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Serving the New York Army and Air National Guard, Naval Militia, New York Guard and Families



FROM THE LEADERSHIP

People Make the New York National Guard Extraordinary

As the latest assistant adjutant general, Army for the New York National Guard, I am honored to follow in the footsteps of Major General Michel Natali, an outstanding officer and a mentor.

As I transition into this role, after 25 years of commissioned service at the company, battalion, brigade and division level, I look forward to working with Major General Ray Shields, the adjutant general, to strengthen the New York Army National Guard.

Our three primary objectives for this force—as outlined by the adjutant general—are safety, strength and readiness.

Each of these priorities center on our personnel.

Our service members and civilian employees are our most vital resource. Quite simply, they are the cornerstone of our mission. Without their dedication and service, organizational success is impossible.

We need more well trained, physically fit, and mentally ready Soldiers to fill our ranks. And we need to ensure that the demanding, realistic training we do is done safely.

I was privileged to serve as the assistant division commander, support for the 42nd Infantry Division from 2025 to 2026 during Operation Spartan Shield and Operation Epic Fury.

I saw just how good our Soldiers are under stress and how important each man and woman is.

I've also had a chance to serve as Director of Joint Staff, overseeing the civil support missions our Soldiers, Airmen, Naval Militia members and New York Guard volunteers conduct regularly.

Serving in this role found me traveling across our state and witnessing first-hand the exceptional dedication and hard work of our service members conducting state active-duty missions.

Each of you exemplifies a high state of readiness and an unwavering commitment to jump into action whenever the people of our state call for help.

During my travels across New York, I was always asked: "What does the Director of Joint Staff (DJS) do?

That officer coordinates operations which involve more than one of our components. The job requires managing the transition from standard training to State Active Duty (SAD) operations during natural disasters, civil disturbances, or health crises.

This synchronization of intelligence, logistics, and personnel tracking provides the adjutant general and the governor with a real-time operational picture. I am proud to say we have a first-rate team operating at Division of Military and Naval Affairs headquarters to make this happen.

Whether executing a federal deployment or responding to local emergencies in Buffalo or New York City, our joint staff ensure New York forces are prepared for everything from high-tech cyber defense to boots-on-the-ground disaster relief.

To share the scope of these missions, here is a quick look at what servicemembers have been doing in 2026:

Joint Task Force Empire Shield, which has been in place since September of 2001, continues to patrol transportation hubs in New York and ensure a safer subway system as directed by the governor.

Joint Task Force Sentinel, our force working with the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision, continues to maintain a strength of 3,000 personnel. We are supplementing the corrections officers at 32 facilities across the state.

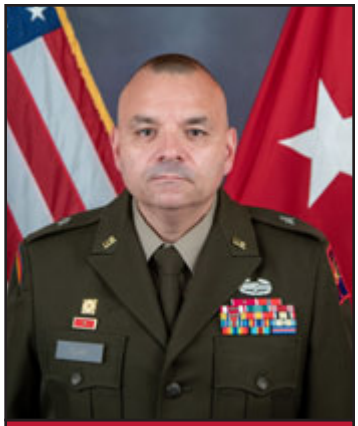
The 2nd and 24th Civil Support Teams- Weapons of Mass Destruction continue to train and support local law enforcement when required across the region and in New York City.

Our FEMA Region II Homeland Response Force, maintained in concert with the New Jersey National Guard is ready to provide a 570 force to respond to Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear incidents.

The Counterdrug Task Force employs 140 personnel in drug demand reduction and supports law enforcement agencies each day.

The Citizens Preparedness Corps works with the Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Services daily to prepare New Yorkers to cope with disasters.

The 23-Soldiers Critical Infrastructure Protection Mission Assurance Assessments Detachments works daily at evaluating threats to critical defense assets and infrastructure.



Maj. Gen. Patrick Clare

The Cyber Incident Response Teams stand ready to surge computer security experts from the Army and Air Guard to cope with cyber threats to industry, business or government. We also have a team providing full-time cybersecurity support to the state.

Our state partnership programs with South Africa, Brazil, and Sweden builds capacity and capability with our allies on three continents.

Our New York military personnel carrying out these operations live the National Guard motto of "Always Ready, Always There."

Your achievements continually set the benchmark for National Guard excellence nationwide. gt



HANCOCK FIELD, N.Y. —Civil Air Patrol members assigned to the Northeast Region pose for a photo while conducting a disaster preparedness exercise and emergency services academy at Hancock Field Air National Guard Base on June 25, 2026. During the training academy, members from across the region obtained CAP certifications to participate in real world operations. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Alexander Rector, 174th Attack Wing.

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WEST POINT, N.Y. — Members of the New York Army National Guard's 42nd Infantry Division Band perform during a ceremony held a the United States Military Academy at West Point on June 14, 2026. The Band played at concerts across New York from June 25 to July 4. Photo by Major Rolando Sierra, 42nd Infantry Division.

FRONT COVER: U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Patrick Williamson, a special missions aviator assigned to the New York Air National Guard 106th Rescue Wing, sits in an HH-60W Jolly Green II search and rescue helicopter at Francis S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base, Westhampton Beach, N.Y., July 3, 2026. The helicopter was preparing to take off to participate in the FourLeaf Air Show at Jones Beach, Wantagh, New York. Photo by Staff Sgt. Sarah McKernan, 106th Rescue Wing.

BACK COVER: New York Army National Gaurd Capt. Eliott Morse, assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 101st Infrantry Regiment makes a radio call on Fort Drum, N.Y., Aug. 10, 2026. Morse was speaking with flight crews attached to the 42nd Combat Aviation Brigade while conducting Air Assault training. Photo by Sgt. First Class Andrew Valenza, 42nd Infantry Division.

Governor Kathy Hochul, Commander in Chief
Maj. Gen. Raymond Shields, The Adjutant General
Eric Durr, Director of Public Affairs
Lt. Col. Jean Marie Kratzer, Public Affairs Officer
Stephanie Butler, Guard times staff

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New York Air Guard Welcomes New Command Chief

Story by Eric Durr, Guard Times staff

LATHAM, N.Y. — Chief Master Sgt. Lynette Tangredi, a Mechanicville resident, became the top enlisted leader of the New York Air National Guard during an August 6 ceremony at New York National Guard headquarters in Latham.

Tangredi replaced Command Chief Master Sgt. Joseph Hewson, a resident of Oakdale on Long Island, who is retiring after 40 years of service.

Tangredi, who has also served in the Scotia-based 109th Airlift Wing, is the principal advisor on enlisted Airmen issues to Major General Gary Charlton II, the commander of the 5,908-member New York Air Guard.

Tangredi is responsible for issues involving the health, welfare, morale, training, and professional development of New York's 4,876 enlisted Airmen.

In his comments, Charlton praised Tangredi's dedication to duty over 26 years of service, and her leadership skills. "I have an immeasurable amount of respect for you, for your service, your integrity and the way you care for Airmen," Charlton told her."

"You have my trust, you have my ear, and when you speak on matters affecting our force, I will listen intently," he added.

During her remarks, Tangredi thanked her family for their support during her military career, which has included deployments to Antarctica, Greenland, and the Middle East.

She also thanked Charleton for putting his faith in her, and promised that she would do her best to look out for every member of the New York Air Guard's enlisted force.

"Stepping into the role of state command chief is one of the greatest challenges of my career, and I do not take this responsibility lightly," Tangredi said.

"I am ready for the challenge," she said.

"I am ready for the responsibility of ensuring every Airman in our formations are prepared for today's fight, developed to become tomorrow's leader, and knows that they are heard," Tangredi added.

Tangredi, enlisted in the Air Force in August 1997 and trained as a computer systems operator. She was initially assigned to the 83rd Communications Squadron at Langley Air Force Base in Virginia.

After a three-year break in service, she joined the Nevada Air National Guard in 2003. In June 2004, she joined the 109th Airlift Wing at Stratton Air National Guard Base.

Tangredi served in a number of positions of increasing responsibility in the 109th Airlift Wing. These included head of cybersecurity for the 109th Communications Flight, first sergeant of the 109th Security Forces Squadron, and superintendent of the 109th Comptroller Flight.

She also worked as civil operations program manager and criminal analyst for the New York National Guard Counterdrug Task Force.

Tangredi deployed to Greenland and Antarctica in support of the 109th Airlift Wing's unique polar airlift capabilities, and in 2021 she deployed to Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar, as superintendent for the 379th Air Expeditionary Wing's comptroller squadron.



Maj. Gen. Gary Charlton II, the commander of the New York Air National Guard, left, presents the New York Air Guard's guidon to Command Chief Master Sgt. Lynette Tangredi, the top senior enlisted leader of the New York Air National Guard, during her assumption of responsibility ceremony held on Thursday, August 6, 2026 at New York National Guard headquarters in Latham, New York. In her new role, Tangredi acts as the key advisor to Charlton on all issues regarding the New York Air Guard's enlisted force. Photo by Stephanie Butler, Guard Times staff.

Tangredi served as the senior enlisted leader for the 105th Airlift Wing's Force Support Squadron from 2023 to 2025. At the same time, she served at the New York Air National Guard headquarters managing the Active Guard and Reserve personnel program.

Her most recent job was senior enlisted leader in New York Air National Guard headquarters and also serving as director of military personnel for the New York Air Guard.

Tangredi holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Excelsior College, an Associate of Applied Science in Human Resources from the Community College of the Air Force, and a Master of Science in Management from Excelsior College.

She is a graduate of the Navy Senior Enlisted Academy in Newport, Rhode Island, and the Reserve Component National Security Course in Washington, D.C.

Tangredi's holds multiple awards of the Air and Space Achievement and Commendation Medals and the Meritorious Service Medal. gt

Activation of the New York Air National Guard Recruiting and Retention Squadron

Story by Eric Durr, Guard Times staff

LATHAM, N.Y. — The New York Air National Guard activated its first Recruiting and Retention Squadron during a Wednesday, July 29 ceremony at New York Air National Guard headquarters in Latham, New York.

Maj. Joshua Bowers assumed command of the newly created squadron, accepting the New York Air National Guard Recruiting and Retention Squadron guidon from Army Major General Ray Shields, the adjutant general of New York.

Previously the New York Air Guard's recruiters had worked for the five New York Air Guard wings.

The Army National Guard has recruited centrally for years with Recruiting and Retention Battalions in each state. New York's Army Recruiting Battalion has been number one in the nation for the last four years.

The 66 personnel in the squadron, including 38 recruiters, will now work directly for the commander of the New York Air National Guard, Maj. Gen. Gary Charlton II.

Nationally, all 54 state and territory Air Guards are creating dedicated statewide recruiting elements. But only New York is large enough to be designated as a squadron. The others are flights.

The goal, Shields said, is to use the "synergy" of the statewide recruiting effort to bring more people into the New York Air National Guard.

"We are a people focused organization," Shields said.

"Our people—service members, civilian employees, and contractors—are the very heart and soul of our organization," he said. " Without them we cannot do anything. "



Army Guard Maj. Gen. Ray Shields, the adjutant general of New York passes the squadron guidon to Maj. Josh Bowers, commander of the New York Air National Guard Recruiting and Retention Squadron, during the activation and assumption of command of the squadron at New York National Guard headquarters in Latham, NY on July 29, 2026. The ceremony marked the activation of the first New York Air National Guard Recruiting and Retention Squadron. Photo by Stephanie Butler, Guard Times staff.



