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[2 National Guard soldiers, 1 Border Patrol agent killed in Texas helicopter crash are identified:](#)

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[NY National Guard Members, Border Patrol Agent Identified in Deadly Texas Helicopter Crash by Mexican Border:](#)

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[New York State Trooper, female National Guard pilot identified as two of the three victims killed in Texas helicopter crash at southern border:](#)

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History

Called to arms: Women in the military

**Adirondack Daily Enterprise, March 14,2024 ::
Mar 18, 2024**

Women have served in the U.S. military since the American Revolution when hundreds of soldiers' wives, sisters, daughters and mothers accompanied them in colonial militias and George Washington's Continental Army. They tended wounded, foraged for food, cooked, cleaned laundry and cannons, worked as spies and even disguised themselves as men and fought.

During the Civil War, women served as nurses in the Union and Confederate armies. Superintendent of the U.S. Army Nurses, estimated from 3,000 to 8,000, Dorothea Dix led them throughout that conflict. African American nurses were often limited to menial labor and/or caring for wounded Black soldiers.

A number of women on both sides estimated from 400 to thousands disguised themselves as men and fought in the Civil War. They enlisted for the same reasons as their male colleagues: Duty and patriotism, adventure, escape from the drudgery of farm work and difficult family situations. They typically bound their chests with corsets, cut their hair, used a male name and enlisted. Some of these woman were wounded or killed on battlefields, others became prisoners of war.

When the U.S. entered World War I and more warships were being constructed, Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels realized he needed more sailors to man them. Enlistments and the draft were insufficient to keep up with the need, so Daniels found a loophole in the Naval Act

of 1916: Nowhere did it specify that only men could enlist. He began actively recruiting women.

Young women, many of them suffragists, enthusiastically joined the Navy, freeing men on shore duty to join the fleet. In short time, Navy women were serving as clerks, radio operators, messengers, truck drivers, ordinance workers, mechanics, cryptographers and other non-combat roles.

More than 22,000 women served in the Army and Navy nurse corps in the U.S., France, England, Belgium and Siberia. More than 200 died or were wounded. A relatively small number of Black women served as nurses, but were only allowed to care for Black soldiers and, occasionally, prisoners of war.

With women serving and dying in the “Great War,” suffragists pushed hard for a woman’s right to vote. On Sept. 30, 1918, with war’s end only weeks away, President Wilson addressed Congress stating: “We have made partners of the women in this war ... Shall we admit them only to a partnership of suffering and sacrifice and toil, and not to a partnership of privilege?”

When the U.S. entered World War II following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the country needed to significantly increase the number of military personnel, and quickly. Again, women did not hesitate to enlist, and for the first time in the nation’s history every branch of the armed forces enlisted females.

The Army established the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps (WAACs), later restructured and renamed the Women’s Army Corps (WACs). The Navy formed the Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Services (WAVES). The Marine Corps and Coast Guard also instituted women’s reserve units. By the war’s end, approximately 350,000 women had served in the armed forces, taking on jobs they did in World War I as well as new ones: Rigging parachutes, test-flying planes and, in some cases, training male soldiers.

Approximately 68,000 women served in the Army and Navy nurse corps. Over the course of the war 432 military women were killed and 88 taken prisoner. After the war, many women wanted to continue their military careers but were discharged as the much smaller peace-time military returned to a near all-male institution. Women who served in the armed forces during World War II not only made significant contributions to the war effort — they paved the way for women in the post-war military.

In 1948 President Truman signed the Women’s Armed Services Integration Act, allowing women to serve as permanent members of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps and newly formed Air Force. During the Korean War, 12,000 women served, adding on roles as engineers and military police. Women were barred from combat units but did serve in combat zones as nurses in Mobile Army Surgical Hospital (MASH) units.

During the Vietnam War, 11,000 women saw duty in that country, 90% as nurses. Air Force nurses participated in air evacuation missions and Navy women served on hospital ships.

Many of these women suffered from agent-orange complications and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Seven Army nurses and one Air Force nurse were killed. Every woman who served in Vietnam volunteered for military service. In 1972 President Johnson opened promotions for women to general and flag ranks rear admiral through admiral.

In October 1976 President Ford signed legislation allowing women to enter the U.S. military academies. As of 2022 the percentage of women at these was: West Point, 24%; Annapolis, 28%; Air Force Academy, 30%; and Coast Guard Academy, 38%. Women officers in all services currently account for a low just under 8% (Marine Corps) and a high just over 25% (Air Force).

More than 40,000 women served in combat zones during the Gulf War, although they could not technically serve in direct combat roles or assignments. Since the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, approximately 300,000 women have served in Iraq and Afghanistan; 177 have been killed and over 1,000 wounded.

In 2013 then-Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta stated the Pentagon would overturn the military policy preventing women from serving in ground combat units below the brigade level. Two years later, the first women graduated from Army Ranger School and in 2018 a female Marine led an infantry platoon. In 2019 approximately 600 female sailors and marines were serving in combat units previously restricted to men. That same year more than 650 army women had combat roles. In 2022 Admiral Linda Fagan was sworn in as commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard Academy, the first woman to lead any branch of the armed forces.

On the 75th anniversary of the Women's Armed Services Act in 2023 Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin stated: "Women's service has made our military stronger. ... And that's worth celebrating."

George J. Bryjak lives in Bloomingdale and is retired after 24 years of teaching sociology at the University of San Diego. He served in Okinawa and Vietnam with the First Marine Air Wing. This is part one of a special two-part series in honor of Women's History Month. A list of sources will accompany the second part of this series online.

<https://www.adirondackdailyenterprise.com/opinion/guest-commentary/2024/03/called-to-arms-women-in-the-military/>

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Migrant Mission

New York Army Guard Soldiers Help Track Down Arsonist

NationalGuard.mil, By Staff Sgt. Sebastian Rothwyn, New York National Guard March 8, 2024 ::
Mar 18, 2024

NEW YORK – Three New York Army National Guard Soldiers displayed quick thinking and teamwork to help track down a suspected arsonist who tried to set fire to a building a few feet from a Long Island City hotel housing migrants.

Spc. Jaslin Guzman, Sgt. Animesh Das and Staff Sgt. Richard Miller were on duty at the City View Inn on Greenport Avenue just before 11 p.m. Jan. 29 when Guzman spotted somebody throwing bottles out of a silver SUV onto a collision barrier outside the hotel.

Guzman yelled at the man, later identified as Ping Huang, to stop. Hearing his fellow Soldier's voice, Das ran outside to find out what Guzman was yelling about.

As soon as Das stepped outside to see what was happening, he saw flames erupt on the fence above the barrier. He ran toward the vehicle with his smartphone ready to capture the offender's license plate and yelled stop along with Guzman.

The suspect in the SUV moved over to the driver's seat and drove off quickly.

Das pursued the SUV on foot to get a picture of the license plate. He made it as far as the end of the block before the vehicle sped away.

Guzman also began a foot pursuit, then turned around and got her car. She caught up to Das, he piled in, and they chased the arson suspect.

Inside the shelter, Miller heard the commotion and rushed toward the entrance. He saw the smoldering fire and joined others to extinguish it with whatever they could find — water bottles and any available containers.

Noticing someone struggling with a fire extinguisher, Miller, a military combat engineer and police officer, took charge. He quickly extinguished the flames.

"I could see that others were unfamiliar with the fire extinguisher, so in the interest of time and safety, I took it, followed the steps starting at the base of the fire, and worked my way up," said Miller.

Meanwhile, Guzman drove her car after the suspect and caught up when Huang stopped at a red light.

Das got out, captured the suspect's license plate, and maneuvered around the SUV to get a picture of Huang.

Das said he remembered his priorities were to safeguard life, protect property, and mitigate suffering, so he had no intention of confronting the suspect.

"At this moment, I could only think of the children and the families that could be harmed and that this guy has to be caught," he said. "Catching him is a job for law enforcement, and I'm just here to help in any way I can."

Das quickly returned to Guzman's vehicle after capturing the information. Huang drove away when the light turned green.

Guzman and Das returned to the shelter to deliver the information to their shift leader. By then, hotel security had alerted the police and fire department.

When they returned to the shelter, Miller checked them to make sure his Soldiers were unharmed and advised everyone not to touch anything at the scene, including the bottles thrown by Huang.

According to the fire department, information provided by the Soldiers helped fire marshals and police investigators identify Huang.

Fire investigators determined that Huang, who was reportedly involved in a business dispute with the owner of the other building, was seen on video acquiring gasoline from a nearby station before attempting to set the business on fire.

Fire marshals apprehended Huang on Feb. 6, and the Queens District Attorney's office will prosecute him.

<https://www.nationalguard.mil/News/Article-View/Article/3700940/new-york-army-guard-soldiers-help-track-down-arsonist/>

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New York Air National Guard

Duty Calls: Greenfield Center airman takes command of 109th Airlift Wing

**Times Union , March 11, 2024 ::
Mar 18, 2024**

New York Air National Col. Robert Donaldson of Greenfield Center, an Afghanistan war veteran, has assumed command of the 1,160-member 109th Airlift Wing during a ceremony at the Stratton Air National Guard Base in Scotia.

Donaldson replaced Col. Christian Sander of Lake George, a C-130troop-cargo aircraft pilot, who had led the wing since 2020. Sander retired after 32 years of military service. Maj. Gen. Denise Donnell, the commander of the New York Air National Guard, presided over the change of command ceremony.

"I know you will keep your focus on safety, strength and readiness," Donnell told Donaldson.

Donaldson is a LC-130H navigator with nearly 2,000 flying hours supporting operations in Antarctica and Greenland and mobilizing in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in the Middle East. He previously served as deputy wing commander of the 109th Airlift Wing.

Donaldson has completed numerous Greenland missions and served at the Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan. In the past, he has served at the National Guard Bureau and was the director of staff at New York's Joint Force Headquarters in Latham.

Donaldson was commissioned as a second lieutenant upon graduation from the Academy of Military Science in 1999. He previously served eight years as an enlisted aircrew member with the Air Force and the New York Air National Guard.

The colonel earned an associate of science degree in math and science at Hudson Valley Community College, Troy, a bachelor of science in civil engineering at Union College, Schenectady and a law degree at Albany Law School. He also is a graduate of the Academy of Military Science, McGhee-Tyson Air National Guard Base, Tenn.

He earned a master of arts in national security and strategic studies at the Naval War College, Newport, R.I. and a master of philosophy, military strategy at the School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala. He has earned five Meritorious Service Medals, a Joint Service Commendation Medal, three Air Force Commendation Medals, eight Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards, and an Air and Space Organizational Excellence Award.

Sander, a command pilot with more than 4,350 flying hours, has served as an instructor-evaluator pilot as well. He has earned a Meritorious Service Medal, an Aerial Achievement Medal, a Combat Readiness Medal, an Antarctic Service Medal and a Humanitarian Service Medal.

Donaldson now leads airmen whose primary mission is to provide airlift within Antarctica, flying to various remote locations from McMurdo Station. Crews transport scientists, support, fuel, supplies, medical supplies, and research equipment across the continent. The wing also flies missions to support science research in Greenland. The wing operates 10 LC-130 Hercules transports configured with skis to land on ice and snow.

Next Patriot Flight

World War II, Korean War, Vietnam War and Cold War veterans and their guardians can sign up for a free one-day excursion slated for Wednesday, April 17 to visit their war monuments, historic sites in Washington, D.C. as well as the Arlington National.

The Capital District Patriot Flight, a hub of the National Honor Flight Network, will fly the veterans and their guardians on a Southwest Airlines aircraft from the Albany International Airport to Baltimore-Washington International Airport. They will board two buses that will transport them to the nation's capital. Wheelchairs will be provided.

Each guardian is assigned to a veteran or several veterans to provide assistance and serve as the veterans' guides. Some will push veterans in wheelchairs. Volunteers are also needed for a variety of logistical, administration and other tasks. Veterans are free. Each guardian pays a \$450 fee that helps offset flight, meal, transportation and other expenses.

"We still have openings for veterans so if you know of any veteran encourages him and or her to go onto the website (PatriotFlight.org) and apply," says Jennifer Lyons of Berne, Patriot Flight spokeswoman.

Veteran and guardian applications also can be downloaded from PatriotFlight.org., filled out and mailed in. Veterans and their guardians will visit the Navy Memorial, the World War II Memorial, the Korean War Memorial, the Vietnam War (Wall) Memorial, Women's Military Memorial, Air Force Memorial, Arlington National Cemetery and Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, and Iwo Jima Monument at the Marine Corps War Memorial also in Arlington.

Donations to help finance future flights can be made payable to Patriot Flight Inc. and sent to Patriot Flight, P.O. Box 13776, Albany, NY 12212-3776 or by PayPal via PatriotFlight.org.

The Capital Patriot Flight serves veterans from Albany, Rensselaer, Schenectady, Saratoga, Washington, Columbia counties as well as parts of Vermont and Massachusetts.

Since Patriot Flight was founded by the late Bill Peak of Brunswick in 2007, the nonprofit has flown more than 1,000 veterans to visit their war memorials.

For more information, contact Jennifer Lyons at 518-872-0812 or jenniferlyons63@yahoo.com.

News of your troops and units can be sent to Times Union, Duty

Calls, Terry Brown, Box 15000,

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NY Air Guard's 109th Airlift Wing wraps up Antarctic mission season for 2023-2024

**HudsonValley 360.com, March 14, 2024 ::
Mar 18, 2024**

SCOTIA — The New York Air National Guard's 109th Airlift Wing, based at Stratton Air National GuardBase in Scotia, has successfully concluded its annual Operation Deep Freeze season, marking the end of another productive season supporting scientific research in Antarctica.

Between October, 2023 and March 6, 2024, 366 Airmen worked at McMurdo Station, Antarctica, flying missions to locations across the continent and to New Zealand.

Five ski-equipped LC-130 aircraft were used to fly the missions.

The LC-130s flown by the 109th Airlift Wing are the largest ski-equipped aircraft in the world, and the 109th is the only unit which operates them.

The unit completed a total of 114 missions. Sixty-two of those were to and from locations on the continent. Fifty-two were trips between Antarctica and New Zealand.

A total of 1,100 tons of cargo, 1,500 passengers and 68,000 gallons of fuel were moved throughout the season.

The missions completed on-continent were re-supply for the South Pole Station and West Antarctic Ice Sheet station. The aircrews flew 1.7 million pounds of cargo, delivered 68,000 gallons of fuel, and transported 706 passengers.

“I am so proud of the dedicated, hard-working airmen who sacrifice their time away from family annually to support Operation Deep Freeze,” Said Col. Rob Donaldson, commander of the 109th Airlift Wing.

Despite facing challenging weather conditions and logistical hurdles, the dedicated men, and women of the 109th Airlift Wing remained committed to ensuring the success of this vital operation, Donaldson said.

Donaldson added that he feels the robust team effort showed a steadfast commitment to mission accomplishment.

“With veteran flexibility, honed by years of deployment experience, the Airmen worked through the challenges completing another successful season on the ice while demonstrating global power projection on a world stage,” he said.

“Our mission-ready airmen continue to showcase the superior training, experience, and skills needed to fly the LC-130 safely in the harshest environments, while embracing Department of Defense and Air Force strategic aims,” Donaldson said.

Operation Deep Freeze is a joint service, inter-agency mission in support of the National Science Foundation, the lead agency for the United States Antarctic Program. The mission aims to provide logistical support to scientific research activities conducted in Antarctica, facilitating groundbreaking discoveries in various fields, including climate science, geology, and biology.

The 109th will now begin preparing for the scientific support season in Greenland, which begins in mid-April. The Airmen will fly missions to National Science Foundation research stations on the Greenland ice cap.

https://www.hudsonvalley360.com/artsandlife/localannouncements/ny-air-guards-109th-airlift-wing-wraps-up-antarctic-mission-season-for-2023-2024/article_634c51b6-e15d-11ee-baca-f3283c1af98d.html

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SEALs break new ground while submarine breaks through ice at Arctic allied exercise

Stars and Stripes, March 13, 2024 ::

Mar 18, 2024

Photo Caption : Navy SEALs and Norwegian naval special operations commandos retrieve an airdropped package from a C-130 Hercules assigned to the New York Air National Guard's 109th Airlift Wing during exercise Arctic Edge on Saturday, March 9, 2024. The training was designed to bolster troops' skills in an arctic environment. (Jeff Atherton/U.S. Navy)

STUTTGART, Germany — U.S. special operators and allied commandos moved across frozen tundra in snowmobiles and linked up with a fast-attack submarine after it cracked through a thick sheet of ice, marking a first in the Arctic Circle, military officials said this week.

Some 400 Navy SEALs, Army Green Berets and elite troops from several NATO countries were fanned out in the upper Arctic for weeks to hone their cold-weather fighting skills during Arctic Edge 24.

The exercise was part of a flurry of ongoing military maneuvers stretching from the northernmost points of the United States to Finland, Sweden and Norway.

Special operators broke new ground when MH-47G Chinook helicopters landed in a secure zone past Utqiagvik, Alaska, having received ice depth information from a U.S. submarine in the area, Naval Special Warfare Group Two said in a statement Tuesday.

From there, the commandos took off in snowmobiles to set up a command-and-control tent, coordinated an airdrop “of a critical package” from a C-130 Hercules and carried on across the tundra to deliver the package to the submarine USS Hampton, which moments beforehand surfaced through the sea ice, military officials said.

“This marked the first-ever integration of SOF personnel, SOF aircraft and snowmobiles coming together to conduct an operation with a submarine that surfaced that deep in the Arctic Circle,” Naval Special Warfare Group Two said in a statement Tuesday.

Military officials did not detail the contents of the “critical package” or the nature of the training scenario, which brought together special operators and an attack submarine designed to seek and destroy enemy submarines and surface ships.

The strategic value of the High North has increased over the years, as melting sea ice opens the possibility of new shipping lanes and greater access to undersea natural resources that the Kremlin has its eye on. Russia has sought to fortify its position in the region with numerous military bases now in operation.

Capt. Bill Gallagher, commander of Naval Special Warfare Group Two, said in a statement Tuesday that the drills were intended to discourage aggression from potential adversaries.

“Given the frequency with which we are training alongside our allied partners and demonstrating our combined expertise in some of the most severe environments on the planet, we are sending a clear message about our warfighting ability and our preparedness to defend the homeland across the Arctic region,” Gallagher said in the statement.

Arctic Edge 24, which ended Tuesday, included special operators fast-roping from helicopters, multiple diving operations and pier-side vessel attacks by combat swimmer infiltration.

Other exercises in the Arctic are ongoing. The two-week Nordic Response, which involves 20,000 U.S. and allied troops, will conclude Thursday.

Meanwhile, soldiers from the Alaska-based 11th Airborne Division will fly over the North Pole next week for Arctic Shock, which will see them dropping down in northern Norway.

“The Arctic is a critical region for power projection and homeland defense,” Maj. Gen. Brian Eifler, 11th Airborne Division commanding general, said in a statement Monday.

<https://www.stripes.com/branches/navy/2024-03-13/seals-green-berets-arctic-13304192.html>

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New York Army National Guard

109th Airlift Wing Wraps up Antarctic Science Support Mission

**NationalGuard.mil, March 13, 2024 ::
Mar 18, 2024**

STRATTON AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, N.Y. - The New York Air National Guard's 109th Airlift Wing concluded its annual Operation Deep Freeze mission, marking the end of another productive season supporting scientific research.

From October to March, 366 Airmen worked at McMurdo Station, Antarctica, flying missions across the continent and to New Zealand in five ski-equipped LC-130 aircraft.

The LC-130s flown by the 109th Airlift Wing are the largest ski-equipped aircraft in the world, and the 109th is the only unit that operates them.

The unit completed 114 missions — 62 between locations on the continent and 52 between Antarctica and New Zealand — moving 1,100 tons of cargo, 1,500 passengers and 68,000 gallons of fuel.

The on-continent missions were to resupply the South Pole and West Antarctic Ice Sheet stations.

"I am so proud of the dedicated, hard-working Airmen who sacrifice their time away from family annually to support Operation Deep Freeze," said Col. Rob Donaldson, commander of the 109th Airlift Wing.

"With veteran flexibility, honed by years of deployment experience, the Airmen worked through the challenges, completing another successful season on the ice while demonstrating global power projection on a world stage," he said.

"Our mission-ready Airmen continue to showcase the superior training, experience and skills needed to fly the LC-130 safely in the harshest environments while embracing Department of Defense and Air Force strategic aims," Donaldson said.

Operation Deep Freeze is a joint service, interagency mission to support the National Science Foundation, the lead agency for the U.S. Antarctic Program.

It provides logistical support to scientific research in Antarctica, facilitating discoveries in various fields, including climate science, geology and biology.

The 109th now prepares for the scientific support season in Greenland, which begins in mid-April. The Airmen will fly missions to National Science Foundation research stations on the Greenland ice cap.

<https://www.nationalguard.mil/News/Article-View/Article/3705760/109th-airlift-wing-wraps-up-antarctic-science-support-mission/>

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109th Airlift Wing completes mission to Antarctic

WTEN, March 13, 2024 ::
Mar 18, 2024

SCOTIA, N.Y. (NEWS10) — In October 2023, members of the 109th airlift wing took off for Operation Deep Freeze. On Wednesday, March 6, they successfully completed their trip.

