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Volume 17 Number 4

# guardtimes

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



# FROM THE LEADERSHIP

## Soldiers, Airmen must be ready for anything

**A**s the new commander of the 42nd Infantry Division, I am honored to lead the men and women of our Division.

The Rainbow Division has a proud history of service that began in World War I and continued through World War II and the Iraq War. Today, our division headquarters is preparing to deploy once again to the Middle East and command Army forces in the region.

I've also had the privilege to command the 42nd Combat Aviation Brigade and the 53rd Troop Command. I have developed tremendous respect for the way our 11,000 Army National Guard Soldiers handle every mission they are given.

I've also come to deeply respect the professionalism of our New York Air Guard Airmen members.

No matter what uniform we wear, where we serve, or whether we are traditional or full-time Guard members, one of our primary focuses must be readiness.

We have to be ready to respond to emergencies here at home.

This means being ready to handle expected emergencies like flooding or snowstorms, and unexpected ones like the pandemic support or migrant support missions.

This also means undertaking federal domestic missions, like those along the southwest border, which claimed the lives of two of our Army aviators in March of 2024.

We have to be ready to deploy overseas to deter adversaries.

This means being ready to support NATO, as the Soldiers of the 222nd MP Platoon have done in

Poland, or as our Airmen do when they fly MQ-9 missions

or supplies and people around the world. Finally, we must be ready to fight and win our nation's wars. After years of supporting the Global War on Terror, we all have to be ready to fight an enemy like Russia or China.

This means our units must be interoperable with our active duty counterparts and ready to plug into any Army corps, joint force, or Air Expeditionary Wing at any time in any part of the world.

All of this revolves around our people. As Major General Shields, our adjutant general has consistently emphasized, people are our top priority.

### "Be Ready for Anything."

—Maj. Gen. Jack James  
Commander, 42nd Infantry  
Division

To meet our missions, we need enough people. Recruiting and retaining new Soldiers and Airmen is a non-negotiable priority.

Soldiers and Airmen remain in uniform when they are challenged with quality training, career opportunities, and exciting and rewarding deployments. I challenge our leaders at every level to make this happen.

Every Soldier and Airman can help bring more people into our ranks by sharing your pride in serving our state and nation with others. Share your story with your peers and others who look for a purpose in their life.

We must also guarantee that every man and woman in the ranks is treated with dignity and respect.

Everybody is a vital teammate, playing a role in defending the Nation. Leaders at every level must support our Soldiers and Airmen, help them grow, and maximize their professional and human potential.

My charge to every leader, from

sergeant to colonel who reads this, is to be a role model and be the mentor our Citizen Soldiers and Airmen—men and women both—deserve.

Above all, "Be Ready for Anything."

You never know. You cannot predict. But for some, the call will come.

You don't know what the call will be, but you have to be ready for it.

This means you must maintain the highest level of personal readiness—ready to fight—ready to act—ready to respond—at all times. At any time.

On January 28, 2024, an armed drone struck Tower 22, a U.S. military outpost in Jordan. Fourteen members of the 101st Expeditionary Signal Battalion were there. Three Army Reserve Soldiers were killed and 47 others were wounded.

Soldiers of the 101st ESB moved quickly to ensure the signals network was still up and functioning, and then moved to



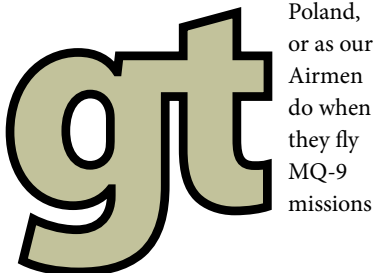
provide medical care to other Soldiers. I commend our 101st Signal Soldiers for their timely and courageous actions.

They were ready. You must be ready.

Our task now is to prepare the Rainbow Division for its next deployment. This is a big effort that's benefitted from strong support from the Joint Force Headquarters and staff. We thank everyone for their strong support to the Rainbow Division team as it writes the next chapter in its storied history!



NEWBURGH, N.Y. —Maj. Gen. Ray Shields, the adjutant general of New York, presents Maj. Gen. Michael W. Bank, commander of the New York Air National Guard, with his promotion order Oct. 8, 2024 at Stewart Air National Guard Base, Newburgh, N.Y.. Bank's promotion ceremony was held on a 105th Airlift Wing C-17 Globemaster III. Photo by Staff Sgt. Rebekah Wilson, 105th Airlift Wing.





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 Stephanie Butler, GUARD TIMES STAFF

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 DMNA-MNPA  
 330 Old Niskayuna Road  
 Latham, New York 12110-3514  
 OFFICE (518) 786-4581  
 or richard.l.goldenberg.mil@army.mil

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**WATERTOWN, N.Y.—**  
*United States Air Force Airmen assigned to the 17th Special Tactics Squadron operates an ATV at the Adirondack Range at Fort Drum, NY, during exercise Jaded Thunder, Sep. 17, 2024. Photo by Senior Airman Dylan McCrink, 174th Attack Wing.*

FRONT COVER: Soldiers from the New York Army National Guard's 27th Infantry Brigade Combat team board a C-17 Globemaster III from the New York Air National Guard's 105th Airlift Wing as they head to Camp Blanding Joint Training Center near Jacksonville, Florida to support the Florida National Guards response to Hurricane Milton's landfall. The troops are being dispatched to assist Florida at the direction of Gov. Kathy Hochul. Photo by Senior Airman Dylan McCrink, 174th Attack Wing.  
 BACK COVER: The 369th Veterans Association Inc presents its Annual Wreath Laying Ceremony at the monument in front of the Harlem Regiment Armory, New York, N.Y., Nov. 11, 2024. Photo by Spc. Luis Fernandez, 719th Transportation Company.

# FACES of the FORCE

## Physicians Assistant Speaks About PA Opportunities in the Army Guard

Story by Eric Durr, *Guard Times* staff

ALBANY, N.Y.— New York Army National Guard Capt. Ryan Romano, a physician assistant assigned to New York's Medical Readiness Command, graduated from Albany Medical College's PA program in 2017.

On October 7, he returned to his alma mater, talking to PA students who are about to complete their training about the opportunities for them serving in the Army Guard.

"I explained to them that being in the military as a PA was really unique because of the experience it offers that you just can't get in the civilian sector," Romano said.

The military, he said, offers medical trauma training and opportunities to practice in different places that most PAs don't get.

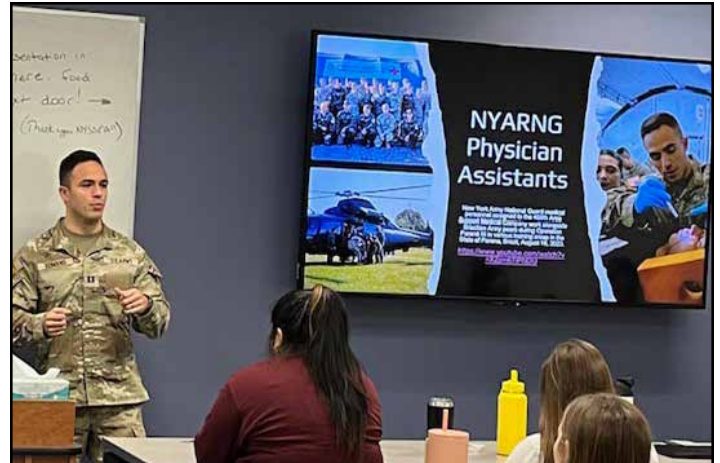
His goal, he said, was to sell the positive side of being a military PA in the Army Guard.

Romano's talk was sponsored by the New York State Society of Physician Assistants as part of a day-long session to give new PAs some insight into the profession.

Since Romano is a graduate of the Albany Medical College program, it was special for him to be able to speak there, said Lt. Col. Luis Garcia, the New York Army National Guard's Deputy State Surgeon, who is also the Capital District director for the state PA society.

Physician Assistants handle a variety of medical diagnostic and treatment tasks, working under the direction of a medical doctor.

It's a rewarding job, Romano said, and he told the new PAs that they needed to be humble as they set out to do their first clinical rotations and get hands on experience.



New York Army National Guard Capt. Ryan Romano speaks to new physician assistants at Albany Medical College on Oct. 7, 2024 in Albany, N.Y. Romano, a graduate of the Albany Medical College PA training program spoke about opportunities available to PAs in the New York Army National Guard. Courtesy Photo.

He also told them to be enthusiastic about their jobs, he said.

Romano said he had always been interested in joining the military, and in 2021 he joined the New York Army National Guard. He also jumped at the chance to work full-time as a military physician's assistant, he said.

"Before I joined the Guard, I was commuting five miles back and forth to my community hospital, with a regular routine," he said. "But I felt I had so much more to give and I wanted to do bigger things."

"A PA in the Army and the Army Guard has a lot of responsibility. And a lot of autonomy," Romano said. There are also opportunities for leadership that PAs in a civilian workplace don't get, he added.

It's also great to work with a population of mostly healthy, young adults, he said.

"Honestly, the lifestyle is really great," Romano said.

PAs who join the New York Army National Guard are eligible for loan repayment programs as well as retention bonuses, according to Garcia. **gt**



## NY National Guard Conducts Firefighting Operations in Orange County

ORANGE COUNTY, N.Y.— New York Army National Guard UH-60M Black Hawk helicopters conducting fire fighting operations near Greenlake, N.Y. on Nov. 12, 2024 while fighting the Jennings Creek/ Sterling Forest State Park fire. The UH-60s can carry 660 gallons in their Bambi buckets. Courtesy Photo.

## 42<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division Change of Command



FORT INDIANTOWN GAP, PA — The New York National Guard's 42nd Infantry Division welcomed its new commander Maj. Gen. Jack James during a change of command ceremony at Fort Indiantown Gap, Pa., Nov. 18, 2024. During the ceremony, Maj. Gen. Jack James assumed command of the "Rainbow" division from Maj. Gen. Joseph Biehler. Photos by Staff Sgt. Andrew Valenza, 42nd Infantry Division.

## NY Air Guard Honors Martin Van Buren



KINDERHOOK, N.Y. — New York Air National Guard Brigadier General Gary Charlton and Command Chief Master Sergeant Michael Hewson salute after the placing a wreath from the White House during the annual wreath laying ceremony marking the birthday of President Martin Van Buren in Kinderhook, N.Y., on Dec. 5, 2024. Charlton presented a wreath from President Joseph Biden at the annual ceremony held at Van Buren's gravesite in Kinderhook Reformed Cemetery. Photo by Stephanie Butler, Guard Times staff.

## 2024 NY National Guard Joint Leader Symposium



LATHAM, N.Y.— Major General Michelle Kilgore addresses attendees during the 2024 New York National Guard Joint Leader Symposium held at the Joint Forces Headquarters in Latham, N.Y. on Nov 3, 2024. Senior Guard leadership holds the event annually in order to bridge gaps between branches and commands across New York State. Photo by Staff Sgt. Matthew Gunther, Guard Times staff.

## New York Army National Guard is Tops in Recruiting and Retention for Third Year

Story by Eric Durr, Guard Times staff

LATHAM, N.Y. — The New York Army National Guard was number one out of 54 state and territorial Army National Guards in recruiting and retaining Soldiers for the 2024 federal fiscal year.

This marks the third year in a row that New York has been tops in retaining Army Guard Soldiers while bringing new Soldiers on board.

Major General Ray Shields, the adjutant general of New York, said a focus on Soldiers led to the recruiting and retention success.

“The New York Army National Guard has led the nation in recruiting and retention for the last four years because we focus on our people,” Shields said.

“Our commitment is demonstrated every day by the care, communication, and commitment to our Soldiers,” he added.

The assigned strength for New York’s Army Guard as of Sept. 30, 2024 – the end of the federal fiscal year—was 11,339. The New York Army National Guard’s strength at the start of the 12 month period, on October 1, 2023, was 10,970.

The New York Army National Guard’s authorized strength is 10,340 Soldiers, with a goal strength at the end of fiscal 2024 set at 11,140 personnel.

This means that despite Soldiers retiring or deciding to move on after one or two enlistments, the New York Army National Guard strength stood at 109 percent of the authorized figure.

The number of Soldiers was 101 percent of the strength goal set for New York’s Army Guard.

The Army National Guard assigns a weighted score to state Guard’s based on enlisted Soldier

recruiting, officer recruiting, and Soldier retention and attrition in the force as Soldiers leave.

The New York Army National Guard scored 126.4 percent on this scale. The next highest state was Georgia with a score of 122.9 percent.

During fiscal year 2024 the

South Carolina and Florida,” Natali said.

Recruiting additional Soldiers also allows New York to expand its force structure, Natali said.

New York activated a new division artillery headquarters for the 42nd Infantry Division and created a finance battalion headquarter-



Staff Sgt. Tevin McLeary, the New York Army National Guard's top recruiter for 2024, speaks to a prospect in his office at the New York State Armory in Yonkers, N.Y.. The New York Army National Guard has been named the top Army Guard for recruiting and retention for federal fiscal year 2024. This is the third year in a row that New York has been recognized for this success. Courtesy photo.