Army Guard Maj. Gen. Ray Shields, the adjutant general of New York stands next to Maj. Josh Bowers, commander of the New York Air National Guard Recruiting and Retention Squadron for the unveiling of the squadron guidon during the squadron activation ceremony held at New York National Guard headquarters in Latham, NY on July 29, 2026. Photo by Stephanie Butler, Guard Times staff.

"The new Recruiting and Retention Squadron takes our people focused priority to a new level in the Air National Guard," Shields emphasized.

New York created an ad hoc recruiting "concept squadron" in 2025 and immediately saw results, Shields said.

The New York Air National Guard now stands at almost 103 percent of authorized strength, he said. And in 2026 New York's Air Guard is leading the nation with 477 new recruits, Shields added.

In his remarks, Bowers acknowledge Shield's emphasis on the importance of recruiting.

"Filling the ranks is pivotal to our state and national defense," Bowers said.

"Without the right people in those seats, our aircraft won't fly, our supply lines will seize, and our communities don't get disaster relief when crisis strikes," he added.

The Air National Guard as a whole, with a directive to reach its authorized strength of 106,700 from an assigned strength of 103,605 Airmen, authorized the creation of centralized recruiting efforts across the 54 state and territorial Air Guards.

According to Bowers, the New York Air National Guard, with an assigned strength of 5,908 personnel is at 102.8 percent of its authorized strength of 5,748 Airmen.

Working as a statewide recruiting force will allow the Air Guard recruiters to allocate more resources to a particular wing to help fill specific job requirements, Bowers explained. gt

Honor Guard Welcomes Home Remains of World War II Airman After 84 Years

Story by Eric Durr, Guard Times staff

LATHAM, N.Y.—When Army Air Corps 2nd Lt. Joseph Burke came home to Troy, New York on May 1, 2026-- 84 years after he left-- New York Army National Guard Soldiers welcomed him at the airport.

Joseph Leroy "Roy" Burke was captured by the Japanese in May 1942 in the Philippines and held prisoner for over two years. He was killed inadvertently by U.S. forces in January 1945, as he was being transported to Japan on an unmarked prison ship.

His remains were never identified, and he was interred with 431 other unknowns at the National Military Cemetery of the Pacific in Hawaii.

But in 2025, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency used DNA donated by the son of Burke's sister to identify his remains.

The family elected to bring him home to Troy, New York, where he had grown up, gone to college and first learned to fly.

New York Army National Guard Lt. Col. Michael Squires, the executive officer of the 42nd Combat Aviation Brigade, served as the casualty assistance officer and worked with the family to coordinate the shipment of Burke's remains to Albany International Airport.

He was happy to help bring closure to the Burke family, Squires said.

"His parents weren't able to have that closure; his brother and sisters weren't. But now, knowing his brothers and sister and parents, see from up above what we're doing to honor Roy in this time," Squires said.

When the casket arrived at the Albany airport at 4:35 p.m. on board a Southwest Airlines flight, ten members of the New York Army National Guard's Honor Guard were there.

They conducted a dignified transfer, moving the casket containing the remains of 2nd Lt. Burke from the airplane to a waiting hearse as TV camera filmed and family members watched.

The event, which is not considered a ceremony, took about a minute, but took a week to plan and prepare for, said Staff Sgt. Ryan Gosse, the Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge of the state Honor Guard.

Gosse, who has served on New York's Army Guard Honor Guard since 2018, said a lot of coordination is involved.

Normally, Honor Guard members work in teams of two, so getting ten Soldiers together means making sure schedules mesh, he said.

It also means coordinating with the airport to get the team onto the tarmac in a timely manner and working with the baggage.

Three Soldiers in Army combat uniforms wearing white gloves arrived at the aircraft first. They went into the cargo hold and ensured no baggage was around the casket and removed the cardboard shipping carton, Gosse explained.

They also made sure that dog tags for Burke were hanging from the front of the casket and that the flag on the casket was secured.

They assisted airport baggage handlers in moving the casket onto a luggage truck. Then the seven-member honor guard, clad in dress blue uniforms, moved forward in formation. They picked up the casket, turned, and briskly transported Burke's remains to the hearse.

Watching it was very emotional, according to John Burke, one of Joseph Burke's nephews.

"To see the coffin come off, the honor guard go out, his dog tags hanging from the front, it's just, it's a lot." he said.

Following a memorial service at Siena University where he went to college just outside Albany, Burke was interred at the Gerald B. Solomon Saratoga National Cemetery. The cemetery is located near the historic Revolutionary War battlefield.

Burke received the honors due to a Soldier killed in action. These included a firing party, the playing of taps, and a "six-man fold" of the American flag.

"It's one of the highest honors we can give anybody," Gosse said. "And since he was, unfortunately KIA, we want to give him as much respect as possible."



Soldiers assigned to the New York Army National Guard Honor Guard prepare to carry the coffin containing the remains of Army Air Corps 2nd Lt. Joseph L. Burke from a Southwest airliner to a waiting hearse at Albany International Airport in Latham on May 1, 2026, during a dignified transfer of remains. Burke was taken prisoner by the Japanese in the Philippines in 1941 and killed by U.S. aircraft inadvertently in 1945. His remains were identified in 2025 and returned to his family in Troy, New York. Photo by Master Sgt. Jamie Spaulding, 109th Airlift Wing.



Army Air Corps 2nd Lt. Joseph Leroy "Roy" Burke and his parents Kathryn and William, prior to his deployment to the Philippines in 1941. Joseph Burke, who grew up in Troy, New York, died as a prisoner of the Japanese in January 1945. His parents passed away in 1966 and 1963, respectively. His remains were identified in 2025 and returned to his family on May 1, 2026. Courtesy photo.



NY National Guard Headquarters Marks Memorial Day

LATHAM, N.Y. — Air National Guard Maj. Gen. Gary Charlton II, commander of the New York Air National Guard, left, and Command Chief Master Sergeant Michael Hewson salute while taps is played during the New York National Guard headquarters Memorial Day ceremony in Latham, N.Y. on May 21, 2026. Photo by Stephanie Butler, Guard Times staff.



Kicking off America 250 Birthday Celebration

STEWART AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, N.Y. — Maj. Gen. Gary Charlton II, commander of the New York Air National Guard, addresses the men and women of the Patrouille de France aerial demo team on their arrival to the 105th Airlift Wing at Stewart Air National Guard Base, New York, June 7, 2026. Charlton and Brig. Gen. Ryan Dannemann, 105th Airlift Wing commander, welcomed the Patrouille de France to New York and the United States as they begin their Liberty 250 mission for the United States' 250th birthday. Photo by Staff Sgt. Sarah Post, 105th Airlift Wing.

Specialized NY Team Masters Evaluation Challenge

Story and photos by Stephanie Butler, Guard Times staff

AMSTERDAM, N.Y.— Local police and fire had reports of radioactive material at Amsterdam, New York's Shuttleworth Park.

Now, the 21 Airmen and Soldiers of the New York National Guard's 2nd Civil Support Team had to find the radiation source and identify it for local first responders and state agencies.

The survey team members, Air Guard Tech Sgt. Karlie Foster and Army Guard Sgt. Jacob Crocetta, put on breathing apparatus's and hazmat suits with the help of other team members.

Then they boarded a utility vehicle loaded with gear and went into the park to find the radiation source.

They identified the radiation source, but then Crocetta hit his head and was down, simulating a man down event. Now the team had to extract him as well.

This was the day-one scenario for a two-day evaluation conducted by the National Guard's Civil Support Training Activity.

There are 11 collective tasks a CST—officially known as a Weapons of Mass Destruction Civil Support Team—must demonstrate proficiency in during an evaluation, explained Willie Coleman, the head of the evaluation team.

Civil Support Teams were established to provide expertise in identifying chemical, biological, and radiological hazards to local governments in each state. Additionally, they assess the hazard, advise local incident commanders and assist with requests for additional support. Some states, like New York, have two.

The 2nd CST is based out of the Stratton Air Base in Scotia, N.Y. It handles mission in upstate New York and is prepared to travel anywhere in Federal Emergency Management Agency region II. The 24th CST, based out of Fort Hamilton in Brooklyn, and is responsible for New York City and Long Island.

Every 18 months the CST personnel must demonstrate their proficiency.

The members of the 2nd CST started the day not knowing when the emergency call would come in or where they would go.

Once they got to the location with their vehicles, they deployed just as they would in a real-world situation.

The complication was the simulated head injury, said Sgt. Evan Cunningham, a 2nd CST survey team member.

Cunningham's survey team was sent in to retrieve Crocetta and take him back to the decontamination station. Then another team took over and put him through the decon process so that he could be safely moved to get further care.

That process went smoothly, Cunningham said.

"My partner was super helpful. We were able to communicate well," he said.

"We got him on the sked stretcher, which is what we used to drag him out, and got him out, handed off the medical team, and it was pretty seamless didn't really have any major issues," Cunningham added.

Lt. Col. Andrew McClure, the commander of the 2nd CST, said he was really pleased with his Soldiers and Airmen.

"I saw a flawless extraction of the man down, there was zero hesitation, which is what we're talking about, when saving a life, we can't hesitate," McClure said.

He wasn't surprised because the CST trains regularly, McClure added.

"As always, the military is always improving our processes and how we do things. The more we do it, the more confident we are and we will find out whether something's working the way we wanted to," said McClure.

The 2nd CST trains habitually with local fire departments and police, state agencies and federal agencies like the Federal Bureau of Investigation, McClure said.

During the June 9 exercise members of the New York State Police Contaminated Crime Scene Emergency Response Team—the State Police version of the CST—were on hand as well, as they would likely be in real life.

"We want to make sure our processes, our standard operating procedure, and the way



New York National Guard 2nd Civil Support Team, Sgt. 1st Class Joshua Slish, decon NCO, (right) and Staff Sgt. Tyler Center, survey team chief (left), gather contaminated items during the certification process in Schenectady, N.Y. on June 11, 2026. The 2nd CST based out of Stratton Air National Guard base is one of two New York National Guard CST teams. These teams are required to be federally certified every 18 months.

we do business are prepared for a real-world response," explained Lt. Ian Turner, the 2nd CST's, entry control officer.

During a response Turner controls the entry and exit of the survey teams into and out of the contaminated "hot" zone.

The second part of the two-day evaluation took place on June 11 in a Schenectady, New York hotel.

The training scenario on June 11 focused on working inside a building. The CST members found the dangerous material and then set up a lab in place to analyze it.

At the end of both days, the evaluators determined that they had once again met the standard, said Air Guard Lt. Col. James McCauley, the training officer for the New York National Guard's joint operations directorate.

The 2nd CST's evaluation was also observed by five members of the Swedish Army, who were there as part of the New York National Guard's training partnership with Sweden's military.

Sweden and New York have been paired through the National Guard's State Partnership Program since 2024.

Sgt. Sanna Johansson, a Swedish Army decontamination specialists noted a couple of differences between the way her Army does things versus the National Guard.

"The most significant difference between how we do this in Sweden, is that you throw everything away afterwards," she said.

"In Sweden, we try to take everything back and reuse," she explained.

"Also, when we are going in, we're going in armed, that is the huge difference," she said.

The Swedish Army focuses more on the wartime aspects of a Chemical, Biological, Radiological or Nuclear (CBRN) explained Capt. Anton Palmgren, who is assigned to Sweden's CBRN Defence Center.

"We are equipped to do warfare, so we go in armed, we're a little more army heavy," he explained

"From peacetime, all the way through wartime, prepared for mass deconing for both scenarios, Palmgren added.

"In Sweden, we usually train for mass decon, up to 100 people, here it's 2 to 4 people," explained Johansson.