The trip departed from Scotia to Antarctica, taking about five days to land.

The annual mission focuses on transporting scientists and supplies back and forth from the Continental U.S. to Antarctica for the National Science Foundation. The unit completed a total of 114 missions.

According to the New York State Division of Military and Naval Affairs, 62 of those missions were to and from locations in Antarctica, and 52 were between Antarctica and New Zealand.

1,100 tons of cargo, 1,500 passengers, and 68,000 gallons of fuel were moved throughout the season.

“I am so proud of the dedicated, hard-working airmen who sacrifice their time away from family annually to support Operation Deep Freeze,” Said Col. Rob Donaldson, commander of the 109th Airlift Wing. “With veteran flexibility, honed by years of deployment experience, the Airmen worked through the challenges completing another successful season on the ice while demonstrating global power projection on a world stage.”

<https://www.news10.com/news/ny-news/109th-airlift-wing-completes-mission-to-antarctica/>

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NY National Guard to Lead Largest St. Patrick’s Day Parade

**NationalGuard.mil, March 13, 2024 ::
Mar 18, 2024**

NEW YORK - The Soldiers of the New York Army National Guard’s 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment, will again lead the world’s largest St. Patrick’s Day parade this year.

Since 1851, “The Fighting 69th” has been the lead unit in New York City’s annual parade marking Irish pride. The regiment was organized in 1849 as a New York State militia regiment made up of Irish immigrants.

Because of fears of anti-immigrant attacks against the traditional Irish Catholic parade, the 69th was asked to lead the parade to fend off attackers.

This year’s event, beginning at 11 a.m. March 16, will mark the 173rd time the 69th Infantry has led the parade.

” St. Patrick’s Day is integral to the history of the 69th Infantry Regiment,” said Lt. Col. Adam Bojarski, the battalion’s commander. “It is with tremendous pride that we will continue this time-honored and unbroken tradition this year.”

Bojarski said this year’s event also marks the battalion’s return from a deployment in 2003.

In 2023, most of the regiment’s Soldiers deployed in the Horn of Africa, providing security for U.S. military outposts in Djibouti, Kenya and Somalia.

That year, the battalion’s rear detachment of 150 marched in the New York City parade while the Soldiers stationed at Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti conducted their own parade there.

The battalion’s 800 Soldiers will be joined during the parade by the members of the 42nd Infantry Division Band and New York National Guard leaders.

“When we march this year, we honor all those members of the regiment who have come before us and served our nation, from the Civil War through World War I and World War II to the modern conflicts of today,” Bojarski said.

The 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry, supposedly earned the nickname “Fighting 69th” from Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee. He is said to have referred to the Irish-American unit as “that fighting 69th regiment” following the battle of Fredericksburg in 1863.

The unit’s Soldiers have distinguished themselves in the Civil War, World War I, World War II, and, since Sept. 11, 2001, deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan.

Because of the regiment’s roots in Irish-American history, St. Patrick’s Day is also the 1st Battalion, 69th’s “Unit Day,” during which the battalion’s Soldiers are recognized for their accomplishments.

Traditions of the 69th and the St. Patrick’s Day parade include:

- Soldiers place a sprig of boxwood on their uniforms because members of the Irish brigade put boxwood springs in their hat bands at the Battle of Fredericksburg on Dec. 13, 1862, to mark their Irish heritage.
- Officers of the 69th carry a fighting stick made of blackthorn wood imported from Ireland because it is considered the mark of an Irish leader and gentleman.
- The battalion’s officer joins the commander in the morning before the parade for an Irish whiskey toast.
- Soldiers are accompanied on their parade march by two Irish Wolfhounds, the official mascot of the 69th Infantry. The dogs represent the regimental motto, “gentle when stroked, fierce when provoked.”

- The battalion commander carries the “Kilmer Crucifix,” the religious icon once worn by poet Joyce Kilmer, who was killed in action serving in the 69th in World War I.
- Before the parade, the regiment attends a special Mass at St. Patrick’s Cathedral to honor the regiment’s fallen and honor its Irish heritage.
- Just before the parade starts, the head of the parade committee asks the commander if the 69th is ready. The response is: “The 69th is always ready!”
- The city of New York provides a dedicated subway train to transport the Soldiers back down to the East Village for their unit day activities.
- When the Soldiers return from the parade and begin their unit day ceremonies, they are cheered by the battalion’s officers, who render honors and pay tribute to the enlisted Soldiers and noncommissioned officers.

<https://www.nationalguard.mil/News/Article-View/Article/3705481/ny-national-guard-to-lead-largest-st-patricks-day-parade/>

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James Valk, a Kinderhook resident, was promoted to Warrant Officer in the New York Army National Guard

**Hudson Valley 360, March 14, 2024 ::
Mar 18, 2024**

LATHAM — James Valk, a Kinderhook resident, was promoted to Warrant Officer in the New York Army National Guard during a March 8, 2024, promotion ceremony at the New York National Guard headquarters in Latham.

Army National Guard Lt. Col. David Berge, New York Army National Guard Staff Judge Advocate, presided over the ceremony and praised Valk during his remark.

LATHAM — James Valk, a Kinderhook resident, was promoted to Warrant Officer in the New York Army National Guard during a March 8, 2024, promotion ceremony at the New York National Guard headquarters in Latham. Army National Guard Lt. Col. David Berge, New York Army National Guard Staff Judge Advocate, presided over the ceremony and praised Valk during his remark.

“He has been a great asset to our legal team for years, and we appreciate all his hard work and knowledge he has as a part of our team.”

In his comments, Valk thanked his co-workers and family for their support over the years.

alk has served in the New York Army National Guard since 2011. He was assigned to the 42nd Combat Aviation Brigade as a paralegal non-commissioned officer. In 2015, he was assigned to the 42d Infantry Division as the chief paralegal. In July 2022, he was assigned to Joint Force Headquarters-New York, where he serves as the chief paralegal for the New York Army National Guard.

Valk deployed to Kuwait in in 2013 and 2014 as the paralegal non-for the 42nd Combat Aviation Brigade.

He deployed again in 2020, and served as the command paralegal at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait. Additionally, Valk was appointed as the chief paralegal during the deployment, making him the most senior paralegal in the area of operation, where he was the technical supervisor to 55 paralegals.

He is a graduate of the Army National Guard Battalion Career Counselor Course, Basic Leader Course, Paralegal Specialist Advanced Leader Course, Paralegal Specialist Senior Leader Course, Law for Paralegal Course, Command/Chief Paralegal Course, and Warrant Officer Candidate School.

His awards and medals include the Army Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Army Achievement Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, and Overseas Service Ribbon.

Valk grew up in Saugerties. He graduated from Hudson Valley Community College with an associate degree in criminal justice in 2008 and later from SUNY Brockport with a bachelor's degree in criminal justice in 2010.

alk and his wife Elizabeth live in Kinderhook, with their two children, Charly and Emmie.

https://www.hudsonvalley360.com/artsandlife/localannouncements/james-valk-a-kinderhook-resident-was-promoted-to-warrant-officer-in-the-new-york-army/article_8270c752-e176-11ee-9767-277be2cd4ae2.html

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The "Fighting 69th" leads New York City's St. Patrick's Day parade for 173rd year in a row

**Stars and Strips, March 17, 2024 :
Mar 18, 2024**

A New York Army National Guard regiment with deep ties to Irish-American history once again took the lead in New York City's St. Patrick's Day Parade.

For the 173rd year in a row, soldiers with the 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment — the “Fighting 69th” — marched at the head of Saturday’s parade, one of the world’s largest Irish heritage festivities. The holiday commemorates Ireland’s patron saint and was popularized largely by Irish Catholic immigrants.

While St. Patrick’s Day falls on March 17, some parades were moved up from Sunday, a day of worship for the Christian faithful.

Photo Caption : Soldiers with the New York National Guard’s 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment, 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 42nd Infantry Division, lead the annual New York City Saint Patrick’s Day Parade, Saturday, March 16, 2024. (Warren W. Wright Jr./U.S. Army)

This year marks the return of the 800-soldier battalion to the front lines of the parade, following their deployment to the Horn of Africa last year.

The regiment formed in 1849 as a New York state militia made up of Irish immigrants. Two years later, amidst anti-Irish Catholic sentiment, they were asked to lead the parade and fend off any attackers.

“Traditions like these are fading out of our society,” Lt. Col. Adam Bojarski, the battalion’s senior leader said. “It’s so important that units like the 69th continue to be the face of the Army National Guard and the National Guard as a whole.”

Photo caption: A U.S. Army color guard comprised of soldiers with the New York National Guard’s 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment, 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 42nd Infantry Division, carry the nation, state, Army and unit flags into Saint Patrick’s Cathedral prior to the start of the New York City St. Patrick’s Day Parade, Saturday, March 16, 2024. (Warren W. Wright Jr./U.S. Army)

The day began with an Irish whiskey toast at 6 a.m. at the historic Lexington Avenue Armory. Soldiers adorned their uniforms with sprigs of boxwood to emulate their Irish American predecessors who fought at the Battle of Fredericksburg during the Civil War, while officers of the unit received blackthorn fighting sticks, considered “the mark of an Irish leader and gentleman,” according to a New York National Guard news release.

Before dawn, they marched in formation to Saint Patrick’s Cathedral, where they attended a mass to remember the regiment’s fallen and to honor its heritage. Then the parade began in earnest. “In the moment, singing, just walking with everyone ... it didn’t feel long at all,” said Pfc. Danyel Rodriguez, a computer and detection systems repairer assigned to the 69th’s logistics unit, Hotel Company, 427th Brigade Support Battalion. “Being around so many people, just singing along with everyone, it felt really nice. You just lose track of time, having a good time.”

<https://www.stripes.com/branches/army/2024-03-17/ny-national-guard-st-patricks-13349515.html>

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Camden soldier earns promotion

**Rome Sentinel, March 18, 2024 :
Mar 18, 2024**

CAMDEN — Christopher Bennett, of Camden, has been promoted to sergeant in the New York Army National Guard, according to an announcement by Major Gen. Ray Shields, adjutant general for New York, in recognition of his capability for additional responsibility and leadership.

Bennett is assigned to the Operations Company, 42nd Infantry Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion based at the Glenmore Road Armory in Troy, the announcement said, adding that Army National Guard promotions are based on a soldier's overall performance, demonstrated leadership abilities, professionalism and future development potential.

For more information about the New York Army National Guard, see its website at www.dmna.ny.gov or go online to www.1800goguard.com

The New York National Guard (New York State Division of Military and Naval Affairs) is the state's executive agency responsible for managing New York's Military Forces, which consists of nearly 20,000 members of the New York Army National Guard, the New York Air National Guard, the New York Naval Militia and the New York Guard.

https://www.romesentinel.com/entertainment-life/notices/camden-soldier-earns-promotion/article_b52543de-dfd8-11ee-8015-a3381b101c7c.html

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Watertown's Whimsical Pig to leave an impression at New York City St. Patrick's Day Parade

**Watertown Daily Times, March 14, 2024 :
Mar 18, 2024**

MANHATTAN — The two co-owners of a Watertown small business who have left their mark on the New York Army National Guard's 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment, 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, will join the unit on Saturday as it leads the world's largest St. Patrick's Day parade down Fifth Avenue.

"The Fighting 69th," as it is known throughout the Army, was organized in 1849 as an Irish-American militia unit in New York's Lower East Side.

The unit's soldiers and its veterans have led the famous parade every year since 1851.

The first New York City St. Patrick's Day Parade was held on March 17, 1762 — 14 years before the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

Jason D. Comet and Avery Carman own The Whimsical Pig, located in the Franklin Building, 50 Public Square. Among its services, the business creates graphic design items, guidons and flags, embroidery items such as patches, customized gifts and it does specialized framing — mainly for military-related clients.

The Whimsical Pig has been creating items for the 69th for nearly 20 years. Last year, after the unit returned from a 10-month deployment to the Horn of Africa, the local business received a large order.

“They kept coming up throughout last year to pick these things up, and they said, ‘You know what? This is the last time the armory will be open for (several) years. We’re shutting it down to do a thorough renovation. You guys should come down. You’ve been great to us this year and march in the parade with us,’” Comet said.

This summer, \$120 million in planned renovations will get underway at the 69th Regiment Armory. The building, at 68 Lexington Ave., built in 1906, is listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places. A New York National Guard spokesman said Thursday that the project will take about three years to complete.

“We have framed some of their historic memorabilia that’s hanging in the Armory as museum-type pieces,” Comet said.

Comet and Carman attended the parade in 2022 and were guests of the 69th Infantry at a reception. At that time, they just viewed the parade and did not participate in it. “They needed some last-minute pieces for their presentation they did right after the parade that day,” Comet said. Among the highlights of that trip was a private tour of the Garryowen Club, a bar inside the 69th Armory that is open only for military personnel and guests.

One of the pieces created by The Whimsical Pig in 2022 and rushed to the 69th was an award for Joseph A. Brady, who concluded his 33-year run that year as the 69th's piper in the parade.

The 2022 parade, Comet said, was memorable for him as a spectator. “We were standing on the side of Fifth Avenue watching the parade go by, across from St. Patrick's Cathedral. I watched my flag I made for them walking in front of me with the unit that started the parade in 1851. I choked up. It was emotional — a little, small-town shop in Watertown having an impact in New York City to some extent.”

Comet said the 69th wanted to spend more time with the Whimsical Pig owners this year.

“So we’ll be there for their ceremony where they present their awards at the Armory afterwards,” Comet said. “The last time we went down, they showed us around the Armory, the history of it all and we watched them in the parade. This time, we’re seeing the Armory

before it gets renovated and then spending the whole day with them and presenting all the awards we made for them throughout the year.”

According to a National Guard news release written by former Watertown Daily Times Albany correspondent Eric Durr, the 69th Infantry Regiment was organized in 1849 as a New York state militia regiment made up of Irish immigrants. Because of fears of anti-immigrant attacks against the traditional Irish Catholic parade, the 69th was asked to lead the parade to fend off attackers. Saturday will mark the 173rd time the 69th Infantry has led the parade.

“When we march this year, we honor all those members of the regiment who have come before us and served our nation, from the Civil War through World War I and World War II, to the modern conflicts of today,” said Lt. Col. Adam Bojarski, the battalion’s commander. “It is with tremendous pride that we will continue this time-honored and unbroken tradition this year.”

The 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry, supposedly earned the nickname “Fighting 69th” from Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee. He is said to have referred to the Irish-American unit as “that fighting 69th regiment” following the Battle of Fredericksburg in 1862.

The Whimsical Pig was founded by Carman’s mother, Alma J. Carman, in 2003 at 139 J.B. Wise Place. The shop’s original focus was custom framing and the hand-painted art pieces she had created at home.

“A soldier came in one day with a bag full of all these pins and tags and everything and asked her, ‘Can you frame it?’” Comet said.

The name Alma gave the business comes from the children’s book, “The Pig Plantagenet” — the story of pig who spends his life inside a manor during the Middle Ages, but dreams of more and goes off in search of adventures.

Avery Carman and Comet moved the business to the Franklin Building in 2014, three years after a renovation project to the former YWCA building was completed.

Comet said the business has customers all over the U.S. “We even shipped stuff over to Poland during COVID.”

https://www.nny360.com/communitynews/business/watertown-s-whimsical-pig-to-leave-an-impression-at-new-york-city-st-patrick-s/article_0477f368-99ad-5359-857b-5bfb7809616c.html

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Opinion: NYC’s Subways Need Services, Not Soldiers

City Limits, March 14, 2024 ::
Mar 18, 2024

The recent invasion of the subway system by hundreds of uniformed and armed National Guard troops was a useless and maybe counterproductive measure to convince riders that the system is now safe. I don't understand how the governor would think that riders walking past soldiers would make them feel safer. If anything, it sends the message that the subways are more dangerous than ever. I understand the governor's desire to project safety and strength, but this is not the way to do it.

Instead of soldiers, I am suggesting that we add services to the subway system. With thousands of homeless people residing in the system and with outreach teams having a very limited success rate in finding them shelter, it is time we accept the fact that most of the homeless will not be leaving the subways any time soon. I believe that we can create a better environment for both the homeless and riders by setting up drop-in centers within some of the larger subway stations.

Drop-in centers are equipped with chairs and provide clients with food, water, medical care, clothing and a place to clean up and use a toilet. An oasis for the street homeless, drop-in centers could make it easier for outreach workers to convince them to first leave the trains and platforms and eventually accept placement in a shelter or supportive housing.

It would be easy and not very expensive to set up drop-in centers on a pilot basis in stations like Grand Central, Times Square, Penn Station, and Atlantic Avenue, where several unoccupied spaces could easily be converted with the addition of chairs, tables and portable toilets.

Getting the homeless off trains and platforms this way would be better for them, and make riders feel more comfortable—even though the homeless are a very small percentage of the perpetrators of subway crimes. The majority of those criminals are repeat offenders, known to the justice system, who feel that they can do whatever they want since the new system of bail reform has given them a Get Out of Jail Free Card. We hear about people who are arrested for subway crimes who are released immediately even though they have dozens of prior convictions and have skipped out on required court appearances.

The governor should move, as quickly as she did on deploying the National Guard, to insist that the legislature make significant changes to bail reform. She has a budget coming up soon and she should pressure the legislature, especially our progressive speaker and majority leader, to end this destructive experiment of letting criminals off and hoping that somehow they will change their ways.

After the soldiers are removed from the system, which hopefully will be soon, the NYPD should develop a system to use hand held metal detectors' to remove weapons from the subways. Looking in backpacks is almost useless, as a weapon such as a knife could be easily concealed within a person's clothing. The police should also continue their efforts to confront fare beaters, many of whom have been shown to have outstanding warrants pending against them.

As a former deputy commissioner with the city's Department of Homeless Services, former director of the NYS Crime Victims Board and as a native New Yorker, I believe that removing soldiers and putting in services would help to make the subways safer for everyone.

Mascali is a former deputy commissioner with the city's Department of Homeless Services and a former vice president for supportive housing with Win.

<https://citylimits.org/2024/03/14/opinion-nycs-subways-need-services-not-soldiers/>

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Border Patrol Agent Luna laid to rest

ValleyCentral.com, March 14, 2024::
Mar 18, 2024

EDINBURG, Texas (ValleyCentral) — Border Patrol Agent Chris Luna was laid to rest this afternoon.

Luna was killed in last week's helicopter crash in Starr County. The crash also claimed the lives of two members of the New York National Guard.

A mass was held today for Agent Luna at the Basilica in San Juan. A burial at Hillcrest Memorial Gardens in Edinburg followed the mass.

The shrine was filled with family, friends, U.S. Customs and Border Patrol Agents and other law enforcement agencies.

Numerous law enforcement agencies gathered at Luna's mass at the Basilica in San Juan. (Photo courtesy of Blake Brown)

Luna had been with U.S. Customs and Border Protection for 17 years.

The cause of the crash is still under investigation.

<https://www.valleycentral.com/news/local-news/border-patrol-agent-luna-laid-to-rest/>

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GoFundMe campaign for injured Rensselaer County National Guard soldier surpasses \$75K goal

Troy Record, March 14, 2024 ::
Mar 18, 2024

LA GRULLA, Texas — A National Guard soldier from Rensselaer County who was seriously injured in the crash of a helicopter flying over the U.S.-Mexico border remains hospitalized as of Wednesday.

The three killed Friday in the crash in a field in Texas near Rio Grande City were: Chief Warrant Officer 2 Casey Frankoski, 28, and Chief Warrant Officer 2 John Grassia, 30, both with the New York National Guard; and Border Patrol Agent Chris Luna, 49. The cause of the crash remains under investigation. Local officials in Rensselaer County have identified the injured soldier as Jacob Pratt, who is a graduate of Rensselaer High School.

Grassia, a New York State trooper, was from Schenectady, New York, enlisted in the New York Army National Guard in 2013 as a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter maintenance specialist, according to the New York State Division of Military & Naval Affairs. The release said that Frankoski, of Rensselaer, New York, enlisted in the New York Army National Guard in 2016 and she trained to become a UH-60 Black Hawk and UH-72 Lakota helicopter pilot.

The UH-72 Lakota helicopter was assigned to the federal government's border security mission when it went down while the helicopter was conducting aviation operations, according to a statement released by Joint Task Force North, a military unit that supports Customs and Border Protection. No other details were provided.

The New York State Council of School Superintendents organized a GoFundMe page to help ease the financial strain associated with Pratt's medical care and recovery. The page was created on Monday and as of early Wednesday morning, the page surpassed its goal of raising \$75,000. The page had over \$84,000 in donations as of Wednesday.

According to the fundraiser page, Pratt suffered multiple broken bones, including fractures in his back, ribs, leg, and pelvis. While the full extent of his injuries is still being assessed, it is clear that Pratt has a long and arduous road to recovery, organizers of the page said.