New York Army National Guard recruiting team enlisted 1,519 Soldiers while another 200 officers and warrant officers joined the force.

Keeping New York’s Army Guard full is important for readiness, according to Maj. Gen. Michel Natali, New York’s assistant adjutant general, Army.

“Our recruiting and retention success directly contributes to the ability of the New York Army National Guard to respond to short notice or no-notice emergencies, most recently in response to hurricanes impacting North Carolina,

ters because there were enough Soldiers to fill those new units, he explained.

The activations of the 42nd Division Artillery and the 27th Finance Battalion are two recent examples in which personnel strength factored into force structure decisions, he said.

The 220 full-time Soldiers assigned to recruiting duty for the New York Army National Guard, take pride in their mission, according to Lt. Col. Josh Heimroth, the commander of the New York recruiting and retention battalion.

The recruiters are the “life-

blood” of the effort to keep Soldiers in the National Guard and bring in new one’s Heimroth said.

“The success of the New York Army National Guard’s recruiting and retention battalion is a direct result of our highly-trained recruiters,” he said.

“Their daily dedication, professionalism, and willingness to increase individual proficiency in the recruiting career management field has paid dividends,” he emphasized.

New York has also pushed more Soldiers into recruiting duty, Shields said.

“Other than Soldier safety, we have no higher priority than assigned unit strength. he said.

“Our success can be summed up in short - we care about our Soldiers, their families, and their personal growth, while welcoming new Soldiers to our team with open arms,” the adjutant general added.

The New York Army National Guard is the fourth largest Army National Guard in the country.

Meanwhile, the New York Air National Guard is also putting an effort into filling it’s authorized strength of 5,822 Airmen.

The New York Air National Guard, is the largest in the United States.

In fiscal 2023, the New York Air National Guard recruited 628 Airmen, the highest number of any of the nation’s state Air Guard elements.

The New York Air Guard has increased its recruiting force from 26 to 33 production recruiters to help bring in more recruits, according to Lt. Col. Kristen Gibson. **gt**

## Sweden Makes First State Partnership Visit to the 106<sup>th</sup> Rescue Wing

FRANCIS S. GABRESKI AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, WESTHAMPTON BEACH, N.Y. — Ten members of the Swedish Air Force visited the New York Air National Guard's 106<sup>th</sup> Rescue Wing during a Key Leader Engagement, as part of the New York National Guard's State Partnership Program (SPP), at Francis S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base, Westhampton Beach, N.Y., from November 17-20, 2024. The purpose of this initial SPP engagement was to provide Swedish personnel with an opportunity to learn first-hand the advanced search and rescue capabilities of the 106<sup>th</sup> and to allow key leaders and Airmen from the New York Air National Guard and personnel from the Swedish Air Force to get to know each other. Photos by Senior Airman Sarah McKernan, 106<sup>th</sup> Rescue Wing.



## 42<sup>nd</sup> Band in the Community

NEW ROCHELLE, N.Y. — Soldiers from the 42<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division Band provided musical assistance to the Middle School Students of the Albert Leonard Middle School, in New Rochelle, N.Y., during the unit's Brass Band Tour.

The members of the Bear Mountain Brass Band helped students practice and learn best practices for their instruments along with answering questions about being a military musician. Courtesy photo.



## 105<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing Hosts Spouses

STEWART AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, NEWBURGH, N.Y. — Spouses of Airmen from the 105<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing participate in a C-17 Globemaster III flight Nov. 1, 2024, in New York. The flight included an aerial refueling demonstration with the 459<sup>th</sup> Air Refueling Wing and a low-level return following the Hudson River. Photos by Staff Sgt. Rebekah Wilson, 105<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing.



# Soldiers, Airmen Mark National Guard Birthday With Cake Cutting Ceremony

Story by Eric Durr, *Guard Times* staff

LATHAM, N.Y.

— Two New York National Guard Soldiers and an Airmen commemorated the National Guard's 388th birthday at New York National Guard headquarters in Latham, New York on Friday, Dec. 13.

Army Guard Master Sgt. Michael Schin, age 59; Airman Gabriela Geise, 18; and 17-year-old Army Guard Pfc. Aliyah Billar joined Army Maj. Gen. Michel Natali, assistant adjutant general, Army, in cutting the traditional National Guard Birthday cake.

Schin, who enlisted in the Army in 1983, represented the history and traditions of the Army and National Guard, while Geise and Billar, who joined the Air Force and Army National this year, represented the future of the force.

The National Guard claims December 13, 1636, as its birthday. On that date the General Court of the Massachusetts Bay colony approved a law organizing the colonial militia into three regiments.

In his remarks, Natali pointed out that members of the militia and National Guard have fought in every American War since the New English militias defeated native American tribes in King Philips War in 1765.

The New York Air National Guard can lay claim to one of the oldest units in the Air Force, Natali



Maj. Gen. Michel Natali, assistant adjutant general, Army, is joined by Airmen Gabriel Geise, age 18, from Averill Park; Master Sgt. Michel Schin, age 59, from Ballston Spa; and Pvt. 1st Class Aliyah Billar, age 17, from the Bronx, in cutting the National Guard birthday cake during a ceremony marking the 388th anniversary of the National Guard on Dec. 13, 2024 at New York National Guard headquarters in Latham, N.Y.. Schin represents the oldest serving National Guard member retiring next year, as Geise starts her career this April and Billar enlisted Oct. 16, 2024 represent the youngest serving members. Photo by Stephanie Butler, *Guard Times* staff.

said. The 106th Rescue Wing's 102nd Rescue Squadron has a lineage that reaches back to the New York National Guard 1st Aero Squadron organized in 1915.

"The men and woman who have served, and certainly continue to serve, the National Guard have participated in every one of America's conflicts and have consistently been always ready and always there for every manner of domestic crisis or natural disaster over the past 388 years," Natali said.

Today the New York Army National Guard is prepared to deploy 850 Soldiers to Africa, the Middle East and Guantanamo Bay in the coming year, while the New York

Air National Guard continues to operate worldwide and especially in the polar regions, Natali noted.

"Central to our ability to answer the call is our people, our Soldiers, our Airmen, our civilian workforce, and their families, that support all of our efforts abroad and here at home," Natali told his audience.

Schin, a resident of Ballston Spa, New York, enlisted in the Army Reserve in 1983 and transferred to the Army Guard a year later, said it was an "honor and a privilege" to represent the history of the National Guard at the ceremony.

"This sort of helps to tie off my career," said Schin, who is due to retire in five months.

Schin, a veteran of the Iraq War, has served as an infantry platoon leader, an assistant inspector general and as an information technology specialist.

He currently works for the National Guard as a civilian information technology specialist.

"It's been an awesome adventure from start to finish, and I would do it all over again," Schin said.


Airman Gabriela Geise, 18, graduated from Averill Park High School in Averill Park, New York, where she played varsity football and soccer.

She enlisted in the New Air National Guard on Sept. 5, 2024, and plans to train in the air transportation function with the 109th Airlift Wing. She reports for basic Airman training in April 2025.

"It was an honor to take part in the ceremony," Geise said. "Being one of the youngest it is definitely and eye-opener being with one of the oldest."

Army Pfc. Aliyah Billar, age 17, is originally from the Bronx in New York City and attends Brewster High School in Westchester County. The senior plays varsity lacrosse and was in Navy JROTC.

She enlisted in the New York Army National Guard in October and will serve in the 27th Finance Company in New York City and will report for basic training in August 2025.

She joined the Army Guard because one of her friends said it would help her grow, Billar said. 





## New York City Veterans Day Parade

NEW YORK — New York Army National Guard Soldiers with the 101st Expeditionary Signal Battalion, 369th Sustainment Brigade, participate in the 2024 New York City Veterans Day Parade, Nov. 11, 2024. The seeds of the modern Veterans Day Parade were planted after the end of World War I when hundreds of thousands of returning troops, including the famed Harlem Hellfighters, were welcomed home along Fifth Avenue in the heart of the city. Photo by Staff Sgt. Sebastian Rothwyn, 369th Sustainment Brigade.



## Harlem Regiment Armory Wreath Laying

HARLEM, N.Y. — The 369th Veterans Association Inc presents its Annual Wreath Laying Ceremony at the monument in front of the Harlem Regiment Armory, New York, N.Y., Nov. 11, 2024. Photo by Spc. Luis Fernandez, 719th Transportation Company.



## Onandaga County Veterans Day

SYRACUSE, N.Y. — U.S. Air Force Col. John Meili, commander of the 152nd Air Operations Group, 174th Attack Wing, New York Air National Guard, delivers remarks during the Onandaga County Veterans Day Ceremony in Syracuse, N.Y., Nov. 11, 2024. During the ceremony Meili spoke on the importance of military families and how their unwavering commitment supports our service members at home and abroad. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Alexander Rector, 174th Attack Wing.



## 42<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division Veterans Day Wreath Laying

GARDEN CITY, N.Y. — Brig. Gen. (retired), Pat Alesia, president of the 42nd Infantry (Rainbow) Division Association, provides remarks at the New York Army National Guard 42nd Infantry "Rainbow" Division Association's annual Veterans Day wreath laying memorial service on Nov. 9, at the 42nd Infantry Division World War I Memorial.

The service commemorated the history and service of the 42nd Infantry Division during World War I. It was held at the former site of Camp Mills, which was the birthplace of the 42nd Infantry "Rainbow" Division where Soldiers trained prior to departing for overseas combat during World War I. Courtesy photo.

# THE JOINT FORCE

## NY deploys Soldiers, Airmen to North Carolina

Story by Eric Durr, *Guard Times* staff

ROCHESTER, N.Y.— Forty-seven New York Army National Guard Soldiers and Airmen deployed to North Carolina between Sept. 29 and October 18 after Hurricane Helene devastated the state's mountainous western region.

The New York National Guard deployed Army engineers and aviators and Air Force casualty recovery specialists to assist the North Carolina National Guard's hurricane recovery efforts.

New York Governor Kathy Hochul directed the deployment after an Emergency Management Assistant Compact request from states hit by Hurricane Helene. The compact allows states to share people and resources, including from the National Guard, during disasters.

Sixteen Soldiers from Company B of the 3rd Battalion, 126th General Support Aviation Battalion, were the first to head south.

The Soldiers flew three CH-47F Chinook heavy lift helicopters from Rochester to Greenville, South Carolina on September 29. From the Army Aviation Support Facility in Greenville, they conducted missions into the region hit by the storm.

Between Sept. 29 and October 9, when they returned to Rochester, the aviators transported 99 tons of supplies, ranging from bottled water to hay for cattle. They also transported 32 rescue and recovery personnel.

**"They were living and breathing the mission for 20 hours a day. We would get done flying and we would sleep right by the aircraft. They were true professionals."**

— Capt. Jeff Tampe, the Company B Commander

"It was mostly just resupply of food and water and other critical personal needs, like dog food, paper products, generators, and fuel," said

Capt. Jeff Tampe, the Company B commander. "A lot of those folks without power were basically camping out."

North Carolina National Guard liaison teams would provide the taskings to his Soldiers and they were usually flying six missions daily to meet the demands, he said.

The CH-47s would normally land at high school athletic fields and recreation centers, but the aviators could land someplace else if the potential landing zone looked unsafe, he said.

There was an "abundance of debris" on the ground and that could be hazardous, Tampe explained.

He was impressed by how quickly his unit responded and how dedicated the men and women were to the mission, Tampe said.

"They were living and breathing the mission for 20 hours a day," he said. "We would get done flying and we would sleep right by the aircraft. They were true professionals."

The New York Air National Guard's 107th Attack Wing, based at Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station, sent 11 members of its 107th Fatality Search and Recovery Team to North Carolina on October 1.

The team's members are trained to locate the remains of people killed in a disaster and recover and transport the decedents.

The Airmen deployed with four F-350 pickup trucks, two refrigerator trailers to hold remains, and three all-terrain vehicles for search and recovery missions, said Capt. Shawn Lavin, the team commander.

They returned after two weeks to New York on October 15.

The Airmen operated out of Burnsville and supported the Yancy County medical examiner, Lavin said.

The Airmen worked with an emergency response team from Kansas to search the mountain towns for suspected fatalities. These missions took 12 to 14 hours a day.

The unexpected mission they encountered was recovering remains from cemeteries, Lavin said.

The rain and steep slopes wound up resulting in mudslides which washed coffins and



Engineers assigned to the 204th Engineer Battalion work to clear downed trees in the vicinity of Old Fort, N.C. on Oct. 13, 2024. The battalion deployed 20 Soldiers with engineer equipment as part of a 47-Soldier contingent which deployed to help the North Carolina National Guard cope with damage caused by Hurricane Helene. Courtesy photo.

some remains out of family cemeteries, Lavin explained. In one case they had to deal with a tomb that had been partially washed out of the ground.

