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FROM THE LEADERSHIP

Strengthening the Warrant Officer Cohort

As the Command Chief Warrant Officer for the New York Army National Guard, my role is to help recruit and develop the warrant officer corps for our 11,600-member force.

Warrant officers are a small force who fill a unique role between the Army's command teams and the enlisted force. We serve as the technical experts and problem solvers who bridge the gap between the planners and those who execute the plan.

At our core, we are warfighters—leaders who enable combat power through expertise, precision, and the commitment to excellence.

While my comments are directed specifically at the 255 Warrant Officers in the New York Army National Guard, I believe they can apply to every member of the Army and Air Guard, and the New York Naval Militia as well.

Now, more than ever, we warrant officers must refocus on what truly matters: recruiting and retaining warrant officers, military excellence, readiness, the warfighting mission and the future of the warrant officer corps.

These priorities are not just words—they are the foundation of our success.

We need more warrant officers so we can support

and execute both active duty and state active duty missions. Whether it is in maintenance, intelligence, aviation, logistics, or any other field, we need enough warrant officers so the Army can fight and win.

Each of us must continuously hone our technical skills, sharpen our tactical awareness, and always ask ourselves: Is what we are doing contributing directly to combat effectiveness? If the answer is no, then we need to adjust fire.

Soldiers and leaders rely on us to deliver results, and we must always be prepared to answer the call.

We must train, certify, and validate ourselves and

those we mentor. We must ensure every mission-critical item—whether it is a weapon system, a vehicle, or a logistical operation—works.

Excellence means embracing a culture of accountability.

If something is broken, we fix it. If a system isn't working, we refine it. If standards are slipping, we correct them. Excellence is not optional.

We must ensure we are personally ready.

Physical fitness, marksmanship, battlefield survivability, and tactical proficiency are just as critical as technical expertise.

As Warrant Officers, we must enforce standards,

lead by example, and eliminate anything that detracts from combat effectiveness. It also means training and mentoring the next generation to carry forward a warrior's mindset.

We must focus on improving sustainment operations and ensuring that logistics systems are optimized for battle-field conditions.

Gen. Randy George, Army Chief of Staff, said that we perform "unnecessary maintenance" at an annual cost of 632 man-years.

Logistics drives operations, so we must ensure that every system, policy, and process is built for speed, efficiency, and effectiveness in combat. If something is slowing down the fight, we need to be the ones who fix it.

The strength of the Warrant Officer Cohort depends on identifying, mentoring, and retaining the best talent. The next generation of Warrant Officers will not find their way to us on their own—we must seek them out, guide them, and show them the value of this profession.

Recruiting must be deliberate. We need to engage top-performing NCOs early, educate them on what it means to be a Warrant Officer, and help them navigate the process. If we aren't actively bringing in the best talent, then we are failing our future force.

Retention is just as critical. Warrant Officers must feel valued and see



**Chief Warrant Officer 5
William Solmo**

a clear path for career progression. We need to foster professional growth, ensure opportunities for development, and provide mentorship that keeps them engaged.

The Warrant Officer Cohort of the New York Army National Guard has a proud history of excellence, but we cannot rest on our past successes.

Now is the time to reset our focus—on warfighting, Soldier skills, technical mastery, and leadership.

The battlefield of the future will be fast, complex, and unforgiving. To ensure victory, we must refocus on the warfighting mission, military excellence, readiness, and the future of our cohort.

I challenge every Warrant Officer to act. Master your craft. Mentor the next generation. Streamline processes that impact the fight. Ensure that you and those around you are truly ready.

These are not passive responsibilities: they are active commitments that will define the success of our force. **gt**



LATHAM, N.Y. — Chief Warrant Officer 5 William Solmo joins Pvt. John Palacios in cutting the cake during a June 13, 2025 ceremony celebrating the Army's 250th birthday in Latham, New York. Palacios, who is 17 represented the future of the Army, while Solmo, who is 59, represented the history and traditions of the service. Photo by Stephanie Butler, Guard Times staff.