"The entire Pratt family humbly ask for your continued thoughts and prayers for their brave son and brother. The outpouring of kindness and concern from both familiar faces and strangers alike has been deeply touching. Kelley, Kenny, and Olivia are by Jacob's side in Texas, but the uncertainty of the days, weeks, and months ahead weighs heavily upon them," part of the description on the fundraiser page read.

An update was posted to the GoFundMe page on Tuesday saying Pratt was headed back into surgery Wednesday with the hope of getting him off the ventilator later this week. "Kelley, Kenny, and Olivia want everyone to know how much they appreciate the support, love, and prayers they have received. They are beyond grateful," the update read.

Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said in a recent statement to the Associated Press they are hoping for the injured national guardsman's "swift recovery," and said his thoughts and the "deepest condolences" of the department were with the families of those killed.

Officials said Pratt was the aircraft crew chief.

The helicopter that crashed was assigned to the District of Columbia Army National Guard, according to the New York State Division of Military & Naval Affairs in a recent news release.

The border region is heavily patrolled by both state and federal authorities, including routine aerial surveillance.

<https://www.troyrecord.com/2024/03/13/gofundme-campaign-for-injured-rensselaer-county-national-guard-soldier-surpasses-75k-goal/>

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Multiple broken bones : Lone survivor of fatal helicopter crash in recovery

ConchoValley Homepage.com, March 14, 2024 ::
Mar 18, 2024

HARLINGEN, Texas (ValleyCentral) — The lone survivor of Friday’s fatal helicopter crash continues to fight for his life, according to family members.

National Guardsman Aircraft Crew Chief Jacob Pratt is one of four people who were en route towards the southern Texas border in a National Guard helicopter when it crashed in La Grulla, killing the other three people onboard.

The NYS Council of School Superintendents organized a GoFundMe page Monday on behalf of the Pratt family.

2 National Guard soldiers, 1 Border Patrol agent killed in Texas helicopter crash are identified

“Jacob is currently receiving treatment in Texas for severe injuries sustained in the crash. He has suffered multiple broken bones, including fractures in his back, ribs, leg and pelvis,” the GoFundMe states.

On Tuesday, the Pratt family shared the latest update on Jacob’s road to recovery.

“Jacob is headed back into surgery today with the hope of getting him off the ventilator later this week,” the Pratt family said.

The upstate New York family traveled to the Rio Grande Valley to be with Jacob who is currently hospitalized at the South Texas Health System Hospital in McAllen.

Friday's helicopter crash claimed the lives of two National Guard soldiers from New York, Casey Frankoski and John Grassia, and Christopher Luna, a Valley Border Patrol agent from Edinburg.

The City of Edinburg hosted a candlelight vigil to honor the hometown Border Patrol agent and the two National Guard soldiers.

Texas Department of Public Safety South Texas Regional Director Victor Escalon said the helicopter was not part of Operation Lone Star, Governor Greg Abbott's border security initiative to secure the border.

The cause of the accident is still under investigation.

<https://www.conchovalleyhomepage.com/news/multiple-broken-bones-lone-survivor-of-fatal-helicopter-crash-in-recovery/amp/>

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NY National Guard mourns loss of 2 warrant officers, Border Patrol agent killed in Texas helicopter crash

**Stars and Stripes, March 10, 2024 ::
Mar 18, 2024**

The New York National Guard on Sunday mourned the loss of two soldiers killed Friday in a helicopter crash in a field near Rio Grande City, Texas, during a mission in support of border security.

Chief Warrant Officer 2 Casey Frankoski, 28, of Rensselaer, N.Y., and Chief Warrant Officer 2 John Grassia, 30, of Schenectady, N.Y., were assigned to Detachment 2, A Company of the 1st Battalion, 244th Aviation Regiment, according to a statement from the New York National Guard.

Also killed was Border Patrol agent Chris Luna.

A third soldier from the New York National Guard was critically injured. The soldier, whose name isn't being released, was the aircraft crew chief. The soldier remained hospitalized.

The crash is under investigation.

"We are all shocked and devastated by the loss of Chief Warrant Officer 2 Grassia and Chief Warrant Officer 2 Frankoski," said Major Gen. Ray Shields, the adjutant general of New York. "We are praying for the quick recovery of the crew chief who was injured in the crash. Our deepest condolences also go out to the family and friends of the U.S. Customs and Border Patrol agent who was also killed."

Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro N. Mayorkas said in a statement Sunday that the agency is devastated, calling Luna “a heroic public servant.”

“Every single day, our Border Patrol agents place themselves in harm’s way so that the rest of us can be safe and secure,” the statement said. “My thoughts, and the deepest condolences of our department, are with agent Luna’s family, loved ones and colleagues and with those of the National Guardsmen who lost their lives. We hope for the injured service member’s swift recovery and hold our National Guard colleagues and their families in our thoughts as well.”

The UH-72 Lakota helicopter, in use by Joint Task Force North, was not one of the two UH-72s operated by the New York Army National Guard. It was assigned to the District of Columbia Army National Guard.

Joint Task Force North is a military unit that supports the Customs and Border Protection operations on the southwest border.

The New York detachment, which specializes in flying missions in support of civilian agencies, is based at Army Aviation Flight Facility #3 at Albany International Airport in Latham, N.Y., the Guard said.

Twenty-one soldiers from the units deployed to Texas in October 2023 to support the federal military mission. They are operating on federal duty status and are not part of the Texas National Guard’s Operation Lone Star.

Frankoski enlisted in the New York Army National Guard in October 2016. She was appointed as a warrant officer in 2019 and trained to become a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter pilot.

She was promoted to the rank of Warrant Officer 2 in 2021. Frankoski deployed to Kuwait from November 2018 to September 2019 with Detachment 5, Company C, 2nd Battalion, 245th Aviation Regiment as a mission planner.

The unit flies the Army’s C-12 transport aircraft.

Her military awards include: the Army Commendation Medal; the Army Achievement Medal; the National Defense Service Medal; the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal; the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal; the Army Service Ribbon; the Armed Forces Service Medal; the Non-Commissioned Officer Professional Development Ribbon; the Armed Forces Reserve Medal; the Basic Aviator Badge; and the Basic Aviation Badge.

Grassia has served in the New York Army National Guard since 2012.

He deployed to Kuwait with Company A of the 3rd Battalion, 142nd Assault Helicopter Battalion from September 2013 to September 2014. He was also on state active duty from 2020 to 2022 as part of the New York National Guard’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

His military awards include: the Army Commendation Medal; the Army Achievement Medal; the Army Good Conduct Medal; the Army Reserve Component Achievement Medal; the National Defense Service Medal; the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal; the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal; the Armed Forces Service Medal; the Army Service Ribbon; the Armed Forces Reserve Medal; and the Basic Aviator Badge.

The latest crash comes just two weeks after two Mississippi National Guardsmen were killed on Feb. 23 when their AH-64 Apache helicopter went down during a routine training flight. The crash occurred near Booneville, Miss. On Feb. 6, five Marines died in a helicopter crash outside of San Diego when their CH-53E Super Stallion helicopter went down at Pine Valley, Calif. The helicopter was on a night flight between Creech Air Force Base near Las Vegas and Miramar.

<https://www.stripes.com/theaters/us/2024-03-10/national-guard-helicopter-crash-texas-13272953.html>

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Local National Guard soldiers among those killed in helicopter crash

**Times Union, March 9, 2024 :
Mar 18, 2024**

Two New York National Guard members from the Capital Region were killed and a third soldier from the area was seriously injured in a helicopter crash near the U.S.-Mexico border in Texas that was reported by the military on Friday and also claimed the life of a U.S. Border Patrol agent.

National Guard soldiers Casey Frankoski, a graduate of Columbia High School in East Greenbush and daughter of former Rensselaer Police Chief James Frankoski, and John Grassia, a New York State Trooper and area resident, were among those killed, according to statements from Rensselaer County elected officials posted Saturday on social media.

The injured soldier is Jacob Pratt, a graduate of Rensselaer High School, Rensselaer Mayor Michael Stammel confirmed to the Times Union after social media posts named the soldier.

Stammel shared his condolences on Facebook Saturday after learning of Frankoski's death.

"Rensselaer is deeply saddened to hear of the sudden passing of Casey Frankoski, a remarkable New York National Guard helicopter pilot who tragically lost her life in a helicopter crash on Friday while patrolling the US-Mexico border," Stammel stated. "A proud native of Rensselaer and distinguished graduate of Columbia High School, Casey was not only an excellent student but also excelled in sports and community service before joining the New York National Guard. Casey comes from a family deeply rooted in public service, and her legacy as an American hero resonates throughout our community. Casey's father is retired Rensselaer Police Chief James Frankoski and a part of our Rensselaer family. Our heartfelt

condolences go out to the Frankoski family as we collectively mourn the loss of a beloved city native and dedicated patriot. Please keep all of the victims and families in your prayers.”

Stammel's post said flags in Rensselaer will be lowered in Casey's honor and also told the Times Union that Casey's brother, Jesse Frankoski, is a Rensselaer police officer.

A post on Rensselaer County's Facebook page confirmed Frankoski and Grassia had been killed. County Executive Steve McLaughlin said the National Guardswoman "represents the best of our nation," and also extended condolences to Grassia's family. Grassia graduated from State Police basic training in 2022 and lived in Schenectady at the time, according to a news release from the office of Gov. Kathy Hochul from 2022. More recently he lived in Albany County.

James Frankoski also posted on Facebook about his daughter's death, but he and his wife, Jill, declined to comment when reached by phone Saturday morning.

The UH-72 Lakota helicopter that crashed in La Grulla, a small city with about 1,400 residents in Starr County, was assigned to the federal government's border security mission when it went down near Rio Grande City, according to a statement released by Joint Task Force North. The cause was still under investigation on Saturday.

The crash happened mid-afternoon Friday while the helicopter was conducting aviation operations, according to the statement. No other details were provided.

Starr County Judge Eloy Vera, the county's top official, said those on board included one woman and three men. He said the person who was injured was in critical condition.

The names of those killed were not immediately released by the military. A National Guard spokesperson told the Times Union Saturday that the military would likely release more information about the incident on Sunday.

Gen. Daniel Hokanson, head of the National Guard Bureau, in a post on X, sent his condolences to the families, loved ones, friends and colleagues of the three people killed, and prayers for the injured soldier's speedy recovery.

“We mourn these heartbreaking deaths,” Hokanson's post said. “They are a tragic loss beyond words. All of these people represent selfless service & the best of America.”

President Joe Biden released a statement Saturday: "These brave Americans dedicated their lives to protecting our nation. They signed up knowing the risks and believing in the mission of serving their fellow Americans by keeping our nation safe. Our gratitude is profound, and their sacrifice will never be forgotten.

"We extend our deepest condolences to their families and loved ones, as well as their colleagues in the National Guard and U.S. Border Patrol. We pray for the injured Guardsman's swift recovery."

The site of the crash is in Texas' Rio Grande Valley. The border region is heavily patrolled by both state and federal authorities, including routine aerial surveillance.

In January, a Texas Department of Public Safety helicopter patrolling the state's border with Mexico lost power and crashed, officials said at the time. The co-pilot suffered a minor hand injury and the helicopter was significantly damaged.

That helicopter was flying as part of Operation Lone Star, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott's nearly \$10 billion border mission that has tested the federal government's authority over immigration.

<https://www.timesunion.com/news/article/helicopter-crashes-along-us-mexico-border-texas-18805496.php>

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Hochul's wrong subway call-up: Troops are not needed underground (Opinion)

**Daily News, March 10, 2024 ::
Mar 18, 2024**

Last week, in response to the ridership's fear of crime, Gov. Hochul announced the state will deploy 750 National Guard soldiers and 250 state troopers and MTA officers to the subways. This amounts to sending four Army rifle companies and an extra police precinct's worth of troopers into the transit system.

But to do what exactly? They will help conduct bag searches in a few stations, a mismatch for a problem that doesn't start or end with the things people carry, but centers on basic concerns about public order, quality of life, and social cooperation in the subways.

It is a precarious choice of personnel. While National Guard soldiers are citizens who can be deployed to war in a matter of months — as they were in the aftermath of 9/11 — they are hardly police officers. I have served in both roles, and the difference is stark.

Soldiers have none of the training and skills necessary to handle the myriad crimes and crises that spring up in the subways and require police. That is why, at present, riders only see them at hubs like Grand Central and Penn Station. Surrounded by actual police officers, they are typically on hand to be the first responders to a terror attack. Their role is to do battle with the type of gunmen who killed dozens of commuters such as in the 2008 attack on Victoria Terminus, Mumbai's version of Grand Central, using assault rifles and grenades.

That attack startled the NYPD for its simplicity, brutality and body count. Among my 19 years in the NYPD, three were spent as an intelligence officer. I deployed to Mumbai to

investigate the attack, retracing the steps of terrorists, talking to police, and reviewing video footage.

Back in New York, we realized we needed military-grade firepower both as a deterrent and a response to such a threat, and we knew New York City was perpetually in terrorists' crosshairs. This is one of the reasons that even as the National Guard scaled back its presence in New York City after 9/11, it continued to deploy to transportation hubs.

But short of dystopian martial law, we did not think for a moment that the infantry could help us deter pickpockets, mentally ill assailants, farebeaters and the other everyday criminals and people in crisis who degrade safety and quality of life on the city's subways.

An effective response to crime underground isn't much different than one on the surface. The perpetrators are from the same population, they are policed by the same NYPD, and they are sent through the same criminal court system. If they need social services, they need to be linked to the same resources available above ground.

The subway isn't some sort of bizarro world where the regular ways of fighting crime and addressing behavioral health problems don't work, and safety instead requires soldiers. If anything, the omnipresent cameras and witnesses in the subway make crimes even more solvable than they are on the surface.

So if crime is up in the subways — and while major felonies remain low overall compared to recent history, violence is by some measures, with some especially terrifying crimes splashed across headlines — the city's first look should be inward, to determine why the systems that worked so well for so long are now leaving people feeling less safe.

Some point a finger at criminal justice reforms that arguably make it easier for recidivists to cycle through the system no matter how many times they disrupt the subway. The city should identify this population, the judicial system should make it clear that an infraction on the subway is a more serious matter than one out on the street, and act within the bounds of the law to acknowledge this.

The gap may be in the form of basic, everyday policework, investigation and prosecution, combined with a growing body of alternatives when behavioral health problems lie at the root of problematic behavior underground. Throwing more bodies from other agencies at tangential things like random bag checks won't fix that.

In that regard, the city has enough resources to do the job. Officials often claim to need more bodies, but apart from the force in New Delhi — and with all its disanalogies — the NYPD is the largest municipal police department in the world. The agency's Transit Bureau has about 2,500 officers on its own, which would make it the 10th largest police department in the United States were it not a part of the NYPD and its 35,000 officers.

It is entirely capable of effectively policing the subways by itself, and has done a remarkable job of it over the years: Subway crime actually remains near historic lows, and the number of felonies reported in the system has been basically stable for the past two decades.

It is true that there has been a recent jump in some important categories. There have been more murders in recent years. Though very small in number, these are among the most fear-inducing crimes for riders. Assaults last year hit a 27-year high, and that's a genuinely serious problem.

But overall violent crime remains low, and the NYPD that beat back a truly historic subway crime epidemic in the mid-1990s is the same NYPD we have today, except it now has better technology and more investigative tools. Were it not for the present rhetoric of doom, getting back to a basic combination of well-focused policing supplemented by well-resourced social work would seem like a recipe for success.

What a military deployment has done, however, is hand the city and state's political detractors an unforced error that they will use against it for years to come. It is hard to argue that the subway system hasn't become an intractable war zone when government executives are acting as though it will literally take the Army to get it under control.

The trope that New York City must be a blue-state liberal hellhole is patently untrue, as tens of millions of tourists who visit every year (and who ride the subways, too) see with their own eyes: Nearly every mouthpiece that utters it writes from a jurisdiction with a much higher violent crime rate that would triumphantly brag about its success if it were somehow as safe as New York or its subways. But when the governor herself is sending the infantry into the transit system and the mayor is pleased to receive them, it becomes nearly impossible to deny their hysterical claims.

And what does the city get in exchange for giving this away? If the earliest videos are an indication, not too much. So far, they are mainly scenes of soldiers and troopers standing at subway entrances with combat rifles while police officers check bags.

It is very doubtful that troopers and soldiers will actually ride the trains. They'd need special radios, training in the layout of the subway system, and knowledge of the NYPD's procedures, lest they get lost or have to tell riders they aren't authorized to handle the basic situations the NYPD responds to every day.

Liability will probably therefore require that they never be more than a stone's throw from an NYPD or MTA police officer, significantly reducing their role as a force multiplier.

In the end, it may all just be a battle of dueling impressions. While crime in the subway has gone up in certain categories, the idea that there is a monumental crime wave in transit is simply an illusion, however persuasively it has been conveyed by tabloids and opportunists. In response, an extra 1,000 uniformed bodies rotating their way through some stations may provide the counter-illusion that everything is actually under control.

Where a government deploys its soldiers will always be politics by other means, whether their objective is to topple a foreign regime, or in this case, retake the Pelham One Two Three.

Del Pozo is a policing, public health and criminal justice researcher. He served in the NYPD for 19 years and for four years as chief of police of Burlington, Vt. This originally appeared in Vital City.

<https://www.nydailynews.com/2024/03/10/hochuls-wrong-subway-call-up-troops-are-not-needed-underground/>

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New York State Trooper killed in Texas Helicopter crash

**WROC, March 9, 2024 ::
Mar 18, 2024**

ROCHESTER, N.Y. (WROC) — A New York State Trooper was killed in Friday's Helicopter crash near Rio Grande City in Texas.

A helicopter crashed while flying over the U.S.-Mexico border in Texas. Two New York Army National Guard soldiers and a Border Patrol agent were killed in the crash, and another soldier was injured according to the military.

According to New York State Troopers PBA on Facebook, one of the National Guard soldiers was 30-year-old New York State Trooper John M. Grassia III. NYSP said Trooper Grassia joined the New York State Police in April 2022 and was most recently assigned to Troop G.

Trooper Grassia was said to have been dedicated to serving and protecting the citizens of New York State and the U.S

Funeral arrangements are pending.

<https://www.rochesterfirst.com/news/new-york-state-trooper-killed-in-texas-helicopter-crash/>

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Subway Mission

National Guard Can't Carry Long Guns While Checking Bags in Subway

**New York Times, March 9, 2024 ::
Mar 18, 2024**

Gov. Kathy Hochul issued an order forbidding the weapons at bag-check stations on Wednesday, directly after her announcement that soldiers would be deployed to New York City's subways.

Shortly after Gov. Kathy Hochul announced on Wednesday that hundreds of National Guard soldiers would be deployed to patrol the New York City subway system and check riders' bags, her office made an adjustment: Soldiers searching bags would not carry long guns.

The change was ordered by Ms. Hochul on Wednesday for implementation on Thursday, according to a spokesman for the governor. Ms. Hochul issued a directive that National Guard members would be prohibited from carrying long guns at bag-check stations, he said. Soldiers not working at the stations would presumably be allowed to carry them.

Donna Lieberman, the executive director of the New York Civil Liberties Union, called the ban on long guns at bag-checking stations a "relief," but said the Guard's presence underground remained "an unnecessary overreaction based on fear, not facts."

"Deploying military personnel to the subways will not make New Yorkers feel safe," Ms. Lieberman said. "It will, unfortunately, create a perfect storm for tension, escalation and further criminalization of Black and brown New Yorkers."

Early images of the National Guard's deployment showed soldiers standing near turnstiles in the subterranean system, wearing camouflage and military gear and holding long guns.

Ms. Hochul, a Democrat, said the move to flood the system with reinforcements — 750 members of the New York National Guard, and an additional 250 personnel from the State Police and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority — would help commuters and visitors feel safe.

Subway safety, a perpetual concern for New Yorkers, has been a challenging issue for public officials, who can be as sensitive to the perception that mass transit is dangerous as they are to an actual rise in crime.

In February, following a 45 percent spike in major crimes in the first month of the year compared with the same period last year, Mayor Eric Adams ordered an additional 1,000 police officers into the subway system. Reported crime rates in the system declined that month, according to city data, and the overall rise in major crimes for the year as of March 3 was 13 percent, Police Department data shows.

Ms. Hochul's announcement this week drew criticism from public officials and from some members of her own party.

Jumaane N. Williams, the city's public advocate, warned that the plan would "criminalize the public on public transit." Emily Gallagher, an assemblywoman and democratic socialist from Brooklyn, said that Ms. Hochul's move was a "ham-fisted and authoritarian response" that validated "G.O.P. propaganda about urban lawlessness in an election year."

John Chell, the Police Department's chief of patrol, cited recent statistics suggesting that transit crime had dropped.

"Our transit system is not a 'war' zone!" he wrote on X.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/03/09/nyregion/long-guns-subway.html>

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Marine stabbed in his hand while trying to protect woman from subway purse snatchers

WABC, March 9, 2024 ::
Mar 18, 2024

ELHAM PARKWAY, the Bronx (WABC) -- A man who was stabbed in his hand while trying to intervene in a dispute at a Bronx subway station is angry that crime continues to impact the lives of everyday New Yorkers.