The major lesson learned, Lavin said, was that his team needed a better way to communicate when the power grid is down. The mountains interfered with the FM radio's line of site, and the cell network was down.

It would be logical to invest in satellite phones to deal with those challenges, he said.

Twenty Soldiers from the 827th Engineer



An Airman assigned to the New York Air National Guard's 107th Fatality Search and Recovery Team surveys damage in the vicinity of Burnsville, N.C., while assisting the North Carolina National Guard in responding to Hurricane Helene. The 11 Airmen of the 107th Attack Wing's FSRT are trained to find and retrieve the bodies of those killed in disasters. Photo by Capt. Shawn Lavin, 107th Attack Wing.



Soldiers assigned to B Company, 3rd Battalion, 126th General Support Aviation Battalion, deliver hay in Green River, N.C. on Oct. 7, 2024. The company deployed 16 Soldiers and three CH-47F Chinook heavy lift helicopters to support the North Carolina Army National Guard. Courtesy photo.

Company of the 204th Engineer Battalion, took the most indirect route to North Carolina's disaster zone, according to 1st Lt. Jason Boring, the platoon leader who led the mission.

His team was originally tasked to support the South Carolina National Guard with 17 pieces of major engineer equipment, which included backhoes, 5-yard loaders, skid steers, and dump trucks. They also brought along chainsaws for debris clearance.

The main body departed Horseheads and Walton on October 2 in rental vans with the equipment following on commercial flatbeds, Boring said.

After they arrived in Greenwood, South Carolina, they were assigned a route reconnaissance mission. State officials needed to know what roads were clear and which were obstructed, Boring said.

The Soldiers used an emergency management application on their phones to record and transmit this data for 70 miles of road they surveyed, he said.

But North Carolina needed their engineering equipment more than South Carolina, so they were re-tasked to help that state.

On October 7 the team moved to Morgan-

ton, North Carolina and then were tasked to conduct missions in the vicinity of nearby Old Fort.

In Old Fort the engineers worked to clear obstructions from four culverts and six bridges along two miles of a town road. They also cleared 7,809 square yards of debris and cut up and removed 150 downed trees, Boring said.

The Soldiers were frustrated that they couldn't do more, Boring said. But the repeated movements kept them from working projects, he said.

"To the Soldiers credit, they just wanted to do work and make a difference," he said.

The 204th Soldiers began moving back to New York on October 17 and the trail party returned home October 19, Boring said.

"I know it sounds cheesy," he said, "but I was really impressed with our Soldiers. They didn't get on the mission because they wanted a paycheck. They wanted to be on the mission because they wanted to work and help." **gt**

## 109<sup>th</sup> Participates in Schenectady Parade



**SCHENECTADY, N.Y.** — The 109th Airlift Wing drove a 48 foot parade display for the Schenectady Holiday Parade, Nov. 22, 2024. Twenty five Airman and their families walked in the parade. The 109th Airlift Wing under the lead of Tech. Sgt. Martin Allen constructed the parade float in just 15 days. Allen was the "mastermind" behind both this year's float and "Best Overall Float" in 2023, when the 109th was the Grand Marshal, Command Master Sgt. Kelly Archambeault said. The 109th is known for its "Sand to Snow" expertise deploying to Greenland and Antarctica every year and the Sand fit because this year the Wing is supporting overseas missions in various locations, Archambeault explained. Courtesy photo.



# NY Air Guard Woman is Top at South African Military Skills Match

Story by Eric Durr, *Guard Times* staff

POTCHEFSTROOM, South Africa — New York Air Guard Senior Airman Vincenza Costanzo was the top scoring woman at the end of the week-long South African National Defence Force Military Skills Competition which ran from October 28 to November 2.

Costanzo was one of 17 New York National Guard Soldiers and Airmen who represented the United States at the annual military competition held at South Africa's Army Support Base Potchefstroom.

Teams from the Netherlands, Germany, Namibia, and Zimbabwe also took part in the competition, along with South African teams.

The 133-competitor event tested participants with a conventional obstacle course, a swimming obstacle course, pistol and rifle marksmanship events, an eight-

kilometer run in combat gear, and a grenade throwing competition.

The New York National Guard, which has had a State Partnership Program relationship with South Africa's military since 2003, regularly sends teams to compete.

This year 10 Soldiers and seven Airmen -- 12 men and five women-- represented the New York National Guard.

The New York team captain this year, Lt. Col. Andrew Miller, commander of the 102nd Military Police Battalion, said Costanzo — “Vinnie” to her teammates— “was phenomenal.”

Costanzo was a competitive diver at Canisus University and it showed, Miller said. She performed superbly in the unusual water obstacle event and did well at everything else, he added.

Costanzo finished in second place in three of the events. Senior



Lt. Col. Andrew Miller, the commander of the 102nd Military Police Battalion dives into the water obstacle court during the during the South African National Defence Force Military Skills Competition, held from Oct. 28 to Nov. 2. Courtesy Photo.

Airman Jayla Decicco took two third place finishes and Army Guard Staff Sgt. Stacey Hart took third place in another event.

The New York National Guard women did incredibly well, he said.

Airman 1st Class Roko Jelavic took a third place for men.

Miller and Army Guard Staff Sgt. Jonathan Harris, assigned to A Troop, 2nd Squadron, 101st Cavalry, finished in the top 25 percent of men who competed.

The New Yorkers' showing was more impressive in light of the fact that the other foreign military teams practice for these events full time, said Air Guard Chief Master Sgt. Catrina Gray, the women's team coach, an emergency manager from the 107th Attack Wing. Miller, who participated in the event in 2023, said he was impressed by how well the New York National Guard team came together.

“We all jelled really well together,” Miller said.

“The people that go on these kinds of missions are usually high performers,” Miller explained. “You get a really good group of people who know how important that this is and they want to do



The four top-scoring members of the New York National Guard women's team poses for a picture with their medals and a trophy, at the completion of the South African National Defence Force Military Skills Competition in Potchefstroom, South Africa, on Nov. 2, 2024. Pictured from left, Air National Guard Senior Airman Alexa Reeves, Senior Airman Jayla Decicco, Senior Airman Vincenza Costanzo and Army National Guard Staff Sgt. Stacey Hart. Costanzo was the top scoring woman during the competition. Courtesy Photo.

well and they encourage each other.”

Costanzo, who is also an emergency manager in the 107th Attack Wing, agreed with Miller's assessment.

“We crushed it, I think, because we all were competitive and we all know our strengths and how we could perform well,” she said.

The obstacle course was the toughest event for her and for the other Americans as well, Costanzo said.

“Potchefstroom is almost a mile above sea level, it was a hot summer in South Africa, it's very arid and the air quality is not the best,” Costanzo explained. “So, it was a challenge for people used to New York's more temperate climate.”

“It really took a toll on your lungs. You coughed a lot,” Miller agreed. **gt**



The 17 New York National Guard Soldiers and Airmen who represented the United States at the South African National Defence Force Military Skills Competition in Potchefstroom, South Africa, pose for a team photo at the end of the event on Nov. 2, 2024. The 10 Soldiers and seven Airmen -- 11 men and six women—competed in seven events. Courtesy Photo.

# NY Air Guard's 105<sup>th</sup> Base Defense Group Becomes First to Activate in Air Reserve Component History

Story by Sgt. Rebekah Wilson, 105th Airlift Wing

NEWBURGH, N.Y. — In a historic restructuring, the 105th Base Defense Group at Stewart Air National Guard Base celebrated its activation with a ceremony Dec. 7, 2024.

This base defense group is the first of its kind in the Air Reserve Component, which includes the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve.

The previous 105th Base Defense Squadron has been reorganized into a group of 300 Airmen divided between three squadrons: the 105th Base Defense, 105th Security Support and 205th Base Defense Squadrons.

This reorganization allows for efficient and direct workflows, providing members with tasks specific to their squadrons and streamlining the chain of command. Each unit's responsibilities will also align with their individual missions.

Lt. Col. Michael Curtis, the commander of the 105th Base Defense Group, explained the unique missions of each unit and their functions.

"The group staff provides overarching strategic vision, supports squadron operations, and ensures synergy among the three squadrons," Curtis said.

The group will also prioritize base defense, domestic operations, homeland defense, strengthening partnerships and air operations, Curtis added.

The 105th Base Defense Squadron will serve as the base's traditional security forces unit responsible for base protection under the command of Maj. Brian Ibbs.

Maj. Joseph Carpentieri will

lead the 205th Base Defense Squadron as the largest security forces squadron within the Air National Guard. In its partnership with the 820th Base Defense Group, the 205th will prioritize agile combat employment, specialized and joint training, as well as enhanced capabilities to prepare for the Great Power Competition.

The 105th Security Support Squadron will serve under Capt. Steven Morris and will take ownership of training, combat arms, supply, plans and programs. Additional specialties, such as intelligence, medical, communications and logistics, will also be incorporated into the squadron to enhance

"The 105th Base Defense Group will not just meet the challenges of the future- we will redefine what it means to defend, support and lead in the Air National Guard."

— Lt. Col. Michael Curtis,  
Commander 105th Base  
Defense Group

group capabilities as a whole.

Col. Ryan Dannemann, the commander of the 105th Airlift Wing and presiding official over the ceremony, shared his vision and expectations for the group during his speech.



The 105th Base Defense Group celebrates its activation ceremony at Stewart Air National Guard Base, Newburgh, N.Y., Dec. 7, 2024. In a historic restructuring, the 105th BDG is the first of its kind in the Air Reserve Component and now consists of the 105th Base Defense Squadron, 105th Security Support Squadron and 205th Base Defense Squadron. Photos by Master Sgt. Patrick Espeut, 105th Airlift Wing.

mander.

"I am humbled by this opportunity to lead a group of three specialized squadrons that are appropriately manned and well-structured to meet their distinct missions," Curtis stated while addressing the group. "Together, we will foster a positive climate rooted in innovation and guided by our core values."

The ceremony also included an unveiling of artwork on a C-17 to honor the newly activated group. The art was unveiled by Gold Star family members of four 105th defenders who gave the ultimate sacrifice between 2001 and 2015- Staff Sgt. Todd Lobraico, Tech. Sgt. Joseph Lemm, Staff Sgt. Louis Bonacasa and Staff Sgt. Jerome Dominguez.

"We are honored by the families who show-through the power of their presence- the enduring Spirit

of the Defender," Dannemann said. "It is the spirit of all defenders- past, present and future."

The roots of this activation can be traced back to a 2009 partnership initiative between the 105th Security Forces Squadron and 820th Base Defense Group. Their collaboration aimed to provide a steady pool of 30 personnel from the 105th to support the 820th during Air and Space Expeditionary Force deployments, further enhancing deployment readiness and defense capabilities within each unit.

Within the 105th Base Defense Group, the 105th Base Defense Squadron will be responsible for supporting the 820th, while the 205th Base Defense Squadron conducts training, exercise programs, logistics support and more. These changes are set to clarify each unit's mission and roles in both foreign and domestic environments.

Aligning with the 820th Operating Concept, the 105th Base Defense Group's restructuring and increased administrative power will allow missions to be completed efficiently through designation of roles, responsibilities and organizational structure according to individual squadron missions.

The transformation of the 105th Base Defense Squadron into the 105th Base Defense Group marks a pivotal moment in enhancing the security and operational readiness of the 105th Airlift Wing. This strategic shift allows for more effective mission execution and a clearer organizational structure that aligns with existing Air Force standards, Curtis said. ✦

# Chaplains Take Part in South African Symposium

Story by Eric Durr, *Guard Times* staff

CAPE TOWN, South Africa — Two New York Army National Guard chaplains represented the United States military at an annual meeting of South African military chaplains held in Cape Town, South Africa from October 14 to 18.

New York National Guard State Chaplain (Col.) Douglas Brock, and Deputy State Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Timothy Miller, joined 200 South African Defence Force chaplains at the symposium held by Brigadier Gen. E.T. Masweu, South Africa's chief of chaplains.

Brock and Miller attended the meeting as part of the New York National Guard's State Partnership Program relationship with the South African National Defence Force.

Chaplains representing nine of the 16 countries in the Southern African Development Communities also attended the meeting.

He and Miller were invited as both a courtesy and to further the relationship between the New York National Guard and South Africa's military, Brock said.

He and Miller were invited in 2023 but could not make it, Brock said.

New York National Guard chaplains have visited South Africa in the past.

In April, Brock and Miller took part in a regional chaplain's workshop conducted by Zambia's chaplain general, Brig. Gen. Rev. Dr. Henry Matifeyo.

Each of the visiting chaplain delegations were invited to speak to the symposium, Brock said.

The topic of the symposium was "Unity in Diversity", Brock said. So, he spoke about the ways military chaplains use their calling to bring people within military units together.

