremony at Fordham University.

Mensah, a native of Ghana, was among 12 people killed back on Dec. 28 when a five-story Belmont apartment building went up in flames.

He was staying with a family on the first floor of the building when the deadly fire broke out. His uncle, Twun Bredu, said before firefighters arrived, Mensah saved a family of six, including four young children.

“According to those who saw him, he came out about three times helping people out and then the fourth time he went back to help, he didn’t come back,” Bredu said in December.

A 13th person who was injured in the blaze died last month.

FDNY Commissioner Daniel Nigro said the fire was sparked by a little boy who was playing with the burners on the stove in a first floor apartment.

He said the fire quickly spread up the stairs, but added that there was nothing structurally about the building that was unusual.

<http://newyork.cbslocal.com/2018/02/16/bronx-fire-soldier-honored/>

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Soldier killed while saving lives in tragic Bronx house fire honored with medals

WPIX, POSTED 5:38 PM, FEBRUARY 16, 2018:

THE BRONX — Private First Class Emmanuel Mensah, who lost his life while trying to rescue others in a horrific house fire in the Bronx late last year, was honored with the Soldier’s Medal and the New York State Medal For Valor Friday.

Friends and family of the fallen soldier were on hand at Fordham University’s Keating Hall to accept the posthumous medals in an emotional ceremony.

The Mensah family accepted the Soldiers Medal, the Army's top award for valor outside of combat, and the New York State Medal for Valor, the state's highest military award.

The fatal Dec. 28 house fire broke out in a 5-story building in the Belmont section of the Bronx. It took the lives of 12 people while leaving six injured and is considered the deadliest house fire in New York in over 25 years.

Pfc. Mensah is credited with saving four lives as he ran in and out the burning building as many as three times.

<http://pix11.com/2018/02/16/soldier-killed-while-saving-lives-in-tragic-bronx-house-fire-honored-with-medals/>

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Soldier who saved his neighbors from deadly Bronx fire celebrated as a hero at his funeral

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS ,Saturday, February 17, 2018:

The soldier who perished while pulling people out of a roaring blaze was remembered Saturday as a man who lived as he died — a hero.

Dozens of mourners packed into Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Church in Belmont to pay tribute to Pfc. Emmanuel Mensah.

The 28-year-old from Ghana was among the 13 victims of a fast-moving inferno that engulfed a five-story building Dec. 28.

The young soldier was home for the holidays when the blaze broke out on the first floor.

Rather than run and save himself, Mensah raced in and out of the burning building at least three times — carrying his neighbors to safety.

Mensah's heroism cost him his life — he was found dead on the fourth floor, overcome by smoke as he tried to evacuate the building.

He's credited with saving the lives of four people in what was the city's deadliest fire in more than a quarter-century.

In his eulogy, Timothy Cardinal Dolan said that Mensah demonstrated the best in humanity by sacrificing his life for others, according to the New York Times.

“In the selfless valor, the instinctive willingness to sacrifice and give his all, Emmanuel Mensah was God with us, reminding us of the most noble calling of the human person, to give ourselves in sacrifice and love to others,” Dolan said, the Times reported.

Tears rolled down the faces of Mensah's anguished relatives as soldiers carried his flag-draped coffin out of the church.

<http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/bronx/soldier-saved-4-bronx-fire-celebrated-hero-funeral-article-1.3827211>

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Soldier who died saving people from a Bronx fire is laid to rest

New York 1, By Van Tieu | February 17, 2018 :

A Bronx soldier, who died in December saving some of his neighbors during a fire in his apartment building, was laid to rest Saturday morning.

Fellow soldiers and loved ones honored Private First Class Emmanuel Mensah at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church.

Mensah ran back into his apartment building four times to rescue others from the Dec. 28 fire. He did not make it out after his final attempt. It was the deadliest fire in the city in decades, resulting in the deaths of Mensah and 12 other people.

Mensah's family accepted two military awards in his honor Friday.

Soldier who died saving others in Bronx blaze awarded medals for valor

His family said the New York State Medal of Valor and the Soldier's Medal, which is the United States Army's highest award for valor outside of combat, will be buried with him.