As a Marine, Alfredo Troché Jr. took an oath to protect his country -- but he didn't think he'd have to do it in his own back yard.

Troché was on his way back home at the subway station at Pelham Parkway and White Plains Road 1 a.m. Thursday when he saw two men harassing a woman in the mezzanine.

"I seen this lady screaming and I seen like shadows, and when I looked, this guy was pulling out box cutters going to cut the straps out of a purse," he said. "That's when I just... jumped on the door and I started punching, pounding them."

Police say the men ran and sped away in a white car.

Troché was bleeding profusely from a stab wound on his hand and made it to a bus stop more than a mile away before he realized he needed medical help.

The 53-year-old victim was taken to Montefiore Medical Center where he was said to be stable.

No arrests have been made.

This encounter comes just hours after Gov. Kathy Hochul announced that 1,000 National Guardsmen and state police officers will flood the subway system to prevent violence.

Troché says the lack of action by the state and city coupled with bail-reform laws are leaving people, like himself, with no choice but to intervene.

"We're tired, I shouldn't see an old lady or an innocent man get kicked in the back, a conductor get cut in the neck. Since COVID this world has gone bonkers," he said.

On Wednesday evening, the NYPD posted bag checkpoints at several subway stations. The mayor's office says bag screening will ramp up at over 130 subway stations next week.

Experts say Hochul's deployment of the National Guard is not sustainable long term, likely only a few months -- just in time for when congestion pricing goes into effect.

<https://abc7ny.com/nyc-subway-crime-stabbing-bronx/14499008/>

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Why the National Guard Won't Make the Subways Safer

The Atlantic, March 9, 2024 ::
Mar 18, 2024

Former police commissioner William Bratton calls the New York governor's recent reforms "the equivalent of putting a Band-Aid on a hemorrhage."

The millions of people who crowd into New York City's busiest subway stations every day have recently encountered a sight reminiscent of a frightening, bygone era: National Guard troops with long guns patrolling platforms and checking bags.

After 9/11 and at moments of high alert in the years since, New York deployed soldiers in the subway to deter would-be terrorists and reassure the public that the transit system was safe from attack. The National Guard is now there for a different reason. Earlier this week, Governor Kathy Hochul sent 1,000 state police officers and National Guard troops into the city's underground labyrinth not to scour for bombs but to combat far more ordinary crime—a recent spate of assaults, thefts, and stabbings, including against transit workers.

The order, which Hochul issued independently of the city's mayor, Eric Adams, prompted immediate criticism. Progressives accused her of militarizing the subways and validating Republican exaggerations about a spike in crime, potentially making people even more fearful of using public transit. Law-enforcement advocates, a group that typically supports a robust show of force, didn't like the idea either.

"I would describe it as the equivalent of putting a Band-Aid on a hemorrhage," William Bratton, who led the police departments of New York, Boston, and Los Angeles, told me. "It will actually do nothing to stop the flow of blood, because it's not going to the source of where the blood is coming from."

Bratton's success in reducing subway crime as the chief of New York City's transit police in the early 1990s led then-Mayor Rudy Giuliani to appoint him as NYPD commissioner. He

returned to the post under a much different mayor, Democrat Bill de Blasio, nearly two decades later. During a 40-minute phone interview yesterday, Bratton acknowledged that many New Yorkers perceive subway crime to be more pervasive than it really is; rates of violent crime in New York City (and many other urban centers) have come down since the early months of pandemic and are much lower than they were in 1990, when he took over the transit police.

Bratton is most famous—and, in the minds of many, notorious—as a practitioner of the “broken windows” theory of policing, which calls for aggressive enforcement of minor crime as a precondition for tackling more serious offenses. The idea has been widely criticized for being racially discriminatory and contributing to mass incarceration. But Bratton remains a strong proponent.

He blamed the fact that crime remains unacceptably high for many people—and for politicians in an election year—on a culture of leniency brought on by well-intentioned criminal-justice reformers. Changes to the bail system that were enacted in 2019—some of which have been scaled back—have made it harder to keep convicted criminals off the streets, Bratton said, while city leaders are more reluctant to forcibly remove homeless people who resist intervention due to mental illness. Bratton said that police officers are less likely to arrest people for fare evasion, which leads to more serious infractions. “We are not punishing people for inappropriate behavior,” Bratton said.

The subways need more police officers, Bratton said, and Adams had already announced a deployment of an additional 1,000 last month. But an influx of National Guard troops won’t be as effective, he argued. They can’t arrest people, and the items they are looking for in bags—explosive devices and guns, mainly—aren’t the source of most subway crime. The highest-profile incidents have involved small knives or assailants who pushed people onto the subway tracks. “What are the bag checks actually going to accomplish?” he asked. “The deterrence really is not there.”

William Bratton: I would describe it basically as a public-relations initiative that is the equivalent of putting a Band-Aid on a hemorrhage. It will actually do nothing to stop the flow of blood, because it’s not going to the source of where the blood is coming from.

The problem with crime in the subways, as with crime in the streets, is the idea that we are not punishing people for inappropriate behavior, whether it’s as simple as a fare evasion or something more significant—assaults and robberies and, in some instances, murders.

The presence of the National Guard in the subway system is not needed, not necessary; nor are, for that matter, state troopers. The NYPD and the MTA are fully capable of policing the subways and the train systems.

Berman: This is going to remind people of what New York was like in the months and years after 9/11, when you routinely saw National Guard troops doing bag checks in busy stations. Was it more effective to do that then, because people were worried about what was in those bags? Now they are more worried about other things.

Bratton: That was appropriate then. People understood that what the National Guard was looking for in that era were bombs. So the bag checks made sense. It wasn't so much the level of crime in the subways. What they were fearful of was terrorists, so the use of the National Guard for that purpose was appropriate at that time.

What is the problem in terms of crime in the subway? It is the actions of the mentally ill, who have been involved in assaults and shoving people onto the tracks. It is the actions of a relatively small number of repeat criminals. And what are the bag checks actually going to accomplish? If you are carrying a gun, if you're carrying a knife, you walk downstairs and see a bag check, you're going to walk back up the stairs and down the block and go in another entrance and go right on through. So the deterrence is really not there.

William Bratton: Police reform needs to come from within

Berman: Did those bag checks back then after 9/11 ever find anything significant, or was it mostly for making people feel like someone was watching?

Bratton: I'm not aware that anything was ever detected. Might something have been deterred? Possibly somebody who was coming into the subway with a device and decides, Well, I'm not going to do it after all. But I can't say with any certainty or knowledge.

Berman: Governor Hochul is also proposing a bill that would allow judges to ban anyone from the public-transit system who has been convicted of assault within the system. What do you make of that?

Bratton: It would be difficult to enforce. They'd be banned from the system, but if they're on the system behaving themselves, who's going to know?

Berman: Earlier you mentioned that law enforcement should be punishing fare evasion more than they do. When people hear that, they might think of the "broken windows" theory of policing. These people aren't necessarily violent; they're just jumping the gate. Is your argument that you're trying to address higher-level crime by prosecuting lower-level crime?

Bratton: "Broken windows" is correcting the behavior when it's at a minor stage before it becomes more serious. Somebody who's not paying their fare might be coming into the subway system with some type of weapon. Oftentimes they're coming into the system to commit a crime—or, if they encounter a situation in the subway, out comes a box cutter, out comes the knife, out comes the gun. The situation escalates.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2024/03/nyc-subway-national-guard-bratton/677700/>

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Hochul bans “long guns”™ for National Guard troops deployed to NYC subway bag checkpoints

**NY Post, March 10, 2024 ::
Mar 18, 2024**

New York Gov. Kathy Hochul banned the use of long guns by National Guardsmen she sent to check bags at Big Apple subway stations — as she continued to defend the controversial deployment.

Hochul issued the ban on military-grade rifles “immediately after” 750 troops were deployed to the subway system, a spokesperson told The Post Sunday.

After the deployment began last week, straphangers entering the subway were greeted by camouflaged and gun-toting soldiers at bag-search checkpoints in a sight reminiscent of the city after the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

The move led to complaints that state leaders were militarizing the subway system, and NYPD Chief of Patrol John Chell accused Hochul of treating the subways like a “war zone.”

“Stop the theater!” wrote former Police Commissioner Bernie Kerik in a post on X, adding that “the NYPD knows their job” and should be left to do it.

Under Hochul’s new directive, some guardsmen will still be armed with assault weapons at certain postings throughout the subway, but will not carry them at the actual bag checkpoints.

Commuters voiced support Sunday afternoon for the National Guard presence – but said they also agreed with Hochul’s decision to leave the assault rifles behind.

“Overall, I do approve of the National Guard on the subway. We all know there is violent crime on the subway and it needs to be stopped,” Peter Luciano, 37, told The Post.

“But the guns are unnecessary. To me, it’s just a display. They have no intention of using them. It’s for fear. It’s excessive and unnecessary.”

Brooklyn teacher Jazmine Diggs, 26, also said the move by Hochul made her feel safer, but didn’t think the firearms were needed.

“What if someone grabs it from them and starts shooting?” Diggs said.

Daniella Pavon, 28, added: “I don’t think that kind of a weapon should be used in such a crowded space. I do like having them [National Guard] here, I feel more protected if anything happens.”

Troops first appeared in the subways on Wednesday to conduct random bag checks in a major show of force Hochul said would help solve the “crisis” of crime in the subways.

“These brazen heinous attacks on our subway system will not be tolerated,” Hochul said.

“No one heading to their job or to visit family or go to a doctor appointment should worry that the person sitting next to them possesses a deadly weapon,” the governor added.

“They shouldn’t worry about whether someone’s going to brandish a knife or gun. That’s what we’re going to do with these checkpoints.”

Hochul has hit back at critics, arguing the average commuter is feeling high levels of “anxiety” on the system and that the National Guard will help “supplement” the NYPD’s efforts to keep the subway safe.

“It is more of just a physical presence where you can see — if you’re feeling anxious and you feel safer when you see someone that could protect you if you need help. If you need help, someone is there,” the governor said in a WBSZ 107.5 FM interview Sunday.

“We had an unusual spike of crimes, high profile crimes, frightening crimes,” she went on. “Everyone’s thinking that could have been me. And they may be deterred from going on the trains and using the subway, and that’s exactly the opposite of what we want to have happen. We want people to feel safe and be safe.”

Subway crime spiked 45% in January compared to the same month a year prior — but dropped 15% in February, which Mayor Eric Adams credited to new NYPD patrols on the Subway.

Crime on the subway is up 13% overall for the year, according to NYPD statistics.

Hochul’s deployment of the National Guard is part of a larger five-point plan to make the subways safer, which includes:

Influx of 1,000 National Guardsmen, state and MTA cops.

Law to allow judges to ban transit assault perps from trains, buses.

Installation of CCTV cameras in all train cars, conductor cabins.

Better coordination between NYPD and district attorneys to thwart recidivists.

\$20 million to expand Subway Co-Response Outreach mental health teams.

<https://nypost.com/2024/03/10/us-news/hochul-bans-long-guns-for-national-guard-troops-deployed-to-nyc-subway-checkpoints/>

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National Guard won't carry long guns during bag checks in NYC subways, Hochul says

**Gothamist, March 10, 2024 ::
Mar 18, 2024**

The National Guard will no longer carry long guns while checking the bags of commuters filtering through the city's subway system, officials said.

The directive reportedly came days after last week's announcement that soldiers would begin patrolling subway stations and helping the NYPD perform random bag-checks. National Guard soldiers who are not deployed at bag-check stations will continue to carry long guns as part of the Joint Task Force Empire Shield, the governor's office confirmed with Gothamist on Sunday.

The NYPD reported an uptick in the number of murders in subway stations since the beginning of 2020 compared to the 15 years prior. Coupled with several recent high-profile crimes on subways – including an incident last week in which a passenger slashed another with a box cutter – Gov. Kathy Hochul enlisted the National Guard last week, announcing 750 soldiers would be entering the system.

The National Guard's sudden appearance in subway stations was novel, echoing the aftermath of 9/11 in New York City. And before that, a huge military presence hadn't been seen in subways since a blackout in 1965.

Shortly after the National Guard began appearing in subway stations last week, commuters told Gothamist that the soldiers' presence terrified them. Civil rights advocacy groups lambasted the news, including the Legal Defense Fund – which publicly urged Hochul “reconsider this harmful plan” on social media.

“A sweeping surveillance state and biased broken windows policing won't deliver the security New Yorkers are asking for,” the New York Civil Liberties Union said in a statement on Wednesday.

The governor has not said how long the military will be present in the underground system.

<https://apps.its.ny.gov/apps/govDaily/admin/index.cfm>

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National Guard soldiers no longer carrying long guns at subway bag checks

**amNY, March 10, 2024 ::
Mar 18, 2024**

The National Guard soldiers checking the bags of subway straphangers are no longer carrying long guns on duty, a spokesperson for Gov. Kathy Hochul has confirmed.

The spokesperson told amNewYork Metro that “immediately” following the deployment of military soldiers to the subway system last week, the governor opted to direct the New York National Guard to stop carrying assault rifles while checking bags.

Soldiers in the subway under the long-running Joint Task Force Empire Shield are only authorized to patrol the bag check stations, so no National Guard will be carrying long guns in the subway going forward — though they’ll still carry them at transit hubs like Grand Central and Penn Station as they did before.

The spokesperson did not immediately divulge a reason for the decision, which was first reported by the Daily News. But widely disseminated images of soldiers carrying assault rifles in the system seemed to do little to quell straphangers’ safety fears within the system, eliciting a tepid reaction from riders and political blowback from both sides of the aisle and even top NYPD brass.

On Wednesday, the governor ordered 750 National Guard troops and 250 members of the State Police and MTA Police to assist the NYPD in patrolling the subway system, and to perform beefed-up bag checks at busy transit hubs. That came amid a 13% spike in major crimes in the subway system in 2024 compared to the same period in 2023 and a series of high-profile murders in the system which also led Mayor Eric Adams to deploy an additional 1,000 cops to subway patrols.

Soldiers with big guns are nothing new in New York’s transit system, having long patrolled transport hubs like Grand Central Terminal, Penn Station, the Port Authority Bus Terminal, and the region’s airports. Heavily-armed police have also periodically patrolled the system since 9/11, and cops have been able to check bags since a deadly 2005 terrorist attack in London’s transit system.

But now, the soldiers’ presence in the subway system left many riders uneasy.

“I feel like it is unnecessary,” straphanger Dejuan Sullivan told amNewYork Metro. “We have got plenty of police here and I feel like that is overkill.”

The deployment has also apparently not stopped the regular ebb and flow of crime underground. On Saturday, for example, a man shoved a woman into the path of an oncoming train at Fulton Street in Manhattan in an apparent act of domestic violence, causing her to lose her feet.

The governor has stated in media appearances that the National Guard is intended to have a “psychological” impact, both to deter would-be criminals and give riders a sense of security. She also denied that the bag checks were akin to a renewed stop-and-frisk, as some critics have charged.

“They’re just really there to be a deterrent. So, people who maybe want to do something harmful to others would know that there’s people around,” Hochul said on WBLS radio Sunday. “They’re not doing stop and search. They’re not doing that whatsoever. And so, I want to just make sure that people know the intent of this is to keep people safe and change the psychology of fear around the subways and get back to some sense of normalcy.”

But critics say the decision was not based on the actual prevalence of crime in the system, which is quite rare in comparison to crime in the rest of the city.

“While it is certainly a relief that the National Guard’s long rifles will not be present underground, treating our subway system like a war zone remains an unnecessary overreaction based on fear, not facts,” said Donna Lieberman, executive director of the New York Civil Liberties Union. “Deploying military personnel to the subways will not make New Yorkers feel safe; it will, unfortunately, create a perfect storm for tension, escalation, and further criminalization of Black and Brown New Yorkers.”

Three people have been murdered in the subway system so far this year, compared to 53 across the city as of March 3, according to NYPD statistics.

Riders are protected under the Fourth Amendment and can refuse a bag search if prompted by soldiers, though they will not be permitted to enter the subway if they do so. However, that doesn’t necessarily preclude them from going to another entrance or another station.

<https://www.amny.com/transit/national-guard-no-long-guns-subway-checks/>

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Monday’s Headlines: Gun Control in the Subway Edition

StreetsblogNYC, March 11, 2024 ::
Mar 18, 2024

The big news yesterday was that Gov. Hochul disarmed the National Guard of its long assault weapons when they're doing bag checks in a handful of subway stations.

All the papers — NYDN, NY Post, NY Times, amNY, Gothamist — covered the news, and Gothamist also did a Q&A with a policing expert about what we can and can't expect from all this searching of bags.

Before the news of the long-gun ban, Crain's editorialized against the deployment anyway. And the Guardian asked how this could even be legal (it is, mostly because you can refuse, as the Times pointed out in its explainer last week).

Nobody really thinks opening a tiny number of bags at a tiny number of stations is going to do any good, as Hell Gate reported. That outlet's headline on it's story last week on Hochul's

announcement said everything you need to know: "Hochul Is Sending the National Guard Into the Subway to Search Your Bag Because of Vibes."

<https://nyc.streetsblog.org/2024/03/11/mondays-headlines-gun-control-in-the-subway-edition>

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What will soldiers in the subways achieve? We asked an expert.

**Gothamist, March 10, 2024 ::
Mar 18, 2024**

About a thousand National Guard members and New York State troopers began arriving in New York City Subway stations this week. The move was Gov. Kathy Hochul's response to a string of high profile violent crimes on the transit system, even while crime stats have begun to trend downward on trains.

The added personnel are conducting mandatory bag checks at busy subway stations, though the governor declined to say for how long.

Henry Smart III, assistant professor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice in Manhattan, joined WNYC's All Things Considered this week to walk us through the implications. The following interview has been lightly edited for clarity.

Sean Carlson: Professor, do we know how effective something like mandatory bag checks are at driving down subway crime?

Henry Smart: I wouldn't say we would know it in every scenario, in every context. I think what's important is that there is a show that the state and the city are interested in addressing the problem. The question is, is it proportional to the conditions? Uh, and I think that's where you're seeing some of the fanfare and the news coverage where you hear about the military coming into the underground system.

It signals extra. And I think that's what we're concerned about is — is it necessary? And were there other creative ways to use what we already have in place to meet the goals of both the government as well as the concerns of the citizens? How much of this is a matter of psychology more than anything else?

When the governor rolled the plan out, she was very clear that she was appealing to the emotions and the feelings, which you don't often hear from politicians, but maybe some consultation with citizens and asking them what do they need to feel safe in a very broad way.

If you don't have the ability to send folks out to talk to Everyday Joe and Jane, then you need to at least consult professionals that work in behavioral health and understand the human psyche in a way that we're not going to introduce additional anxiety into the subway system.

Now, data we have from the NYPD shows that crime in the subway was down by more than 2.5 percent last year from 2022. From a historical perspective, how bad is subway crime right now?

Here's what I can tell you about incidents in the MTA system. I'm really speaking from recent data: There were 461 in October. At the end of February, even with those two most egregious stories of a shooting on a train platform and a conductor having his neck slashed, we were down by 16 percent when compared to October.

So, starting the year out, if it weren't for the salacious stories and the most horrific stories leading the year — if we allowed maybe another month or two and observed those statistics for the MTA system — we may also find that the complaints continually declined as well because that's the actual trajectory that we were on just for the first two months of the year.

So the situation is a thousand additional law enforcement will be in the system. That's a fairly significant number, right? But they're gonna be checking bags. Is there anything else they can be doing other than that, that would deter subway crime?

I thought about this a little bit before our conversation. I'm prior Marine Corps. Um, I understand sort of basic war patrol, if you will. And the idea is that you cover as much maintenance land as you can or territory and you report back to the others what you saw. And I think this can be without the guardsmen. I think this could have been the quality of the patrol, the MTA officers could have been improved just with the folks that they had on hand.

So think about yhe times that you've seen an MTA officer on a train with you, they may ride two, three, four, five stops, or they may ride longer on that car than I am because maybe I'm only going two stops. I would encourage them to cover more territory. So for every stop, get off. If you've made your quick assessment and it needs to be quick, go to the next car, make another assessment.

It will give the impression that there are more police officers or that there's more rigor to the patrol. And in fact, I would argue. It is because they're covering more territory. And so I think raising vigilance and having strategic vigilance works in almost every scenario.

When Mayor Adams talks about this, he says the city is dealing less with an issue of rampant crime on the subways, and more with the fact that subway crimes are committed by repeat offenders. Is that the right analysis? And how do you tackle that problem?

Thinking about, sort of like, gang studies, and then they realize in major cities like Los Angeles, it was a core of, like, 17 people — I might be off on the number — that if they were able to actually put these folks in correctional services, crime would significantly go down.

Now, if you just process that for a moment, it's just a few people, but in a city of eight million plus, it's causing hysteria. It's causing folks to avoid systems that really need our financial support in order to fund the city. So I think the bullet point about adding surveillance and cameras that actually work as folks enter the system that will allow the M.T. A. to

actually monitor an individual from the time they get into the system from the time that they leave. One way to sort of look at this is if you look at San Francisco, they have a camera system that literally, through AI and use of AI, will follow a perpetrator almost to the ends of the city. Because they have tapped into a network of cameras that then trade off that footage to the next available camera. And I think Maybe New York City needs to start thinking about, how do we do that?