Chaplains are at peace "because of our call from the divine," Brock said, and they get to "foster and grow peace."

Being present at these kinds of events helps strengthen the strategic partnership between the United States and South African militaries, but also allowed the two New Yorkers to learn from the experiences of African military chaplains, Brock explained.

"We get to see how other chaplaincies are doing their business, how other chaplaincies are fulfilling their call," Brock said.

Masweu said he would like the New Yorkers



The South African National Defence Force Chaplain Brig. Gen. E.T. Masweu, left; and South African Defence Minister A. M. Motshekga; pose with New York Army National Guard chaplains Col. Douglas Brock and Lt. Col. Timothy Miller during the South African military's annual chaplains symposium outside Cape Town, South Africa in October 2024. Courtesy photo.

to regularly attend his annual chaplain's training events, Brock said.

He would also like to invite South Africa to send representatives to the New York National Guard's Joint Chaplain Annual Sustainment Training in January, Brock said.

New York has had a state partnership with South Africa since 2003.

Ongoing engagements with South Africa include New York participation in the South African National Defense Force Combat Rifle and Soldier Skills Competitions, New York Army National Guard Military Police officers visit-

ing the South African military police training center, firefighter exchanges, and other specialty staff and family readiness engagements.

The New York Air National Guard also regularly participates in the bi-Annual African Aerospace and Defense Air Show held at Air Force Base Waterkloof, located on the outskirts of Pretoria, South Africa. **9**

# 27<sup>th</sup> Brigade Soldiers Assist Florida Communities

Photo and story by Spc. Joseph Leggio, 138th Public Affairs Detachment



Sgt. Tyler Linendoll, an infantryman assigned to Charlie Company, 2nd Battalion, 108th Infantry Regiment, 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT), cuts down tree branches with a chainsaw following Hurricane Milton in Palmetto, Fla., Oct. 11, 2024. Soldiers from the 27th IBCT worked with members of the Florida Army National Guard to provide relief to communities impacted by the hurricane.

**PALMETTO, Fla —** Forty-three New York Army National Guard Soldiers spent a week assisting the Florida National Guard's response to Hurricane Milton, from October 9 to 15.

The New York National Guard Soldiers helped clear debris and set up fuel and emergency supply distribution sites in Parrish and Bradenton, south of Tampa.

The New Yorkers were also visited by Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, who thanked them for their support.

"We had an extremely motivated group," said 1st. Lt. Ivelisse Velazquez, a personnel officer assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 2nd Squadron, 101st Cavalry Regiment, who led the team on ground.

"Everyone wanted to come down here and get to work and help out wherever they could, and it was really great seeing that

motivation," Velzaquez said.

The mission kicked off on Oct. 9, when 41 volunteers from New York's 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, supported by two personnel from the 53rd Troop Command flew out of Hancock Field Air National Guard Base in Syracuse with 10 Humvees.

"Honestly, we didn't know what to expect, we didn't know where we were gonna go," said Staff Sgt. Kevin Morales-Roldon, a section sergeant assigned to the 152nd Brigade Engineer Battalion, 427th Brigade Support Battalion.

The New York Army National Guard contingent convoyed south to the city of Palmetto on Oct. 11 where they spent the afternoon clearing downed trees.

"As we got closer, you did get to see a little bit more of what the effects of the hurricane were, and it was definitely a lot of damage, and I think it makes you feel like you

want to help even more," said Spc. Emily Burdick, a motor transport operator assigned to the 427th Brigade Support Battalion.

Early the next morning the team divided into two groups, each responsible for setting up and managing a distribution site for supplies in the nearby towns of Parrish and Bradenton, where locals could drive through and pick up provisions.

In just a few hours, the sites were up and running.

"When we got there, we got the trucks open and had to bring a lot of the resources down by hand—tarps, meals and cases of water," said Burdick.

"We got to work, and people showed up, and we started handing them out and making sure that they knew that there was a friendly face and that we were here to help them," she added.

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis

visited the Bradenton site, and met with New York Guardsmen working to distribute supplies.

"In the wake of everything, I was glad that we could bring a sense of calm to people," said Spc. Shane Bierk, a cavalry scout assigned to Bravo Troop, 2nd Squadron, 101st Cavalry Regiment.

For many on the mission, including Bierk, it was their first time serving in a state active-duty capacity, and first time representing the Guard outside of New York.

"I did feel like we brought a sense of real peace to the community at a time of emergency—they enjoyed us being here," said Bierk.

In less than 12 hours, the Soldiers had handed out approximately 1540 boxes of emergency rations, 1800 cases of water, 1200 tarps and helped refuel 310 vehicles. **gt**

## 2025 Best Warrior Competition



CAMP SMITH, N.Y. — The 53rd Troop Command Best Warrior Competition is an annual event in which junior enlisted Soldiers and non-commissioned officers from various 53rd Troop Command units compete in several events intended to test their military skills and knowledge, as well as their physical fitness and endurance with the winners proceeding to the State competition next year. Photos were taken on Oct. 22, 2024 by Sgt. 1st Class Jonathan Pietrantonio, 138th Public Affairs Detachment.

(Top left) Spc. David Amendola, assigned to the 442nd Military Police Company, 369th Sustainment Brigade, tests on the M2 Browning .50 Caliber Machine Gun as a graded event for the competition.

(Top middle) Staff Sgt. Jerral Graham, assigned to the 1501st Field Feeding Company, 369th Sustainment Brigade, calls in a nine-line medical evacuation as an event for the 2025 53rd Troop Command Best Warrior Competition.

(Top right) Sgt. Justin Jablanski, assigned to the 1156th Engineer Company, 153rd Troop Command, and Spc. Chase Gaylord, assigned to the 827th Engineer Company, 153rd Troop Command, performs a 12-mile ruck march as an event for the 2025 53rd Troop Command Best Warrior Competition.

## Massachusetts Guardsman Promoted to NY National Guard One-star General

Story by Eric Durr, Guard Times staff

BOSTON — Lakeville resident Kenneth P. Wisniewski III was promoted to the rank of brigadier general in the New York Army National Guard on Saturday, Dec. 7 at Faneuil Hall in Boston.

Wisniewski, who enlisted in the Massachusetts Army National Guard at age 17, was promoted by Major General Gary W. Keefe, the adjutant general of Massachusetts, during the ceremony held in the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company Museum on the hall's fourth floor.

His oath was reaffirmed by Major General Raymond Shields, the adjutant general of New York.

Wisniewski will become one of two assistant adjutant generals assigned to the New York Army National Guard.

Keefe praised Wisniewski for his devotion to the Army National Guard over the years.

"He's sacrificed a lot, and the fact that Ken stuck with the Guard and kept plugging away is a testament to his character and his dedication to service," Keefe said.

Shield's said Wisniewski will play a role in



Major General Ray Shields, the adjutant general of New York, left, administers the oath of office to Brig. Gen. Kenneth P. Wisniewski III, during his promotion to the rank of one-star general, at Faneuil Hall in Boston, Dec. 7, 2024. Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Steven Eaton, 117th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment.

the director of joint staff for the Massachusetts Army National Guard, said he was looking forward to service in the New York National Guard.

"New York has a large, highly respected, and well-trained National Guard, that is involved in

operations across the globe. I'm very excited to be joining this top performing executive team as the assistant adjutant general," he said.

Wisniewski earned his commission through the Massachusetts Officer Candidate School and was commissioned as a second lieutenant of infantry as he entered his senior year at Bryant University in 1996.

Wisniewski has served as a rifle platoon leader, company executive officer, and infantry company commander, infantry battalion executive officer and infantry battalion commander. In 2002 he commanded A Company of the 1st Battalion, 182nd Infantry during a mission to secure Fort Dix, New Jersey.

In 2006 he deployed to Iraq with the 1st Battalion, 181st Infantry.

Wisniewski served on full-time duty for three years as the operations officer and team chief of the state Premobilization Training and Assistance Element.

He has also served as the commander of the Massachusetts Army National Guard's 51st Troop Command. **gt**



# Aviators Play Key Role in Controlling Wildfire

Story by Eric Durr, *Guard Times* staff

**GREENWOOD LAKE, N.Y. —** New York Army National Guard aviators dropped 550,160 gallons of water on the 5,200 acre Jennings Creek fire between Nov. 11 and Nov. 20 as state and local fire fighters fought the Orange County blaze.

The wildfire, the largest in New York since 2008, according to New York Gov. Kathy Hochul's office, ignited on Saturday, Nov. 9 and expanded to 2,500 acres straddling the New York/ New Jersey border by Nov. 10.

On Veterans day, Nov. 11, eight Soldiers assigned to Alpha Company of the 3rd Battalion, 142nd Aviation, began flying water bucket firefighting missions with two UH-60M Black Hawks.

New York State Police helicopters had already been flying, but additional assets were needed, said Chief Warrant Officer 5 Thomas Scott, the maintenance officer for the 42nd Expeditionary Combat Aviation Brigade. Scott coordinated the Army Guard missions.

That first day the aviators conducted 63 drops and delivered 41,580 gallons of water onto the fire 660 gallons at a time, according to the New York National Guard operations center.

By Nov. 20, 49 aviators, and 10 aircraft, including two CH-47F Chinook helicopters, capable of carrying 1,500 gallons of water at a time, had taken part in the firefighting effort.

The CH-47s are assigned to B Co. 3rd Battalion, 126th Aviation, which is based in Rochester.

By the end of mission, the aviators had flown 94 hours – 57.4 in UH-60s and 46.4 in the CH-47s—and conducted 576 water bucket

drops.

The UH-60 crews conducted 386 drops during five days of operations. These missions—conducted by crews based in Latham and Ronkonkoma—put 295,400 gallons of water on the fire.

The CH-47 crews, which flew from Nov. 14 to the Nov. 20, with one non-flying day, conducted 190 drops. The CH-47 crews dropped 254, 760 gallons of water.

At any given time, there were eight aircrew flying two UH-60s and 10 aircrew flying two CH-47s. The CH-47s, a much larger helicopter, had crews which include a flight engineer and two Soldiers in the back, while a UH-60 has a crew of three.

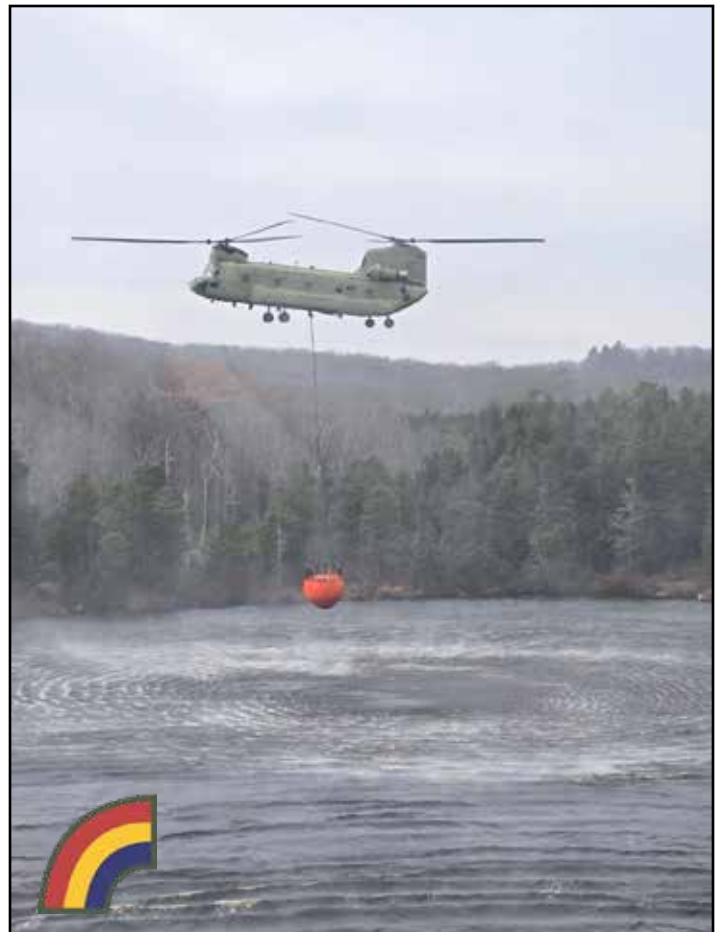
The CH-47s normally fly with four people on board.

For this mission a fifth soldier was added. His job was to keep an eye on the surrounding airspace, so the crew chief could watch the massive Bambi bucket slung underneath the heavy lift helicopter, according to Chief Warrant Officer 4 John Hermanson, a CH-47 standardization pilot.

This is the longest firefighting mission New York's Army Guard aviators have ever deployed on and also the first time the CH-47s have been used for firefighting, according to Scott.

The last time New York Army National Guard helicopters were used to fight a fire was on August 31, 2022, when a fire was burning at Minnewaska State Park Reserve near Ellenville.