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Air National Guard Tech. Sgt. Declan Harley, a pararescueman, and Staff Sgt. Jenna Picozzi, an Aircrew Flight Equipment parachute rigger, assigned to the 106th Rescue Wing, pack a parachute following jump training on Francis S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base, Westhampton Beach, N.Y., May 2, 2025. Photo by Staff Sgt. Sarah McKernan, 106th Rescue Wing.

FRONT COVER: New York Naval Militia Patrol Boat 440 approaches the southern tip of Manhattan during a maritime security mission on June 2, 2025. The Naval Militia hosted a Swedish military delegation to study maritime security in New York Harbor as part of the State Partnership Program agreement between the New York National Guard and the Swedish Military. Photo by Stephanie Butler, Guard Times staff.

BACK COVER: Medical personnel from the 105th and 109th Airlift Wings load "patients" in the cargo bay of a 105th Airlift Wing Globemaster III airlifter at Stewart Air National Guard Base in Newburgh, New York, on June 6, 2025 during a medical evacuation training exercise. Photo by Senior Airman Sarah Post, 106th Airlift Wing.

FACES of the FORCE

Air Guard Recruiter Sets Record

Story and photo by Senior Airman Sarah Post, 105th Airlift Wing

STEWART AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, N.Y. — One recruiter at the New York Air National Guard's 105th Airlift Wing is standing out from his peers. He's recruited more Airmen in 2024 than any other recruiter in the Air Force.

Tech. Sgt. Franklin Angel, 105th production recruiter, was named the top producing recruiter in the nation for 2024, recruiting 80.5 new Airmen.

He was also awarded the Blue Suit Award for the second consecutive year, an achievement that makes him the first Air National Guard recruiter to win the award twice.

"Tech. Sgt. Angel is an exceptionally talented recruiter," said Master Sgt. Grant Drumgold, the 105th recruiting flight chief. "He manages nearly 100 applicants at once and makes each recruit feel as if they're his only applicant. No recruiter has done more to bolster the Air National Guard's manning in the last two years than Tech. Sgt. Angel. It's an honor to serve alongside him," Drumgold said.

Angel, a Montgomery, New York resident, became a recruiter in 2021, following seven years as a member of the 105th Base Defense Squadron. He said after two deployments and other trips, he was ready for a change of pace that would challenge him and help him learn new skills.

So, he traded the security forces beret for a recruiter tab on the right arm of his uniform and a new focus on bringing new talent into the New York Air National Guard.

"We're not just supporting the Air Force as a whole, we're supporting our communities and state," Angel said. "Everyone sees our C-17s flying around, but they also see us serving during state emergencies, doing missions only the Air Guard can undertake. It's amazing seeing people go from their civilian job to their guard job, go on deployments and missions, and then be able to go back their regular day-to-day when the mission is over."

In 2023, with less than two years of experience, Angel was named Rookie Recruiter of the Year and awarded his first Blue Suit Award for high enlistment rates exceeding those of his peers with similar experience.

After receiving his first Blue Suit Award in March 2025, Angel had a choice to make: take a

step back from the top spot or continue striving for excellence in his service to the guard.

"One of the reasons I aimed for Blue Suit again was due to my wife," Angel said. "A big factor toward my accomplishments is due to her support and understanding. Blue Suit does a fantastic job of acknowledging not just our efforts, but the contributions our spouses make toward our job. I wanted her to experience the spotlight and praise."

Driven by this motivation, Angel enlisted 80.5 new Airmen in 2024, including new recruits and prior service members from various branches.

He recruited half a new Airmen by splitting the credit with another wing's recruiter, which happens when a new recruit is interested in a career the 105th doesn't have an opening for or when they might be a better fit at another unit.

Angel credits his success to the help and support he gets from his team and family, his motivation to learn the best and most accurate ways to recruit incoming members, and the ideal location of the 105th, about 90-minutes north of New York City.

Angel was formally recognized by Air Force Recruiting Service for his second Blue Suit Award in March 2025 alongside 13 other award recipients, including 10 active-duty, two reserve and one other guard recruiter. These individuals are the top performing Air Force recruiters out of over 1,000 worldwide.

There were a variety of events in honor of the award recipients, including an arrival ceremony, meet and greets with Air Education and Training Command leaders and prior Blue Suit Award recipients, and time spent with military training instructors and Airmen in basic military and technical school training.