So along with the deployment of the additional officers in the subway and the surveillance that you've been talking about, another thing that the governor is pushing for, is a bill in Albany that would prohibit some violent offenders from riding the transit system for three years. How would you assess that proposal?

I'm for it. That bullet point didn't get much coverage but that one is important. That type of signaling needs to come through in the MTA's announcements when we're in cars, reminding people of the fines and the consequences of ill behavior. Part of public safety is also educating the public about what's right and what's wrong and to look out for each other. We don't get enough of that messaging, people's faces are more in their cell phones. And so getting away with a crime, even if this is something like stealing a purse, you're more likely not to be seen by people in modern times.

We're all focused on something else other than each other. And I think just having a message that we repeat and put into the psyche of the public: Let's support each other by paying attention to each other. That's how we contribute to the thing that we call public safety. We don't have enough police officers, and I don't think adding numbers is the answer.

I think the quality of the collective activity of everyone involved will get us to the end that we're interested in.

Are there other things that different levels of government can do outside of increased law enforcement to put a bigger dent into subway crime?

I'm old enough to remember PSAs. Uh, so it's not just the PSAs that are happening on the train, but also PSAs that feed into our homes.

If safety is a value, let's express that in as many mediums as possible. If it's teenagers that you're trying to reach, go where they are, go to TikTok, and remind them "Hey, by the way, here are the penalties for this," you know? As overt and weird and corny as that may sound, this is how you get into the psyche of those that have ill intent.

You meet them where they are and you remind them. If you're thinking about it today, here's what might happen.

<https://gothamist.com/news/what-will-soldiers-in-the-subways-achieve-we-asked-an-expert>

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National Guard Now Patrolling NYC Subway: Here's What It Looks Like (Photos)

Forbes, March 9, 2024 ::
Mar 18, 2024

TOPLINE New York Gov. Kathy Hochul deployed hundreds of National Guard troops to assist with bag checks across the New York City subway system in the wake of a series of headline-grabbing crimes and elevated subway crime rates—a decision that has divided New Yorkers and public safety advocates.

KEY FACTS

Hochul on Wednesday announced she was deploying a force of 1,000 law enforcement officials, including 750 National Guard members, and 250 state police and Metropolitan Transportation Authority officers, as part of a “five-point plan” to improve subway safety—the personnel started being seen in subway stations this week.

The decision came after a series of high-profile crimes across the transit system, including an incident this week in which a teenage girl was beaten after a dispute and another in which a 64-year-old man was kicked onto the subway tracks.

There's been a 13.1% increase in transit crimes as of March 3 compared to the same period last year, according to New York Police Department data.

But the presence of National Guard troops at subway stations drew criticism from a broad range of voices—the city's Public Advocate Jumaane Williams suggested the deployment amounted to “posturing to look tough on crime” instead of dealing with the root issues of crime, and NYPD Chief of Patrol John Chell said “our transit system is not a ‘war zone.’”

Hochul has defended the decision as a measure to help people feel safer on the subway, and she has support from some New York Democrats, like recently elected Rep. Tom Suozzi.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/jamesfarrell/2024/03/09/national-guard-now-patrolling-nyc-subway-heres-what-it-looks-like-photos/?sh=42a76d3d42de>

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Hochul rolls back big guns in National Guard NYC subway bag searches

New York Daily News, March 9, 2024 ::
Mar 18, 2024

Gov. Hochul has pulled back the big guns in her subway safety surge, ordering the National Guard not to carry military-grade assault rifles when they check straphangers' bags for weapons.

Many of the 750 troops Hochul deployed Wednesday to check straphangers' backpacks hauling laptops or school books or bags carrying groceries carried M4 carbines, military assault rifles whose 5.56mm rounds can defeat some body armor.

Unlike their civilian counterpart, the AR-15, the M4s are capable of automatic fire.

After a flurry of news coverage showing the rifle-carrying Guard members checking straphangers' totes at Grand Central and Penn Station, the governor ordered the troops to carry out their work without their big guns. A Hochul spokesperson told the Daily News the order was issued "immediately after the deployment" of the Guard for bag checks.

Hochul's order to stow the long guns followed photos on news sites and social media showing well-armed soldiers checking straphangers' property. It also came amid concern from civil libertarians that the governor's subway safety plan is militarizing public transit.

The order took time to implement — soldiers were seen carrying the rifles well into Thursday.

But by Friday evening rush hour not a single long gun was visible among the dozen soldiers and law enforcement officers at the entrance to the No. 4, 5, 6 and 7 trains below Grand Central Terminal.

At Penn Station, a mass of law enforcement officers and Guard members stood near the entrance to the Nos. 1, 2 and 3 trains, all wearing only sidearms.

A few hundred feet away in the Long Island Rail Road concourse, two Guard members stood before a storefront. One carried an M4.

"We're with Empire Shield, but we're supporting the bag checking," said the Guard member with the rifle. Joint Task Force Empire Shield is a long-running task force that regularly deploys National Guard members to transit hubs.

The Guard member acknowledged that the long-guns had been banished from the bag-check areas. "That's why we're standing far way from them," he said.

Whether they carried rifles or not, the Guard soldiers' presence in the subway system concerned some.

"No matter what weapons they're carrying, a Guardsman is still a Guardsman," said Albert Fox Cahn, founder of the Surveillance Technology Oversight Project.

"It's incredibly irresponsible and a chilling symbol," said Cahn, adding that he worried about "the normalization of militarized tactics" in the transit system.

Donna Lieberman, head of the New York Civil Liberties Union, agreed.

“Treating our public transit system like a war zone is an unnecessary overreaction based on fear, not facts,” she said in a statement.

“Deploying military personnel to the subways will not make New Yorkers feel safe,” she said “It will, unfortunately, create a perfect storm for tension, escalation and further criminalization of Black and Brown New Yorkers.”

Metropolitan Transportation Authority Police and New York State Police officers do random bag checks at Penn Station in New York City on March 7, 2024. (Photo by TIMOTHY A. CLARY/AFP via Getty Images)

Metropolitan Transportation Authority Police and New York State Police officers do random bag checks at Penn Station in New York City on March 7, 2024. (Photo by TIMOTHY A. CLARY/AFP via Getty Images)

The M4 carbine is standard issue for many members of the U.S. military, and the weapons are fielded by most police tactical units, including the NYPD’s Emergency Service Unit and the New York State Police.

The weapons aren’t wholly foreign to the city’s transit system.

Well-armed Guard troops are routinely deployed with M4s to the main concourses at Grand Central Terminal, the Oculus at World Trade Center, and other locations as part of the Empire Shield joint task force that began after the Sept. 11 terror attacks and is charged with deterring national security threats.

A New York Guard spokesman told The News that the troops deployed at subway station bag-checks were bound by similar use-of-force rules to the Empire Shield task force — deadly force is authorized in cases of self-defense or defense of another person.

Guard members are not law enforcement officers. If they see a crime while deployed in the subway, they cannot make an arrest, the spokesman said — though the law does allow them to detain a suspect until law enforcement arrives.

The Guard members — as well as State and MTA Police officers — are playing second fiddle to the NYPD, which remains in charge of subway security, transit officials said.

NYPD Chief of Patrol John Chell posted on social media, “Our transit system is not a ‘war’ zone!” and noted that subway bag checks have been a regular part of NYPD operations for more than 15 years.

<https://www.nydailynews.com/2024/03/09/hochul-rolls-back-big-guns-in-national-guard-nyc-subway-bag-searches/>

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National Guard Can't Carry Long Guns While Checking Bags in Subway

New York Times, March 9, 2024 ::
Mar 18, 2024

Shortly after Gov. Kathy Hochul announced on Wednesday that hundreds of National Guard soldiers would be deployed to patrol the New York City subway system and check riders' bags, her office made an adjustment: Soldiers searching bags would not carry long guns.

The change was ordered by Ms. Hochul on Wednesday for implementation on Thursday, according to a spokesman for the governor. Ms. Hochul issued a directive that National Guard members would be prohibited from carrying long guns at bag-check stations, he said. Soldiers not working at the stations would presumably be allowed to carry them.

Donna Lieberman, the executive director of the New York Civil Liberties Union, called the ban on long guns at bag-checking stations a "relief," but said the Guard's presence underground remained "an unnecessary overreaction based on fear, not facts."

"Deploying military personnel to the subways will not make New Yorkers feel safe," Ms. Lieberman said. "It will, unfortunately, create a perfect storm for tension, escalation and further criminalization of Black and brown New Yorkers."

Early images of the National Guard's deployment showed soldiers standing near turnstiles in the subterranean system, wearing camouflage and military gear and holding long guns.

Ms. Hochul, a Democrat, said the move to flood the system with reinforcements — 750 members of the New York National Guard, and an additional 250 personnel from the State Police and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority — would help commuters and visitors feel safe.

Subway safety, a perpetual concern for New Yorkers, has been a challenging issue for public officials, who can be as sensitive to the perception that mass transit is dangerous as they are to an actual rise in crime.

In February, following a 45 percent spike in major crimes in the first month of the year compared with the same period last year, Mayor Eric Adams ordered an additional 1,000 police officers into the subway system. Reported crime rates in the system declined that month, according to city data, and the overall rise in major crimes for the year as of March 3 was 13 percent, Police Department data shows.

Ms. Hochul's announcement this week drew criticism from public officials and from some members of her own party.

Jumaane N. Williams, the city's public advocate, warned that the plan would "criminalize the public on public transit." Emily Gallagher, an assemblywoman and democratic socialist from Brooklyn, said that Ms. Hochul's move was a "ham-fisted and authoritarian response" that validated "G.O.P. propaganda about urban lawlessness in an election year."

John Chell, the Police Department's chief of patrol, cited recent statistics suggesting that transit crime had dropped.

"Our transit system is not a 'war' zone!" he wrote on X.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/03/09/nyregion/long-guns-subway.html>

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U.S. National Guard troops patrol New York City's subways (video)

CNN, March 10, 2024 ::
Mar 18, 2024

This weekend, commuters in New York City are seeing new uniforms in the subway stations, worn by some 750 U.S. National Guard members. The deployment comes after a series of high-profile violent incidents. CNN's Paula Newton speaks to Mitchell Moss, a professor of Urban Policy at NYU, about the new policing.

<https://www.cnn.com/videos/world/2024/03/10/exp-moss-nyc-subway-intv-fst-031003aseg01-cnni-world.cnn>

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National Guard in the Subway? A Transit Reporter Explains.

New York Times, March 8, 2024 ::
Mar 18, 2024

Ana Ley covers mass transit and commuters in New York City. In an interview, she discussed Gov. Kathy Hochul's decision to beef up security on the city's subway.

The New York City subway is full of surprises, and Ana Ley, who covers mass transit for The Times, is used to waking up not knowing where her reporting will take her next. Still, Ms. Ley was shocked on Wednesday when Gov. Kathy Hochul announced she was deploying members of the National Guard to patrol subway stations and assist the police officers who inspect riders' bags.

"I had just got back from vacation, so this was quite an interesting thing to jump into," Ms. Ley said in an interview on Friday.

In addition to the National Guard, officers from the State Police and the Metropolitan Transportation Administration will be on duty at station entrances and platforms, for a total of one thousand additional officers. Ms. Hochul said the surge in enforcement — and show of

force — would help people feel safe, but did not disclose how long the measure would remain in place. The drastic action, which unrolled last week, has already received blowback.

After the announcement, Ms. Ley and her colleagues immediately headed for subway stations and called sources. “It’s not that there’s been this huge wave of crime down there, which you might think, given the scale of this announcement,” Ms. Ley said. “What we really tried to explain to people as quickly as possible was that perception drives a lot of these decisions in the subway system as it relates to crime.”

On Friday morning, before swiping in to the subway system, Ms. Ley spoke to Times Insider about her life on the transit beat, Ms. Hochul’s decision and what riders should expect. This interview has been edited.

Transportation in New York City

Subway Crime: Just 24 hours after Gov. Kathy Hochul deployed the National Guard and the State Police in the New York City subway to quell fears of crime, the unusual show of force drew intense criticism from various corners, some unexpected.

Congestion Pricing: Transit officials held the final public hearings to hear feedback on the nation’s first congestion-pricing plan, which could go into effect in New York City as soon as this spring.

Subway Cars Makeover: Every single wheel, motor, brake, axle, wire and door on every New York City subway car gets completely refurbished every six to 12 years. Here is where the magic happens.

Failing to Impress: The M.T.A. is testing new fare gates to stop turnstile jumpers and metal platform barriers to keep riders safe in an effort to address some of the subway system’s most vexing problems. So far, the devices have received poor reviews.

Get us up to speed on what Gov. Kathy Hochul announced on Wednesday.

The governor announced that the National Guard, State Police and additional officers with the Metropolitan Transportation Administration’s police department were going to be deployed into the system. They will assist the police department in conducting bag searches. So people should expect to see their presence in the system. It has been a gradual rollout over the last few days.

This announcement came as a surprise to many New Yorkers. Was it expected from those of you who have been following the subway system or the governor?

No. This was pretty surprising even to people who follow the transit system. Crime happens in the subway system. Unfortunately, sometimes they are really scary crimes. There can be a strong reaction from the public and in turn, from politicians. There were a few pretty shocking crimes recently, including the slashing of a train conductor about a week before this

announcement was made. But riders were surprised, and the transit community was pretty surprised as well.

What is the picture of crime on the subways?

Crime actually went down last year, compared to the previous year. But it went up in January compared to January 2023. Then it started going back down in February. Generally, crime has been going down if you look at the longer-term trend. The perception is really what's driving these big decisions.

There is concern that this action infringes upon civil liberties. The New York Police Department has checked bags for years, but what do we know about how the National Guard will operate?

People have the right to refuse a bag search. They can say no. But the governor said that means you can be denied entry at the station.

Any increase in surveillance is going to raise concerns from people who worry about privacy. There are plenty of people in the city who worry about any return to stop-and-frisk policies that could intentionally or unintentionally target communities of color.

Mayor Eric Adams is a former transit officer in the Police Department, and he made public safety his No. 1 priority. What was his reaction to the announcement?

The mayor was not at the announcement, and there's a lot of speculation over why. This is a state initiative. There's already a lot of police presence on the subway and the governor has already given money to the Police Department to put more transit police in the subway system. Officially, the mayor has said that he's very much in support of the governor and boosting police presence in the system.

As a journalist covering mass transit, do you report while on your commute?

I was dying to get onto the subway this morning. I am always curious to see what I see. I'm trying to observe how people react to things — to someone shouting or acting unusual — and how unsettled they are or how little they notice.

The pandemic put a lot of people on edge. As ridership comes back, I'm curious if people are feeling more comfortable or less comfortable with bigger crowds and more human interaction.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/03/08/pageoneplus/national-guard-subway.html>

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Hochul tears a page out of Cuomo's book by sending National Guard into NYC subway (opinion)

**Staten Island Advance, March 9, 2024 ::
Mar 18, 2024**

Let's militarize the subways. What could go wrong?

That's what Gov. Kathy Hochul has inexplicably chosen to do by sending 750 members of the National Guard, packing automatic weapons, into the New York City subway system to provide a reassuring presence to commuters and to check their bags.

This sounds like it's going to be more of an arduous process than having those cute dogs sniff your backpack or suitcase at the ferry terminals. State Police troopers are also being deployed as part of the effort.

First of all, let's talk practical logistics. There are around 470 subway stations in the city. Some stations have multiple entrances and exits.

How is the National Guard supposed to cover them all?

If someone with something to hide knows that the soldiers are at one entrance, they can just use another. Or they can go to the next station uptown or downtown to avoid a search.

So putting the National Guard in the subway system is little more than public safety theater. Or a bid to get New Yorkers used to a military presence among us so that the state can bigfoot its way across the city whenever it feels like it.

I don't know about you, but seeing armed soldiers in the subway, or anywhere on city streets, doesn't necessarily fill me with happy, reassuring thoughts. At least not outside of times of war or pandemic. Passengers get rattled enough whenever they see a Coast Guard boat shadowing the Staten Island Ferry.

Seeing soldiers makes me think that there's an emergency. That we need to be on high alert. The military shouldn't be used for public policing. They have other jobs to do. Let the NYPD do the policing.

This kind of over-militarization is the stuff that the Founding Fathers warned us about.

And if New Yorkers refuse to have their bags inspected? They can go home and not use the subway, Hochul says. What other autocratic conditions can the state place on us for use of public services? What's next, demands to show our papers?

Things in the subway are bad. I know that. Subway personnel are getting attacked. Passengers are being pushed off of platforms. New Yorkers don't feel safe underground, even

though Mayor Eric Adams has said that crime is down, both in the city overall and in the subway system.

But sometimes perception is reality. Passengers have concerns. But we're not scared to the point that we need to call out the National Guard. It doesn't mean I want soldiers rummaging through my personal effects.

And let's be honest. If this effort does happen to snare a criminal or two, what are the odds that that suspect is actually going to spend any time in jail?

S. Forrest was hit on the head with a bottle recently while playing cello in the subway. The woman who accused of the assault, Amira Hunter, was freed without bail. She was later arrested for shoplifting and had to post \$500 bail for that offense.

Heck, the suspects arrested in the Long Island body parts case were released without bail. What would a subway passenger have to have in their backpack in order to face serious repercussions?

It looks like Hochul did learn a thing or two while she was serving as Gov. Andrew Cuomo's number two.

In a slap at then-Mayor Bill de Blasio, Cuomo in 2017 sent New York State Police troopers to patrol city roadways, even though those roadways were already being patrolled by multiple law enforcement agencies.

Now Hochul looks to bigfoot Adams on crime. She should let the NYPD do its job.

<https://www.silive.com/news/2024/03/hochul-tears-a-page-out-of-cuomos-book-by-sending-national-guard-into-nyc-subway-opinion.html>

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After Another Subway Shooting, New York Wrestles With Question of Safety

**New York Times, March 16, 2024 :
Mar 18, 2024**

The subway crime that Jimmy Sumampow had been hearing about in recent years — as well as his own experience — had already led him to make plans to leave New York City. Then, on Friday, he saw a video online of the shooting on an A train this week.

“I’m scared,” said Mr. Sumampow, 46, after seeing the video. Mr. Sumampow lives in Elmhurst, Queens, but plans to board an Amtrak train on Monday for Florida, where he has a

new job and an apartment lined up. “I feel I should move out for a while and see if New York takes action and gets better,” he said.

For Elise Anderson, however, the shooting did not raise her level of concern.

“I wouldn’t say I’m any more scared,” Ms. Anderson, a 27-year-old Brooklyn resident, said as she waited at the Port Authority Bus Terminal subway station on Friday for a No. 7 train. “I think we’re in one of the safest cities in the world.”

In interviews across the city this week, New Yorkers wrestled with a question that cut to the core of the city’s identity: Is the subway system safe? Subway crime data in recent years shows a muddled picture, and just as they have in surveys of riders and polls of residents, New Yorkers’ opinions diverge.

But barely more than a week after Gov. Kathy Hochul sent the National Guard and State Police into the subway to increase security and help ease New Yorkers’ fears, the shooting seemed to underscore the limits of law enforcement’s ability to improve safety underground.

The shooting took place seconds after the train arrived at the Hoyt-Schermerhorn station, where the Police Department maintains an outpost, Transit District 30, that is regularly staffed by officers. Moments before the shooting, two additional officers entered the station to inspect the platforms and train cars, Kaz Daughtry, the Police Department’s deputy commissioner of operations, said at a news conference on Friday.

If protections like those, plus the 1,000 National Guard soldiers and other law enforcement personnel promised by Governor Hochul, are not enough to prevent one of the subway’s most gruesome confrontations in recent memory, what is?

“They could send the Army into the subway, I think it’s still going to get worse,” Antonio Balaguacha, 56, said Friday as he waited on a subway platform in Sunnyside, Queens, for a Manhattan-bound 7 train.

Efforts by city and state officials in recent days to improve safety have drawn a wide range of opinions from New Yorkers who rely on the subway. Some riders felt comforted by the presence of the Guard soldiers.

“I haven’t seen the National Guard yet, but I don’t think I would feel safer in their presence,” Patrick Bovie, 27, said on Friday as he waited for a G train in Brooklyn.

“I feel better seeing them here,” Anna Puello, a 47-year-old resident of Upper Manhattan, said on Friday.

Recent surveys by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority show that a significant percentage of riders, though not a majority, do not feel safe on the subway, with many citing erratic behavior by other passengers among their top concerns.

The data on subway crime paints a more nuanced picture. Annual figures from recent years show that major crime on the subway decreased slightly in 2023 compared with the year before, even as ridership rose.

While the total number of major crimes was similar in 2023 to the years before the pandemic, the system has still regained only about 70 percent of its average daily ridership, suggesting the per-ride crime rate is higher today than it once was. And some categories of crime that cause New Yorkers particular alarm, such as felony assault, have risen far above prepandemic levels.