The missions were challenging for the pilots, said Chief Warrant Officer 3 Andrew Behrens, the standardization pilot for A



**A New York Army National Guard CH-47F Chinook heavy lift helicopter picks up water from Greenwood Lake in Greenwood Lake, N.Y., on Nov. 15, 2024, while fighting the 5,200 acre Jennings Creek Fire on the New York/ New Jersey border in Orange County. The firefighting buckets carried by the CH-47s can carry up to 2000 gallons of water. This was the first time the Chinooks had ever been used for firefighting missions. Courtesy photo.**

Company.

Flying with 2.7 tons of water slung underneath the helicopter is always challenging, Behrens said. But high winds made it more difficult to position the water bucket accurately, he explained.

Each helicopter carried a DEC Forest Ranger on board who could talk to the fire crews on the ground, Behrens said. This was critical for making sure that water wasn't dumped on the people below, he said.

And because the pilots can't see the bucket slung underneath, they counted on the crew chief in the

back to talk them onto the target and release the water at the right time, he said.

The CH-47s carried an average of 7.2 tons of water each time they conducted a drop.

This meant the pilots couldn't conduct steep turns or sudden maneuvers, which would set the water bucket swinging, Hermanson said.

Flying in these conditions was like the difference between driving a pickup truck, and then driving a pickup truck with two pallets of paving blocks in the back, Hermanson said. **gt**

# Brig. Gen. Isabel Rivera Smith takes Command of New York's 53<sup>rd</sup> Troop Command

Story by Eric Durr, *Guard Times* staff

**CAMP SMITH TRAINING SITE, N.Y.** — New York Army National Guard Brig. Gen. Isabel Rivera Smith, an Albany resident, took command of the 4,100 Soldiers of the 53rd Troop Command during a Saturday, October 19, 2024, ceremony at the Camp Smith Training Site near Peekskill.

The 53rd Troop Command is one of the New York Army National Guard's two general officer commands, with Soldiers located across the state in combat support and combat service support roles.

Smith also serves as the director of joint staff for the New York National Guard, overseeing joint Army and Air Guard operations, which includes responses to state emergencies. She will continue in that role while serving as the 53rd Troop Command leader.

Smith, an Iraq War veteran, is the first woman to lead one of the New York Army National Guard's two major commands.

She replaces Maj. Gen. Jack James, who moves on to command the 42nd Infantry Division, the state's other major Army National Guard command.

Major General Ray Shields, the adjutant general of New York, praised Smith as "simply a superb leader."

"She has a great personality and a caring approach to leading our people," he said. "She's exceptionally smart and quick to grasp a situation."

In her remarks, Smith noted that she first served in the 53rd Troop command as a sergeant maintaining the organization's property books in 1994.

She also served in the 53rd's command team as the personnel

officer and as the command's chief of staff.

"It's so good to be back home," Smith said. "I'm deeply honored to be here."

She also praised the Soldiers of the 53rd Troop command for their service.

"The balance that you maintain with your civilian jobs, your fami-

duty station was Fort Bragg (now Fort Liberty), North Carolina, assigned to Charlie Battery, 368th Air Defense Artillery Battalion.

In 1988, she enlisted in the North Carolina Army National Guard; and in 1989, she transferred to the New York Army National Guard.

In 1995, Smith was commis-

assignments in personnel and logistics fields, as well as service as the executive officer to the adjutant general and chief of staff for the 53rd Troop Command.

She is a graduate of the Army's Command and General Staff College, the U.S. Army War College; the Joint Task Force Commander Training Course; and the National Security Management Course at the University of Syracuse.

Her awards include the Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star Medal, the Meritorious Service Medal, the Army Commendation Medal, the Army Achievement Medal, the Army Good Conduct Medal, the Iraq Campaign Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, and the Humanitarian Service Medal. Smith is also the recipient of the 2017 Latina Style Military Service Award.

Smith was born and raised in

**"It's so good to be back home, I'm deeply honored to be here."**

—*Brig. Gen. Isabel Rivera Smith, Commander 53rd Troop Command*



**Brig. Gen. Isabel Rivera Smith accepts the guidon of the 53rd Troop Command from Maj. Gen. Raymond Shields, the adjutant general of New York, during a change of command ceremony on Camp Smith Training Site, Cortlandt Manor, N.Y., Oct. 19, 2024. Smith, who also serves as director of joint staff, assumed the command from Maj. Gen. Jack A. James. The 53rd Troop Command oversees more than 4500 Soldiers in combat service and combat service support units stationed across New York. Photo by Spc. Joseph Liggi, 138th Public Affairs Detachment.**

lies, and your dedication to serve your state and nation is a testament to the remarkable Soldiers that you are. You are the fabric that makes the 53rd and unshakeable command," Smith said.

Smith also thanked the Soldiers and officers she has served alongside for their support and mentorship over the years as well as her family.

Smith first enlisted in the active Army in October of 1985 as a Motor Transport Operator. Her first

stationed as a second lieutenant in the Quartermaster Corps after graduating from Officer Candidate School.

Smith's command assignments and operational deployment include commander of Headquarters detachment of the 53d Troop Command, commander of the 369th Special Troops Battalion, and deputy team chief-Iraq Police National Headquarters in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, 2010.

Smith has had a number of staff

Lorain, Ohio where she graduated from Admiral King High School.

She holds a bachelor's degree in human services from Mount St. Mary's College, a master's degree in education in Counseling and Development from Long Island University, and a Master's Degree in Strategic Studies from the United States Army War College. **gt**



Soldiers with the 1501st Quartermaster Company (Field Feeding), 369th Sustainment Brigade, provide large-scale culinary food service support during the 42nd Infantry Division's command post exercise at Fort Indiantown Gap, Pa., Nov. 12-26, 2024. Photos by 2nd Lt. Rivkah Weissberger, 369th Sustainment Brigade.

# 1501st Field Feeding Company Passes First Test

Story by Staff Sgt. Sebastian Rothwyn, 369th Sustainment Brigade

FORT INDIANTOWN GAP, Pa. — Outstanding is a familiar term for Soldiers who exceed the standard, but ‘Delicious’ is especially meaningful to the cooks of the New York Army National Guard’s first field feeding company.

From November 12-26, 2024, 1501st Field Feeding Company’s second detachment fed an average of 823 42nd Infantry Division Soldiers twice a day during the division command post exercise at Fort Indiantown Gap.

The reviews were good, Soldiers said.

“Well done! The food was delicious,” said Maj. Christine Atwell, a signal and communications staff officer with the 369th Division Sustainment Brigade.

Another soldier called the macaroni and cheese “no joke.”

Lt. Rivkah Weissberger, the detachment commander, praised the hard work of her Soldiers, and their culinary skills for their success.

“From the first to the last meal it was obvious that the soldiers were ready and capable to succeed,” Weissberger said.

The company has existed for less than a year with a traditional company force structure but modular capabilities. Since its formation, the company has brought together Soldiers from different units across the state of New York and achieved success after success, Weissberger explained.

According to the Army, the field feeding company concept is intended to create an expeditionary force posture for the military culinary specialist community, modernizing this often-overlooked Army capability.

The field feeding company concept allows higher headquarters commands to order customizable subsistence packages, to dramatically improve sustainment force structure according to the Army.

“It’s incredible that they didn’t exist a year ago and now after cooking for about 1400 soldiers they have exceeded all expectations,” said Lt. Col. David Myones, the commander of the 369th Special Troops Battalion, said. “Soldiers from multiple states have all shared positive

reviews and it is a testament to the leadership and the Soldiers of the 1501st with whom I’m greatly impressed.”

Some of the Soldiers were concerned that they could not support a large exercise, Weissberger said. They were wrong, she added.

“At each meal there was an item that stood out. The freshness and flavor of the food was noticeable and sustained throughout each meal, and the quality and care the soldiers put into presenting the best product was recognizable,” Weissberger said.

Capt. Jowayne Meadows, commander of the 1501st, said that the Soldiers provided feeding support to the highest of Army standards in addition to enhancing meals to boost Soldier morale—with artistic displays of food-- without sacrificing the nutritional value.

“The Soldiers’ devotion to service and culinary arts shined through and enabled mission success,” said Weissberger. “It proved the concept of the 1501st, and set a tone, and expectations for future missions.” **gt**

# Army National Guard Cuts Ribbon on State-of-the-art Maintenance Shop in Troy

Story by *Eric Durr, Guard Times staff*



Guests at the ribbon cutting ceremony for the New York Army National Guard's new Field Maintenance Shop 17 explore the new facility on Sept. 27, 2024 in Troy, N.Y.. The new Field Maintenance Shop will be home to 16 mechanics serving the vehicles used by the 1,000 New York Army National Guard Soldiers assigned to New York's Capital Region, especially the 42nd Infantry Division headquarters. Photo by Lt. Col. Jean Marie Kratzer, Guard Times staff.

TROY, N.Y. — New York Army National Guard leaders and New York state officials cut the ribbon on a \$16.7 million state-of-the-art field maintenance shop in Troy, N.Y. on Friday, Sept. 17.

The new facility will service the vehicles assigned to the headquarters of the 42nd Infantry Division, as well as 16 other New York National Guard units stationed in New York's Capital Region.

The 18,808 square foot building, which was finished five months ahead of schedule will help improve the New York Army National Guard's vehicle readiness rate above its current 90 percent, according to Major General Ray Shields, the adjutant general of New York.

The building replaces a 11,000 square foot facility built in 1971 which is no longer big enough to accommodate modern military vehicles, Shields said.

It is also designed to use less electricity, generate its own power with solar panels, and conserve water, he said.

"The building is green in color on the outside and "green" on the inside," Shields said.

This new building, where 16 maintenance personnel will work full-time, also demonstrates the New York Army National Guard's commitment to Soldiers, Shields emphasized.

"While this new facility is wonderful, it's real impact, and the most important impact, is on our Soldiers and their well-being," he said.

"This facility directly supports our highest priority, our people, they are our most valuable resource, by ensuring everybody has a great place to work and train," Shields added.

This new building is part of the New York National Guard's effort to upgrade old armories in New York City and statewide, Shields said.

Jeannette Moy, the head of New York State's Office of General Services, which designed and oversaw the construction of the building, said her agency values the work it does for the New York National Guard.

"New York state is so grateful and the governor is so grateful for everything you do which is why these types of projects are so incredibly important for OGS," she told the National Guard Soldiers in the audience.

The new maintenance building is very unique because it balances, function, sustainability and force protection, Moy said.

The building is built so that it limits energy consumption by couple daylight, with LED lighting and energy efficient heating, lighting and air conditioning systems, Moy said. The plumbing in the building also uses less water,

she said.

Rainwater falling on the roof is collected to help wash vehicles. Solar panels on the roof and on the ground outside, will generate 145 megawatts annually, 15 percent more than the building needs, she said.

This field maintenance shop is the first in the nation that will qualify for the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, or LEED, certification, Moy said. **gt**



Maj. Gen. Raymond Shields, the adjutant general of New York, and Office of General Services Commissioner Jeanette Moy, are joined by state and federal representatives and New York Army National Guard Soldiers as they cut the ribbon opening Field Maintenance Shop 17 in Troy, N.Y. on Sept. 27, 2024. Photo by Lt. Col. Jean Marie Kratzer, Guard Times staff.

# New York National Guard Honors President Chester Arthur

Story by Eric Durr, *Guard Times* staff



Maj. Gen. Michel Natali, the assistant adjutant general, Army and Command Sgt. Major Edwin Garris salute after placing a wreath from the White House at the gravesite of President Chester Arthur, during a ceremony at Albany Rural Cemetery in Menands, N.Y. on Oct. 4, 2024. Since 1967 military officers have placed a wreath from the current president at the graves of their predecessors on their birthday. Photo by Stephanie Butler, *Guard Times* staff.

MENANDS, N.Y. — The New York National Guard marked the 195th birthday of Chester Arthur, the 21st President of the United States, during a ceremony at Albany Rural Cemetery on Friday, October 4.

Army Major General Michele Natali, the assistant adjutant general, presented a wreath from President Joseph Biden at Arthur's memorial as taps sounded and a color guard and honor cordon presented arms.

Natali, and New York Army National Guard Command Sgt. Major Edward Garis, were carrying on a tradition that began in 1967. That year President Lyndon Johnson began sending wreaths to be placed on the graves of his predecessors on their birthdays.

In his remarks Natali told the 20 people gathered for the ceremony, that Arthur, who was born on October 5, 1829, in Vermont, has special significance for the New York National Guard.

As a lawyer, Arthur helped modernize the New York State

Militia, the predecessor of the National Guard, and then went on to serve as a brigadier general during the Civil War.

He served as judge advocate of the militia's second brigade in 1857, and in 1860 he was appointed the engineer in chief for the governor.

When the Civil War broke out Arthur supervised the construction and maintenance of fortifica-



The color guard from the New York National Guard's Joint Task Force Headquarters presents the colors at the gravesite of President Chester Arthur, during a ceremony at Albany Rural Cemetery in Menands, N.Y. on Oct. 4, 2024. Photo by Stephanie Butler, *Guard Times* staff.

tions guarding New York Harbor. Then he went on to serve as inspector general, visiting New York troops in the field, Natali said.