"The decon line is also a bit smaller than ours. In Sweden, it can be up to from 10 meters to 300 meters long," she added. gt



New York National Guard Sgt. Theodore Albright, decontamination NCO (Center) demonstrates part of the decontamination process prior to starting the certification process in Amsterdam, N.Y. on June 9, 2026. The 2nd CST based out of Stratton Air National Guard base is one of two New York National Guard CST teams.



New York National Guard 2nd Civil Support Team (CST) Sgt. Evan Cunningham, survey team member, and Sgt. Jesse Simonetty, survey team member drag the simulated man down during the CST federal certification process in Amsterdam, N.Y. on June 9, 2026.



Greenlandic Soldier Recognized for Aiding U.S. Soldier by NY National Guard

Story by Eric Durr, Guard Times staff

Maj. Gen. Ray Shields, the adjutant general of New York, left, and Richard Anderson, the Air Force's assistant secretary for manpower and reserve affairs, present a challenge coin to Lance Corp. A.M. Sethsen, a Greenlandic member of the Danish Army, on May 19, 2026, in Kangerlussauq, Greenland. Sethsen was presented with the coin to thank him for his quick actions in helping NY Army National Guard Command Sgt. Major Cory Cush when Cush fractured his leg in a running accident. Shields and Anderson were in Greenland visiting members of the New York Air National Guard's 109th Airlift Wing. Photo by Col. Eric Underhill, 109th Airlift Wing.

KANGERLUSSAUQ, Greenland— A misstep while running outside the airport in Kangerlaussauq, Greenland, resulted in a broken leg for New York Army National Guard Sgt. Major Corey Cush, on May 18, 2026.

A combined effort involving Danish military personnel, Greenlandic civilian medical personnel, and New York Air Guard Airmen got him patched up and back home for advanced medical treatment two days later.

The "rapid, coordinated treatment" of Cush, the New York National Guard's senior enlisted leader, demonstrated how New York Guardsmen and Danish military personnel have learned to work together seamlessly, according to Col. Eric Underhill, the deputy commander of the New York Air Guard 109th Airlift Wing.

Cush was in Greenland with Major General Ray Shields, the adjutant general of New York, and Richard Anderson, the Air Force's assistant secretary for manpower and reserve affairs visiting members of the 109th Airlift Wing operating in Greenland.

Fortunately, Danish Army Lance Corp. A.M. Sethsen, a Greenland native who teaches at the Danish Joint Arctic Command's Arctic Basic School saw Cush go down and immediately moved to help the sergeant major.

A Danish Army medic responded quickly as well.

They treated Cush and moved him to the nursing station at the airport, Underhill said.

Danish Army doctors responded, as did Air Guard Lt. Col. Kevin Collins, the 109th's flight surgeon.

The Danish doctors determined that while Cush would need additional treatment, there was no need to evacuate him immediately. They applied a cast to stabilize his leg.

A team from the 109th's 139th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron—Dr. (Lt Col) Kevin Jones, Capt. Justine Bottorff, and Master Sgt. Rebecca Eldred—flew into Kangerlussauq on May 19.

The three comprised a Critical Air Transport Team. These are medical personnel who specialize in moving badly injured patients.

On May 20, Cush was on his way back to Stratton Air National Guard Base. When he arrived, he was taken immediately to nearby Albany Medical Center for the more complex care he required.

The combined Danish, Greenlandic and American effort demonstrates the "critical strength and strategic value of our Arctic alliances," said Anderson, the Air Force undersecretary.

"This immediate, unified action by Greenlandic first responders, Danish military medical personnel, and the 109th Airlift Wing demonstrates flawless interoperability," Anderson emphasized. gt

Colonel Christopher Weisshaar Assumes Command of the 107th Attack Wing

Story and photo by Capt. Jason Carr, 107th Attack Wing

NIAGARA FALLS AIR RESERVE STATION, N.Y. — Airmen of the New York Air National Guard, 107th Attack Wing welcomed a new Wing Commander as Col. Christopher H. Weisshaar assumed command of the 107th Attack Wing during a ceremony at Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station.

Weisshaar succeeds Col. Andrew Carlson, who retired earlier in May 2026.

A career aviator with more than 4,000 flight hours, including over 1,000 combat hours, Weisshaar now leads the unit responsible for the wing's flying operations, training, and mission readiness.

As wing commander, Weisshaar is responsible for the training and readiness of the 760 airmen that carry out the wing's mission, ensuring Airmen remain prepared to support operations at home and around the world.

Weisshaar expressed his gratitude to the 760 airmen under his leadership.

"It's imminently humbling to have 760 airmen entrusted to you. To be quite frank, many of these individuals perhaps make more on the outside. And yet they still sacrifice their time away (from careers), from their families, when really they don't have to," he said.

Weisshaar brings more than two decades of military experience to the role. Commissioned through the United States Naval Academy, he began his career as a Naval Flight Officer before transitioning to the Air National Guard.



Col. Christopher Weisshaar assumes command of the 107th Attack Wing from Maj. Gen. Gary Charlton, June 6 2026 at Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station. Weisshaar brings more than two decades of military experience to the role. Commissioned through the United States Naval Academy, he began his career as a Naval Flight Officer before transitioning to the Air National Guard.



Col. Christopher Weisshaar assumes command of the 107th Attack Wing, June 6 2026 at Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station. During his time in naval aviation, Weisshaar deployed in support of operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Horn of Africa. Over the course of his career, he has served in a variety of operational roles, including instructor, evaluator, and mission commander

Weisshaar's resume reflects extensive experience with remotely piloted aircraft, which includes both tactical field operations and strategic-level management. He noted his operational background in the Middle East and Africa, as well as his leadership roles overseeing these programs at a command level.

During his speech Weisshaar recognized the past, present, and future challenges facing the airmen of the 107th.

"The road ahead is demanding, but I have absolute faith in the professionals here before me today," he said.

During his time in naval aviation, Weisshaar deployed in support of operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Horn of Africa. Over the course of his career, he has served in a variety of operational roles, including instructor, evaluator, and mission commander.

Before becoming wing commander, Weisshaar was named the wings' Operations Group Commander in March earlier this year.

Prior to coming to Niagara, he held several senior leadership positions across the Air National Guard, and the Department of Defense, Pentagon, and the National Guard Bureau, helping shape future mission capabilities for the Air National Guard.

In 2022, Weisshaar was selected as a National Security Fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School, where he studied national security and leadership alongside military and civilian leaders from across the country.

Outside of his military career, Weisshaar previously served as a police officer in Jacksonville, Florida.

"I know that trust is not transferred with a flag, trust is transferred one conversation, one event at a time, and I'm committed to earning yours every single day," Weisshaar said. gt

NY Air National Guard Strengthens International Partnerships Through the Military Reserve Exchange Program

Story and photos by Tech. Sgt. Alexander Rector, 174th Attack Wing

SYRACUSE, N.Y. — The 174th Attack Wing, headquartered in Syracuse, NY, hosted two German military officers for a two-week visit as part of the Military Reserve Exchange Program this June.

The program, which pairs U.S. National Guard and reserve members with service members of allied nations, was founded in 1986, and is celebrating 40 years since its inception. Participants who volunteer for the program are matched with foreign military members with similar military occupational specialties.

"We're just trying to exchange ideas with our good friends in the U.S.," said 1st Lt. Matthais Roessler, a technology advisor assigned to NATO's Joint Air Power Competence Center, and one of the program's participants. "We're the 40th class, so it's quite a longstanding program."

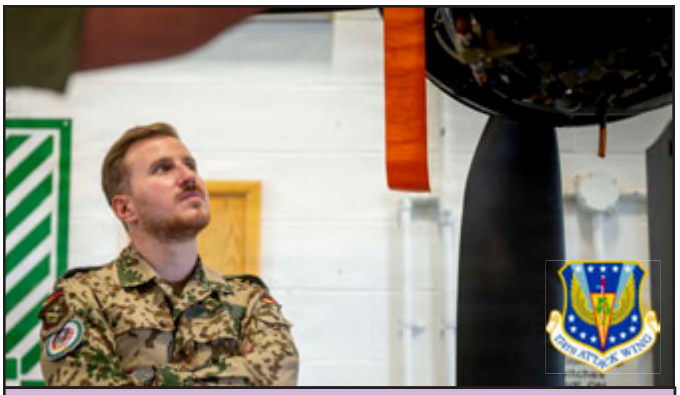
During their visit, the German participants toured U.S. Air Force facilities here at Hancock Field Air National Guard Base and visited the Eastern Air Defense Sector in Rome, NY.

"It was quite impressive to see how the Air National Guard is integrated into the joint force doctrine in the U.S.," said Roessler. "There's a lot of flexibility between people working across the force and different domains, from active-duty, Air Force Reserves and the National Guard themselves."

Joining Roessler on the exchange was Capt. Joshua Tewalt, an operations officer assigned to Germany's Cyber and Information Domain Service. "I always viewed myself as a kind of cross-cultural kid," said Tewalt, who has family members living in the U.S. "I was always going back and forth during my youth."

In addition to visiting EADS and Hancock Field, Roessler and Tewalt toured Stratton Air National Guard Base, home of the 109th Airlift Wing. "I think the unit was really impressive because it's such a unique unit in the military," said Tewalt. "We saw how the ski-equipped C-130 Hercules operate and how they support all kinds of military and scientific missions."

Every year a large number of Allied and U.S. military applicants vie for a spot in the popular program and after an intensive selection process, only a small percentage are chosen to participate in the exchange. "In Germany this is considered to be one of the more prestigious programs," Roessler said. "Many active-duty officers are jealous and impressed by what this program offers. The application process is quite competitive."



German Armed Forces 1st Lt. Matthais Roessler, a technology advisor assigned to NATO's Joint Air Power Competence Center, tours the 174th Attack Wing Field Training Detachment during a visit to Hancock Field Air National Guard Base on June 10, 2026. During the tour Tewalt learned about MQ-9 Reaper maintenance courses conducted at the FTD in Syracuse, NY.

Hosting the Germans here at Hancock Field was Capt. Michael Szewil, the cyber systems flight commander for the 152nd Air Communications Squadron, 152nd Air Operations Group, 174th Attack Wing, New York Air National Guard.

Szewil, as their host, accompanied Roessler and Tewalt everywhere they visited. "During this trip they got to integrate with us at the 152nd Air Operations Group," said Szewil. "Our mission at the 152nd is augmenting the 603rd Air Operations Center at Ramstein Air Force Base, Germany, so it gives us an interesting connection to host these two German officers."

During his part of the exchange, Szewil is scheduled to travel to Germany for two weeks later this year. "I'm looking forward to seeing their unique missions," said Szewil. "These folks are doing some interesting work with the European Union's Ukraine support mission and a broader picture of what NATO is up to."

While the opportunities for travel abroad and learning about different missions overseas is an obvious draw for the program, those chosen for the exchange often learn more about their home units as well. "The best part has been getting their viewpoints and getting to highlight the Air National Guard and the 174th." said Szewil. "It's been great getting around base and seeing everything myself." gt



German Armed Forces Capt. Joshua Tewalt, an operations officer assigned to Germany's Cyber and Information Domain Service, and 1st Lt. Matthais Roessler, a technology advisor assigned to NATO's Joint Air Power Competence Center, pilots a MQ-9 Reaper simulator under the tutelage of Master Sgt. Isaac Swisher, a MQ-9 sensor operator assigned to the 108th Attack Squadron, during a tour of Hancock Field Air National Guard Base on June 02, 2026. During the tour Tewalt and Roessler learned about MQ-9 Reaper operations conducted at Hancock Field Air National Guard Base in Syracuse, NY.