<http://www.ny1.com/nyc/all-boroughs/news/2018/02/17/private-emmanuel-mensah-funeral-services-bronx-nyc>

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Bronx fire hero remembered for selflessness at funeral mass

NY Post , By Eileen AJ Connelly and Georgett Roberts, February 17, 2018:

The nearly two months that passed since Private First Class Emmanuel Mensah died a hero in a Bronx inferno have done little to ease his family's pain.

Mensah, 28, was mourned Saturday at a funeral mass which recalled the characteristic selflessness that cost the young soldier his life.

Our Lady of Mount Carmel R.C. Church was packed with friends and family, many wearing colors from his native Ghana, and with fellow members of the military who praised his heroism.

Mensah died Dec. 28 while helping neighbors escape his five-story apartment building while it was engulfed in flames. Mensah reportedly rushed in and out of the burning building four times.

He was among 13 people killed in the city's deadliest fire in more than a quarter-century.

In a rare show of solidarity, members of the city Fire Department lined 187th Street as the soldier's flag-draped coffin was brought into the church.

Cardinal Timothy Dolan thanked Mensah in his homily, and told mourners that he took up his cross when he died saving others.

Mensah's sacrifice reflected his actions throughout his life, according to his family and friends.

"How can I put in words everything that you meant to us?" Mensah's aunt, Sherri Kommey, said in her eulogy. "How do I sum up everything about you in a few words for the page? I couldn't and I still can't."

Kommey told The Post she wasn't surprised when she learned her nephew went back into the burning building to help others. "Whenever you needed help with anything, he was there," she said. "He is going to leave a hole in my heart and the whole family's hearts."

Mensah, who immigrated in 2012, worked for American Airlines for five years before enlisting in the Army. He was home for a holiday break after completing basic training in Georgia when the fire broke out. He was scheduled to head next to Virginia for training as a Military Police officer.

His friend Erwin Boating, a sergeant in the Marines, remembered Mensah as kind, energetic, patriotic and smart. By saving lives, "he died serving his country, and that's the most honorable thing you can do," Boating said.

On Friday, Mensah was posthumously awarded the Soldier's Medal and the New York state Medal for Valor. He was buried in Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx, where he received a 21-gun salute. His father, Kwabena Mensah, 62, was presented with the flag from his coffin.

<https://nypost.com/2018/02/17/bronx-fire-hero-remembered-for-selflessness-at-funeral-mass/>

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Funeral held for soldier who died saving others in NYC fire

WCBS , Feb 17 2018:

NEW YORK -- A funeral was held Saturday in New York City for 28-year-old Emmanuel Mensah, whom the U.S. government honored by posthumously awarding him two military valor medals after he died rescuing some of more than a dozen people trapped in the deadliest fire in the city in quarter of a century. Cardinal Timothy Dolan, the Roman Catholic archbishop of New York, celebrated the funeral Mass for an Army National Guard soldier and native of Ghana.

In December, Mensah was staying with a family on the first floor of the building when the fire broke out, CBS New York reports. He initially escaped the blaze, but he kept going back into the inferno to bring out a family that included four children.

"According to those who saw him, he came out about three times helping people out and then the fourth time he went back to help, he didn't come back," his uncle, Twun Bredu, said in December.

Among them mourners in attendance Saturday was Mensah's elderly neighbor, who spoke glowingly of him.

"Every time he'd come home from some place he'd knock on my door and say, 'are you okay?' and I'd go, 'yes, I'm okay,'" Margot Perkins told CBS New York.

Mansah's funeral was at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church in Belmont.

On Friday, the Army Private 1st Class was posthumously awarded two valor medals at a ceremony at Fordham University.

Fire officials say the blaze was started by a child playing with a gas stove.

"The mother was not aware of it, was alerted by the young man screaming," said Daniel Nigro, commissioner for the New York City Fire Department. "She exited her apartment with her 2-year-old, and 3-year-old and left the door open."

That was a fateful mistake, according to the commissioner. Like smoke up a chimney, the fire was sucked into the hallways, and the entire five-story building was engulfed within minutes.

Crisbel Martinez, 10, escaped with her brother.

"I got scared and freaked out because I thought I was going to fall off the fire escape, but I tried my best," Martinez said.

The victims range in age from one to 63.