Most importantly, Arthur was named quartermaster general for the militia, responsible for clothing, equipping and providing weapons for many of the 300 regiments of 1,000 Soldiers each, New York raised for the war, Natali said.

Arthur, Natali said, had roots in the Albany, New York area. He taught school in nearby towns and earned his law degree at Union College in Schenectady.

He also played a key role in early civil rights litigation, Natali pointed out. As a young lawyer in 1854, he represented a Black woman in a case which ended segregation in public transportation in New York City, he said.

Arthur was deeply involved in Republican politics but did not serve in elected office until he became vice president in 1880. When President James Garfield was shot and died, Garfield stepped into the role of president.

Arthur was very much alone in this role, Albany historian and author David Pietruska, said in his remarks. He represented a minor faction in Republican politics, Garfield had been widely respected, and Arthur had no friends in government, he told the audience.

In his remarks, Pietruska quoted Elihu Root, and important figure in 19th century American politics and friend of Arthur who noted that when he became president in September 1881 "he was alone."

"He was bowed down by the weight of fearful responsibility and crushed to the earth by the feeling, exaggerated but not unfounded, that he was surrounded by dislike, suspicion, distrust and condemnation," Pietruska said, quoting Root.

But by the end of his term in office, Arthur was praised for creating the federal civil service, reenergizing the U.S. Navy by pushing the construction of modern ships, and going after corruption in government, Natali said.

He left office in 1885 but died in New York City in Arthur died in New York City in November 1886 due to complications from kidney disease. He was buried in Albany Rural Cemetery where his wife, who died in 1880 from pneumonia, was interred previously.

Writer Mark Twain praised Arthur upon his death.

"I am but one in 55,000,000; still, in the opinion of this one-fifty-five-millionth of the country's population, it would be hard to better President Arthur's administration," Twain wrote.

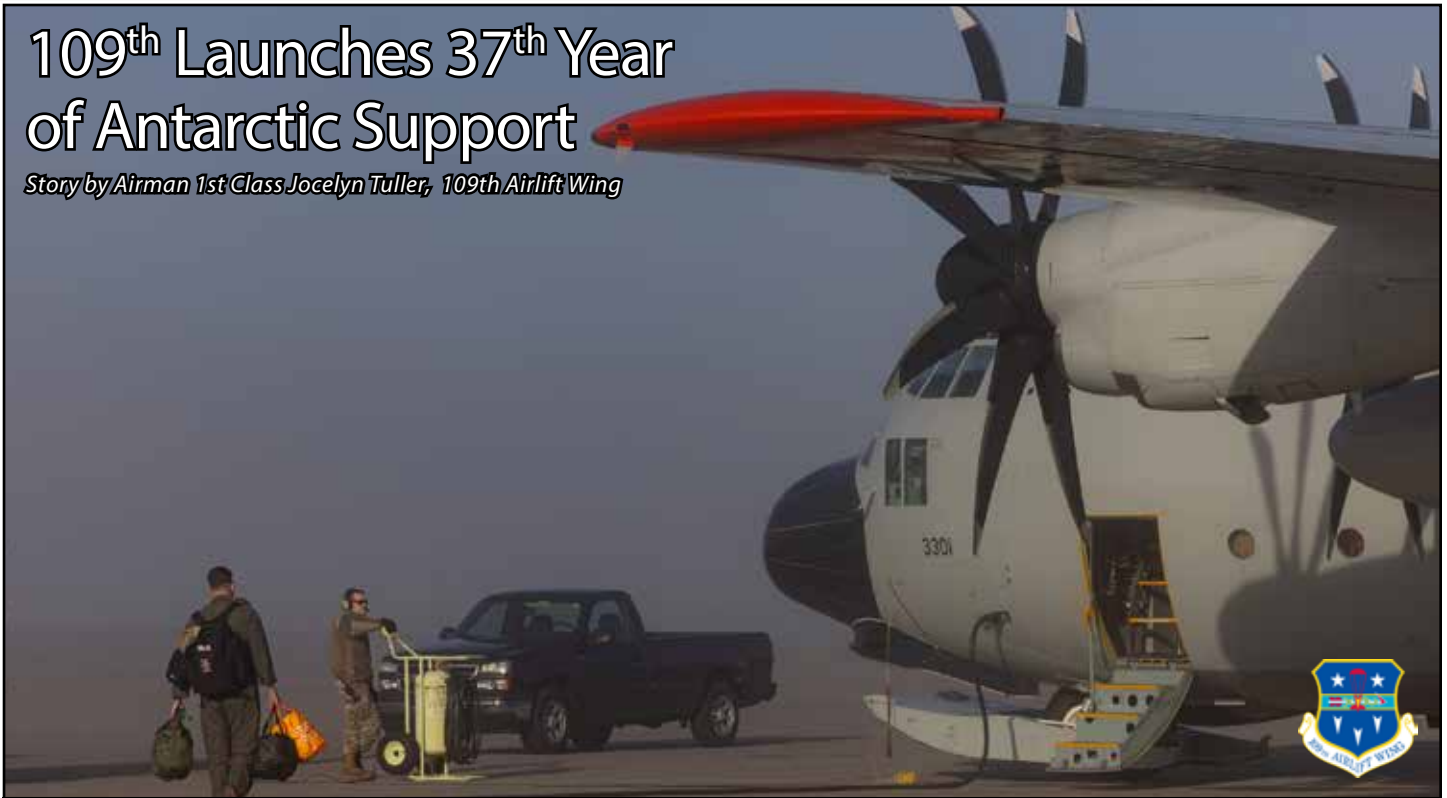
In 1889, the elaborate marker featuring a granite sarcophagus and bronze statue of a weeping angel was placed on the plot where Arthur, a two-year old son, and his wife were already buried. His son, Chester Arthur II, was interred there following his death in 1937. **gt**



The New York National Guard Joint Force Headquarters color guard stands beside the grave of President Chester Arthur after a wreath from the White House was placed, during a ceremony at Albany Rural Cemetery in Menands, N.Y. on Oct. 4, 2024. Photo by Stephanie Butler, *Guard Times* staff.

## 109<sup>th</sup> Launches 37<sup>th</sup> Year of Antarctic Support

Story by Airman 1st Class Jocelyn Tuller, 109th Airlift Wing



New York Air National Guard Airmen assigned to the 109th Airlift Wing prepare to depart from Stratton Air National Guard Base in Scotia, N.Y. to Christchurch, New Zealand on board LC-130H ski-equipped aircraft as the wing begins its annual mission to support science in Antarctica on Oct. 17, 2024. The wing, which flies the largest ski-equipped planes in the world, will deploy five LC-130Hs to McMurdo Station, Antarctica and will rotate 400 Airmen through the mission from October to February 2025. Photo by Senior Airman Jocelyn Tuller, 109th Airlift Wing.

SCOTIA, N.Y.—The New York Air National Guard’s 109th Airlift Wing kicked off its 37th year of supporting American Science research in Antarctica as five LC-130H “Ski-birds” and 110 Airmen departed Stratton Air National Guard Base outside Schenectady, N.Y. on October 16 and 17.

The LC-130s flown by the 109th Airlift Wing are the largest aircraft in the world which can land on snow and ice using skis.

From October through February, 400 airmen will provide support to the United States Antarctic research efforts as part of Operation Deep Freeze, the Department of Defense’s annual support to the National Science Foundation’s Antarctic program.

The aircraft and Airmen operate from McMurdo Station, the American Antarctic research station on the southern tip of Ross Island.

About 400 Airmen will rotate through the mission during season.

This season’s effort will consist mainly of

resupplying remote science camps in the West Antarctic Ice Sheet, the Siple Dome Field Camp, and supporting the Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station, according to Col. Robert Donaldson, the wing commander.

The Siple Domes Field Camp is 507 miles away from McMurdo Station, while the South Pole Station is 850 from McMurdo. The West Antarctic Ice Sheet Station is 1,000 miles from McMurdo Station.

“As we begin Operation Deep Freeze in Antarctica, our mission-ready airmen anticipate the unique challenges of this extreme environment,” Donaldson said. “The efforts of our airmen are critical to scientific research and demonstrate the force projection capability of the LC-130 aircraft.”

Lt. Col. Drew Brewer, the 109th Operations Group, deputy commander, who has been flying these missions for 21 years, told local station WTEN that the flying is challenging.

“When a storm rolls in and everything goes white, you can’t tell the difference between the

sky and the ground; it’s like being inside of a ping pong ball,” Brewer said.

While C-17 Globemaster III transports and other aircraft fly to McMurdo, the LC-130s have the capability to fly inside the continent, according to wing leaders.

Their special capabilities have also been vital to keeping McMurdo Station itself sustained.

During the 2023-2024 support season, the unit completed a total of 114 missions. Sixty-two of those were to and from locations on the continent. Fifty-two were trips between Antarctica and New Zealand.

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

“We are committed to the mission’s success, and through careful planning in support of the joint cause, we continue to showcase the resilience and capabilities of our force in this austere region,” Donaldson said. **gt**

# 106<sup>th</sup> Hosts Employers "Boss Lift" Mission

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

FRANCIS S. GABRESKI AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, WESTHAMPTON BEACH, N.Y. — The New York Air National Guard's 106th Rescue Wing welcomed 58 employers from 28 different companies to Francis S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base on Nov. 2, as part of the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) "Boss Lift" program.

This event provided them with a firsthand look at the wing's critical rescue missions. The employers got a mission briefing, workstation tours, and orientation flights in the HC-130J Combat King II search and rescue aircraft and the HH-60W Jolly Green II search and rescue helicopter.

Ryan Huguenin and Michael Chiesa, fire chiefs of the West Sayville Fire Department in West Sayville, New York, and Marguerite Jimenez, Assistant Superintendent for Business and Operations at Deer Park School District in Deer Park, N.Y., were among the first civilians to fly aboard the 106th Rescue Wing's brand-new HH-60W helicopter.

"It was my first experience in a helicopter, and I am speechless with how beautiful it was," Jimenez said. "I can't believe we made history as the first civilians on that aircraft."

This year's Boss Lift was more than a flight experience; it was an opportunity for employers to gain a deeper understanding of the 106th's mission and the demands faced by their employees who serve in the Air National Guard.

"When an employer supports our members, they are supporting the entire military family," said Lisa D'Agostino, the 106th Airman

and Family Readiness Program manager. "This year was even more remarkable because spouses of our service members were able to invite their supportive employers. This provided an opportunity to broaden the spectrum and let civilian employers know how they are an integral part of the military process."

Lt. Col. Mike Ritigueno, an HC-130J pilot with the 106th Operations Group who piloted the HC-130J orientation flights during the event, noted the importance of employer support.

"This is one of the best opportunities we have to show our employers what we do on a daily basis," he said. "When they see us in action, they gain a new appreciation for who we are and the impact their support has on our service to the country."

Three managers of the MIL Corporation, based in North Charleston, South Carolina, were honored with ESGR Patriot Awards for supporting Sgt. Jacquelyn Fisher, the 106th's installation spectrum manager. "We now have a greater appreciation for the 106th Rescue Wing's professionalism and mission, and we're more committed than ever to supporting Jacquelyn," Herring said.

Col. Jeffrey Cannet, the commander of the 106th Rescue Wing, said he appreciated the support shown by employers, especially those of service members' spouses, whose encouragement helps families balance civilian life with military service.

"Your flexibility allows our airmen to train, deploy, and save lives," Cannet said. "We're grateful for that partnership, and we



Fifty-eight civilian employers from 28 different companies of New York Air National Guard Airmen from the 106th Rescue Wing stand in front of an HC-130J Combat King II search and rescue aircraft at Francis S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base, Westhampton Beach, N.Y., Nov. 2, 2024. The employers participated in an Employer Support of Guard and Reserve 'Boss Lift,' learned about the wing's critical search and rescue mission and the role their Guard members play in the mission.



Brian Fehon, Director at The MIL Corporation, North Charleston, S.C., looks out from an HH-60W Jolly Green II search and rescue helicopter during an orientation flight at Francis S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base, Westhampton Beach, N.Y., Nov. 2, 2024. Fehon received the Patriot Award for exceptional support of National Guard and Reserve employees and participated in the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) 'Boss Lift' program.

couldn't do this without you."

"This was indeed our largest Boss Lift to date, and it was amazing," D'Agostino said. "The civilian employers were thanking us for hosting them when indeed it is

because of their outstanding support of our service members and families." **gt**

# 106<sup>th</sup> Welcomes New, High-tech Helicopters

Story by Capt. Cheran Campbell, 106th Rescue Wing

WESTHAMPTON BEACH, N.Y. — The New York Air National Guard's 106th Rescue Wing officially marked the arrival its new HH-60W Jolly Green II search and rescue fleet during a ceremony held on Friday, October 25 at Francis S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base.