Coast Guard Commander Visits 174th Attack Wing



HANCOCK FIELD, N.Y. — U.S. Air Force Maj. Nicole Clay, left, a MQ-9 Reaper pilot assigned to the 174th Attack Wing, accepts a commander's coin from U.S. Coast Guard Capt. Matthew Walter, commander of U.S. Coast Guard Sector Eastern Great Lakes, at Hancock Field Air National Guard Base, Syracuse, N.Y., July 13, 2026. Walter recognized Clay for her contributions to a joint search and rescue mission over Lake Erie on July 9-10, 2026, during which the 174th Attack Wing supported the U.S. Coast Guard's search for a missing boater. Photo by Staff Sgt. Dylan McCrink, 174th Attack Wing.

Ronald McDonald House Event



PALOMA, N.Y. — New York Army National Guard Soldiers show off Army equipment during a Ronald McDonald House event in Paloma, N.Y. on August 11, 2026. Ronald McDonald House provides a comfortable, temporary "home away from home" for families with seriously ill or injured children receiving medical treatment at nearby hospitals. Courtesy Photo.

NY Army Guard's 42nd Infantry Division Marks Return From Middle East and Operation Epic Fury Missions

Story by Eric Durr, Guard Times staff and Maj. Rolando Sierra, 42nd Infantry Division

TROY, N.Y. — Five hundred New York Army National Guard Soldiers assigned to the 42nd Infantry who deployed to the Middle East in June of 2025, and eventually conducted combat operations against Iran, were officially welcomed home Sept. 11-13.

During a Sept. 11 ceremony at the division's Troy, New York headquarters, Major General Jack James, the division commander, thanked them for their service.

On Sunday, Sept. 13, "Yellow Ribbon" events were held to salute Soldiers and families in Syracuse, New York National Guard headquarters in Latham, and on Long Island.

"I want to take the opportunity to thank each and every one of you personally, and the group together as a unit, because this will probably be the last time for sure that this exact group will be together," James told the Soldiers at the Troy ceremony on Sept. 11.

Members of the 42nd Infantry Division headquarters deployed to Kuwait to serve as the headquarters for Task Force Spartan, the Army's 10,000-Soldier force in the region.

The original mission focused on exercises with regional allies, such as Operation Brightstar in Egypt in September 2025. The 42nd Soldiers also conducted operations designed to build regional allies' military capacity and to deter regional aggression.

Following the deaths of two Iowa National Guardsmen and an interpreter in Syria at the hands of an Islamic State fighter on December 13, 2025, the division headquarters facilitated Operation Hawkeye Strike in retaliation.

At the same time, elements of the 42nd deployed to Pakistan to provide emergency relief after historic levels of flooding devastated the country. "Rainbow" Soldiers provided supplies, including generators, water pumps, tents, and cots.

When President Donald Trump made the decision to attack Iran and launched Operation Epic Fury on Feb. 28, the division headquarters began conducting combat operations. Some of the Soldiers began redeploying to Germany and then the United States while the command group coordinated operations.

On June 6, James and 42nd Division Command Sgt. Major Arnold Reyes furled the division's flag in theater, turning Army operations over to the Texas Army National Guard's 36th Division.

The turnover between the 42nd and 36th division headquarters was delayed so the 42nd Division could continue focusing on combat operations longer, according to Lt. Gen. Kevin Leahy, commanding general of U.S. Army Central and Third Army.

"This was one of the longest relief-in-place operations in history. It allowed two legendary divisions to work together, with the 36th stepping in to manage key tasks so the 42nd could maintain an uninterrupted focus on combat operations – some of the most complex combat operations in U.S. Army history," Leahy said during the June 6 ceremony in Kuwait.

During the Sept. 11 ceremony, James and Reyes unfurled the division's flag, signifying the official end of the mission after two years of preparation, deployment, execution and redeployment.

Holding the ceremony on the 25th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks was especially significant, James said, because 42nd Division Soldiers were the first Army Guard troops to respond when the Twin Towers fell in Manhattan.

After hostilities with Iran began, the 42nd Infantry Division became the primary Army headquarters effort leading Army long-range fires in support of the campaign, James told the Soldiers.

"How did we get this mission, guys, was that part of the original plan; I'll tell you if it's not. It was because of trust," James said.

"Our leaders, our NCOs, our Soldiers establishing credentials with ARCENT leaders… by consistently meeting the mission, by exceeding standards, and relentlessly building readiness," James added.

The 42nd Infantry Division Soldiers facilitated the destruction of countless targets in support of operations with the "largest and first long-range precision fires campaign in the history of the United States Army," James said.



Maj. Gen. Jack James (left) and Command Sgt. Maj. Arnold Reyes (right), the 42nd Infantry Division command team, case the division's colors during the Task Force Spartan transfer of authority ceremony June 6 in the Middle East. The New York Army National Guard's 42nd Infantry Division headquarters served as the command for the Army's Middle Eastern combat element during Operation Epic Fury. Courtesy photo.

James also saluted Major Sorffly Davius, the division deputy communications officer, who died because of a medical emergency on March 6 while conducting operations.

"He was just an amazing human being and a great officer, a great Soldier, and a great leader," James said.

The Yellow Ribbon ceremonies and events were designed to help Soldiers and their families reintegrate back into civilian life and let them know what benefits are available to them.

Five hundred and seventy-four people took part in the events held in Latham, at the Syracuse University Veterans Center and at the flight facility in Ronkonkoma, according to Robert Volk the State Family Program Manager.

The Soldiers learned about healthcare access, financial counseling, legal assistance and rights and educational benefits.

In Syracuse, Major General Ray Shields, the Adjutant General of New York, urged the 85 Soldiers and family members present to use the benefits they had earned.

Resources offered within The Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program include access to healthcare, financial counseling, legal benefits, and education, to name a few.

Maj. Gen. Ray Shields, the Adjutant General of New York, urged Soldiers and their families at the Syracuse, New York location to use the benefits they have earned. He praised them for their performance while deployed and noted that the governor had regularly asked him how they were doing in the Middle East.

Brig. Gen. Peter Fiorentino, the division deputy commander for maneuver, emphasized similar themes while speaking to 206 people gathered at the Long Island flight facility.

Col. Gurpreet Singh, who served as the division tactical operations center officer in charge, spoke to 280 people at the Latham gathering. He emphasized keeping information about the benefits they are entitled to and the importance of caring for their loved ones.

Reyes, the division's command sergeant major, thanked the families for their support during the deployment.

"This deployment was far from easy. There were long days, difficult missions, and moments that tested our Soldiers in ways that would break most people, said Reyes. I know none of this would have been possible without you, our families, and loved ones.

"You were the one keeping everything running back home. You were the ones managing the household. We know you sacrificed just as much as they did, and I truly wish I could shake every one of your hands and thank you personally," he added.

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New York Army National Guard Soldiers assigned to the 42nd Infantry Division and their family members listen to a benefits briefing during a Yellow Ribbon program conducted on Sept. 13, 2026, at the Syracuse University Veterans Center in Syracuse, New York. The program was held to familiarize the Soldiers and family members with the benefits due to them following a Middle East deployment which saw division headquarters members conducting combat operations against Iran following the start of Operation Epic Fury. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Alex Rector, 174th Attack Wing.

From New York to Scandinavia: Empire State Soldiers Train With Allied Partners in Sweden

Story by and photos by Master Sgt. Warren Wright, 42nd Infantry Division

KUNGSÄNGEN, Sweden — Eighty New York Army National Guard Soldiers spent their annual training working along side Swedish soldiers in Sweden's sprawling forests.

Instead of spending their two weeks of AT at Fort Drum, New York, the New York Soldiers were in Sweden as part of New York's State Partnership Program relationship with Sweden's military.

The two-week deployment, from April 24 to May 8, 2026, allowed the New York troops to participate in exercise Northern Lights 26, known as Aurora 26 in Sweden. The team included reconnaissance Soldiers from Troop C, 2nd Squadron, 101st Cavalry Regiment, and military police from the 105th Military Police Company, 102nd Military Police Battalion.

New York and Sweden inked a State Partnership Program deal in 2024 , but this was the largest training exchange to date. Previously small groups of military personnel have attended training events in each other's country.

For many of the Empire State Soldiers, the exercise was a series of firsts, from their first time leaving the continental United States, their first time operating under a foreign command, and their first experience of a remarkably different approach to reconnaissance and combat operations.



New York National Guard Soldiers with Troop C, 2nd Squadron, 101st Cavalry Regiment, and a Swedish Armed Forces servicemember, fire a 120 mm mortar during live-fire training as part of exercise Northern Lights 26, May 5, 2026. Northern Lights 26, also known as Aurora 26 in Sweden, is a multinational exercise involving 18,000 Soldiers from 13 countries aimed at strengthening defense capabilities and enhancing interoperability with international allies.

"Their (Swedish) reconnaissance assets are a mounted force, so the size of the movement and the durations are longer," said Capt. Ryan Sheehan, Troop C's commander. "We're usually only out there for 24 hours, maybe 48. Having them do reconnaissance for 72-plus hours gives my Soldiers a perspective on having to equip themselves for that."

Placed under the command of a Swedish reconnaissance company from the Guard's Regiment, Troop C's platoons had to overcome the unique challenges of navigating an entirely new command structure, eventually finding their footing and adapting successfully.

The differences extended into small-unit tactics. Pvt. Tyler Brundage, a Troop C infantryman from Elma, New York, noted that while U.S. doctrine favors establishing a static observation post, or OP, to monitor a target long term, Swedish reconnaissance elements prioritize continuous, fluid movement.

Brundage recalled one grueling mission that began with a six-mile ruck through thick vegetation to a highly camouflaged rally point, culminating in a stealthy nighttime movement through a residential neighborhood under the cover of darkness.

"It was super cool," he said. "We were walking, staying close to the forest, and we had to kick out onto a street, and some lady looked at us through the window. It was crazy because you're never going to see that in America."

Despite some of the small-unit tactical differences, the integration at the team level was seamless. Sgt. Matthew Jankowski, a team leader from Clifton Springs, New York, leading his first large-scale training event, credited his platoon leadership and the professionalism of the Swedish hosts for mitigating potential friction.

"We fell under Swedish command, and we had some Swedes embedded with us, but predominantly it didn't really change the mission very much," Jankowski said. "Whatever differences there might have been above my station were absorbed by my platoon sergeant and platoon leader."

Jankowski described the intense training as a bond-building "crucible."

"There were a lot of tough moments, but everyone knew there was a mission to do, and they knew what their part was," Jankowski said. "We had an excellent Swedish soldier with us... the integration was very seamless."

Brundage emphasized the advanced tactics and state-of-the-art technology used by the Swedish trainers to bring stark wartime realism to the training scenarios, driven by regional security concerns. He recalled his Swedish counterparts using a specialized 12-by-12-foot tarp designed to completely mask thermal signatures from overhead drone surveillance.

"When the drone pops up, and it sees a thermal signature across the whole forest, that tarp that all five of us are sleeping under... it all is the same heat signature," Brundage explained. "They treat everything so seriously."

For other New York Soldiers, the training extended beyond reconnaissance and infantry tactics. Spc. Myles McCoy, a military police specialist with the Buffalo-based 105th Military Police Company, spent his time in country partnering with Swedish MPs on detainee and combat operations while living out of field tents.

"This is my first time out of the USA," McCoy said. "Honestly, I love Sweden. (Northern Lights) gives us a lot of opportunity to not be so 'cone-visioned.' We're not just New York state. We're not just the U.S."