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/emmanuel-mensah-bronx-nyc-fire-funeral/>

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Soldier Who Died Saving People From Bronx Fire Is Hailed at His Funeral

New York Times, By ASHLEY SOUTHALL FEB. 17, 2018:

When the deadliest fire in New York City in more than 25 years ripped through the apartment building where Pfc. Emmanuel Mensah lived, he made a choice.

Instead of escaping unharmed to live out his life as a newly minted soldier and American citizen, Private Mensah, 26, went back inside to rescue his neighbors, ultimately paying with his life. He was among the 13 victims of the December fire, including five members of a family rooted in Jamaica, five other immigrants from his native Ghana, a woman from Puerto Rico and her infant granddaughter. The blaze was started by a 3-year-old boy playing with a stove.

On Saturday, a white hearse bearing a picture of his smiling face in the rear window carried him to the Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church in the Bronx, where it was met by a line of soldiers offering their salute. Bagpipers played “Amazing Grace,” while on a nearby corner, two fire trucks hoisted an American flag over the center lanes of East 187th Street.

The soldier’s father, Kwabena Mensah, and four siblings were among the mourners looking on as his light blue coffin, draped in an American flag, was taken inside the church, where the flag was temporarily replaced with a white cloth.

The pews of the church were filled with firefighters and members of the Army, Navy and Marines, as well as rows of schoolchildren and weeping members of the general public. Also in attendance, quietly, was at least one of the people whose lives Private Mensah saved.

Sergeant Kyeremeh said it had been important for his group to attend the funeral, particularly after President Trump reportedly made remarks disparaging West African countries.

“The military is not strong just because of our weapons,” he said. “It’s also the quality of our people. So immigrants should be welcome to America. We are all important.”

Private Mensah was born on May 11, 1991, in Accra, the capital of Ghana on the West African coast. When he was 12, his mother, Beatrice Owusu, died in childbirth. His father, who was already living in the United States, sent him to live with a friend’s family so he could finish school.

In Ghana, Private Mensah studied engineering and sought to continue his education in the United States military. But his father objected to military service.

“In America, when I came here, they said education is the key,” said Mr. Mensah, who came to the United States in 1984. “I was trying to put in his head: Go to school and become a top man.”

He brought his son to the United States in 2012, and soon after, Private Mensah began leaving their apartment early in the morning and returning in the evening. He kept it up for a few months before revealing his intention to join the Marines.

He needed his father's assistance to get a driver's license, but Mr. Mensah refused to help. Frustrated, Private Mensah took a job handling baggage for American Airlines at La Guardia Airport, where he worked from 2013 until 2017, when he left to join the Army.

On his son's second attempt, Mr. Mensah relented and Private Mensah enlisted in the New York Army National Guard in December 2016. On Sept. 21, 2017, he became a United States citizen, taking his oath at a military base in Georgia, his father said.

At the time of the fire, he was home on break after completing his advanced training to be a wheeled vehicle mechanic. He was scheduled to start drilling with the 107th Military Police Company at Fort Hamilton in Brooklyn in January.

After the funeral Mass, Private Mensah's body was taken to Woodlawn Cemetery for burial. Soldiers tapped five flags against his coffin, one at a time, before giving them to his father and four siblings: Bernold Anno Mensah, Vannessa Anno Mensah, Gloria Anno Mensah and Edem Mends.

An employee at the funeral home presented a blanket with Private Mensah smiling in his dress uniform to Mr. Mensah. She placed it on his lap, but he immediately draped it around his shoulders and hugged himself.

A caption on the blanket read, "May the works I've done speak for me."

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/17/nyregion/emmanuel-mensah-funeral-bronx-fire.html>

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PFOA Issue

Governor pledges to do whatever state can to help Newburgh with tainted water

mid-hudsonnews.com., Feb 22, 2018 :

NEWBURGH - Governor Andrew Cuomo was miffed on Thursday over the City of Newburgh putting the state on notice of a civil lawsuit of its contaminated water in Washington Lake.

Speaking in Poughkeepsie, he said he did not understand why the state was included in a notice of civil suit against polluters.

"Why they would threaten litigation; they have to feed the lawyers," he said. "But, whatever we can do we will do and we are doing. To the extent that PFOA was deposited, the intelligence is it was deposited by the federal government years ago," he said.