The new aircraft will replace the HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopters formerly flown by the wing. The new high-tech helicopters are more capable than the aircraft they replace.

"This is a momentous occasion which allows for us to reflect on where we are as an organization and where we are headed," said Col. Shawn P. Fitzgerald, commander of the 106th Rescue Wing.

"The "Whiskey" model you see before you may look almost identical to the Golf, but I can assure you, it is much different," said Fitzgerald.

"So much so that the training of our aircrew and maintainers requires months and additional intensive training and practical hands-on experience. It's not an easy transition," Fitzgerald added.

Major General Michael W. Bank, the commander of the New York Air National Guard and a former commander of the 106th Rescue Wing, said the new helicopters was part of an overall effort to keep the wing combat ready.

Major General Raymond F. Shields Jr. the adjutant general of New York, said that the modernization of the wing's aircraft was important in keeping the New York Air National Guard capable of responding to new challenges.

New York recently signed an agreement



U.S. Air Force Maj. Gen. Michael W. Bank, commander, New York Air National Guard, congratulates Tech. Sgt. Michael Tessar, an HH-60W crew chief assigned to the 106th Rescue Wing, during an HH-60W conversion ceremony at the 106th Rescue Wing based at Francis S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base, Westhampton Beach, N.Y., Oct. 25, 2024. Tessar was honored as the Dedicated Crew Chief of the 106th's brand-new HH-60W. Photo by Senior Airman Sarah McKernan, 106th Rescue Wing.

with the Swedish military to conduct training together, alongside existing agreements with South Africa and Brazil, Shields said.

The 106th Rescue Wing has been heavily involved in training with Brazil and he expects the wing's Airmen, and their new aircraft, to conduct similar missions with Sweden, Shields said.

During the ceremony the wing leadership also honored Tech. Sgt. Michael Tessar, a

West Islip resident, by naming him as the first dedicated crew chief for the brand new HH-60W.

"As advancements in military aircraft technology continue, so too will the skills of myself and my fellow maintainers and aircrew," Tessar said.

"It's an exciting time to be a part of the Air National Guard, especially within the 106th, where we are at the forefront of these innovations and ready to meet all challenges that lie ahead," Tessar added.

The ceremony concluded with a HH-60W demonstration fly by conducted by the first crew qualified in the aircraft, Lt. Col. James Liston and Staff Sgt. Joe Devito.

"Although we celebrate the arrival of our brand new helicopter, we must always remember it is the Airman that makes the system work," said Fitzgerald.

The 106th Rescue Wing is a unit of the New York Air National Guard, stationed at Francis S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base, Westhampton Beach, New York. 🇺🇸



An HH-60W Jolly Green II search and rescue helicopter assigned to the 106th Rescue Wing conducts a flyover during an HH-60W conversion ceremony at the 106th Rescue Wing based at Francis S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base, Westhampton Beach, N.Y., Oct. 25, 2024. Photo by Senior Airman Sarah McKernan, 106th Rescue Wing.



# National Science Board Visits the 109<sup>th</sup>

Story and photos by Senior Airman Jocelyn Tuller, 109th Airlift Wing



Members of the National Science Board pose for a photo in front of a LC-130 Hercules during a visit to Stratton Air National Guard Base on Sept. 12, 2024. The National Science Board sets policies and priorities for the National Science Foundation, which funds and oversees scientific research.

SCOTIA, N.Y. — Members of the National Science Board – the entity responsible for setting U.S. polar research priorities, got a firsthand look at the ski-equipped C-130s which sustain science research in Antarctica and Greenland during a visit to Stratton Air National Guard Base on Sept. 12.

The ten LC-130s flown by the New York Air National Guard's 109th Airlift Wing are the largest ski-equipped planes in the world and support the work of the National Science Foundation in the polar regions.

The board members, who had been meeting in nearby Saratoga Springs, visited the base to see these important, but aging, aircraft for themselves, according to Dario Gil, the board chair.

"We have been spending quite a lot of time on the board discussing the LC-130s- not only what they enable but also the challenges we have ahead to make sure we can sustain the missions they do," Gil

said.

"It's at the heart of the polar mission, we wanted to get firsthand knowledge of how the mission is carried out and what the needs are," he explained.

The oldest LC-130 in use today was made in 1973, the newest models were made in 1993, Col. Rob Donaldson, the commander of the 109th Airlift Wing, told the board members.

He briefed the board members on the challenges associated with maintaining aging aircraft.

The 109th Airlift Wing has operated its fleet of LC-130 Hercules aircraft since the 1980, Donaldson said.

The aircraft are increasingly showing signs of wear, prompting concerns about their future efficacy and safety, Donaldson said.

He explained that sustainment has become more challenging, many parts are no longer manufactured which leads to supply issues and major overhauls that must be

done on station.

Despite the challenges faced with the aging aircraft, the 109th has continually met the needs of the National Science Foundation, said Dr. Jean Cottom Allen, the acting director of the National Science Foundation's Office of Polar Programs.

"Without the capacity and capability (of the LC-130), we would not be able to build up the world class science programs that we have at South Pole Station or Summit Station, or the deep fields of Antarctica. U.S. leadership in science is very much a partnership dependent on the LC-130s and the 109th," Allen said.

The insights gained from this visit are expected to contribute to ongoing discussions about how best to address the modernization needs of the 109th Airlift Wing's fleet, Gil said. 



Members of the National Science Board are touring a LC-130 Hercules during a visit to Stratton Air National Guard Base, on Sept. 12, 2024.



Members of the National Science Board are learning about how the skis of a LC-130 Hercules are repaired and maintained during a visit to Stratton Air National Guard Base on Sept. 12, 2024.

# 109<sup>th</sup> Security Forces Train Augmentee Force

Story and photos by Jaclyn Lyons, 109th Attack Wing

SCOTIA, N.Y. — New York Air National Guard Airman 1st Class Anton Konev normally sits behind a computer, tracking the personnel records of the 109th Airlift Wing's Airmen.

Now Konev, and nine other 109th Airmen, have a new qualification; augmentees to the 109th Security Forces Squadron.

The ten Airmen took part in a special class held from Sept. 16 to 20, 2024 that honed their marksmanship skills and taught them the roles for use of force.

It was training, and a qualification he was happy to get, Konev said.

**"Usually, I am sitting at a computer for my job - this gives me a different perspective and the ability to be more well-rounded as an Airman."**

*-Airman 1st Class Anton Konev, 109th Airlift Wing Security Forces Squadron*

"Usually, I am sitting at a computer for my job - this gives me a different perspective and the ability to be more well-rounded as an Airman," he said.

The new skills will also give him a chance to pull more duty-time and enhance his Guard pay, said Konev, a personalist in the wing's Force Support Squadron.

Security Forces Airmen assigned to the 109th Airlift Wing, New York Air National Guard, conducted the week-long course to train augmentees to equip them with the necessary tools to operate effectively alongside full-time security forces personnel.

The course is a wing-driven program, developed by the security forces squadron to backfill when needed.

Airmen can volunteer to be part of the augmentee force, a group of volunteers who can be on call to support the unit during critical staffing shortages, ensuring mission readiness when it matters most, explained Master Sgt. Jeremy Morey, the security forces day shift supervisor.

"We are trying to build a backup defense force in case we (Security Forces) get called to larger operations. With the augmentee force, if we do have additional defenders pulled, the wing and these augmented defenders can cover down on day-to-day operations at the installation." Morey said.

Morey explained that the course is five days long.

Two days are spent on weapons training, with Airmen qualifying on the M18 and the M4 rifles and then three days focus on use of force and day-to-day duties, including how to manage the front entrance gate and respond to emergencies on base, he said.

Capt. Matt Begin, security forces officer, explained that the augmentee force is a one-year program- with an annual refresher required each year.

Airmen can volunteer for as much or as little as they like once certified.

Begin said there are short-term full-time employment opportunities or single annual training days available when additional manning is needed.

"We are always looking for help and base defense is always our number one priority when it comes to security forces- we are here to defend the resources and



Master Sgt. Jeremy Morey, security forces supervisor assigned to the 109th Airlift Wing, Scotia, N.Y., instructs an Airman during a security forces augmented training course on Sept. 17, 2024. The purpose of the augmentee course is to backfill at home station when security forces defenders must forward deploy. The course covers weapons training, combative and day to day base procedures.

our assets to include our personnel," Begin, said.

"This is a great opportunity for us to share our mission set and share what we do as well as get some volunteers who may not normally get to be exposed to doing this activity day-to-day, we all get to learn how to shoot and how to contribute to the fight in

basic training and then get our spin-offs from there- but this brings folks back to the basics of maybe why they enlisted," he said. By covering a wide range of important topics and encouraging participation, the course ensured that leaders are well-prepared for the challenges of today's military environment, Vyas said. **gt**



Staff Sgt. David Hacker - a combat arms instructor assigned to the 109th Airlift Wing, Scotia, N.Y., instructs a weapons qualifications during a security forces augmented training course on Sep. 17, 2024. The purpose of the augmentee course is to backfill at home station when security forces defenders must forward deploy. The course covers weapons training, combative and day to day base procedures.



## Air Guardsmen Awarded for Saving Wingmen's Lives

Story by Senior Airman Sarah Post, 105th Attack Wing

STEWART AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, N.Y.— Two Airmen from the New York Air National Guard's 105th Airlift Wing were recognized for saving their fellow Airmen's lives during a Dec. 8, 2024 ceremony.

The 105th's Top 3 Executive Team presented Staff Sgt. Timothy Horton and Capt. Sinead Kirnan with the Henry W. Windels Wingman Award for their selfless and decisive actions that helped save the lives of two wingmen. These incidents occurred outside of their military duties—Horton's action took place during his civilian job as a police officer, and Kirnan's was in a situation where a friend was helping another friend.

Horton, responded to a 911 call while on shift in Warwick, New York, Aug. 19, 2023. The call was about Master Sgt. Roman Jeter, a 105th Air Maintenance Squadron maintainer, who had gone into cardiac arrest at his residence and required immediate medical attention.

on the scene Horton took over cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) from Jeter's wife and set up an automated external defibrillator (AED), administering defibrilla-

tion to Jeter.

On June 19, 2024, Kirnan, a pilot with the 137th Airlift Squadron, was helping Master Sgt. Jarnon Brown, a loadmaster with the 137th, move into his third-floor condo while recovering from a foot injury.

One of Brown's crutches became caught in the stairway railing. He lost his balance, stumbled through the balcony railing and fell three stories.

"I ran down to him, and he wasn't talking, not responding, not moving," said Kirnan. "He was lying on his stomach, and when I looked at his head, I saw he had a huge gash and was bleeding."

Kirnan immediately called 911 while checking Brown's pulse and trying to get his attention. When Brown regained consciousness, Kirnan kept him calm and still, ensuring his safety until EMS arrived.

The Windels award was created in honor of Master Sgt. Henry Windels, an Airman with the 105th who donated a kidney to a fellow 105th Airman in 2016, saving his life. **gt**

## Childs Promise to Join Air National Guard Fulfilled Years Later

Story and photo by Senior Airman Jocelyn Tuller, 109th Airlift Wing



Brendan Murphy, a new recruit, poses with a 109th Airlift patch in front of the flightline at the 109th Airlift Wing, Scotia, NY, on August 27, 2024. Murphy took a similar photo when he was young, with a patch given to him by a member of the 109th Airlift Wing.

SCOTIA, N.Y. — When Queensbury, New York resident, Brendan Murphy, was just 3 years old, a brief encounter at the Glens Falls Airport changed the course of his life.

During a family visit, he marveled at an LC-130 Hercules cargo plane that was at the airport. Then a member of the 109th Airlift Wing approached him, removed a patch from their uniform, and gifted it to the young boy.

Murphy kept that patch throughout his life, promising to join the Air National Guard in his future.

"I knew I wanted to join the military in some aspect because my grandfather was in the Army National Guard," Murphy said. "That moment really changed me into wanting to join the Air Force."

Fast forward nearly two decades, and Murphy, now 22, has fulfilled that childhood promise.

He enlisted in the 109th Airlift Wing's Security Forces Squadron, August 27, 2024, motivated by a desire to serve and a passion for law enforcement inspired by his father, who works in the field.

"I want to be a state trooper, so I figured I want to do something that is aligned with what I want to do on the outside as well," he said.

Murphy, who graduated from Queensbury High School, will begin at the 109th Airlift Wing this October, participating in regularly scheduled drills before heading off to basic training to become an Airman.

He said he still treasures the patch he received as a child. It is a tangible reminder of his passion from a young age to serve in the military.