To conclude the week's festivities, there was a formal award ceremony to recognize each of the award winners, Angel being the top performing of them all. Angel recognizes that it will be a challenge to beat his record 2024 year.

But, it is a challenge he is willing to take on



Air National Guard Tech. Sgt. Franklin Angel, 105th Airlift Wing production recruiter, displays his two Blue Suit Awards at Stewart Air National Guard Base, New York, April 22, 2025. The Blue Suit Award recognizes the 14 top performing recruiters from around the world, including active duty Air Force, the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserves.

in 2025, as part of his job as a recruiter requires adapting to change and finding new ways to recruit.

The recent ceremony, he said, gave him a second wind and a reminder of the importance of his job and why he does it.

"Everyone at the event asked, 'are we going to see you again next year?'" Angel said. "At first, I thought definitely not, but when I kept hearing it, I thought, well maybe I can and maybe I should." **gt**

"No recruiter has done more to bolster the Air National Guard's manning in the last two years than Tech. Sgt. Angel. It's an honor to serve alongside him,"

— Master Sgt. Grant Drumgold, 105th Airlift Wing Recruiting Flight Chief

109th Family Readiness Manager Honored for Community Service

Story by Tech. Sgt. Madison Scaringe, 109th Airlift Wing

STRATTON AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, N.Y. — Colleen Casey, the 109th Airlift Wing's Military and Family Readiness Manager, has been named Distinguished Citizen of the Year by the Scotia Glenville Elks.

The award, presented during the group's annual award ceremony on March 25, 2025, recognized Casey's service and commitment to community support, according to the Elks.

"What Mrs. Casey does for Stratton Air National Guard Base and for the service men and women and their children is truly generous. She checked every box on my list for someone who I thought deserved this award," said Travis St. Louis, the Exalted Ruler of the Scotia Glenville Elks.

As manager of the Military and Family Readiness office, Casey serves as a central hub for resources. She regularly answers questions about deployments, finances, or transitioning from the military to find local resources.

"This award recognizes a true champion of our Airmen and their families," said Chief Master Sgt. Karolyn De Vito, command chief of the 109th Airlift Wing.

"Colleen embodies the spirit of service, dedicating herself to ensuring our members have the resources and support they need to thrive, both professionally and personally, throughout their military journey. We are proud to have her on our team," she said.

The award comes after working in the position for over 10 years.

"I know I am appreciated – I receive many heartfelt thanks and words of praise daily. But this is

the first tangible award I have received. It's hard to explain how wonderful it feels to be recognized in person," Casey said.

Casey works closely with national, state and local agencies to stay up to date on what resources are available for service members and their families.

This past year, she assisted the Scotia Glenville Elks in an effort to provide backpacks and school supplies to service members' children.

"Colleen is a very humble person. It's nice to know there are still people out there that genuinely care for military members and the youth. She doesn't do it for the praise, but just from the goodness of her heart," St. Louis said.

Casey also mentors six new Airman and Family Readiness Program Managers throughout the northeast and the Virgin Islands.

With nine core services to master, the role can be overwhelming for newcomers, Casey explained.

"I've had new managers in tears, frustrated and ready to quit," she said. "I remember being in that exact place 10 years ago—learning everything on my own. It's incredibly rewarding to be the person who helps them through it and encourages them to keep going."

Her passion for service is deeply rooted in a proud military family. Her father was a Navy veteran, her husband a retired Army Sergeant Major, and several of her children currently serve in the New York Air National Guard.

"This award isn't just about my job at the 109th—it reflects a lifetime as a military spouse and mother," she said.



Travis St. Louis, the Exalted Ruler of the Scotia Glenville Elks, and Colleen Casey, the Military and Family Readiness Manager for the 109th Airlift Wing, pose for a photo at the Elks' annual award ceremony, March 25, 2025, in Scotia, New York. Casey was awarded the Distinguished Citizen of the Year award by the Scotia Glenville Elks. Courtesy photo.

Casey feels equipped to help Airmen and families through different military events because she's been through them too, she said.

"I understand having family members deploy, leave for Basic Training and attend schools for long periods of time. I've lived it myself. I like to think that through my experiences, I can help members and their families make it through," she said.