In 2024, overall crime in the subway is up 13.2 percent through March 10, compared with the same period in 2023, but down 6.6 percent from the same period in 2022.

Officials have stressed that the chances of any rider becoming the victim of a crime are statistically remote: The 570 felony assaults recorded last year — the highest number in decades — came over the course of more than a billion rides.

But in a recent television interview, Ms. Hochul explained that data does little to assuage people's fears. "I can show you all the statistics in the world and say, 'You should feel safe because the numbers are better,' but you're the mom on the subway with your baby in a stroller," the governor said, adding that it was the public's perception of subway crime, not statistics, that informed her decision to deploy the National Guard.

Some riders, however, fear the surge in officers and troops will lead to more racial discrimination; some believe the discrimination has already started. Joy Richardson, a photo producer at HBO, stood beside a Penn Station subway entrance on Wednesday as police officers searched her bag.

"As soon as I heard about this, I knew I was going to be stopped," said Ms. Richardson, 39, who lives in Brooklyn. "I knew because I have a big bag and I'm Black."

A protester holds a small sign saying "National Guard out of the subway" in all capital letters.

A few demonstrators responded to the National Guard mobilization with a small protest on Friday night in Union Square. Credit...Andres Kudacki for The New York Times

Speaking at a news conference on Friday, Jeffrey Maddrey, the Police Department's chief of department, said there was a need to enforce "quality of life" laws like fare evasion, which he noted could lead to more serious crimes. The man who started the fight that led to his own shooting on Thursday entered the subway without paying a fare, Mr. Maddrey added.

In February, Mayor Eric Adams ordered 1,000 additional police officers to patrol stations and trains. Ms. Hochul followed up last week by stationing 750 Guard troops at various stations, augmented by 250 personnel from the State Police and the M.T.A. A spokesman for Ms. Hochul did not respond to requests for comment.

“The presence of a uniform makes people feel better, and if the National Guards or the State Police want to add to that presence, I applaud that,” Mr. Adams said during a news conference on Tuesday.

A few demonstrators responded to the governor’s mobilization with a small protest on Friday night in Union Square. The demonstrators were outnumbered by police officers, journalists and curious passers-by, some of whom agreed with the organizers.

“I don’t think the police keep things safe,” said Tiffany Bailey, 21, a dog walker who lives in Brooklyn. “I think they just instill a sense of fear in us.”

Others said the protesters did not understand the fears of riding the subway. Jesenia Ramirez, a 44-year-old entrepreneur, prefers the hassle of buses, and the expense of taxis or rental cars, to the anxiety she feels when she takes the train. Part of her concern, she explained, is that because the subway system is so sprawling there is no way for police officers or Guard members to patrol it all.

“They cannot be in every train car or in every train,” said Ms. Ramirez, who lives in Manhattan.

As Mr. Sumampow rode the 7 train to Times Square on Friday morning, he said he had noticed the increased police presence at some stations, but it didn’t change his plans to leave the city. About a month ago, he said, three men tried to steal his wallet as he entered a subway station near his home. He escaped because he hit one of the robbers with his elbow, he said, and a nearby pedestrian yelled for the police.

Now Mr. Sumampow removes all the cash from his wallet every morning before he leaves home. And he has bought a one-way train ticket to Florida.

“I’m going to escape for a while,” he said. “But I’ll keep my apartment here. If New York gets safer, then I’ll come back.”

Julian Roberts-Grmela, Erin Nolan and Nate Schweber contributed reporting.

Christopher Maag is an enterprise reporter covering the New York City region for The New York Times. More about Christopher Maag

A version of this article appears in print on March 18, 2024, Section A, Page 17 of the New York edition with the headline: New Yorkers Grapple With Safety on Subway After Another Shooting. Order Reprints | Today’s Paper | Subscribe

<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/03/16/nyregion/subway-shooting-national-guard-safety.html>

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NYC subway bag checks reminiscent of “stop and frisk”™: advocates

WPIX, March 14, 2024 ::
Mar 18, 2024

NEW YORK CITY (PIX11) – Gov. Kathy Hochul’s plan to increase subway bag checks and ban violent offenders from the system will only further endanger vulnerable New Yorkers, a slew of advocates said Thursday.

Dozens of electeds and community organizations pleaded with Hochul to “abandon [the] dangerous policies” they say won’t actually reduce subway violence.

Gov. Hochul responds to subway safety plan backlash

“In a city of eight million people, the public interest is not served by a militarized show of force in reaction to public safety concerns that may not be supported by actual data and that, nonetheless, are more likely to be remedied through other means,” reads the letter signed by state Senators Jabari Brisport, Julia Salazar, Cordell Cleare and other officials.

Hochul recently announced she would deploy hundreds of National Guard members to conduct bag checks in New York City subways indefinitely — a move advocates say is reminiscent of New York City’s discriminatory “stop-and-frisk” policies.

Saturating the subway system with police will result in “harsher outcomes” for New Yorkers of color and aren’t justified given a relatively low rate of subway crime, the advocates and electeds said.

City and state leaders have recently taken aim at recidivism as a key source of violent subway crime, something Hochul’s plan could intensify, the letter reads.

Hochul proposed a ban on subway riders with certain violent convictions from riding for at least three years.

Such legislation will intensify the “cycle of reincarceration” by making it “virtually impossible” for some people to meet the requirements of their release from parole and probation, which can include employment, education, regular meetings and community service.

“This proposed bill will put people who are already struggling with the challenges of reentry at risk of harmful cycles of reincarceration through circumstances that are often out of their control,” the letter reads.

More effective interventions would include investments in housing, healthcare, education and employment opportunities, they write.

“To achieve real safety, we need proven methods like community investments that will promote the health and economic well-being of residents,” said Jin Hee Lee of the Legal Defense Fund.

Emily Rahhal is a digital reporter from Los Angeles who has covered local news for years. She has been with PIX11 since 2024. See more of her work here and follow her on Twitter.

<https://pix11.com/news/local-news/nyc-subway-bag-checks-reminiscent-of-stop-and-frisk-advocates/>

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Why the National Guard Can’t Ease All Fears About Riding the Subway

New York Times, March 14, 2024 ::
Mar 18, 2024

More bag checks will not calm the nerves of New Yorkers worried about being shoved onto the tracks by someone with mental illness.

By Ginia Bellafante

Ginia Bellafante writes the Big City column, a weekly commentary on the politics, culture and life of New York City.

Last week, Gov. Kathy Hochul announced, to immediate controversy, that she would deploy 1,000 members of the National Guard and the State Police to patrol New York City’s subway system in an effort to help people feel safer. Explaining her reasoning on “Morning Joe,” she said the measure would serve as both a means of deterrence and a way to “change the psychology around crime in the city.” That psychology tilts toward pervasive fear in the aftermath of rare but dramatically violent incidents like the recent 3:40 a.m. attack on a train conductor in Brooklyn who survived a slashing to his neck after he stuck his head out of the window while pulling into the Rockaway Avenue station.

“I could show you all the statistics in the world and say ‘you should feel safe’ because the numbers are better,” Ms. Hochul said. And they are, essentially. Crime in the transit system fell in 2023 compared with the previous year even as ridership increased. Major crimes ticked upward in January before declining in February.

“But you’re the mom on the subway with your baby in the stroller, you’re the parent putting your kid on the subway to go high school, you’re that senior citizen going to a doctor’s appointment” she continued. “If you’re anxious? Then I’m the governor of the State of New York, and I’m concerned about it.”

Of course, there are many reasons New Yorkers feel anxious that do not prompt swift and sweeping policy responses at the level of executive decree. The process of applying to city's public high schools is hellish, and last year was one of the deadliest on record for cyclists, to cite just two examples. But the governor has made clear that shifting perceptions about the prevalence of disorder is not her only objective. There is a political motivation as well. "I am going to demonstrate that Democrats fight crime," she also told Joe Scarborough and his crew, "so this narrative that Republicans have set, and hijacked the story that we're soft on crime that we defund the police — no."

It is unquestionably true that many New Yorkers worry about taking the subway now in a way that they did not before the Covid-19 pandemic, even if that worry does not always revolve strictly around crime but rather around the unease they experience witnessing so many people struggle with psychological instability on the trains.

Broad-based research tells us that only 3 to 5 percent of violent acts are attributable to mental illness. But erratic behavior is very visible in the transit system, and the death of Michelle Go, who was pushed off a platform into the path of an oncoming train at Times Square two years ago, changed the mind-set of many commuters, igniting a terror of recurrences. New habits soon formed; it is much more common now to see people congregating in the center of a platform, rather than the edge, as they wait for a train. Ms. Go's assailant was ultimately deemed unfit to stand trial.

Part of Gov. Hochul's plan to quiet rider apprehension — and to lure back those who have given up on the subway altogether — involves additional security cameras and more random bag checks, of the kind the police department has conducted for nearly 20 years. But how that delivers relief to the person fearful of getting thrown in front of a moving subway car by someone who might have schizophrenia and be dealing with drug addiction and prone to impulsivity is not especially obvious.

In the view of Jeffrey W. Swanson, a professor of psychiatry and behavioral science at Duke, who studies the relationship between violence and mental illness, the idea of placing the National Guard in the subway not only seems ineffective as a means of prevention among people not necessarily making rational decisions but could also turn out to be harmful. What might look like increased security, he noted, could also emphasize the notion that we "are living in a violent dystopia."

The issue is "not a one-thing problem and a one-thing solution," Professor Swanson continued. A militaristic presence could have precisely the opposite effect of what the governor intends. "If someone is in the midst of a psychotic episode, they might feel that everyone is out to get them, that they are threatened," he said. "It could reinforce a false perception of dangerousness."

Two decades ago, in the years after Sept. 11, the existential fear many New Yorkers carried with them on the way to their morning commute was the prospect of a deadly terrorist bombing underground. That this never happened remains both a miracle and the product of a

vast infrastructural response that involved not simply the performative presence of more law enforcement but enormous efforts made across multiple government agencies.

The analogy may be imperfect, but the mental-health crisis affecting the city — a problem that is partially, but in no way totally, responsible for reduced ridership on the subway — could be tackled in the same vein. More “homeless services and mental health services” on the streets, in shelters and jails and transit hubs would be a more rational solution, as Avram Bornstein, a professor of anthropology at John Jay College of Criminal Justice put it. “Though it would be largely invisible, in an immediate sense, to the average person,” he said.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/03/14/nyregion/new-york-subway-national-guard.html>

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Cuomo slams Hochul’s deployment of National Guard in NYC subways: “You need police”

New York Post, March 14, 2024 ::
Mar 18, 2024

Former Gov. Andrew Cuomo slammed his successor’s decision to deploy the National Guard to New York City subway stations — arguing instead for more police officers to patrol underground.

Cuomo claimed Gov. Hochul’s directive to station hundreds of troops in the subway system to check bags is useless, saying it cannot serve as a viable long-term solution to combat crime.

“You need police,” Cuomo told John Catsimatidis & Rita Cosby Wednesday on the “Cats & Cosby Show.”

“The National Guard are not police and we don’t have to reinvent the wheel here,” Cuomo said.

Under Hochul’s order, 750 National Guardsmen and 250 state and MTA cops were sent to patrol the subway stations, a decision she staunchly defended as a crime deterrent that would calm commuters’ “anxiety.”

The troops — who were heavily armed until the governor banned the use of long guns this week — conduct bag checks for straphangers, which Cuomo said would do nothing to stop rising transit crime because they are not properly trained for the task.

“Why is there a spike in crime in the subway system? Because you have the lowest level of police in the subway system in a decade,” Cuomo said.

“You don’t need the National Guard checking bags. You need transit police in the system. That’s the answer ... This is not what the National Guard does. It’s not what they’re trained to do.”

Hochul had pushed back against hiring more NYPD officers earlier this week, claiming it would entail a time-consuming process of making funding requests, a pointless venture when she has the National Guard at her immediate disposal.

Cuomo called hogwash, however, accusing Hochul of making a political decision based on national pushback against police departments.

“We still have a hangover from this ‘defund the police,’” Cuomo said.

“It’s just politics where the [city] council doesn’t want to hire police, and the state doesn’t want to say you should hire more police because it is this hangover [from] ‘defund the police.’”

The former governor said the tide against a stronger police presence in New York City has subsided, and pointed to Mayor Adams’ 2021 election.

“New Yorkers elected a police officer as mayor. The signal is undeniable. You elect a former police officer because you’re saying, ‘I want public safety.’ We have fewer cops today than when they elected Mayor Adams,” he continued.

Subway crime spiked 45% in January compared to the same month a year prior — but dropped 15% in February, which Adams credited to new NYPD patrols on the subway.

Crime on the subway is up 13% overall for the year, according to NYPD statistics.

Hochul’s deployment of the National Guard is part of a larger five-point plan to make the subways safer, which includes:

Influx of 1,000 National Guardsmen, state and MTA cops.

Law to allow judges to ban transit assault perps from trains, buses.

Installation of CCTV cameras in all train cars, conductor cabins.

Better coordination between NYPD and district attorneys to thwart recidivists.

\$20 million to expand Subway Co-Response Outreach mental health teams.

<https://nypost.com/2024/03/14/us-news/cuomo-slams-hochuls-deployment-of-national-guard-in-nyc-subways/>

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Gov. Kathy Hochul hits back at critics of sending National Guard to protect NYC subways: 'I'm not buying it' Hochul was also pressed on the state's bail laws during 'The View' on Wednesday

Fox, March 13, 2024 ::
Mar 18, 2024

New York Gov. Kathy Hochul defended sending National Guard troops into the New York City subway system on "The View" Wednesday, arguing she had to do something "dramatic" to send a message.

Co-host Sunny Hostin asked Hochul about the decision to send troops into the subways and asked her to respond to Democrats who criticized her decision.

"I'm not buying it. My job is to keep you people safe," she responded, noting there was a spike in subway crimes recently, but that overall crime in New York has come down.

"What happened is I needed to do something dramatic and quickly to send a message that you will not get away with committing crime in our subways. You cannot slash the throat of a conductor," she said during her

media appearance

. "Because people will not take the subway if they don't feel safe. They are not there to harass anybody."

<https://www.foxnews.com/media/gov-kathy-hochul-hits-back-critics-sending-national-guard-protect-nyc-subways-buying-it>

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Sunny Hostin Questions National Guard Troops Protecting NYC Subway Riders: 'Theatrics'

Daily Wire, March 13, 2024::
Mar 18, 2024

Sunny Hostin criticized Governor Kathy Hochul (D-NY) for her decision to place National Guard soldiers on New York City subways, suggesting that it played into "Republican narratives" on increasing violent crime in Democrat-led cities.

Hostin made the comments directly to Hochul's face during the New York Democrat's Wednesday appearance on ABC's "The View," complaining about the optics and arguing that there was no real need for the added security.

"Governor, after a series of high profile crime on New York City subways, right, you deployed hundreds of state police and National Guard troops into the subway system," Hostin began. "But since the pandemic, you have done a wonderful job, overall crime is down in the city, so my question to you is, why now? Why deploy now to the subway?"

Hostin went on to ask Hochul how she'd respond to fellow Democrats who referred to the move as "theatrics that play into Republican narratives that blue cities are poorly-run war zones."

"I'm not buying it, I'm not buying it," Hochul replied, adding, "My job is to keep you people safe. Any way I can, I'm going to keep New Yorkers safe, and I'll tell you who does show appreciation for it, the people out there on the streets."

<https://www.dailywire.com/news/sunny-hostin-questions-national-guard-troops-protecting-nyc-subway-riders-theatrics>

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URBAN AGENDA: State Police, National Guard in Subway is Misguided

**Amsterdam News, March 13, 2024 ::
Mar 18, 2024**

New Yorkers should rightfully be concerned about recent, isolated acts of violence on the subway system. But we should be equally unnerved by the militarization of the public transit system, a strategy that would have been politically taboo just a few years ago as promoting inequality, insecurity and injustice.

The surge of 750 National Guardsmen and 250 New York State Police sends the wrong message to New Yorkers, and the revival of random bag searches for weapons feels over the top. Gov. Kathy Hochul and Mayor Eric Adams – who put no time limit on the surge – must be mindful of history: New York City law enforcement crackdowns typically unfairly target Black and Latino/x young men.

We can be fairly sure State Police and National Guard troops won't be searching brief cases on Wall Street, tourists' bags near Madison Avenue or backpacks on Staten Island. Besides, bag checks don't promote a feeling of safety like increased police presence does, which has the added benefit of being less intrusive. Still another problem with bag checks, besides ensuring that they are conducted fairly and without bias, is that they will very likely trigger litigation.

Ultimately, the way out of this mess involves New York City Transit Police finding ways to increase their visibility on the subway platforms and subway cars, but without a mandate for biased enforcement that disproportionately targets low-income neighborhoods for non-violent crimes of poverty. Uniformed officers on patrol breed confidence, especially among second- and third-shift workers who use the system at night. Reviving the bag search policy sounds great, but may not turn the tide as much as antagonize the innocent.

The surge also obscures the fact, rightfully trumpeted by Mayor Adams, that New York is one of the safest big cities in America. Indeed, in a post-pandemic revival, more than 50 million Americans visited the Big Apple last year. Yet another example of facts being overshadowed and perception becoming reality.

In January, NYC Transit saw a 45-percent spike in serious incidents, largely driven by theft. Another major factor in the highest-profile subway crimes is people with mental illness roaming mass transit. How else do we explain the rash of random, unprovoked attacks and shoving incidents? If there is any upside to the surge in law enforcement officers in the subway system, it is the expectation that they will be accompanied by teams of social and mental services personnel. Because the transit system needs the help of mental health professionals as much as it needs State Police and the National Guard.

New York City is not alone in expanding police tactics and powers to halt crime and fare evasion. Chicago, San Francisco, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C., have all signed off on “hardening” initiatives to stop fare beaters. This represents a stark reversal from 2020, when Blue State progressives fueled a national effort to curb police powers and scale back law enforcement budgets following the murder of George Floyd.

The get-tough-on-crime approach in Democratic strongholds is influenced by the false narrative of Donald Trump and his most fervent supporters that American big cities are a dystopic wasteland. It is part of their years-long strategy to frighten voters into supporting Trump by telling them that terrible things are happening in Democratic-led cities.

We’ve reached the point of embracing troops and State Police in the subways because, in part, of the folly of believing Trump’s narrative as well as the NYPD’s focus on lingering around subway station turnstiles to stop fare evaders. Of course, police maintain that the system’s loss of income is not the only concern. They say there is a strong correlation between fare evasion and disorderly conduct on the platforms and trains, and even dangerous, life-threatening illegal activity.

To combat both problems, last year the agency and approximately 3,500 NYPD officers who oversee the subway launched an all-out war on fare evasion, with New York City spending a record \$155 million in overtime pay as part of the crackdown, the Gothamist reported. The crackdown resulted in a roughly 250-percent increase in summonses and 160-percent jump in arrests over the prior year, according to police records.

Yet Black and brown New Yorkers bore the brunt of it, accounting for more than 90 percent of those arrested. As for “major crimes” on the subway, the police reported a mere two percent drop.

Money does matter, though. The MTA’s operating revenue is a fraction of what it was before the pandemic. Fare evasion is the agency’s Enemy No. 1 (disclosure: I’m a member of the MTA board), but the solution cannot be yet another return to racially disproportionate enforcement. A smarter fix is to increase knowledge of and eligibility for the Fair Fares program, which halves the cost of transit for low income New Yorkers.

<https://amsterdamnews.com/news/2024/03/14/urban-agenda-state-police-national-guard-in-subway-is-misguided/>

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Kathy Hochul talks public safety on “The View”: The governor continued her tough-on-crime crusade on national television this morning.

City & State.com, March 13, 2024 ::
Mar 18, 2024

Kathy Hochul talks public safety on “The View”: The governor continued her tough-on-crime crusade on national television this morning.

City & State.com, March 13, 2024 :

Gov. Kathy Hochul joined the co-hosts of the daytime talk show “The View” Wednesday, where she spoke about public safety as it relates to transportation, congestion pricing and immigration.

Notably, Hochul doubled-down on her decision last week to deploy 1,000 state-level law enforcement personnel – including 750 National Guard troops and 250 New York State Police officers – to the city to assist the New York City Police Department in conducting bag checks at “heavily trafficked locations.”

The initiative received criticism from elected officials at all levels of government – from New York City Public Advocate Jumaane Williams and the City Council’s Progressive Caucus to congressional representatives like Republican Anthony D’Esposito. “I’m not buying it,” she said in response to co-host Sunny Hostin’s comment about the backlash. Recent instances of high-profile crimes throughout the system demanded her strong approach, Hochul reasoned, even if overall crime levels remain low.

“What happened is, I needed to do something dramatic and quickly to send a message that you will not get away with committing crimes in our subways,” she said to the group. “You cannot slash the throat of a conductor; you cannot push someone onto the track.”

That conversation led co-host Joy Behar to question the governor about bail reform laws. Behar specifically alluded to comments made by MTA Chair and CEO Janno Lieber in the past about his agency's struggle to keep repeat-criminal offenders out of the system. Mayor Eric Adams has said those repeat offenders are the main drivers of crime in the city's transit system.