McCoy said he and his fellow Soldiers used their time working with the Swedish Armed Forces to build rapport, learn, exchange information, and make both sides better.

"Coming over to a place like Sweden shows you that there's a world outside of our own at a much larger capacity," he said. "There are a lot of people who want to fight for their own country and where they live, just like we do."

Both leaders and Soldiers agreed that Northern Lights 26 underscored the value of the program, proving that face-to-face engagements turn diplomatic agreements into tangible battlefield capabilities.

"It's one thing to put it on paper and say, 'Yeah, we're teamed with the Swedish,' but to actually get out here and train with them and truly team with them, I think that's an entirely different thing," Brundage said.

"I hope that we've made a good impact on them," Jankowski added. "I hope that they've enjoyed us as much as we've enjoyed them, and that we were able to build those relationships for a long time and be invited back to training events like this." **gt**



A Swedish Armed Forces service member (left) speaks with a New York Army National Guard Soldier with Troop C, 2nd Squadron, 101st Cavalry Regiment, during exercise Northern Lights 26, April 28, 2026. Northern Lights 26, also known as Aurora 26 in Sweden, is a multinational exercise involving 18,000 Soldiers from 13 countries aimed at strengthening defense capabilities and enhancing interoperability with international allies.



New York National Guard and Swedish Armed Forces Soldiers conduct a foot march to their exfiltration area following a 48-hour reconnaissance mission during exercise Northern Lights 26, May 3, 2026. Northern Lights 26, also known as Aurora 26 in Sweden, is a multinational exercise involving 18,000 Soldiers from 13 countries aimed at strengthening defense capabilities and enhancing interoperability with international allies.

New Exhibits at New York State Military Museum Employ Augmented Reality to Tell the Story of the 1777 Battle of Saratoga

Story by Eric Durr, Guard Times staff

SARATOGA, N.Y. — An addition to the exhibits at the New York State Military Museum in Saratoga Springs, which uses visitors' cell phones to tell a story, has been installed to help mark the 250th anniversary of the Battle of Saratoga in 2027.

Four life-sized banners featuring figures involved in the decisive series of battles which began on Sept. 19, 1777, and ended with surrender of the British Army on October 17, 1777, are featured in the exhibit.

Each poster features a QR code. When scanned the code opens a video on which a 3-D animated character representing that historic figure tells their story.

The four people featured are:

--Maj. Gen. Benedict Arnold who George Washington considered one of his best officers and played a key role in producing an American victory at Saratoga. But three years later Arnold would offer to sell-out Washington and the American fort at West Point to the British.



This banner of Benedict Arnold, the hero of the 1777 Battle of Saratoga, who later turned traitor to the American cause, lets visitors to the New York State Military Museum in Saratoga Springs, New York, learn about his story when they use their phone to scan a QR code. Four of these banners are now part of the exhibit at the museum which is run by the New York State Division of Military and Naval Affairs.

--British Lt. Gen. John Burgoyne, who came up with the plan to invade the northern states from Canada and who was forced to surrender to the Continental Army at Saratoga.

--Col. Daniel Morgan, a Virginian whose regiment of riflemen were sent by George Washington to reinforce the northern Army at Saratoga and who played a key role in the victory.

--Baroness Frederika Charlotte Louise von Riedesel, who accompanied her German office husband on the expedition south from Canda, along with her three daughters, and who kept a diary of her experiences.

During the battles fought at Saratoga in the fall of 1777, the Continental Army forced the surrender of just under 6,000 British and German mercenary troops which were sent to capture Albany, New York and cut New England off from the rest of the colonies.

The victory convinced France to openly side with the United States during the war, which forced the British to dilute their support for the war in America.

The museum, which tells the story of New Yorkers at war, includes a Revolutionary War exhibit, but this addition no the exhibit lends "a little excitement with the technology used," said Richard Goldenberg, the director of history for the New York State Division of Military and Naval Affairs

"We are so pleased here at the Military Museum to add these augmented reality banners that can give a voice to the history here in Saratoga," Goldenberg added.

The division, which is the state executive agency which administers the New York Army and Air National Guard, is responsible for the museum which holds thousands of artifacts including the largest Civil War flag collections in the world.

The posters were donated to the museum by the Friends of the New York State Military Museum, a not-for profit which supports the museum and the Rotary Club of Saratoga Springs. gt

New York Army Guard's 27th Brigade gets new Commander During West Point Ceremony

Story by Maj. Rolando Sierra, 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team

WEST POINT, N.Y. — Army National Guard Col. Matthew Kilgore, a Cornwall resident, assumed command of the 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, which is headquartered in Syracuse, during a Sunday, June 14 ceremony at his alma mater, the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York.

Kilgore, previously served as the chief of staff for the 53rd Troop Command headquartered at the Camp Smith Training Site in Cortlandt Manor, New York. He received his commission at the United States Military Academy at West Point in 2002.

Major General Ray Shields, the adjutant general of New York, presided over the ceremony.

"We know you are the right leader for the 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team as you are preparing for upcoming overseas deployments," Shields said. "Keep focusing on your people and building combat capable units."

In his new role, Kilgore oversees over 4,000 Soldiers across New York, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island. The 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team is headquartered in Syracuse, New York at the Syracuse Armory, both 1st Battalion, 182nd Infantry Regiment and 2nd Squadron, 101st Cavalry Regiment have units in Massachusetts, with 2nd Squadron also having assets in Rhode Island.

"I am truly honored and humbled to stand in front of you today as your next commander," said Kilgore.

Kilgore thanked New York Army National Guard leaders for the opportunity and their confidence in him. "I appreciate the guidance and mentorship you have shown and will take all of that into this critical position", he said.

Kilgore's deployments include mobilizations to Iraq and Afghanistan as well as serving in support of civil authorities both in a state and federal capacity.

In 2008, he transitioned to the New York Army National Guard and was selected for the Active Guard and Reserve program in 2009. He's led Infantry formations from platoon to the battalion level in the New York National Guard, and now he will lead at the brigade level as commander of the 27th IBCT.

During the 6 years he served on active duty, he fulfilled assignments as Rifle Platoon Leader, Anti-tank Platoon Leader and Company Executive Officer in 3rd Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division and Information Warfare Officer and COIC Battle Captain with the G3, 1st Calvary Division.

As a guardsmen, he served as an executive officer for the 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment, and as the commander of A Company of the New York Army National Guard's Recruiting and Retention Battalion.

He's commanded the 2nd Battalion, 108th Infantry Regiment, and served as the operations officer for the 53rd Troop Command. He's also served as operations officer for the New York Army National Guard and for the New York National Guard's Joint Force Headquarters.

Kilgore's military education includes the Command and General Staff Officer's Course, Advanced Operations Course, Defense Strategy Course, Air Assault School, Command and General Staff College, the U.S. Army War College, and the Reserve Component National Security Course.

His awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal, the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, the Meritorious Service Medal, the Army Commendation Medal, the Army Achievement Medal, the Iraq Campaign Medal, the Afghanistan Campaign Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service and Expeditionary Medals, the Armed Forces Service Medal, the NATO Medal, the Armed Forces Reserve Medal, the Combat Infantryman Badge, the Basic Parachutist Badge, and the Air Assault Badge. gt



U.S. Army Col. Matthew Kilgore, new commander of the 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 42nd Infantry Division, New York Army National Guard, receives the unit's colors from Maj. Gen. Ray Shields, the adjutant general of New York, during a ceremony conducted at the United States Military Academy at West Point, N.Y., June 14, 2026. This ceremony marked the change of command from Col. Bradley M. Frank, to Kilgore, presided over by Shields. Photo by Spc. Stuart Martin, 138th Public Affairs Detachment.

NY Air Guard's 107th Attack Wing Conducts Niagara Warrior 2026 Readiness Exercise

Story by Capt. Jason Carr, 107th Attack Wing

YOUNGSTOWN, N.Y. — One hundred Airmen assigned to the New York Air National Guard's 107th Attack Wing completedNiagara Warrior2026, a large-scale readiness exercise held April 10–12 at the Youngstown Local Training Area.

The exercise marked the first time Niagara Warriorwas conducted off base and incorporated support from a sister service.

In previous years, Niagara Warrior was held atNiagaraFalls Air Reserve Station and included an airlift around NiagaraFalls to simulate relocating to a new operating location under degraded conditions.

This year, two CH-47 Chinook helicopters assigned to the New York Army National Guard's 3rd Battalion, 126th Aviation Regiment, based in Rochester, transported Airmen to the Youngstown Local Training Area, a New York National Guard training site in Youngstown.

"Moving Niagara Warrior off base and adding Army aviation support gave our Airmen a more realistic look at what it takes to operate away from home station," said Lt Col Damon Antonetti, Chief of Wing Plans and Exercise Director.

For many Airmen, the flight was their first time aboard a CH-47.

Airman 1st Class Randi Fuller, a West Seneca resident and first-timeNiagara Warriorparticipant, said the helicopter ride was one of the early highlights of the exercise.

"I was really excited and anticipating motion sickness, but it never came," Fuller said.

Niagara Warrioris designed to test the wing's ability to operate in a contested or degraded environment while sustaining mission-essential functions away from home station.

The 2026 exercise demonstrated the wing's ability to deploy personnel, establish field operations, respond to simulated threats and work alongside Army Guard aviation assets in support of readiness training.



Staff Sgt. Darren Haudricourt, 107th Security Forces, takes aim at opposition force players during the wings Niagara Warrior exercise, April 12 2026, Youngstown NY. Haudricourt was assigned to the Quick Reaction Force for this particular simulated complex assault exercise, a team designed to respond immediately to developing threats, emergencies, or security incidents. Photo by Capt. Jason Carr, 107th Attack Wing.

Over the course of the three-day exercise, Airmen responded to complex assaults, simulated chemical attacks, communications outages and other challenges associated with operating from a field environment.

The play area also saw significant rain leading up to and during the exercise, further complicating both players and organizers plans and deployment.

"Austere conditions just add another level of realism our players could see down range," Antonetti said. Despite the rain and mud, Antonetti commended the players flexibility in the face of challenging, unpredictable weather. "Overall, I thought it was a good exercise," Fuller said.

"Once we got the all-clear to set up, the team worked quickly and efficiently to get people fed. We also learned we need to check the E-SPEK more frequently to make sure everything is in order before needing to use it."

The exercise also gave experienced Airmen an opportunity to guide junior personnel and identify areas for improvement.

Fuller served as the 107th Attack Wing's Military and Readiness Program Manager, and as an assistant food manager and Expandable Single Pallet Expeditionary Kitchen, or E-



Tech. Sgt. Zachary Woodworth, assigned to the 107th Communications Squadron and a member of the wings Fatality Search and Recovery Team (FSRT), takes cover from a simulated ambush during a downed aircraft exercise while participating in Niagara Warrior, April 12 2026, Youngstown NY. The FSRT is specially trained to recover and handle human remains in mass-fatality scenarios, including environments contaminated by chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear (CBRN) agents. Photo by Capt. Jason Carr, 107th Attack Wing.



Tech. Sgt. Colin King, 107th Security Forces, takes aim at opposition force players during the wings Niagara Warrior exercise, April 12 2026, Youngstown, NY. King was assigned to the Quick Reaction Force for this particular simulated complex assault exercise, a team designed to respond immediately to developing threats, emergencies, or security incidents. Photo by Master Sgt. Michael Owczarczak, 107th Attack Wing.



Airmen assigned to the 107th Attack Wing load into a CH-47 Chinook from Company 3rd Battalion 126th Aviation Regiment, April 10, 2026, Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station. Part of the 107th's Niagara Warrior large scale readiness exercise, this joint training provided CH-47 crews training with loading personnel, as well as providing 107th members with simulated rapid-deployment experience. Photo by Master Sgt. Michael Owczarczak, 107th Attack Wing.