Reflecting on one of her family's most challenging times, Casey recalled her husband's 12-month deployment to Kuwait. He struggled with loneliness and homesickness, often reaching out to her multiple times a day.

"At the time, I was raising three children and juggling an incredibly demanding job that had me traveling nearly every weekend," she said. "I was always torn – do I take his calls or not? I felt very guilty if

I didn't. I was his lifeline to home."

Casey shared that deployments took on a new emotional weight when her children deployed.

"When my husband was deployed, I trusted his training and didn't fear for his safety. But when it was my children, it was completely different," she said. "As a mother, the worry never stopped. It was a whole new set of emotions."

Because she's lived through the same challenges, Casey can connect with military families in a personal and meaningful way, she said.

"When I give my family programs brief to members and families before a deployment, I am honest and talk about my experiences," she said. "I do what I can to make the transition easier."

"Every day is rewarding. I truly have the most fulfilling job." **gt**

AROUND THE STATE

Hitler's Hat finds a home at NY State Military Museum

Story and photos by Richard Goldenberg, *Guard Times* staff

SARATOGA SPRINGS, N.Y. — Adolph Hitler's top hat has a new home at the state Military Museum in Saratoga Springs, New York.

The hat was "liberated" from the Nazi dictator's Munich apartment by a 19-year-old Jewish Soldier from Brooklyn on April 30, 1945.

Eighty years later, the hat found by Private 1st Class Richard Marowitz, a regimental recon Soldier in the 42nd Infantry Division, as the Third Reich collapsed, was donated to the museum by his children, Larry, Linda and Roberta.

Hitler's hat will be displayed as part of the museum's 80th commemoration of the actions of the 42nd Infantry Division in liberating the Dachau Concentration Camp and the end of the Holocaust in WWII.

"We're thrilled that the New York State Military Museum has the exhibit," Larry Marowitz said during an April 24 ceremony. "There's a story to be told. It is history."

"We look for artifacts that tell the story of New York veterans, and this collection from the Marowitz family is a compelling narrative that we're honored to display," said Courtney Burns, the director of history.

The 42nd Division has been a part of the New York Army National Guard since 1947.



The New York State Military Museum display of "Hitler's Hat," once worn by the Reich Chancellor prior to the Second World War. The hat, and other artifacts, were presented by the family of World War II veteran Richard Marowitz, who was present at the Dachau liberation with the 42nd Infantry Division and secured the Nazi clothing memorabilia the following day during his unit's capture of Munich on April 30, 1945.

Marowitz, who died in 2014, had been among the first liberators to arrive at the Dachau Concentration Camp in southern Germany on April 29, 1945.

The 42nd was one of three Army divisions to free 33,000 prisoners during its advance to capture Munich, 10 miles away.

In Munich, early on April 30, Marowitz and a dozen reconnaissance Soldiers arrived at Hitler's Munich apartment to search any papers of intelligence significance.

While looking in a bedroom closet, Marowitz discovered a box on an upper shelf. Climbing up, he found a top hat with the initials "A.H." in the hat lining.

Imagining the Nazi leader's head still inside the hat, he tossed it to the floor and stomped on it.

Later that day, with Russian forces approaching the center of Berlin, Hitler committed suicide in his bunker.

"When he heard some skinny Jewish kid stomped all over his favorite hat, he committed suicide," Marowitz joked to the Associated Press for a news article in 2001.

The war souvenir stayed with Marowitz during post-war occupation duties in Austria before returning to New York.

For the next 50 years, Hitler's hat remained at the bottom of a duffel bag in Albany. The hat became a prop for the magic tricks at children's birthday parties.

For most of their lives, the Marowitz children, didn't know of the hat's unique history.

"The hat was in the basement, with all my father's magic tricks. We had no idea it was there for all those years," explained Larry Marowitz.

"We learned the story of Hitler's Hat because my father belonged to the Jewish War Veterans," he said.

"He had gone to a meeting and they had asked people to bring any souvenirs that they may have picked up. So, my father brought Hitler's Hat," Larry Marowitz said.