The governor was talking about the New York Air National Guard at Stewart Airport using aircraft firefighting foam with the chemicals in it. The Guard base is on Stewart Airport land and the state is the landlord of the property.

The city has also filed suit against the Department of Defense and federal government among other entities.

The state has been paying the hundreds of thousands of dollars for Newburgh to secure clean drinking water from the City of Newburgh's aqueduct and has installed a new carbon filtration system at Washington Lake.

https://www.midhudsonnews.com/News/2018/February/22/Newb_water_lawsuit-CUomo-22Feb18.htm

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Newburgh manager files notices to file lawsuits over city's tainted water

**Mid-Hudson.com, Feb 22, 2018:
Feb 23, 2018**

NEWBURGH - As the controversy over Newburgh's water being tainted by chemicals believed to emanate from the New York Air National Guard Base at Stewart Airport, City Manager Michael Ciaravino Wednesday sent notices of intent to file a civil action against several entities believed to have had some role in the contamination.

The city's reservoir, Washington Lake, was found laced with PFOS, a carcinogenic chemical believed to have originated from aircraft firefighting foam in the National Guard's Crash, Fire and Rescue operation. Washington Lake receives water from sources including Silver Stream and its tributaries, Patton Brook, and groundwater recharge.

Ciaravino said the legal filings are the first step in the legal process.

"Whether it's for injunctive relief, whether it's for damages, whether it's for reimbursement for city residents that have purchased water, these theories are currently being developed and formulated and will be part and parcel of more comprehensive litigation that will be filed," he said.

Mayor Judy Kennedy was glad to see the legal papers filed.

"It's time to sue the pants off the company and the federal government because they are both responsible for this mess," Kennedy said.

Those entities and agencies that Ciaravino put on notice that the city intends to file a citizen suit, include the State Department of Transportation, Stewart's landlord; the Port Authority of

New York and New Jersey, the current operator of the airport; Governor Andrew Cuomo; President Donald Trump; the US Air Force, Department of Defense and US Air National Guard Bureau of the Department of Defense; National Express Group of Burlingham, Great Britain, a former owner of the airport; and Federal Express Corporation, a tenant at the airport.

Ciaravino's letter stated:

"Please take notice, as further described below, that on or after 90 days from this notice, in accordance with Resource Conservation and Recovery Act. and on or after 60 days from the date of this notice, pursuant to Clean Water Act. the city intends to file a citizen suit. for past and continuing practices at the Stewart Air National Guard Base, including discharge(s), release(s), spill(s), and/or disposal(s), of solid or hazardous waste materials, including PFC's, including but not limited to PFOS, other solid or hazardous waste materials, and/or other hazardous waste materials, and/or other hazardous substances, resulting in surface and ground water and soil and sediment contamination, either with a permit, without a permit, or in violation of a permit, which have led to contamination at the base, property, Washington Lake, the city watershed, and which present or may present an imminent and substantial endangerment to health and/or the environment."

http://www.midhudsonnews.com/News/2018/February/22/Nbrg_water_suit-22Sep18.html

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NY: Newburgh Set to Sue Feds, State Over Water Contamination

Aviation Pros, Feb 22, 2018 :
Feb 23, 2018

CITY OF NEWBURGH -- Newburgh is preparing to sue the federal and state governments, a number of their entities and Federal Express over the water contamination that closed the city's primary water supply nearly two years ago.

President Donald Trump, the Department of Defense, the Air Force and the U.S. Air National Guard are being sent notices of intent to sue over the discovery of the toxic chemical perfluorooctane sulfonate, or PFOS, in Washington Lake, which state investigators say was contaminated by

firefighting foams used at Stewart Air National Guard Base. The notices, which are dated Wednesday, are also being sent to the state of New York, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, the state Air National Guard and the state Department of Transportation, which owns the air base property.

In addition to FedEx, Newburgh is planning to sue two other private entities: National Express Group PLC and its subsidiary, SWF Airport Acquisition LLC. National Express Group is the former operator for Stewart International Airport, where investigators have also

found large concentrations of PFOS tied to the use of firefighting foams, in particular foams used to extinguish a FedEx airplane that caught fire after an emergency landing at the airport on Sept. 5, 1996.