In response, Hochul touted her own efforts to successfully stall budget negotiations in 2023 in order to amend the bail reforms. Her "rollbacks" resulted in judges having more discretion to set bail in eligible cases. In other words, the law's new language no longer requires judges to impose the least restrictive conditions necessary to ensure a defendant's return to court. Former Gov. Andrew Cuomo pushed through rollbacks on the same laws in 2020, and Hochul did so as well in 2022.

"I inherited, from my predecessor and the Legislature before, they took the bail laws and watered them down and made it impossible for judges to look at the whole picture of the crime and the person and what they're doing," she said.

She likened proposals for new congestion pricing to a matter of public safety, saying that traffic prevents emergency response teams from responding to health crises quickly as an example.

Hochul's guest spot on the popular ABC show arrives at a time when she is increasingly seen as a national surrogate for President Joe Biden. She attended Biden's "State of the Union" last week, which is an unusual feat for a state governor. On "The View," she repeated his often-used talking point about congressional Republicans holding up bipartisan legislation related to immigration and border control. She went a step further, stating that she needs border control agents for New York's border with Canada.

There were also a few lighter conversations between the co-hosts and the governor, like how she does her makeup every morning while on FaceTime with her 2-year-old granddaughter. She also mentioned that she "found out with the rest of the nation" that she would replace Cuomo as New York's top official in 2022, though her memory of the scenario conflicts greatly with his former Secretary Melissa DeRosa's own account, which she documented in her memoir "What's Left Unsaid."

<https://www.cityandstateny.com/politics/2024/03/kathy-hochul-talks-public-safety-view/394921/>

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UH-72 Crash

Funeral services for Casey Frankoski set for this week

**Spectrum News, March 17, 2024 :
Mar 18, 2024**

Funeral services for Casey Frankoski will be held this week. She was one of the two National Guard Aviators killed in a helicopter crash on the U.S.-Mexico Border last weekend.

According to Rensselaer County officials, a procession to welcome her body back home will be held Monday.

The route runs from Albany International Airport to the W-J Lyons Funeral Home in Rensselaer. The expected arrival in the city is around 4 p.m.

Calling hours are set for Thursday from noon to 5 p.m. at Saint John the Evangelist and Saint Joseph's Church on Herrick Street in Rensselaer.

All are welcome to attend.

The funeral is set for Friday at 11 a.m. at the church.

She will then be laid to rest at Saratoga National Cemetery.

Frankoski was 28-years-old.

<https://spectrumlocalnews.com/nys/capital-region/news/2024/03/17/funeral-services-for-casey-frankoski-set-for-this-week>

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Remains of local National Guard members return to region on Monday

**Times Union, March 18, 2024 :
Mar 18, 2024**

COLONIE — The remains of two New York Army National Guard pilots killed in a March 8 helicopter crash near the Mexican border will be returned to the Capital Region on Monday.

Gov. Kathy Hochul is expected to pay respects to Casey Frankoski, 28, of Rensselaer, and John M. Grassia III, 30, of Rotterdam, when their caskets arrive Monday afternoon at the state's National Guard headquarters at Albany International Airport.

The plane-side service is expected to begin after 3 p.m.

The guard members were assigned to a regiment that has been operating as part of Joint Task Force North, a military unit that supports U.S. Customs and Border Protection operations on the southwest border. The crash also killed a U.S. Border Patrol agent.

Jacob Pratt, an aircraft crew chief from Rensselaer who was badly injured in the crash of the UH-72 Lakota light utility helicopter remains hospitalized. Last week, his family said he was showing some signs of improvement.

The detachment specializes in flying missions in support of civilian agencies and is based at an Army Aviation Flight Facility at Albany International Airport. Grassia and Frankoski were both ranked chief warrant officer 2.

Grassia III had been with the State Police since 2022, working most of his short law enforcement career in Troop K in the Hudson Valley before being reassigned recently to Troop G in Colonie.

Frankoski, the daughter of a former Rensselaer city police chief, was a graduate of Columbia High School and Schenectady County Community College, where she received an associate degree in social science. She was appointed a warrant officer in 2019 and trained to become a UH-60 Black Hawk and UH-72 Lakota helicopter pilot.

Rensselaer Police will escort Frankoski's casket from the Division of Military and Naval Affairs to the W.J. Lyons Jr. Funeral Home.

They encouraged the public to pay respects to the Guard members and published their route to the funeral home on Washington Avenue in Rensselaer.

"We will be traveling out of the Division of Military and Naval Affairs onto Wade Road., continuing onto Wolf Road, turning left onto Albany Shaker Road, continuing to Northern Boulevard to I-90 East to I-787 South across the Dunn Memorial Bridge turning left onto Broadway and traveling the entire length of Broadway to Washington Ave., onto Farley Drive, back out onto Washington Ave. and ending at Lyon's Funeral home.

"We ask the residents of Rensselaer or anyone else wishing to pay their respects line the escort route to honor Casey for the hero that she is."

Frankoski's funeral will be held at 11 a.m. Friday at the Parish of St. John the Evangelist and St. Joseph Church, 54 Herrick St., Rensselaer. Calling hours will be held from noon to 5 p.m. Thursday at the church.

Funeral arrangements for Grassia were not available early Monday.

<https://www.timesunion.com/news/article/bodies-national-guard-members-killed-helicopter-19193455.php>

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Emergency responders to escort body of NG pilot who died in helicopter crash

**WRGB, March 17, 2024 :
Mar 18, 2024**

CAPITAL REGION, NY (WRGB) — The Rensselaer Police Department will be escorting New York National Guard pilot Casey Frankoski from the Division of Military and Naval Affairs at Albany Airport to Lyon's Funeral Home in Rensselaer on Monday.

Frankoski died in a helicopter crash near the Texas-Mexico border on March 9th.

Rensselaer Mayor Mike Stammel released a statement calling her "remarkable" and a "proud native of Rensselaer".

Albany County resident and New York State Police trooper John Grassia was also killed in the crash.

When the flight arrives, there will be a plane-side ceremony, which Gov. Kathy Hochul will attend.

The escort will be traveling out of the Division of Military and Naval Affairs onto Wade Road, before heading onto Albany-Shaker Road. Then they'll be crossing the Dunn Memorial Bridge, turning left onto Broadway and heading down Washington Avenue before heading onto Farley Drive before finally arriving at Lyon's Funeral Home.

<https://cbs6albany.com/news/local/emergency-responders-to-escort-body-of-ng-pilot-who-died-in-helicopter-crash>

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2 N.Y. National Guard soldiers IDed as victims of helicopter crash on U.S.-Mexico border

**Daily News, March 10, 2024 ::
Mar 18, 2024**

Two New York National Guard soldiers were among the three people killed when a military helicopter crashed near the U.S.-Mexico border, authorities confirmed Sunday.

Chief Warrant Officers John Grassia, 30, and Casey Frankoski, 28, were killed when their chopper went down Friday afternoon near Rio Grande City in far south Texas. Grassia was also a state trooper.

Border Patrol Agent Chris Luna, 49, was also killed in the crash, officials said Sunday. A fourth person was seriously wounded and remained hospitalized Sunday. Though authorities

did not identify him, the Albany Times Union reported it was another New York National Guard member, Jacob Pratt.

“New York will never forget the service of State Trooper John Grassia and National Guard member Casey Frankoski,” New York Attorney General Letitia James posted on X. “My heart is with their families after this terrible incident, and I’m praying for the recovery of National Guard member Jacob Pratt.”

The crew of four was traveling in a UH-72 Lakota helicopter as part of the federal government’s border security effort in Texas. The cause of the crash remains under investigation.

In this frame grab taken from video provided by KRGV, authorities stage near where a helicopter flying over the U.S.-Mexico border in Texas crashed, killing two National Guard soldiers and a Border Patrol agent, Friday, March 8, 2024. (KRGV via AP)

Grassia was from upstate Schenectady and joined the National Guard in 2013 as a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter maintenance specialist.

Frankoski was from upstate Rensselaer and joined in 2016, training to be a UH-60 Black Hawk and UH-72 Lakota helicopter pilot. She was the daughter of former Rensselaer Police Chief James Frankoski.

“A proud native of Rensselaer and distinguished graduate of Columbia High School, Casey was not only an excellent student but also excelled in sports and community service before joining the New York National Guard,” Rensselaer Mayor Michael Stammel said in a statement.

Pratt, who graduated from Rensselaer High School, was the aircraft crew chief on the ill-fated mission. Luna joined the Border Patrol in 2007. He is survived by his wife, two children, his parents and his brother.

“Every single day, our Border Patrol agents place themselves in harm’s way so that the rest of us can be safe and secure,” Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said in a statement. “My thoughts, and the deepest condolences of our department, are with Agent Luna’s family, loved ones and colleagues, and with those of the National Guardsmen who lost their lives.”

Thousands of National Guard members from various states have been sent to the U.S.-Mexico border at different points over the past two decades.

<https://www.nydailynews.com/2024/03/10/new-york-national-guard-victims-border-helicopter-crash/>

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2 National Guard soldiers, 1 Border Patrol agent killed in Texas helicopter crash are identified

Associated Press, March 10, 2024::
Mar 18, 2024

2 National Guard soldiers, 1 Border Patrol agent killed in Texas helicopter crash are identified

Associated Press, March 10, 2024:

LA GRULLA, Texas (AP) — A National Guard soldier from New York who was seriously injured in the crash of a helicopter flying over the U.S.-Mexico border remained hospitalized Sunday while authorities released the names of the two National Guard soldiers and a Border Patrol agent onboard who were killed.

The three killed Friday in the crash in a field in Texas near Rio Grande City were: Chief Warrant Officer 2 Casey Frankoski, 28, and Chief Warrant Officer 2 John Grassia, 30, both with the New York National Guard; and Border Patrol Agent Chris Luna, 49. The cause of the crash remains under investigation.

The UH-72 Lakota helicopter was assigned to the federal government's border security mission when it went down while the helicopter was conducting aviation operations, according to a statement released by Joint Task Force North, a military unit that supports Customs and Border Protection. No other details were provided.

The injured soldier was from the New York National Guard, according to the National Guard Bureau. The soldier, whose name isn't being released, was the aircraft crew chief. The soldier remained hospitalized, according to a news release posted by the New York State Division of Military & Naval Affairs.

Major General Ray Shields, the adjutant general of New York, said in the release that they are "shocked and devastated" by the deaths of Frankoski and Grassia, and are "praying for the quick recovery" of the injured crew chief.

Troy Miller, acting commissioner of Customs and Border Protection, said in a statement that they were "heartbroken" by the death of Luna, who is survived by his wife and two children, parents and brother.

Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said in a statement that they are hoping for the injured national guardsman's "swift recovery," and said his thoughts and the "deepest condolences" of the department were with the families of those killed.

Grassia, who was a New York state trooper, was from Schenectady, New York, and he enlisted in the New York Army National Guard in 2013 as a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter maintenance specialist, according to the New York State Division of Military & Naval

Affairs. The release said that Frankoski, of Rensselaer, New York, enlisted in the New York Army National Guard in 2016 and she trained to become a UH-60 Black Hawk and UH-72 Lakota helicopter pilot.

New York Gov. Kathy Hochul said in a statement that she was “deeply saddened” by the deaths of Grassia and Frankoski.

“There is no greater calling than service to and defense of your country,” she said.

Frankoski and Grassia were assigned to Detachment 2, Company A, 1st Battalion, 244th Aviation Regiment. Luna was assigned to the Border Patrol’s Rio Grande City Station.

The helicopter that crashed was assigned to the District of Columbia Army National Guard, according to the New York State Division of Military & Naval Affairs release.

The border region is heavily patrolled by both state and federal authorities, including routine aerial surveillance.

In January, a Texas Department of Public Safety helicopter patrolling the state’s border with Mexico lost power and crashed, officials said at the time. The co-pilot suffered a minor hand injury and the helicopter was significantly damaged. That helicopter was flying as part of Operation Lone Star, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott’s nearly \$10 billion border mission that has tested the federal government’s authority over immigration.

<https://apnews.com/article/helicopter-crash-texas-border-new-york-4ef0071f7ab806f93f4f7e1038aa10f5>

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Officials share condolences for deaths of NY National Guard members in helicopter crash

**WRGB, March 11, 2024 ::
Mar 18, 2024**

CAPITAL REGION, NY (WRGB) — More officials are sending out their condolences Sunday to the families of the two Capital Region natives who were killed in a tragic helicopter crash on the Texas-Mexico border.

The New York State Police say John Grassia, a trooper and Rotterdam native, was killed when the helicopter crashed Friday.

According to Rensselaer city Mayor Mike Stammel, New York National Guard pilot and Rensselaer city native Casey Frankoski, was also killed.

A U.S. border patrol agent died in that crash as well.

Another soldier was injured, Rensselaer County saying they are also a county native.

The U.S. army said the helicopter went down near Rio Grande city, when it was conducting aerial "monitoring and detection" operations at the border and that the cause of the crash was under investigation.

<https://cbs6albany.com/news/local/officials-share-condolences-for-deaths-of-ny-national-guard-members-in-helicopter-crash>

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New York State Trooper Among Those Killed in Military Helicopter Crash

**New York Times, March 10, 2024 ::
Mar 18, 2024**

John M. Grassia III was one of three people killed when a National Guard helicopter crashed along the U.S.-Mexico border in Texas.

Two members of the New York State National Guard were identified as victims in a military helicopter crash that killed three people in Texas on Friday near the U.S.-Mexico border.

John M. Grassia III, a New York State trooper, and Casey Frankoski, a National Guard helicopter pilot, were killed near La Grulla, Texas, when the chopper crashed into a field. Chris Luna, a U.S. Border Patrol agent, also died in the crash, according to the Department of Homeland Security.

All three had been deployed along the southern U.S. border since October.

The death of Mr. Grassia, 30, was announced by the New York State troopers union in a social media post, which said he had joined the force as a state trooper in 2022. Ms. Frankoski was named in a Facebook post by the mayor of her hometown, Rensselaer, N.Y., where her father is a retired police chief.

The operation last week was said to be a "routine mission" along the U.S.-Mexico border, where Mr. Grassia, Ms. Frankoski, and two others were working with Joint Task Force North, a U.S. Defense Department initiative that tracks the boundary along with local and federal law enforcement.

The group had been "providing monitoring and detecting capabilities along that sector of the border," said Maj. Ryan Wierzbicki, a spokesman for the task force.

The helicopter was following people who were illegally crossing into the United States when it crashed, according to Judge Eloy Vera, a top local official in Starr County, the site of the accident.

Army investigators arrived at the site this weekend and were expected to comb the wreckage for the black box of the aircraft, a UH-72 Lakota, used regularly in such missions by the Army as a light utility aircraft.

A third National Guardsman was seriously injured in the crash, the National Guard said.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/03/10/us/helicopter-crash-texas-soldiers.html>

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2 New York National Guard members, 1 border patrol agent killed in Texas-helicopter crash

FOX 5, March 10, 2024 ::
Mar 18, 2024

TEXAS - Two members of the New York National Guard were killed in a helicopter crash in Texas while conducting border patrols along the US-Mexico border last Friday.

The two members have been identified as John Grassia III and Casey Frankosi, who lost their lives while on duty when the UH-72 Lakota helicopter crashed near Rio Grande City, Texas.

Grassia, 30, joined the New York State Police in April 2022 and was most recently assigned to Troop G.

"Trooper Grassia, who was dedicated to serving and protecting not only the citizens of New York State but also the citizens of the entire United States, will be remembered for his ultimate sacrifice," a Facebook post by the New York State Troopers PBA said.

His funeral arrangements are still pending.

Chief Warrant Officer 2 Casey Frankoski, 28, from Rensselaer, New York, was enlisted in the New York Army National Guard in 2016.

She has been serving in the New York Army National Guard since 2012.

Border Patrol agent, Chris Luna, 49, was also killed.

The UH-72 Lakota helicopter was assigned to the federal government's border security mission when it went down, according to a statement released by Joint Task Force North, a military unit that supports Customs and Border Protection.

The injured soldier was from the New York National Guard, according to the National Guard Bureau. The soldier, whose name isn't being released, was the aircraft crew chief. The soldier remained hospitalized, according to a release posted by the New York State Division of Military & Naval Affairs.

Major General Ray Shields, the adjutant general of New York, said in the release that they are "shocked and devastated" by the deaths of Frankoski and Grassia, and are "praying for the quick recovery" of the injured crew chief.

U.S. Customs and Border Patrol Commissioner Troy Miller said in a statement that they were "heartbroken" by the death of Luna, who is survived by his wife and two children, parents and brother.

Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas said in a statement that they are hoping for the injured national guardsman's "swift recovery," and said his thoughts and the "deepest condolences" of the department were with the families of those killed.

Grassia, who was a New York state trooper, was from Schenectady, New York, and he enlisted in the New York Army National Guard in 2013 as a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter maintenance specialist, according to the New York State Division of Military & Naval Affairs. The release said that Frankoski, of Rensselaer, New York, enlisted in the New York Army National Guard in 2016 and she trained to become a UH-60 Black Hawk and UH-72 Lakota helicopter pilot.

New York Gov. Kathy Hochul said in a statement that she was "deeply saddened" by the deaths of Grassia and Frankoski.

"I am deeply saddened at the passing of two members of the New York National Guard and a member of the New York State Police during a federal deployment along our southern border. There is no greater calling than service to and defense of your country. I join the members of our National Guard and State Police, and the entire State of New York, in mourning this tragic loss. Our deepest sympathies are with the families and friends of those killed, and I remain incredibly grateful for the many service men and women who put themselves at risk every day to ensure the security of our state and our nation."

Frankoski and Grassia were assigned to Detachment 2, Company A, 1st Battalion, 244th Aviation Regiment. Luna was assigned to the Border Patrol's Rio Grande City Station.

The helicopter that crashed was assigned to the District of Columbia Army National Guard, according to the New York State Division of Military & Naval Affairs release.

The cause of the crash remains under investigation.

<https://www.fox5ny.com/news/new-york-national-guard-members-killed-texas-helicopter-crash>

It could take months to determine cause of fatal helicopter crash on southern border

**Times Union, March 10, 2024 ::
Mar 18, 2024**

ALBANY — It could take months to determine the cause of a helicopter crash near Rio Grande City, Texas, last week that claimed the lives of two New York Army National Guard pilots from the Capital Region and also a U.S. Border Patrol agent.

An aircraft crew chief who was badly injured in the crash of the UH-72 Lakota light utility helicopter on Friday afternoon remains hospitalized and has not been identified.

The Capital Region pilots who were killed are Casey Frankoski, 28, of Rensselaer, and John M. Grassia III, a 30-year-old state trooper from Schenectady who had been with the State Police since 2022. Grassia had worked for most of his short law enforcement career in Troop K in the Hudson Valley before being reassigned recently to Troop G.

The soldiers were assigned to a regiment that has been operating as part of Joint Task Force North, a military unit which supports U.S. Customs and Border Protection operations on the southwest border.

The detachment specializes in flying missions in support of civilian agencies and is based at an Army Aviation Flight Facility at Albany International Airport in Latham.

Twenty-one soldiers from the unit deployed to Texas in October to support the federal military mission, according to officials with the state Division of Military and Naval Affairs. Their unit is operating in federal duty status and is not part of the Texas National Guard's Operation Lone Star.

"It could take months before we get the answers on what actually happened," said Maj. Jean Marie Kratzer, a spokeswoman for the Division of Military and Naval Affairs.

Gov. Kathy Hochul issued a statement on Sunday saying she was "deeply saddened" by the deaths of the two New York National Guard members.

"There is no greater calling than service to and defense of your country," Hochul said. "I join the members of our National Guard and State Police, and the entire state of New York, in mourning this tragic loss. Our deepest sympathies are with the families and friends of those killed, and I remain incredibly grateful for the many service men and women who put themselves at risk every day to ensure the security of our state and our nation."

New York Army National Guard officials said their state-based military component — which responds to state emergencies as needed and can also be deployed for federal missions — has been flying the UH-72 Lakota helicopter since 2012. They have been deploying UH-72 pilots and support personnel to the southwest border in support of the Border Patrol since 2014.

Official said the aircraft that crashed was not one of the two UH-72s operated by the New York Army National Guard. It was assigned to the District of Columbia Army National Guard.

Grassia, a graduate of Schalmont High School in Schenectady, enlisted in the New York Army National Guard in 2013 as a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter maintenance specialist. He was appointed as a warrant officer in 2019 and trained as a UH-60 and UH-72 pilot. He was promoted to the rank of Chief Warrant Officer 2 in 2020.

He had deployed to Kuwait for a year beginning in September 2013. He was also on state active duty from 2020 to 2022 as part of the New York National Guard's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. He joined the State Police in April 2022 and graduated from the academy that October.

His awards include the Army Commendation Medal, the Army Achievement Medal, the Army Good Conduct Medal, the Army Reserve Component Achievement Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, the Armed Forces Service Medal, the Army Service Ribbon, the Armed Forces Reserve Medal, the Basic Aviator Badge, and the Basic Aviation Badge.

His aunt, Valerie Bleser, wrote in a post on Facebook that the “family is devastated.”