SPEK, specialist during the exercise.

For Staff Sgt. Austin Childs, a NiagaraFalls resident who served as the radio frequency transmissions specialist for the exercise, communications planning was one of the defining challenges.

Childs said issuing equipment and adhering to call signs went well, but minor planning issues early in the exercise created larger challenges later.

"The communications squadron ultimately did very well, but minor, early planning oversights showed some areas to keep in mind moving forward," Childs said.

For Tech. Sgt. Andrew Mach, a North Tonawanda resident who served as the Security Forces flight chief for the exercise, communications affected a different part of the mission.

Mach was responsible for overseeing security forces personnel, coordinating operations and advising defenders on weapons employment, tactics and safety.

During the exercise, defenders responded to base defense operations, force protection condition changes and simulated threats that required quick decision-making and coordination across teams.

Early in the exercise, Mach said coordination gaps affected defenders' response time.

"It immediately reinforced the need for clearer command and control and more emphasis on rehearsing for contingencies," Mach said.

By the final exercise inject of the third day, Mach said he saw improvement in the unit's ability to adapt to changing conditions, maintain accountability and operate safely and effectively.

"Leadership, communication, and teamwork were strong," Mach said. "The exercise provided realistic, valuable training that strengthened readiness and highlighted our improvement areas."

174th Attack Wing Conducts Historic First, by Landing a MQ-9 Reaper at Lajes field, Portugal

Story and photo by Tech Sgt. Alexander Rector, 174th Attack Wing

LAJES FIELD, PORTUGAL — New York Air National Guardsman assigned to the 174th Attack Wing, conducted a historic first on Apr. 1st, 2026, by successfully landing an MQ-9 Reaper at Lajes Field, Portugal. The flight, demonstrated the Wing's ability to self-transport the MQ-9 Reaper remotely piloted aircraft from their home station in Syracuse, NY, to operational locations overseas.

The MQ-9, which has been operated by the Wing since 2009, is normally disassembled and transported as cargo in the C-17 Globemaster when transported intercontinentally. By self-transporting-- flying the aircraft-- requirement of disassembling the aircraft, loading it on another plane, reassembling it at the destination, and performing post-reassembly maintenance was eliminated.

"Flying the aircraft directly drastically reduces our reliance on heavy strategic airlift," said U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Jacob Wolfe, an aircraft maintenance supervisor.

"Flying the MQ-9 proves we can project power much faster, leaner, and with a significantly smaller footprint," he said.

Wolfe, along with a small contingent of maintenance personnel, headed to Lajes Field in advance of the flight to receive and refuel the MQ-9s and perform maintenance before conducting flights.

"This is Agile Combat Employment in action," Wolfe said. "By utilizing Lajes as a strategic steppingstone, we demonstrated that we can rapidly deploy, recover, and sustain operations with a minimal, highly adaptable maintenance team."

"Trans-oceanic flights push the limits of our standard operational envelope. We had to ensure seamless handovers over open water and closely manage fuel burn rates," Wolfe said. "From a maintenance standpoint, it required ensuring the aircraft was in pristine condition to handle the long duration and addressing any potential issues to ensure smooth transit."



A New York Air National Guard MQ-9 Reaper from the 174th Attack Wing taxis across the tarmac at Lajes Field, Portugal, Apr. 2, 2026. The Reaper, which took more than 10 hours to reach the Portuguese base, was serviced and refueled before embarking for its next destination.



New York Air National Guard Airmen assigned to the 174th Attack Wing, perform maintenance on a MQ-9 Reaper at Lajes Field, Portugal, Apr. 2, 2026. The Reaper, which took more than 10 hours to reach the Portuguese base, was serviced and refueled before embarking for its next destination.

The Wing, which has continuously operated the MQ-9 overseas in numerous combatant commands since 2009, demonstrated a first by working with Portuguese Air Force and U.S. Air Force personnel stationed at Lajes Field to demonstrate the safety and reliability of the MQ-9 platform in Portuguese airspace.

"Operating unmanned aircraft in sovereign airspace introduced a new dynamic that required trust, transparency, and close coordination with our host nation partners," said Lt. Col. Nathan Erickson, the 174th Attack Wing's chief of plans. "Working hand-in-hand with the Portuguese Air Force and the U.S. Air Force's 65th Air Base Group, our team focused on ensuring operations were conducted with the same predictability, professionalism, and safety standards as any manned aircraft mission."

Though the MQ-9 is remotely piloted, we needed our operations to look and feel routine to everyone involved, Erikson elaborated.

"After the first successful recovery and launch of an MQ-9, the lead Portuguese Air Traffic Controller noted that the MQ-9 behaved like all manned aircraft that flow through Lajes." Erickson said. "Each launch and recovery reinforced the notion that remotely piloted aircraft can seamlessly integrate into established airspace systems without disrupting existing operations." gt

The 106th Rescue Wing Demonstrates Combat Search and Rescue Capabilities in Support of America's 250th Anniversary

Story and photo by Staff Sgt. Sarah McKernan, 106th Rescue Wing



U.S. Air Force pararescuemen assigned to the New York Air National Guard 106th Rescue Wing, are hoisted into an HH-60W Jolly Green II search and rescue helicopter as part of a day-water rescue demonstration during the FourLeaf Air Show at Jones Beach, Wantagh, New York, July 3, 2026. The 106th opened the air show with its annual combat search and rescue demonstration, showcasing the integration of one HC-130J Combat King II aircraft, two HH-60W Jolly Green II helicopters and Guardian Angel personnel, consisting of pararescuemen and combat rescue officers, in a simulated personnel recovery mission.

FRANCIS S. GABRESKI AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, WESTHAMPTON BEACH, N.Y. — Airmen assigned to the New York Air National Guard 106th Rescue Wing celebrated 250 years of American independence by participating in the Sail4th 250 International Aerial Review flyover along the Hudson River on July 4.

They also demonstrated the wing's combat search and rescue capabilities at the FourLeaf Air Show over Jones Beach, July 5, 2026.

The 106th opened the FourLeaf Air Show with its annual combat search and rescue demonstration, showcasing the integration of one HC-130J Combat King II aircraft, two HH-60W Jolly Green II helicopters and Guardian Angel personnel, consisting of pararescuemen and combat rescue officers, in a simulated personnel recovery mission.

"For as long as I've been here, we've been doing a combat search and rescue demonstration to start off the show," said Lt. Col. Matthew Forbes, 106th Rescue Wing director of staff, and a HH-60W pilot.

"From there, we also provide an aircraft on alert with the Guardian Angel team, in the event that one of the air show participants finds themselves in the water, we are able to assist with extrication, recovery, and transport to higher medical care," he said.

According to Forbes, the demonstration began with a low pass and aerial maneuvering by the HC-130J to highlight the aircraft's capabilities. The HC-130J then joined the HH-60Ws for an aerial refueling demonstration before concluding with a simulated day-water rescue executed by Guardian Angel personnel and HH-60W teams.

The Sail4th 250 International Aerial Review featured 200 military aircraft flying over the Hudson River in coordinated formations, while more than 70 U.S. and international naval vessels sailed below.

The 106th's HC-130J flew as part of the second formation alongside a C-130J Super Hercules aircraft assigned to the 62nd Airlift Squadron, 314th Airlift Wing, Little Rock Air Force Base, Arkansas, said Major Nick Williams, a 106th HC-130J pilot and planner for the event.

"Flying down the Hudson River with all the fanfare, all the aircraft, and Navy ships, it was an amazing sight to see. It was an amazing way to celebrate America's 250th anniversary," said Williams.

The HH-60Ws flew in the fifth wave with a U.S. Coast Guard MH-60T Jayhawk helicopter. The formation also included aircraft from the U.S. Army, U.S. Marine Corps and U.S. Navy, said Forbes.

The aerial review required more than a year of planning and extensive coordination across the joint force, according to Forbes.

Nearly 200 aircraft flew along the Hudson River in approximately 30 minutes.

Airman 1st Class Richard Horton, an HH-60W crew chief with the 106th, said the flight was an amazing event.

"Being in formation with 20-plus helicopters flying through Manhattan to celebrate America's 250th; being able to take part in a flyover like that was a dream come true," he said.

Participating in both the FourLeaf Airshow and the historic International Aerial Review was an opportunity to celebrate America's 250th anniversary while showcasing the 106th's mission ,Forbes said.

"Both of these events are right in our backyard so getting to fly up the Hudson, pass the Statue of Liberty on America's 250th birthday is pretty special," Forbes said.

"It's a lot of work for everybody involved but I think it's well worth it to see the execution and be a part of something that has, either never been done before, or will never be done again in the near future," he continued. gt



HH-60 Pave Hawk Lands to Pick Up JTACs

FORT DRUM, N.Y. — A U.S. Air Force HH-60 Pave Hawk helicopter crewed by Airmen from the 106th Rescue Wing, New York Air National Guard, lands to pick up Canadian joint terminal attack controllers at the 174th Attack Wing air-to-ground gunnery range at Fort Drum, N.Y., May 14, 2026, during Exercise Hungry Horse. The exercise provides U.S. and Canadian forces the opportunity to conduct joint training operations designed to improve communication, strengthen tactical coordination, and enhance mission effectiveness in simulated combat environments. Photo by Staff Sgt. Dylan McCrink, 174th Attack Wing.



Canadian JTACs Observe HH-60 Training at Fort Drum

FORT DRUM, N.Y. — Two Canadian joint terminal attack controllers observe HH-60 Pave Hawk helicopters crewed by Airmen from the 106th Rescue Wing, New York Air National Guard, at the 174th Attack Wing air-to-ground gunnery range at Fort Drum, N.Y., May 14, 2026, during Exercise Hungry Horse. The exercise provides U.S. and Canadian forces the opportunity to conduct joint training operations designed to improve communication, strengthen tactical coordination, and enhance mission effectiveness in simulated combat environments. Photo by Staff Sgt. Dylan McCrink, 174th Attack Wing.

105th CES Environmental Team Wins Restoration Award

Story by Airman Kamila Dul, 105th Airlift Wing



Members of the Stewart Air National Guard Base (SANGB) Restoration Advisory Board, designed to provide a forum for effective two-way communication between the community and the New York Air National Guard about the environmental work that is being conducted at SANGB, tours the water decontamination project site and its state-of-the-art equipment on May 30, 2024 . Photo by Master Sgt. Daniel Hotter, 105th Airlift Wing.

STEWART AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, N.Y. — The 105th Civil Engineer Squadron environmental office recently won the 2025 General Thomas D. White award for Environmental Restoration at Stewart Air National Guard Base, Newburgh, New York.

This award recognizes the exemplary performance of an individual or team supporting an installation, major command, U.S. Air Force or U.S. Space Force Environmental Restoration Program effort. The Air National Guard winner of this award each year is forwarded to compete at the Department of the Air Force level against all other MAJCOM nominees.

After Stewart ANGB was determined to have perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS) contamination that impacted the local area and public drinking water back in 2016, the community needed a solution. The 105th's environmental office teamed up with residents of Newburgh to develop a plan.

In early 2020, the Stewart Air National Guard Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) was created to review the environmental remediation projects.

The RAB is made up of representatives from the NYANG, local environmental groups, local and state government officials and Newburgh community members. They hold quarterly public meetings to inform and engage with the community, as well as receive public feedback.

The restoration teams have led numerous successful projects which have made a significant impact on the community, according to Michael Oettinger, 105th CES's environmental manager.