The New York State Military Museum unveils a new exhibit for the display of "Hitler's Hat." The hat, and other artifacts, were presented by the family of World War II veteran Richard Marowitz, who was present at the Dachau liberation with the 42nd Infantry Division and secured the Nazi clothing memorabilia the following day during his unit's capture of Munich on April 30, 1945. In this unit photo, Marowitz displays Hitler's Hat during occupation duties in Austria in May 1945.

"Many Soldiers came back from the war and never spoke about it again, and my father never really did either," he said. "It wasn't until he went to a 42nd Rainbow Division Reunion and he met up with all his comrades that they all started talking about it."

In the 1990s, Marowitz joined with fellow Albany area WWII veterans to speak about the Holocaust and their wartime experiences with middle and high school students.

The hat would be brought out in a plain shopping bag for students to see and touch.

"Once word got out, it just took off," Larry Marowitz said.

Discovered by documentary film maker Jeff Krulik, the story of Marowitz and the veterans of the Rainbow Division were featured in the film "Hitler's Hat" in January 2003.

"It may not be a pretty sight, but that tiny piece of history holds many memories for those of us who were there for the Taking of the Top Hat," Marowitz wrote in 1995. **gt**



NY Military Museum Marks 80th Anniversary of VE Day Ceremony



Story and photos by Richard Goldenberg, *Guard Times* staff

A marker from the French *Le voie de la Liberté*, commemorating the American Army advance through France in 1944, is unveiled during a May 8 Victory in Europe ceremony at the New York State Military Museum in Saratoga Springs marking the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II in Europe.

SARATOGA SPRINGS, N.Y. — Maj. Gen. Raymond Shields, the adjutant general of New York, welcomed a French diplomat to mark the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II in Europe during a May 8 ceremony.

Shields welcomed Deputy Counsel General Myriam Gil to the New York State Military Museum in Saratoga Springs, New York, for the anniversary of Victory in Europe, or VE-Day.

"This date of May 8th marks the end of the conflict in which our two countries stood side by side and shoulder to shoulder with one shared purpose – to protect democracy and liberty. It is very symbolic that we are celebrating this," Gil said.

"The main message that we have in France when we celebrate this day is first, thank you," she said. "Thank you because we know to whom we owe this victory and our freedom."

Gil and Shields also marked the installation of the museum's newest display, a *Voie de la Liberté* Borne, or "marker." This was one of many historic road markers along the route of the U.S. Third Army from Normandy, France on D-Day to Bastogne, Belgium during the Battle of the Bulge.

The route-- in English the "Liberty Road" or "Liberty Highway," --spans the 1,146-kilometer route, beginning at St. Mere Eglise, and features one marker every kilometer.



Maj. Gen. Raymond Shields, the adjutant general of New York, gives remarks to note the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II in Europe during a May 8, 2025 ceremony at the New York State Military Museum in Saratoga Springs, New York, for the anniversary of Victory in Europe, or VE-Day.

On May 8, 1945, Nazi Germany signed a surrender agreement with the Russian military in Berlin, officially ending the war. The war against Japan would continue until August 1945.

"May 8, 1945, remains one of the most significant dates in history," Shields said. "One of the most evil regimes of all time was defeated."

The Liberty Road marker was originally presented to the New York National Guard's Camp Smith Training Site, according to Courtney Burns, the museum director. It was turned over to the museum in 2016.

The marker was located in the village of Pleugueneuc, in Brittany, about 40 kilometers north of Rennes, before it made its way to the United States.

"This marker is one of more than a thousand that traces the route taken by the allied forces when they liberated France," Gil said. "Many of them were given as a gift to thank the United States for all that they did during this period. It is a symbol of our country's gratitude to your country."

Patrick Chaisson, a retired New York Army National Guard major from Schenectady, spoke about the

New York National Guard's service in the European theater.

"The contribution of the New York National Guard to Victory in Europe was a substantial one," Chaisson said.

National Guard Soldiers served in an infantry regiment, cavalry group, field artillery battalions, anti-aircraft and anti-tank battalions and medical forces from 1940 to 1945.

"It is a proud record of service," he said.

Most New York National Guardsmen fought in the Pacific. But the ancestors of today's 258th Field Artillery and 101st Cavalry distinguished themselves in Europe.