“There is nothing I can say in words that will take away the deep grief his parents, my sister Judi Grassia and my brother-in-law, John are experiencing,” she wrote. “As well as his sisters, Gina Grassia McDermott and Krista Grassia Rotondi. ... I can't imagine how they will process this loss. He loved his family. He loved his German shepherd, Arlo. He loved this country. He had dreams, aspirations and a life map to be the most successful man he could be. At thirty years of age, this has all come to an end.”

The New York State Troopers Police Benevolent Association, the union representing state troopers, said Grassia “was dedicated to serving and protecting not only the citizens of New York state but also the citizens of the entire United States, (and he) will be remembered for his ultimate sacrifice.”

Frankoski joined the New York Army National Guard in 2016 and Grassia has served in the New York Army National Guard since 2012.

“We are all shocked and devastated by the loss of Chief Warrant Officer 2 Grassia, and Chief Warrant Officer 2 Frankoski, while serving along the U.S. border in Texas,” said Maj. General Ray Shields, the adjutant general of New York. “We are praying for the quick

recovery of the crew chief who was injured in the crash. Our deepest condolences also go out to the family and friends of the U.S. Customs and Border Patrol agent who was also killed.”

Frankoski, the daughter of a former Rensselaer city police chief, is a graduate of Columbia High School and Schenectady County Community College, where she received an associate degree in social science. She was appointed a warrant officer in 2019 and trained to become a UH-60 Black Hawk and UH-72 Lakota helicopter pilot. She was promoted to the rank of Warrant Officer 2 in 2021.

Frankoski also deployed to Kuwait, from November 2018 to September 2019, as a mission planner in a unit that flies the Army’s C-12 transport aircraft, officials said.

Her military awards include the Army Commendation Medal, the Army Achievement Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, the Army Service Ribbon, the Armed Forces Service Medal, the Non-Commissioned Officer Professional Development Ribbon, the Armed Forces Reserve Medal, the Basic Aviator Badge, and the Basic Aviation Badge.

Rensselaer Mayor Michael Stammel issued a statement over the weekend saying the community “is deeply saddened to hear of the sudden passing of Casey Frankoski.”

Her brother Jesse Frankoski is a Rensselaer police officer.

“A proud native of Rensselaer and distinguished graduate of Columbia High School, Casey was not only an excellent student but also excelled in sports and community service before joining the New York National Guard,” Stammel said. “Casey comes from a family deeply rooted in public service, and her legacy as an American hero resonates throughout our community.”

The Lakota helicopter that crashed is “configured to conduct utility helicopter missions and execute tasks in non-combat, non-hostile environments, usually in support of local and state government and law enforcement,” according to the state Division of Military and Naval Affairs.

The twin-engine, single-main-rotor helicopter has seating for two pilots and up to six passengers, officials said.

President Joe Biden released a statement Saturday saying: “These brave Americans dedicated their lives to protecting our nation. They signed up knowing the risks and believing in the mission of serving their fellow Americans by keeping our nation safe. Our gratitude is profound, and their sacrifice will never be forgotten.”

The site of the crash is in Texas' Rio Grande Valley. The border region is heavily patrolled by both state and federal authorities, including routine aerial surveillance.

<https://www.timesunion.com/capitol/article/take-months-find-cause-fatal-helicopter-crash-18839059.php>

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Rotterdam state trooper among those killed in helicopter crash

Daily Gazette, March 10, 2024 ::
Mar 18, 2024

Val Bleser remembers speaking to her nephew at a send-off party in September before his last deployment.

John Grassia, 30, was ready to travel to Texas with the National Guard and help patrol the southern border. He expected to come back home to his native Rotterdam a year later and ascend the ranks of the state police.

“I was like, ‘Oh God’ and he said, ‘I’ll be OK, I’ll be OK, I’ll be OK,’ ” Bleser recalled.

On Saturday evening, she saw news reports of three people dead and one injured following a helicopter crash on the southern border. At that point, none of the names were released by the military.

And she went to bed in fear.

“My husband came in the morning and he said, ‘I have something to tell you: You were right. It’s Jay Michael. He’s been killed,’ she said. “It was just the most gut-wrenching [feeling]. It was awful.”

Grassia and Casey Frankoski, a Columbia High School graduate from Rensselaer County, were among the three killed in a UH-72 Lakota crash on Friday around the southern border.

Another soldier, Rensselaer High School graduate Jacob Pratt, was injured. He remains hospitalized, the state Division of Military & Naval Affairs reported.

The incident occurred south of La Grulla, Texas. The cause is still under investigation, according to a statement from the federal Joint Task Force North.

Funeral arrangements are still pending, said Grassia’s sister, Gina McDermott.

Adam Hulett, who has known Grassia since 2014, struggled to process the news at first. The two met while in the New York Army National Guard.

“He was such a good person and he was just squared away as far as the military and he knew his stuff as far as being a pilot goes,” Hulett said. “You didn’t want to believe it.”

Like Hulett, a sheriff's deputy in Rensselaer County highway patrol bureau since 2020, Grassia pursued a career in law enforcement. He's been a trooper since 2022, originally serving in Columbia County, and eventually hoped to serve as the governor's helicopter detail.

While assigned to Troop G in Montgomery County, he would join the family of his training officer, Anthony DiMezza, for dinner.

"They would come in hungry, my wife would often fix them something to eat when they were out on patrol and stopped by," said family patriarch Thomas DiMezza, who also serves as supervisor of the town of Amsterdam. "My son often did that when he had a partner with him."

The senior DiMezza, also a former state trooper, got to know Grassia over time. He said that he never heard anyone ever say anything bad about the state trooper.

The supervisor requested the American flag to fly at half mast at Amsterdam Town Hall on Saturday morning.

"It's just tragic and everybody's heartbroken," DiMezza said.

DiMezza also knew Frankoski, the daughter of a former Rensselaer Police Chief James Frankoski through police academy work. He said that the former chief was proud of his daughter in uniform.

Meanwhile, Grassia, a Schalmont High School and University at Albany graduate, always dreamed of being in the military, as his family had served for multiple generations. He signed up for the Army National Guard before graduating high school in January of 2012.

"Between deployments and the training for everything, any moment that was spared was with family and he had so many friends," Bleser said.

Grassia leaves behind two sisters, several nieces and nephews, and a German Shepherd dog, Arlo. He lived near his parents' home in Rotterdam.

Both Grassia and Frankoski were honored in a series of social media posts on Saturday.

"Trooper Grassia, who was dedicated to serving and protecting not only the citizens of New York State but also the citizens of the entire United States, will be remembered for his ultimate sacrifice," the state Troopers Police Benevolent Association wrote in a statement on Saturday posted to Facebook.

The Troy Police Department also offered its thoughts via Facebook.

"On behalf of the Troy Police Department, we extend our deepest condolences to the family, friends, and colleagues of Casey Frankoski and John Grassia Jr during this difficult time," the

Troy department wrote. “Their service and sacrifice will never be forgotten. Our thoughts and prayers are with all those affected by this tragic event.”

https://www.dailygazette.com/news/new-york-national-guard-helicopter-crash/article_6795bdb0-de84-11ee-87fc-570b2662a376.html

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New York National Guard member killed in Texas helicopter crash

WCAX, March 9, 2024 ::
Mar 18, 2024

RENSSELEAR COUNTY, NY. (WCAX) - Rensselaer County, new York is mourning the loss of one of its own after a helicopter crash in Texas Friday.

National Guard Member Casey Frankoski, died in the crash - along with John Grassia of the New York state police.

Another crew member on the flight was severely injured and is also known to be from Rensselaer County.

“Casey comes from a family deeply rooted in public service, and her legacy as an American hero resonates throughout our community,” Rensselaer Mayor Michael Stammel said in a statement. Please keep all of the victims and families in your prayers.”

Flags at all county facilities are to be flown at half-mast.

<https://www.wcax.com/2024/03/09/new-york-national-guard-member-killed-texas-helicopter-crash/>

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Two Capital Region-based National Guard soldiers killed in southern border helicopter crash

Daily Gazette, March 9, 2024 ::
Mar 18, 2024

LA GRULLA, TEXAS — A Fonda-based New York State Trooper and a Rensselaer County-based guard soldier were among those killed in a helicopter crash on Friday around the southern border, local officials confirmed on social media.

State trooper John Grassia and Columbia High School graduate in East Greenbush Casey Frankoski died while on a mission with the National Guard. Another soldier, Rensselaer High School graduate Jacob Pratt, was injured.

The helicopter crashed south of La Grulla, Texas. The cause of the crash is still under investigation, according to a statement from the federal Joint Task Force North.

"Trooper Grassia, who was dedicated to serving and protecting not only the citizens of New York State but also the citizens of the entire United States, will be remembered for his ultimate sacrifice," the state Troopers Police Benevolent Association wrote in a statement on Saturday posted to Facebook.

Grassia was 30 at the time of his death.

He's been a trooper since 2022 and was recently assigned to Troop G in Montgomery County, the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office wrote on Facebook.

"Please keep their families in your thoughts during this difficult time," the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office wrote.

The Troy Police Department also offered its thoughts via Facebook.

"On behalf of the Troy Police Department, we extend our deepest condolences to the family, friends, and colleagues of Casey Frankoski and John Grassia Jr during this difficult time," the Troy department wrote. "Their service and sacrifice will never be forgotten. Our thoughts and prayers are with all those affected by this tragic event."

https://www.dailygazette.com/news/new-york-national-guard-helicopter-crash/article_6795bdb0-de84-11ee-87fc-570b2662a376.html

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NY National Guard Members, Border Patrol Agent Identified in Deadly Texas Helicopter Crash by Mexican Border

Homeland Security.com, March 13,2024 ::
Mar 18, 2024

Two New York National Guard members and a Border Patrol agent have been identified as the three people killed in a U.S. military helicopter crash in Texas along the U.S.-Mexico border.

New York State Trooper John M. Grassia III and New York National Guard helicopter pilot Casey Frankoski had already been identified as among the deceased by local agencies on

Saturday, while Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas on Sunday identified the third person killed in Friday's crash as Border Patrol Agent Chris Luna.

"We are devastated by the tragic death of Border Patrol Agent Chris Luna, a heroic public servant who lost his life Friday in a helicopter crash while on a Border Patrol mission in Texas. Two National Guardsmen were also killed, and one National Guardsman was seriously injured," Mayorkas said. "Every single day, our Border Patrol Agents place themselves in harm's way so that the rest of us can be safe and secure. My thoughts, and the deepest condolences of our Department, are with Agent Luna's family, loved ones, and colleagues, and with those of the National Guardsmen who lost their lives. We hope for the injured servicemember's swift recovery, and hold our National Guard colleagues and their families in our thoughts as well."

Read the rest of the story at FOX News, here.

<https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/border-security/ny-national-guard-members-border-patrol-agent-identified-in-deadly-texas-helicopter-crash-by-mexican-border/>

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Third New York guard member identified in Texas helicopter crash

**WPTZ, March 14, 2024 ::
Mar 18, 2024**

LA GRULLA, Texas — The third NY national guard soldier involved in a helicopter crash last Friday has been identified as Jacob Pratt, of Rensselaer, according to the Albany Times Union.

Two national guard members from New York were killed in the crash, along with a border patrol agent. As of Sunday, Pratt remained hospitalized.

According to social media posts from friends and family, Pratt was responsive on Monday and opened his eyes in the hospital.

There has been an outpouring of support from the community, including messages from the Montgomery County Sheriff's Department, the Rensselaer City Police Department, Attorney General, Letitia James, and U.S. Rep. Elise Stefanik.

Nearly \$100,000 has also been raised in a fundraiser, organized by the New York State Council of School Superintendents.

The UH-72 Lakota helicopter was assigned to the federal government's border security mission when it went down. The helicopter was conducting aviation operations.

The cause of the crash remains under investigation.

<https://www.mynbc5.com/article/ny-guard-member-identified-texas-helicopter-crash/60196942>

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New York State Trooper among 3 killed in National Guard helicopter crash at southern border

**NY Post, March 9, 2024 ::
Mar 18, 2024**

New York State Trooper among 3 killed in National Guard helicopter crash at southern border

NY Post, March 9, 2024 :

A New York state trooper and another New York soldier have been identified as two of the three people killed in a National Guard helicopter crash near the southern border.

John M. Grassia III, 30, who served in NYSP's Troop G, was serving with the National Guard in Texas when the chopper went down on Friday, killing him, a fellow local National Guard soldier and a border patrol agent, The New York State Troopers PBA announced.

"Trooper Grassia, who was dedicated to serving and protecting not only the citizens of New York State but also the citizens of the entire United States, will be remembered for his ultimate sacrifice," the union said in a statement.

National Guard soldier Casey Frankoski, a graduate of Columbia High School in East Greenbush, New York, was also identified as one of the victims of the crash, according to Rensselaer Mayor Mike Stammel.

Shocking moment tourists left hanging after helicopter crash: video

"Our heartfelt condolences go out to the Frankoski family as we collectively mourn the loss of a beloved city native and dedicated patriot," the Mayor said in a social media post, adding that the town's flags would be put at half-mast.

A post on Rensselaer County's official Facebook page also confirmed Frankoski and Grassia had been killed.

County Executive Steve McLaughlin said the National Guardswoman "represents the best of our nation," and also extended condolences to Grassia's family.

Another National Guard soldier who was injured in the crash was identified by Stammel as Rensselaer High School graduate Jacob Pratt, The Times Union reported.

The deceased CBP agent has not been named.

Grassia's family could not immediately be reached on Saturday night.

A UH-72 Lakota helicopter assigned to assist with the border crisis in Texas crashed at around 2:50 p.m. near Rio Grand City, Texas along the Mexican border, officials said.

The crash involved "a military helicopter on federal orders working with Border Patrol," Texas Department of Public Safety South Regional Director Victor Escalon said.

The cause of the crash remains under investigation.

<https://nypost.com/2024/03/09/us-news/new-york-state-trooper-among-3-killed-in-national-guard-helicopter-crash-at-southern-border/>

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Two Capital Region National Guard members killed in helicopter crash (Video)

News10, March 10, 2024 ::
Mar 18, 2024

Locals Casey Frankoski and John Grassia of the National Guard passed away after a helicopter crash on Friday, according to Rensselaer County.

<https://www.news10.com/video/two-capital-region-national-guard-members-killed-in-helicopter-crash/9503919/>

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Three people were killed when a U.S. National Guard helicopter crashed Friday on the Texas southern border, officials said.

CBS News, March 9, 2024 ::
Mar 18, 2024

Three people were killed when a U.S. National Guard helicopter crashed Friday on the Texas southern border, officials said.

A UH-72 Lakota helicopter crashed just before 4 p.m., local time, while on a support mission near Rio Grande City along the U.S.-Mexico border, according to a statement from Joint Task Force North.

Two soldiers and one U.S. Border Patrol agent were killed and another soldier was injured. New York State Trooper John M. Grassia III, 30, was killed on Friday in a helicopter crash while flying over the U.S.-Mexico border in Texas while serving with the National Guard, the New York State Troopers Police Benevolent Association Board of Directors said in a statement on Saturday.

"Trooper Grassia, who was dedicated to serving and protecting not only the citizens of New York State but also the citizens of the entire United States, will be remembered for his ultimate sacrifice," the statement said. Grassia joined the New York State Police in April 2022 and was most recently assigned to Troop G.

Casey Frankoski, a New York National Guard helicopter pilot died in Friday's crash while patrolling the U.S.-Mexico border, said Rensselaer, New York Mayor Michael Stammel in a statement.

"Our heartfelt condolences go out to the Frankoski family as we collectively mourn the loss of a beloved city native and dedicated patriot," Stammel said.

The cause is under investigation, JTF-North said.

In a statement Saturday, President Biden said he and first lady Jill Biden "extend our deepest condolences to their families and loved ones, as well as their colleagues in the National Guard and U.S. Border Patrol. We pray for the injured Guardsman's swift recovery."

A National Guard spokesperson previously told CBS News that the helicopter went down in La Grulla, Texas, located about 40 miles west of the border city of McAllen.

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/national-guard-helicopter-crash-la-grulla-texas/>

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Mayor: Woman killed in border helicopter crash was Rensselaer native Casey Frankoski

WRGB, March 10, 2024 ::
Mar 18, 2024

RENSSELAER, NY (WRGB) — In a Facebook post Saturday, Rensselaer Mayor Mike Stammel announced that one of the people killed Friday in a helicopter crash near the Texas-Mexico border was a New York National Guard pilot and city native.

“Rensselaer is deeply saddened to hear of the sudden passing of Casey Frankoski, a remarkable New York National Guard helicopter pilot who tragically lost her life in a helicopter crash on Friday while patrolling the US-Mexico border. A proud native of Rensselaer and distinguished graduate of Columbia High School, Casey was not only an excellent student but also excelled in sports and community service before joining the New York National Guard,” Stammel said.

The mayor identified Frankoski's father as retired Rensselaer Police Chief James Frankoski, noting a family history "deeply rooted in public service. " He said her legacy resonates throughout the community.

Stammel concluded, "Our heartfelt condolences go out to the Frankoski family as we collectively mourn the loss of a beloved city native and dedicated patriot. Please keep all of the victims and families in your prayers.”

In addition, a post on the official Rensselaer County Facebook page indicates that John Grassia, an Albany County resident and trooper with the New York State Police, was also killed in the crash. We have reached out to NYSP for additional information.

<https://cbs6albany.com/news/local/mayor-woman-killed-in-border-helicopter-crash-was-rensse-laer-native-casey-frankoski>

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2 soldiers, Border Patrol agent dead in helicopter crash near Texas-Mexico border

**NBC, March 10, 2024 ::
Mar 18, 2024**

Two U.S. National Guard members and a Border Patrol agent were killed and a fourth person was injured when a helicopter went down near Rio Grande City, Texas, on Friday, officials said.

Officials in New York identified the two soldiers who died as Army National Guard members Casey Frankoski and John Grassia III. The Border Patrol agent was identified as Chris Luna by the Department of Homeland Security.

The injured person is also a New York Army National Guard soldier, according to the National Guard Bureau.

The UH-72 Lakota helicopter crashed around 2:50 p.m. local time while it was "conducting aviation operations" in the area of Rio Grande City, on the border of Texas and Mexico, according to a statement from the Defense Department's Joint Task Force North.

The helicopter had been assigned to a support mission at the southwest border of the U.S., the statement said.

Michael Stammel, the mayor of Rensselaer, New York, said in a post on Facebook that Frankoski was a Rensselaer native and excellent student who "excelled in sports and community service before joining the New York National Guard," where she was a helicopter pilot.

Grassia, 30, joined the New York State Police in April 2022 and was most recently assigned to Troop G, according to the New York State Troopers Police Benevolent Association.

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/2-soldiers-border-patrol-agent-dead-helicopter-crash-texas-mexico-bord-rcna142589>

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New York State Trooper, female National Guard pilot identified as two of the three victims killed in Texas helicopter crash at southern border

**Daily Mail, March 9, 2024 ::
Mar 18, 2024**

A New York state trooper who was killed in a National Guard helicopter crash near the southern border on Friday afternoon has been identified as 30-year-old John M. Grassia, III.

Grassia had joined the New York State Police in April 2022 and was with Troop G, serving with the National Guard in Texas when the chopper went down alongside a New York National Guard soldier and a border patrol agent.

'Trooper Grassia, who was dedicated to serving and protecting not only the citizens of New York State but also the citizens of the entire United States, will be remembered for his ultimate sacrifice,' the New York State Troopers PBA union said in a statement.

Grassia was killed alongside New York National Guard soldier Casey Frankoski who was also identified as the second of three crash victims, the Mayor of her home town of Rensselaer, New York, Mike Stammel said.

New York state trooper John M. Grassia III, 30, who served in NYSP's Troop G, was killed in a National Guard helicopter crash near the southern border on Friday

“Rensselaer is deeply saddened to hear of the sudden passing of Casey Frankoski, a remarkable New York National Guard helicopter pilot who tragically lost her life in a helicopter crash on Friday while patrolling the US-Mexico border,' the Mayor said in a posting on Facebook.

'Our heartfelt condolences go out to the Frankoski family as we collectively mourn the loss of a beloved city native and dedicated patriot.

'Casey comes from a family deeply rooted in public service, and her legacy as an American hero resonates throughout our community.'

Frankoski was the daughter of the city's former police chief and the town's flags have been put at half-mast as a mark of respect.

County Executive Steve McLaughlin extended condolences to Grassia's family while noting how the National Guardswoman 'represents the best of our nation.'

Rensselaer High School graduate Jacob Pratt, another National Guard soldier, was also injured in the crash and is fighting for his life The Times Union reported.

The helicopter was New York National Guard Lakota chopper

A Custom & Border Patrol agent who was killed has not yet been named.

The cause of the UH-72 Lakota helicopter crash remains under investigation.

The chopper had been on federal orders working with Border Patrol and assigned to assist with the border crisis in Texas and came down at about 2:50pm close to Rio Grand City, Texas along the Mexican border, officials said.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-13178803/New-York-State-Trooper-female-National-Guard-pilot-identified-two-three-victims-killed-Texas-helicopter-crash-southern-border.html>

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