"Bringing together a diverse group of stakeholders who share a common goal has been a key factor in our progress," said Oettinger. "By combining the expertise of our base personnel, environmental partners and the local community we've been able to accelerate restoration efforts and move critical projects forward."

Oettinger held a key role and was credited for his hard work and dedication in these efforts.

"Mike has been dealing with this for over a decade and he hasn't lost the energy or the drive to better the process, so he has definitely gone above and beyond," said Lt. Col. Thomas Maguire, 105th Mission Support Group commander and chair of the RAB for Stewart ANGB. "From my perspective, I'm so comfortable with him making these decisions. I just know that they're well researched and the projects he oversees are always on time."

The environmental team has used over $16 million in funds for restoration projects since the RAB was created.

Significant improvements were made around the area to reduce PFOS contamination. A state-of-the-art foam fractionation system with Granulated Activated Carbon polishing was deployed to control contaminated groundwater and prevent off-base migration. Additionally, 6,600 ft of deteriorated stormwater infrastructure will be restored, creating an impassible barrier and reducing the risk of PFOS migration through utility lines.

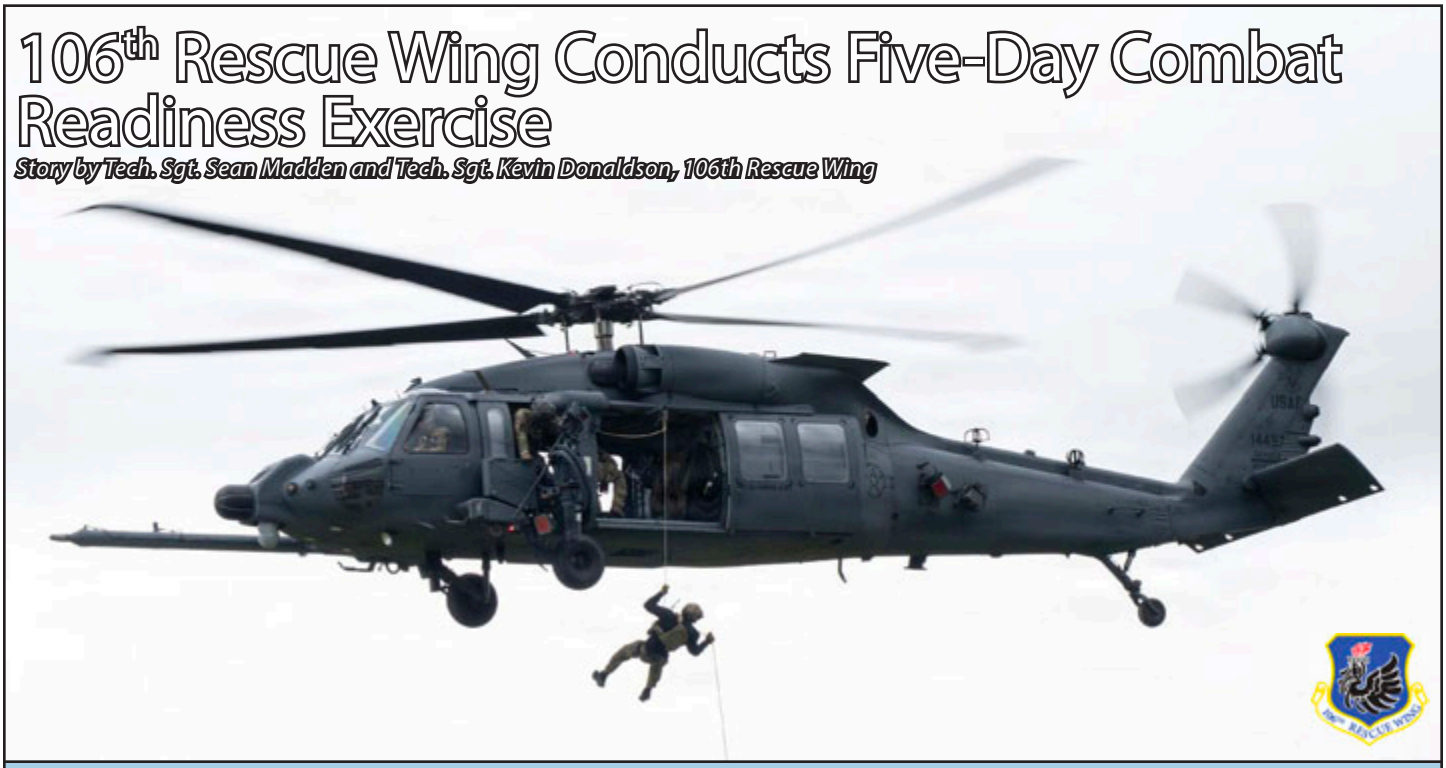
The team also forged a strong partnership with New York State's Department of Environmental Conservation and Department of Health ensuring seamless coordination and a unified message.

"This award reflects meaningful progress but there is still work to be done," said Oettinger. "Our focus remains on continuing restoration efforts that protect human health and the environment while reducing the further spread of PFOS contamination."

The CES Environmental Office placed first across the entire Air National Guard and was runner-up at the Department of the Air Force level. gt

106th Rescue Wing Conducts Five-Day Combat Readiness Exercise

Story by Tech. Sgt. Sean Madden and Tech. Sgt. Kevin Donaldson, 106th Rescue Wing



U.S. Air Force pararescuemen assigned to the New York Air National Guard 106th Rescue Wing conduct rappel operations during an Air Combat Command Combat Readiness Inspection at Fort Drum, New York, May 14, 2026. Combat Readiness Inspections are designed to assess a unit's ability to quickly mobilize, deploy and carry out mission-essential tasks in challenging and contested environments. Photo by Staff Sgt. Sarah McKernan, 106th Rescue Wing.

FRANCIS S. GABRESKI AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, N.Y. — More than 1,000 Airmen assigned to the 106th Rescue Wing completed a five-day combat readiness exercise, testing every element of the unit's operations and personnel recovery and combat support capabilities across two geographically separated locations from May 12 to 16, 2026.

Exercise Northern Horizon, which involved all subordinate squadrons of the wing, was conducted at Francis S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base in Westhampton Beach, N.Y., and Fort Drum, N.Y., home of the Army's 10th Mountain Division.

Planners designed the exercise to validate the wing's readiness to execute its federal combat search and rescue mission under realistic, high-stress, and operationally challenging conditions. Participants trained continuously across day and night shifts, with scenarios incorporating simulated combat environments, medical emergencies, security breaches and coordination with Army medical personnel at Fort Drum's expansive training areas.

"Our goal going into this thing was to really test our wing, to check our readiness, to give our Airmen the opportunity to get the reps and sets in that they need before they find themselves in a similar situation down range," said Col. Jeffrey Cannet, commander of the 106 Rescue Wing.

Aircrews from the 101st Rescue Squadron flew HH-60W Jolly Green II helicopters in simulated personnel recovery missions, launched from F.S. Gabreski and forward-operating scenarios staged at Fort Drum. Helicopter crews flew sorties, refining navigation, rescue operations, and austere landing zone procedures throughout the exercise.

"We were tasked with a homeland defense scenario to provide rescue forces to Northern Command," said Lt. Col. James Liston, commander of the 101st Rescue Squadron and served as the Personnel Recovery Task Force Commander at Fort Drum, throughout the exercise.

"We started with some call for fire events, live fire, live gunnery," Liston said. "We also conducted personnel recovery integration training with our Guardian Angel team."

Pararescuemen of the 103rd Rescue Squadron operated alongside combat rescue officers and air crews, executing recovery tasks at Fort Drum. Teams rehearsed isolated personnel recovery, field trauma care, and tactical movement to landing zones, reinforcing the Guardian Angel concept that pairs pararescuemen with combat rescue officers during recovery missions.

"We tested our ability to pack up, deploy, set up and execute missions," said MSgt. Wes Loignon, a pararescueman with the 106th Rescue Wing. "We ran a couple of different scenarios where we had to recover pilots who had ejected."

Aircrews of the 102nd Rescue Squadron flew HC-130J Combat King II aircraft in command-and-control roles while providing overwatch for recovery missions. Crews also transported over 100 Airmen to and from both areas of operation.

The 106th Maintenance Group kept aircraft mission capable throughout the exercise, with crew chiefs and aircraft maintainers working around the clock to meet mission requirements. Maintainers also deployed a forward maintenance element to Fort Drum, practicing expeditionary repair and



U.S. Air Force pararescuemen assigned to the New York Air National Guard 106th Rescue Wing conduct rope ladder operations during an Air Combat Command Combat Readiness Inspection at Fort Drum, New York, May 14, 2026. Photo by Staff Sgt. Sarah McKernan, 106th Rescue Wing.

aircraft turnaround procedures.

The 106th Medical Group established a forward operating aid station at Fort Drum that received simulated casualties, processing patients through triage and stabilization. Army medics embedded with the 41st Engineer Battalion, 10th Mountain Division, participated alongside 106th Medical Group Airmen.

Medical also had tests of endurance, adaptability and medical proficiency. Teams cycled through scenarios with each iteration requiring them to assess and move simulated casualties through a set of obstacles, including a water crossing, a six-foot wall, barbed wire and a bridge.

> "Everyone had a piece of the mission and everyone succeeded"
>
> *- Command Chief Master Sgt. Edward Rittberg,Senior Enlisted Leader 106th Rescue Wing.*

Airmen of the 106th Security Forces Squadron defended base assets and personnel at both locations. They faced several simulated trespassing and attack scenarios including an unmanned aircraft, or drone, attack and an active-shooter drill.

Wing intelligence personnel built and disseminated threat briefings and mission planning products, while communications specialists maintained secure network operations along with voice and data links between F.S. Gabreski and Fort Drum throughout operations. Logistics readiness Airmen managed fuel accountability, transportation, and supply chains that sustained the geographically split operation.

Officials from the Inspector General's office observed the exercise events to assess and compile a review to identify training gaps and informs future readiness events.

Wing leadership indicated a strong performance across the force.

"Everyone had a piece of the mission and everyone succeeded," said Command Chief Master Sgt. Edward Rittberg, senior enlisted leader of the 106th Rescue Wing. "We couldn't be happier with the way it turned out, and we're proud of every Airman on this installation." gt



U.S. Air Force pararescuemen assigned to the New York Air National Guard 106th Rescue Wing conduct rappel operations during an Air Combat Command Combat Readiness Inspection at Fort Drum, New York, May 14, 2026. Photo by Staff Sgt. Sarah McKernan, 106th Rescue Wing.



U.S. Air Force pararescuemen assigned to the New York Air National Guard 106th Rescue Wing transport a simulated survivor during an Air Combat Command Combat Readiness Inspection at Fort Drum, New York, May 14, 2026. Photo by Staff Sgt. Sarah McKernan, 106th Rescue Wing.

Crew and Aircraft from the 109th Airlift Wing Attend Airshow

Story by Master Sgt. Jamie Spaulding, 109th Airlift Wing



OSH KOSH, Wis. - 109th Airlift wing Crew and Aircraft from the 109th Airlift Wing attend EAA Airventure Airshow in Osh Kosh Wisconsin, July 2026

OSHKOSH, Wis. — The New York Air Guard's 109th Airlift Wing joined more than 10,000 aircraft and hundreds of thousands of aviation enthusiasts last week at EAA AirVenture Oshkosh, the world's largest annual gathering of aircraft and airmen, showcasing the unit's one-of-a-kind polar airlift mission to a global audience.