"Today we honor the courage of these American Soldiers. They risked their lives or died during the war so that we, French and European people would be free," Gil said.

Burns said the ceremony and marker underscore the role the museum plays in preserving New York history.

"This celebration is a magnificent symbol of the 200-year-old alliance between France and the United States and all that we have accomplished together," Gil said. 

THE JOINT FORCE

MP is top shooter at 2025 Adjutant General's Match

Story and photos by Sgt. Jean Sanon, 138th Public Affairs Detachment

CAMP SMITH, N.Y. — New York Army National Guard Sgt. David Amendola, a Military Police Soldier with the 442nd Military Police Company, was the overall individual winner of New York's "Adjutant General Match" shooting competition.

Amendola bested 48 competitors to win the 46th annual shooting competition at Camp Smith, from April 23 to 26.

The TAG Match, officially known as The Adjutant General's Marksmanship Sustainment Training Competition, is held each year to promote marksmanship and small arms sustainment training.

Amendola and a few other competitors were at Camp Smith just two weeks before, participating in the New York Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition.

Other Soldiers and Airmen who fired are also serving on the volunteer state active-duty support missions at the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision, known as DOCCS.

"I was a part of the Best Warrior Competition that happened here a few weeks ago," Amendola said.

"That, hands down, prepared me and gave me an advantage over those who may not have had the same training."

Amendola scored a total of 173 points, winning the individual warrior challenge.

He also received the Sgt. First Class Brent J. Lantange Overall Individual Combat Award, scoring 371 points. This award is given to the individual with the highest overall combined scores for both pistol matches.

"To go from the DOCCS mission where we were helping the corrections officers, to the Best Warrior Competition where we were in a high stress environment, to the TAG Match that focuses on marksmanship is just a humbling experience," Amendola said.

"I'm just thankful to be here and serve," he added.

Staff Sgt. Eric Guest won first place in the Sgt. Thomas Baker Individual Combat Pistol Match with a score of 217 points.

The match offers New York National Guard Airmen, Soldiers, naval militia and the New York

Guardsman an opportunity to test their weapons employment and marksmanship skills.

This year's competition is unique because the pistol, an M17 Sig Sauer weapon system was featured, unlike the past in which the featured weapon was the M4 rifle.

The Camp Smith rifle ranges are be-



Marine Reserve Sgt. Brandon Stanford, assigned to 2nd Battalion, 25th Marine Division and a member of the Naval Militia, fires an M17 pistol during the 46th annual Adjutant General's Combat Marksmanship Skills Competition at Camp Smith, N.Y., April 24, 2025. The match is a 3-day event to promote excellence in marksmanship.

ing rebuilt to meet the Army's new standards, so only the pistol ranges could be used, according to Sgt. Maj. Anthony Abbate, the non-commissioned officer-in-charge of this year's event.

Team Snow Drops, a four-Soldier member team, won the overall Team Combat match with a score of 1794 points.

The team consisted of Sgt. First Class Derrick Baldwin, assigned to the 53rd Digital Liaison Detachment, and Staff Sgt. Eric Guest, Sgt. Peter Meppen, Sgt. First Class Scanlon, all assigned to Joint Force Headquarters.

Team Make-a-Wish, a four-member team consisting of Soldiers and Marines, won the Lt. Col. William Donovan Combat Team Pistol Match.

Amendola was one of those team members. The team also included Marines Sgt. Brandon Stanford, and Sgt. Derrence Morisseau, members of the New York Naval

Militia, and Pfc. Joseph Baldwin assigned to Alpha Company of the Recruiting and Retention Battalion.

Army Guard Sgt. Alejandro Sanchez, assigned to the 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment, said he enjoyed the challenges the competition brought.

"It's a great accomplishment that allowed me to measure myself against some of the best shooters in the state of New York, and I see an opportunity to inspire other soldiers to set great goals for themselves, and their organization as a whole," Sanchez said.

There were 49 competitors in 2024 and he wants to double that number in 2026, Abbate said.