Newburgh is notifying each party that it intends to sue on or after 90 days of the letters date under the federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act. Among the remedies Newburgh seeks are a prohibition on the use of firefighting foams containing PFOS and related chemicals; a cleanup of contamination at the air base and air base; funding for the city to continue to buy New York City water until the cleanups are complete; and rebates to residents who paid for tainted water.

"The federal government needs to step up and take responsibility," Mayor Judy Kennedy said. "They've been dragging their feet."

In October, Newburgh's City Council authorized the administration to sue "any and all potentially responsible parties" over the lake's contamination, which forced the city to buy water from New York City under an agreement in which the state is paying its bills.

Stewart Air Base is among two bases in the state and a larger number of military bases nationwide that have been blamed for releasing PFOS and a sister chemical called PFOA into public water systems and private wells used by residents of nearby communities.

Both chemicals were used in firefighting foams and have been linked to kidney and testicular cancers, birth defects, ulcerative colitis, high cholesterol and other health problems.

Newburgh closed Washington Lake in May 2016 due to high levels of PFOS. In August 2016, the DEC designated Stewart Air Base as a state Superfund site after an investigation found significant levels of PFOS in water samples taken at the base.

Samples taken from an outfall at Recreation Pond, a retention basin that collects wastewater from the base and discharges it into Silver Stream, showed 5,900 parts per trillion for PFOS.

Silver Stream was one of the waterbodies diverted to Washington Lake for drinking water. The PFOS level at the Recreation Pond outfall was 84 times federal advisory guidelines for the chemical.

State investigators found even higher levels at the airport, which is now operated by the Port Authority.

Tests of surface soil at the airport found PFOS concentrations as high as 1,

840,000 ppt and 355,000 in the area of the FedEx airplane fire, and as high as 592,000 ppt in an area of the airport in which foam was used to test hose nozzles.

<http://www.aviationpros.com/news/12399269/newburgh-set-to-sue-feds-state-over-water-contamination>

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World War I

Rainbow Division Soldiers get ready for war in the winter of 1918

Army.mil, By Col. Richard Goldenberg, New York Army National Guard February 16, 2018:
Feb 23, 2018

SARATOGA SPRINGS, N.Y. -- As February 1918 began the National Guardsmen of 26 states that made up the Army's 42nd Infantry "Rainbow" Division in World War I were under tremendous pressure to quickly learn how to fight in the trenches that ran from Switzerland to the English Channel.

The French Army had suffered terribly in 1917 and wanted "Les Americains" in the fight as soon as possible. In their training areas in Rolampont,

American Soldiers began learning how to throw grenades, use machine guns and clear trenches from veteran French instructors.

But for New York National Guard Soldiers of the 165th Infantry, previously known as the 69th New York, the biggest issue for a few days was the buttons on their uniforms.

The regiment's new commander, Col. John Barker, found that his men's uniforms were falling apart. He appealed to the Army Expeditionary Force for new uniforms.

"It wasn't that we didn't have equipment in France," noted Sgt. Richard O'Neill a member of the 69th from New York City, in the Stephen Harris book "Duffy's War".

"They just had trouble getting it to us, that's all. But how the boys did suffer," O'Neill said.

Because the American supply system wasn't fully established, the only uniforms that could be found quickly came from the British Army.

The 69th Infantry had been the New York National Guard's Irish Regiment, and the Irishmen of the regiment were mainly immigrants who hated almost everything English. The glittering brass buttons on the new uniforms had the crown of the British monarchy on them and the Irishmen of the 69th were appalled at being asked to wear them when they arrived on Jan. 25.

"Now the men born in Ireland were really steamed," Stephen Harris quotes Pvt. Al Ettinger as saying. "They didn't like the idea of wearing anything made in England and they refused to

wear the new uniforms. For them, those buttons were the hated symbol of their former oppressors."

The regiment was in a state of near rebellion, noted Father Francis Duffy, the regimental chaplain. The Soldiers of H Company were ready to burn the hated uniforms in a bonfire, according to the Stephen Harris account.