Held each summer at Wittman Regional Airport, AirVenture transforms the small Wisconsin city into what organizers bill as the "World's Greatest Aviation Celebration." For one week, Oshkosh's airport becomes the busiest in the world, logging tens of thousands of takeoffs and landings and drawing pilots, families, industry leaders and military units from across the globe. This year the event set an all-time attendance record of roughly 734,000 people from 94 countries, with more than 10,000 aircraft flying in and over 1000 commercial exhibitors on the grounds.

"There's no better place than Oshkosh to show people what we do," said Maj. Joe Shanahan, an LC-130 navigator who accompanied the aircraft to the show."

"You spend your career flying to the most remote places on the planet, the ice runways of Antarctica, the Greenland ice cap, and then you get to park the Skibird right here in front of hundreds of thousands of people who love aviation as much as we do. Talking with kids who might one day fly this mission, and with veterans who remember the Hercules from their own service, reminds all of us why this work matters. It's been an incredible week," he said.

For 20 Airmen of the 109th Airlift Wing, based at Stratton Air National Guard Base in Scotia, New York, the show offered a rare opportunity to bring their mission directly to the public.

The wing operates the LC-130 "Skibird," a ski-equipped variant of the C-130 Hercules and the only aircraft of its kind in the U.S. military. Fitted with retractable skis, the LC-130 can land on snow and ice runways in some of the most extreme environments on Earth, making the 109th the Defense Department's sole provider of polar airlift.

Each year the wing flies missions in support of the National Science Foundation, delivering passengers, fuel and cargo across the ice sheets of Greenland and to research stations throughout Antarctica as part of Operation Deep Freeze. That mission set draws steady crowds at Oshkosh, where visitors can walk up to the aircraft, meet the aircrews and maintainers, and hear firsthand what it takes to operate at the top and bottom of the world.

AirVenture traces its roots to 1953, when Paul and Audrey Poberezny founded the Experimental Aircraft Association and hosted a small fly-in with a handful of homebuilt airplanes and fewer than 150 registered visitors. The gathering outgrew its original Milwaukee-area home, spent a decade in Rockford, Illinois, and moved to Oshkosh in 1970, where it has grown into an international event now more than seven decades in the making. The show was renamed "AirVenture" in the late 1990s.

The 109th Airlift Wing's aircraft and personnel will remain on display for the remainder of the show, continuing to connect with the public and, as Shanahan put it, perhaps inspiring the next generation of Airmen to take on one of the military's most distinctive flying missions. gt

109th Airlift Wing Volunteers Restore Iconic LC-130 Gate Guard, Preserving the Wing's History

Story and photos by Jaclyn Lyons, 109th Airlift Wing

SCOTIA, N.Y. — The first plane people see when they visit the New York Air National Guard's 109th Airlift Wing, is one that hasn't flown in decades.

Known affectionately as "Old 490," the LC-130 has stood watch at the entrance of Stratton Air National Guard Base in Scotia since 1994.

The "skibird" -equipped with skies as well as wheels, serves as a symbol of the wing's storied Arctic legacy.

But, after more than 30 years exposed to New York's weather, the static display had begun to show its age.

Recently, a team of volunteer Airmen gave the aircraft new life, carefully restoring its distinctive gray-and-orange paint scheme while preserving an important piece of the wing's history.

Leading the restoration effort was Staff Sgt. Devin Slovak, a structural maintenance specialist assigned to the 109th Airlift Wing's Structural Maintenance Shop. Slovak volunteered for the project because of both his experience with restoration work and his appreciation for the unit's heritage.

"We have so much history with the Greenland and Antarctic missions, and that interests me a lot," Slovak said. "I like doing this kind of detailed work, and I've done a lot of historical restoration with my father in construction."

The aircraft had not been repainted since it was transported to the base after serving as a student training aircraft at the former Chanute Air Force Base in Illinois.

Before becoming a training aircraft, the LC-130 flew with the Alaskan Air Command before joining the 109th Airlift Wing's fleet from 1975 to 1985.

During its operational career, the aircraft delivered personnel and supplies throughout Greenland, supporting the Distant Early Warning Line. The DEW Line was a network of radar sites that provided the United States and Canada with early warning of potential Soviet bomber attacks across the Arctic during the Cold War.

Restoring the aircraft required some preparation before the first coat of paint could be applied. Volunteers replaced broken windows and painted them black, sanded weathered surfaces and carefully masked sections of the aircraft before repainting it.

A volunteer call was sent across the base, inviting Airmen with supervisor approval to help complete the project over several days.

"We prepped the surface, then painted the whole plane back to its original look with the glossy gray paint scheme," Slovak said. "This is one of the first planes to have the gray-and-orange paint scheme. It's important to the legacy and history of the unit."

The orange was painted on the planes so they would show up when viewed from above, in case an aircraft had to make an emergency landing on the polar ice.

The restoration is expected to be more than a one-time effort. Wing members plan to wash the aircraft annually and perform routine maintenance to help preserve its appearance for years to come.

For Slovak, maintaining "Old 490" reflects the same pride Airmen take in the aircraft that continue to fly today.

"I think it's important to have a level of professionalism to keep things looking good and running well," Slovak said. "It shows that even though the plane's not flying, we're still maintaining it."

Standing at the entrance to the installation for more than three decades, "Old 490" has welcomed generations of Airmen, families and visitors.

Thanks to the efforts of volunteers, the aircraft will continue to serve as a reminder of the 109th Airlift Wing's enduring mission in the Arctic and the legacy built by those who flew it.

The 109th Airlift Wing flies the largest airplane in the world which has the ability to land on snow and ice in polar regions. The wing flies missions in support of Air Mobility Command missions in Greenland and Antarctica. gt



A team of volunteer Airmen assigned to the 109th Airlift Wing, Scotia, New York, work together to repaint the static display that sits at the entrance of the base. The LC-130D model originally flew with the Alaskan Air Command before flying with the 109th from 1975-1985. It was brought back to the base as a static display in 1994.



New York Guard Unit Celebrates 250th Anniversary of Declaration of Independence

Story by 1st Lt. Ed Shevlin, New York Guard Headquarters

NEW YORK CITY — Twenty-seven service members of the 88th Company of the New York Guard marched in the "Freedom Parade" on 9 July 2026. The event marked the 250th anniversary of the first public reading of the founding document of the United States of America.

The first public reading of "The Declaration" in New York took place at Bowling Green in downtown Manhattan beneath an equestrian statue of the British King George the II on 9 July 1776 after the news of independence reached the city. Soon after the reading, patriotic citizens toppled the statue and melted it down to make musket balls.

" If I were there in 1776, I would have been pulling on the rope to get that statue down," said 1st Lieutenant Sophia Labarbara, leader of the 88th's 2nd Platoon.

The parade was led by the Emerald Society Department of Sanitation Pipe and Drum Band and stepped off from City Hall Park at 1800 hrs.

It then proceeded half a mile south on Broadway to Bowling Green. The parade was joined by many patriotic organizations including, the Sons of the American Revolution, the Daughters of the American Revolution, The American Legion, Revolutionary War reenactors and others.

Upon arriving at Bowling Green, the participants formed into ranks and recited The Pledge of Allegiance. The reading of the Declaration of Independence was undertaken by several different people who each read an assigned portion of the document.

Though organized in a very short time, the Freedom Parade attracted several hundred marchers and many parade viewers who lined the parade route.



The 88th Company Marching past St. Paul's Church on Broadway during the 250th Anniversary celebration in New York City on July 9, 2026. St. Paul's Church was built in 1766 and was the place where George Washington worshipped when New York City was the nations capital.

Hilary Byrne, a long-time organizer of the New York City St Patrick's Day Parade, lent a hand as an organizer for the Freedom Parade.

"I am very happy for the turnout today. It is great to see the New York Guard here on this historic day as we commemorate the first reading of our founding document," Said Byrne.

Following the ceremonies, several service members retired to Fraunces Tavern, the historic pub/restaurant where General George Washington bade farewell to his officers of the Continental Army at the end of the Revolutionary War.

"This was a great opportunity to educate some of the younger Soldiers in the 88th," said Chief Warrant Officer 3 Arthur Brown.

" I don't think that they teach students American history the way I learned it anymore. Our Declaration of Independence is one of the most important documents in the world, and I am happy to commemorate it," Brown said. gt



Soldiers of the 88th Company posed for a picture after the reading of the Declaration of Independence in Bowling Green during America 250 celebrations on july 9, 2026. The 88th Company marched in the Freedom Parade which commemorated the first public reading of the Declaration of Independence in Bowling Green on July 9, 1776.

Brazilian Naval Officer Observes NY Naval Militia Exercise as Part of State Partnership Program

Story by Stephanie Butler, Guard Times staff

IONA ISLAND, N.Y.— A Brazilian naval officer braved cold spring rain, and a choppy Hudson River alongside the crew of the New York Naval Militia's Landing Craft 351 on May 30, 2026 as they executed Exercise Empire Challenge 2026.

"The weather is much different in Brazil," said Lt. Cmdr. Ramon Lucena dos Santos, as he tried to keep warm while watching the Naval Militia team establish an exclusion zone in the river as the exercise played out.

Lucena was in New York as part of the State Partnership Program training relationship between Brazil's military and the New York National Guard. The New York National Guard and Brazil have been partners since 2019.

On May 30 and 31, 20 Naval Militia members joined with members of the New York Guard, the state's volunteer defense force, and employees of the New York State Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Services, or DHSES, for a series of drills.

The drills tested communications skills, the use of drones for a search and rescue mission, and the Naval Militia's ability to shut down maritime traffic in an emergency.

At the same time, members of the New York National Guard's 53rd Troop Command were conducting a command post exercise at nearby Camp Smith Training Site, based around a response to a hurricane hitting the Hudson Valley and New York City.

The Naval Militia mobile command trailer, and New York Guard shortwave radio operators, got a chance to exchange messages with the DHSES's "Command One", emergency response headquarters.

His job, Lucena explained, was to watch how the various agencies worked together and see what his Navy can learn.

"The integration of all the many agencies are very useful for the overall success of the exercise," Lucena said.

Mike Carl, a radio engineer with the DHSES Office of Interoperable and Emergency Communications, said participating in the Empire Challenge Exercise, first staged in 2017, is always useful training.

The annual exercise has simulated challenges ranging from natural disasters to biological weapons attacks while working with federal, state and local agencies and the National Guard, said Marine Capt. Recordo Demetrius, the officer in charge for Empire Challenge.

"It's always good to see a different set of eyes, how they interpret how we operate, they can give some positives or even some feedback that we might not know," Demetrius said. gt



Lt. Cmdr. Ramon Lucena dos Santos from the Brazilian Navy drives Landing Craft 351 during Empire Challenge 2026, May 30, 2026. Brazil is part of the State Partnership Program. The SPP pairs state National Guard's with the militaries of countries around the world in bilateral training and exchange partnerships. Empire Challenge is an annual exercise involving several state and federal agencies working together in a training environment to establish cohesion in preparation for a disaster. Photo by Stephanie Butler, Guard Times staff.



New York National Guard service members monitor operations from the Emergency Operations Center during a Command Post Exercise hosted by the 53rd Troop Command at Camp Smith Training Site, Cortlandt Manor, New York, May 29, 2026. Photo by Sgt. Rosa Ibarra, New York Guard.



New York Naval Militia members as well as State Partnership Program (SPP) Airman and Lt. Cmdr. Ramon Lucena dos Santos from the Brazilian Navy (second from the right) stand for a photo onboard Landing Craft 351 prior to getting underway as part of Empire Challenge 2026 on the Hudson River, May 30, 2026. Photo by Stephanie Butler, Guard Times staff.