The annual competition gives members a chance to hone their skills so when they're firing at Camp Smith, they know they're going up against the best the New York National Guard can offer, Abbate added. **gt**



New York Guard Col. John Mechmann fires an M17 pistol during the 46th annual Adjutant General's Combat Marksmanship Skills Competition (TAG match) at Camp Smith, April 24, 2025.

Joint Forces Train for Casualty Care

Story by Eric Durr, *Guard Times* staff; photos by Senior Airman Sarah Post, 105th Airlift Wing



Soldiers of the 466th Area Support Medical Company offload simulated casualties from a medical evacuation Black Hawk helicopter from Company C, 1st Battalion, 171st Aviation Regiment during joint training at Stewart Air National Guard Base in Newburgh, N.Y., May 22, 2025.

STEWART AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, Newburgh, N.Y. — New York Army and Air National Guard medical personnel teamed up with their active Army counterparts from West Point's Keller Army Community Hospital, for a three-day exercise which tested all parts of the medical evacuation system.

Seventy-five Soldiers and Airmen —from the 105th and 109th Airlift Wings, Charlie Company of the 1st Battalion, 171st Aviation Regiment, Keller, and the 466th Area Support Medical Company— took part in the drill conducted at Camp Smith and Stewart Air National Guard Base, the home of the 105th Airlift Wing.

The goal, according to Army Guard Capt. Samuel Chubb, the commander of the 466th, was to expose Army and Air Force medical personnel to the capabilities of each service.

In his 15 years in the Army medical field, he's never seen an exercise that brought together as many elements as this one did, Chubb said.

"This was a big success," he emphasized.

The three-day exercise culminated on June 6, with a scenario in which casualties were loaded onto two of Charlie Company's UH-60L Black Hawk medical evacuation helicopters at Camp Smith, flown to Stewart, and then loaded onto a C-17 Globemaster III assigned to the 105th.

This is known as a "tail-to-tail" transfer and is conducted when a patient's injuries are so severe that they need to go directly to the top tier of medical treatment, Chubb explained.

Then the 105th Airlift Wing C-17 lifted off so that members of the 109th's 139th Aeromedical Squadron and the 105th Medical Group, could practice providing in-flight care for two hours.

For increased realism, the "patients" were made up with applications known as a moulage to replicate injuries.

The moulage kits were applied by Keller Army Hospital personnel. Marine Corps Reservists, non-medical personnel from the 466th, and Keller staffers provided the patients to be treated, Chubb said.

The leadership at Keller played a key role in getting the exercise put together, Chubb said. The Keller team wanted to train with the 466th, and then they reached out to the Air Guard to improve the training value, Chubb said.

"This successful exercise is the result of incredible coordination and execution by the multiple agencies and will build long-term partnerships in the region," said Col. Sean J. Hipp, commander of the Keller Army Community Hospital.

Air National Guard Brig. Gen. Gary Charlton II, the assistant adjutant general, Air, also praised the training opportunity.

"This training allowed our Army and Air Guardsmen to learn together and from each other. This kind of training means our medical personnel will perform better when lives are on the line," he added. **gt**



Members of the 139th Aeromedical Squadron assess simulated casualties for air evacuation at Stewart Air National Guard Base in Newburgh, N.Y., June 6, 2025 as part of a joint training exercise. Below, 466th Area Support Medical Company Soldiers transport casualties for air movement on a 105th Airlift Wing C-17 Globemaster III (bottom).



NY Hosts Swedish Partners

Story and photos by Stephanie Butler, *Guard Times* staff

NEW YORK — Five Swedish marines and a Swedish naval officer spent June 2 to 6 learning from the New York Naval Militia in New York City and on the Niagara River as part of the New York National Guard partnership with Sweden's military.

The Swedish contingent spent two days studying maritime security in New York Harbor and then observed a two-day maritime border security exercise in western New York.

"To see the cooperation and the interoperability between different task units and different organizations in different jurisdictions work together and how they fill the gaps has been really interesting," said Swedish 2nd Lt. Patrice Freeman, the executive officer of the Swedish warship HMS Skafto.

The Swedish marines man Sweden's 17th Amphibious Patrol Boat Company, which is responsible for coastal defense.

The Swedish military and the New York National Guard signed a State Partnership Program agreement in 2024 and have been conducting leadership exchanges since then.