Murphy said that his journey emphasizes the influence service members can have, often through small acts of kindness that resonate for years. **gt**

## Outstanding Contributors Help Dedicate EADS Agile Operations Project

ROME, N.Y. — The Eastern Air Defense Sector and 224th Air Defense Group celebrated the completion of its agile operations project by cutting a ceremonial ribbon on Thursday, Oct. 31. The ceremony also honored eight Airmen and civilians who made significant contributions to the project. Pictured, from left to right, are Col. Joseph Roos, EADS Commander;



Chief Master Sgt. Rob Zoldi, 224th ADG Senior Enlisted Leader; Mr. Steve Cameron; Brig. Gen. Gary Charlton, Assistant Adjutant General, Air, New York National Guard; Mr. Sonpith Keoviengsamay, Mr. Dan Foley, Brig. Gen. Paul Bishop, New York Air National Guard Chief of Staff; Staff Sgt. Robert Kraeger, Capt. Philip Gentile; Master Sgt. Frank Balash, Mr. Brian Tuttle and Col. Jennifer King, 224th Air Defense Group Commander. Courtesy Photo.

## 106<sup>th</sup> Rescue Wing Welcomes New Commander

Story and photo by Senior Airman Sarah McKernan, 106th Rescue Wing

Francis S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base, Westhampton Beach, N.Y. — Colonel Jeffrey D. Cannet assumed command of the New York Air National Guard's 106th Rescue Wing during a ceremony at Francis S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base on Friday, Nov. 1, 2024.

Cannet, a Mastic Beach resident, assumed command from Colonel Shawn P. Fitzgerald, a Cutchogue resident, who has led the wing since 2020.

Major General Michael W. Bank, the commander of the New York Air National Guard, praised Cannet as an outstanding leader.

"You have demonstrated your ability through your experience in command at the squadron and group level," Bank said.

"You are ready to meet the leadership challenges and guide this wing into the future. You are the right officer, at the right time, for this command and I look forward to working with you and your team," he added.

In his remarks, Cannet said he planned to continue Fitzgerald's emphasis on mission focus and



U.S. Air Force Colonel Jeffrey D. Cannet assumes command of the 106th Rescue Wing from outgoing commander Colonel Shawn P. Fitzgerald during a change of command ceremony held at Francis S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base, Westhampton Beach, N.Y., Nov. 1, 2024.

collaboration by wing members.

"Together, we will continue with this wing's honorable tradition of saving lives... We will commit ourselves to bring the full spectrum of our collective talents together to ensure our cherished motto, 'That others may live,'" he said.

Cannet also thanked his wife Sherry and their children Anthony,

Alexis, and AJ for their constant support.

"I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the support of my family and the sacrifices they have made which allowed me to be here today," he said. "You guys keep me grounded and young, and I could not do this without you."

In his remarks, Bank praised Fitzgerald for his leadership of the wing since 2020.

"Under your leadership you have set the standard for excellence in Airmen safety, manpower, and readiness priorities that we set to ensure we are capable of serving the nation, state, and communities in which we live," Bank said.

"My heartfelt thanks to you and for the support given by your entire family to ensure that on someone's worst day, you and this wing were there," he added.

As he relinquished command, Fitzgerald thanked the Airmen he led.

"You all have lived out the Air Force core values, and it is shown in your performance of this wing," he said. "Through your efforts,

the 106th is number six out of the 90 in the Air National Guard in total in-strength and third in total flying hour execution. We are the only wing in the top six in both categories," Fitzgerald said.

"Thank you for giving me the privilege of watching you prepare, train, and execute our mission. I had the honor, and the best seat in the house, of being a part of it and it truly was special," Fitzgerald added.

Cannet enlisted in the Air Force in 1993, serving as an aircraft maintenance technician. He transitioned to the Air Guard in 2000, serving as a combat search and rescue flight engineer.

Cannet received his officer commission in 2004 graduated from the C-130 Pilot Initial Qualification Course.

Since joining the 106th, Cannet has served as in a variety of positions to include HC-130 Weapons and Tactics Officer, the 102nd's Director of Operations, 102nd Squadron Commander, and the Commander of the 106th Operations Group. ✪

# 107<sup>th</sup> Participates in Large Scale Readiness Exercise

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

NIAGARA FALLS N.Y. — 120 Airmen assigned to the 107th Attack Wing participated and completed their annual large scale readiness exercise, Niagara Warrior, Oct. 17 to 20.

The exercise was designed to simulate a contested operating area with degraded operating conditions.

Airmen from the wing's civil engineering, communications, medical, security forces, and logistics readiness sections participated in the event.

This year the focus was on sustaining a presence in those conditions with more advanced opposition forces capabilities.

Small unmanned aircraft systems (sUAS) were also introduced for the first time with help of both local and federal law enforcement who used the opportunity to familiarize and train themselves with the equipment, said Lt. Col. Damon Antonetti, the 107th's A3/A5 Officer (Operations/ Plans and Integration).

"It was a nice touch, being able to learn different nine-line, when and when not to call it in, it was good experience," said Senior Airman Harry Hartman, assigned to 107th Security Forces.

In the training scenarios Airmen were presented with situational challenges, or 'injects,' forcing them to practice their skills in a 'real world' scenario.

This year Airmen engaged in over 200 such challenges over the four day exercise.

Injects ranged from a simulated cyber attack on a secured network, medical emergencies, to chemical attacks, full scale assaults of the main gate, and riots.

"I really liked the drones that were used," said Senior Airman Shane Such, assigned to 107th

Communications Squadron. "It provided a great example of a very real-world, emerging threat we see coming out."

"Over all I thought it went really well," said Such. "We were really able to show that were able to do our jobs in a situation like this and effectively accomplish the mission."

"We had the opportunity to tabletop a scenario where a chemical attack occurred, and we had to explain how we would handle that, step by step, start to finish," said Staff Sgt Richard Berrios, assigned to 107th Medical Group.

Other Airmen were excited about building moral and connecting with their fellow squad members.

"Being able to showcase our experience and training like that was very exciting, and I think now everyone feels more confident going down range," Berrios added.

"I really like the camaraderie," said Hartman. "Security Forces is a pretty tight-nit unit, we've all been together for at least five years, and some folks have been here for over 15, its just nice to have all of us out here having fun while training."

Preparations have already begun to improve the next iteration slated for 2025, according to Antonetti.

"The members who deployed for this iteration provided some great feedback," said Antonetti. "In 2025 we will continue to develop our readiness culture by reinforcing our Airmen's various skills needed to operate in a combat environment." **gt**



Tech. Sgt. Geronimo Abreu, 107th Attack Wing Security Forces, inspects his riot gear before participating in the last riot exercise of Niagara Warrior, Oct. 19, 2024. Exercises, such as riot control, allow Airmen the opportunity to practice their training, combined with real world experience and provide real world application in a safe, simulated environment.



Chaplain Benjamin Bahr and Master Sgt. Warren Jones, assigned to the 107th Attack Wings Chaplains office deliver mass during Niagara Warrior, the wing's large scale readiness exercise, Oct. 20, 2024.



Airmen of the 107th Attack Wing Medical Group practice providing emergency life saving care to a training dummy during the wings four day large scale readiness exercise, Niagara Warrior, Oct. 18, 2024. This is the second time Niagara Warrior has been exercised, and is used to provide Airmen from all duty stations real world experience in a simulated deployment setting.


## New York Military Forces Ball Honors Retirees

Story by *Glen Marchi, Previous Commander of the 12 Command Support Detachment (Retired Col. Dec. 7, 2024)*

NEW YORK— The annual New York Military Forces Ball was held at Fort Hamilton in Brooklyn, NY, on October 26, 2024, honoring the dedication and service of members from the New York Guard, New York Naval Militia, Army National Guard, and Air National Guard.

This year's event marked a historic milestone, as Retirement Certificates were presented to deserving service members in recognition of their years of commitment. For the first time, spouses were also honored with Certificates of Appreciation, acknowledging their steadfast support and sacrifices during their loved ones' military service.

The evening served as a power-

ful tribute to the vital role families play in military success, celebrating the enduring spirit of duty, sacrifice, and shared commitment. Retirees, families, and distinguished guests and veterans came together to reflect on decades of service and recognize the strength of the military community. 



New York Guard Retirement Certificates presented by BG Peter Riley, New York Guard Commander.  
L-R (back): SGM Clohessy, CSM Rogers, (BG Riley), MSG Amigrone, SSG Santiago, WO1 Earley  
L-R (front): CSM Hodge, CH DeFlorimonte, COL Marchi, COL Colety, LTC Lecce, CPT Boyle, CPT Getman  
Courtesy Photo

## NY Guard Marches in Bronx Veterans Day Parade



(L) BRONX, N.Y. —The 88th Company of the New York Guard marched in the 40th Annual Bronx Veterans Day Parade, Nov. 10, 2024. This year, the parade committee selected two grand marshals to lead the event through the streets of the Throgs Neck neighborhood in the east Bronx. 1SG Joseph Ronda of the 88th Company and MAJ Jason Brezler USMCR (RET) served as Grand Marshals of the parade. 1SG Ronda is a veteran of the United States Marine Corps Reserve and currently serves as the Commandant of the Star of the Sea CYO Cadet Corps.

(R) BRONX, N.Y. — Forty members of the 88th Company led by their commander, CPT David Tsin, marched through the streets of Throgs Neck to the Bicentennial Veterans Memorial Park where Veteran Day ceremony was held.



## Routine Harbor Patrol Becomes Challenging Rescue

Story by Stephanie Butler, *Guard Times* staff

**NEW YORK— A routine security patrol of the East River, turned into a challenging rescue mission for a team of Naval Militia members and Coast Guardsman onboard Naval Militia Patrol Boat 440 on Sept. 24.**

Boatswains Mate 1st Class Kurt Schneider, and Machinery Technician Chief Ken Stefandel were patrolling the river near the United Nations building, as part of the security for the annual gathering of world leaders for the United Nations General Assembly Meeting.

Four Coast Guardsmen, belonging to a Tactical Law Enforcement Team, were also onboard because of the security mission.

At 4:30 in the afternoon the crew noticed people shouting and waiving along the water's edge.

At first, we thought people were waiving to us because we are a military boat, so I waved back, said Stefandel, PB440's coxswain.

"It was then I saw them pointing to the water, after looking closer I realized that there was a person in the water lying face up, that was floating down the river," said Stefandel.

It was then he knew they had to act quickly. Stefandel told the boat crew to make "preps for recovery".

PB440 circled around and began to call out to her.

"She was flailing her arms trying to make some kind of movement," said Stefandel.

"I told the crew to deploy the life ring, so that she could try to swim to or grab on to, to keep her afloat," he said.

Unfortunately, she was not able to make it over to the life ring, Stefandel recalled.

He instructed the crew to try a direct pick up. This means they would have to maneuver the

boat close enough to the person to pull them out of the water and right onto the boat.

"The current in the East River was ripping, there was a tide change, so that made maneuvering the boat and handling the boat a little



**Boatswains Mate 1st Class Kurt Schneider (Front), and Machinery Technician Chief Ken Stefandel (rear) pose for picture on patrol boat 440 in the East River, following a rescue mission. Courtesy Photo**

challenging," explained Stefandel.

Because the crew was made up of Naval Militia and Coast Guard members, they have all been through countless person in the water, man overboard drills, he explained.

"It was kind of easy everyone knew their role and responsibilities," Stefandel said.

The Coast Guard team was able to reach a boat hook to her. She was able to latch on with one of her hands and hold on until she got to the back of the boat. Stefandel explained.

Then the crew was able to pull her out of the water, explained Stefandel.

"One of the Coast Guard members was a certified EMT and had his bag on him. So, he went into his EMT role, assessing her airway, breathing and circulation," said Stefandel.

The crew worked together to contact the fire department and get an ambulance dispatched. Stefandel drove the boat, while others treated the distressed woman until they arrived at the sanitation department pier 99, at the end of 59th Street. A fire truck and ambulance were waiting there.

"I pulled the boat right against the sea wall," said Stefandel.

But the challenges weren't over.

The fire department had to use a ladder to form a ramp because of the 5–6-foot drop from the pier to the boat. From there they were able to drag a stokes litter basket over the ramp, recalled Stefandel.

"We went ahead and put that person in the litter and covered them with a solar blanket, and hoisted her ashore," he said.

"The crew did a tremendous job, it was truly a team effort, I maneuvered the boat, but they did the recovery, the triage and the transport of the patient, so it was truly a team effort," said Stefandel. "We're learning some things that we never realized that we could do," said Perry, referring to landing craft missions.

"Despite numerous challenges in the exercise planning process, the end result has been quite remarkable," McKnight said.

"The Schodack Island State Park location turned out to be convenient and practical for us, as well as having superlative hosts who made us feel very welcome," he added. **gt**

## Training Operations on Lake Ontario



**ROCHESTER, N.Y. — New York Naval Militia Patrol Boat 280 and 281 underway on Lake Ontario to conducting routine training with United States Navy Reservists from Navy Reserve Center Rochester, N.Y., on Oct. 18, 2024. Courtesy photos.**





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