Duffy "calmed the rebels down with a great speech on how their indiscipline would shame the regiment, and how we had to prove in this war that the Irish volunteers were the best fighters in the American Army and that could not be demonstrated around a bonfire," according to Harris.

The issue was resolved for the troops when officers told the Soldiers to cut the U.S. Army buttons off their old uniforms to replace the British buttons on the new ones.

Barker, a Regular Army officer, hadn't understood the anger of his men until Duffy explained the "Irishness" of the regiment to him.

"We are all volunteers for this war," Duffy recalled telling Barker in his autobiography "Father Duffy's Story". "If you put our fellow in line alongside a bunch of Tommies (the nickname for English Soldiers) they would only fight harder to show the English who are the better men."

"There are Soldiers with us who left Ireland to avoid service in the British Army. But as soon as we got into the war, the men, though not yet citizens, volunteered to fight under the Stars and Stripes," Duffy added.

With the uniform issue resolved, the 165th Infantry Regiment got down to training like the rest of the division.

The training was challenging to all the division units as troops learned to master French machine guns, artillery, and train hundreds of newly arriving replacements from the states.

Rainbow engineers from the 117th Engineers, originally from North and South Carolina, had worked tirelessly to improve conditions during the division's time at the training area near Rolampont. The regiment built 80 barracks, 70 horse stables, 18 bath units, pigeon lofts, latrines and reworked electrical and water systems for the thousands of Doughboys now preparing for combat.

The engineers then went on to conduct their combat training at night, providing classes for officers and NCOs or small arms ranges, marches and drill.

French instructors were on hand to provide standardized training for trench warfare, but division leaders had to ensure that the operational tactics and concepts of General John J. Pershing, the commander of the American Expeditionary Force, were applied as well.

Pershing believed in the primacy of the combat infantryman. His training guidance stated, "The rifle and bayonet are the principal weapons of the infantry Soldier. He will be trained to a high degree of skill as a marksman. an aggressive spirit must be developed until the Soldier feels himself, as a bayonet fighter, invincible in battle."

The Rainbow Soldiers would have to balance that emphasis with French lessons on the combined efforts of artillery, aviation, and armor and most importantly, the machine gun on maneuver warfare.

Training with the French also meant individual schools for NCOs and officers.

Sgt. Joyce Kilmer, the famed poet assigned to the 165th Infantry Intelligence Section for the 1st Battalion Headquarters, like many other qualified NCOs, was offered a commission through the Officer Candidate School but declined the offer. He told a friend in a letter that he would rather remain a sergeant in the old Irish Fighting 69th than be an officer.

"I am having an absolutely heavenly time since I joined the intelligence section," Kilmer wrote to his mother and published in the Harris book. "I wouldn't change places with any Soldiers of any rank in any outfit. This suits me better than any job I ever had in civil life."

Kilmer knew that OCS would be three months of training and new officers were frequently reassigned to other regiments. He would not leave his regiment.

As training progressed, pressure from French allies to rush these new troops into the trenches was evident and Rainbow Soldiers were eager to prove themselves.

Strategically, General John J. Pershing and the American Expeditionary Forces struggled to keep an American Army intact and independent for the upcoming battles that would determine the outcome of WWI.

But initially, AEF Doughboys such as those in the Rainbow Division would fight alongside the French.

On February 12, the AEF issued the alert order for the Rainbow Division to begin its movement to the French trenches at Luneville for its first combat exposure and practical experience before taking its full place in the line as an American division.

The plan would place one regiment with each division of the French VII Corps, then holding a sixteen-mile front.

Once with the French, divisional and brigade commanders would lose tactical control of their men, conducting the duties of inspection, coordination and normal administration while many senior staff officers continued professional education and training for their roles ahead.

The division would close in Luneville between 17 and 21 February. The Rainbow Soldiers were as ready as they were going to be.

By February 27, 1918, troops of the 42nd Division would enter the front line trenches for their first combat experience and their first combat deaths.

--During the World War I centennial observance, the New York National Guard and New York State Division of Military and Naval Affairs will issue press releases noting key dates which impacted New Yorkers, based on information and artifacts provided by the New York State Military Museum in Saratoga Springs, N.Y.-

https://www.army.mil/article/200782/rainbow_division_soldiers_get_ready_for_war_in_the_winter_of_1918

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100 years ago: Trained U.S. soldiers ready to fight

**Times Union (blog) Feb. 22, 2018 :
Feb 23, 2018**

The state Division of Military and Naval Affairs is reminding residents about key dates affecting New Yorkers during the 100-year anniversary of America's entry into World War I. The press release, excerpted here, is provided through the New York State Military Museum in Saratoga Springs and readMedia.

As February 1918 began the National Guardsmen of 26 states who made up the Army's 42nd Infantry "Rainbow" Division in World War I were under tremendous pressure to quickly learn how to fight in the trenches that ran from Switzerland to the English Channel.

The French Army had suffered terribly in 1917 and wanted "Les Americains" in the fight as soon as possible. In their training areas in Rolampont, American soldiers began learning how to throw grenades, use machine guns and clear trenches from veteran French instructors.

But for New York National Guard Soldiers of the 165th Infantry, previously known as the 69th New York, the biggest issue for a few days were the buttons on their uniforms.

The regiment's new commander, Col. John Barker, found that his men's uniforms were falling apart. He appealed to the Army Expeditionary Force for new uniforms.

Because the American supply system wasn't fully established, the only uniforms that could be found quickly came from the British Army. The 69th Infantry had been the New York National Guard's Irish Regiment, and the Irishmen of the regiment were mainly immigrants who hated almost everything English. The buttons had the crown of the British monarchy on them and the Irishmen of the 69th were appalled at being asked to wear them when they arrived Jan. 25.

The issue was resolved for the troops when officers told the soldiers to cut the U.S. Army buttons off their old uniforms to replace the British buttons on the new ones.

Poised to fight

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themselves.

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<https://blog.timesunion.com/history/100-years-ago-trained-u-s-soldiers-ready-to-fight/2469/>

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This hero was so deadly, they called him 'Black Death'

We Are the Might, Feb 22, 2018 :
Feb 23, 2018

In this modern world, earning a nickname is generally a piece of cake. Show up for work one day with a half-shaven face and you will quickly be slapped with one or two 'loving' and memorable nicknames that follow you for years.

In previous generations, nicknames were a bit harder to come by. Add in the legal segregation and racism that characterized the early 20th century and imagine what exactly had to be done for a black soldier to be known as "Black Death" by both friendly and opposing forces. It all stems from one night.

Who is Henry Johnson?

Henry Johnson was born on July 15, 1892. On June 5, 1917, standing at approximately 5'4" and weighing roughly 130 pounds, he enlisted in the 15th Infantry Regiment of the New York National Guard (colloquially known as the Harlem Hellfighters).

He joined them on deployment to France to augment the Fourth French Army and would go on to become the first black soldier to engage in combat during World War I.

Why "Black Death?"

On May 14, 1918, Henry Johnson and Needham Roberts were augmenting the Fourth French Army, standing as sentries in Argonne Forest. Outfitted with French weapons and gear, Johnson and Roberts soon began taking sniper fire as German forces advanced.

Roberts was severely wounded trying to alert standby forces, leaving Johnson to fend off the German advance, essentially alone, using any and everything he could get his hands on. Johnson successfully held the German forces up long enough for American and French troops to arrive, forcing the Germans to retreat.

Johnson took bullets to the head, lip, sides, and hands, suffering 21 total wounds in all. Using a combination of grenades, rifles, pistols, buttstocks, and a bolo knife, Johnson killed four enemy soldiers and wounded another 20. Following the events of that night, he was known as, "Black Death."

Vindicated

Johnson and the Harlem Hellfighters returned home to a hero's welcome - a parade on Fifth Avenue and the adoration from their particular corner of the nation.

The good times wouldn't last, however, as Johnson's erroneously recorded medical records resulted in him not receiving a Purple Heart.

He would then bounce from job to job, sliding further down on his luck at every stop until he turned to alcohol. Johnson was dead less than 11 years after his heroic day.

Johnson was, eventually, posthumously awarded a Purple Heart in 1996, a Distinguished Service Cross in 2001, and, finally, the Medal of Honor in 2015.

<http://www.wearethemighty.com/history/this-hero-was-so-deadly-they-called-him-black-death>

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