The New York Naval Militia is a state defense force that falls under the adjutant general of New York and operates alongside New York National Guard units.

In New York City, the Swedish delegation met with representatives of the New York City fire department, police department, and United States Coast Guard's Sector New York, which work together to keep the third largest port in the United States secure.

Since the World Trade Center attacks of Sep-

tember 11, 2001, federal and state agencies in the New York City area have worked together to streamline and integrate their emergency procedures, Coast Guard briefers told the Swedes.

The Swedish officers also received a tour of Marine 1, 343, the flagship of the Fire Department New York's fleet of boats. The number 343 in the boat's name refers to the number of firefighters killed on Sept. 11, 2001.

The fire department regularly patrols 560 miles of New York City waterfront, they were told.

A team from the New York Police Department's Emergency Service Unit explained how they work with the Coast Guard and fire department on the water.

"To meet both the NYPD and the fire department and how they describe how smooth and seamless it is to help out other agencies was eye opening," said Cmdr. Bjorn Vilbern, assistant chief of staff for Sweden's navy.

The Naval Militia's Patrol Boat 440 regularly patrols the harbor to support the Coast Guard as part of the New York National Guard's Joint Task Force-Empire Shield.

The 1,000-member New York National Guard state active-duty security force works with state, federal and city law enforcement.

The New York National Guard's 24th Civil Support Team, whose members are trained to detect biological, chemical, and radiological weapons, conducted a demonstration of their maritime capabilities for the Swedish visitors.

The 24th CST loaded a utility terrain vehicle packed with gear on board Naval Militia Landing Craft 351 at the New York Police Department's Harbor Charlie boat ramp. The Naval Militia boat, accompanied by a police department boat, unloaded the team onto Glen Island on Long Island Sound, to conduct a mission.

The level of cooperation between the agencies was impressive, according to the Swedish



New York Naval Militia members stand with Swedish officers onboard Patrol Boat 440 in front of the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor during a maritime security mission on June 2, 2025.

officers.

"We don't cooperate, as you do, with the firefighters, police, and Coast Guard. We are like lone wolves in the Swedish Armed forces," said Staff Sgt. Fredrick Svensson, the executive officer of the patrol boat HMS Stolt.

"We do cooperate, but not as much as you do, one thing we can take is to start talking over the barriers," he added.

"I knew the corporation was good, so I've



New York Fire Department marine engineer Elliot Diaz briefs New York Naval Militia members and Swedish officers onboard the FDNY flagship Marine 1, during a visit to New York City on June 2, 2025.



Cmdr. Bjorn Vilbern, Swedish Navy, assistant chief of staff, talks to Police Sgt. Stephen Daly, a member of the New York Police Department weapons of mass destruction unit during a visit to Brooklyn on June 3, 2025. The Swedish delegation visited New York City to study maritime security in New York Harbor under the State Partnership Program agreement in between the New York National Guard and the Swedish Military.



Swedish officers observe New York State Police Underwater Recovery Team divers exiting the water during exercise Empire Challenge 2025, on June 5, 2025 on the Niagara River. The Swedish officers visited the multi-agency exercise on the Niagara River as part of their State Partnership Program with the New York National Guard.

heard before, but the level that has been presented for us is really amazing," Vilbern said.

"I think this is a good example of how we can do it," he added.

After observing operations in New York harbor, the Swedes flew across New York state, and watched the Coast Guard Auxiliary, Border Patrol, Naval Militia, New York State Police, New York State Park Police, and the Niagara County Sheriff's Department, work together in Exercise Empire Challenge.

The two-day drill's scenario involved interdicting maritime drug smuggling across the water border with Canada. The conclusion was an on-water apprehension, as well as an arrest on land, with the help of the New York State Police and the Naval Militia's new drone unit.

The Swedes witnessed a swift water rescue, a diving mission with the New York State

Police dropping into the Niagara River from a helicopter. The training also included a Niagara County deputy repelling down a cliff to prepare a litter casualty for evacuation using a pulley system.

In both New York and in Niagara, the Swedish marines got to try their hands at the helm of Naval Militia patrol boats; Patrol Boat 440 in New York and Landing Craft 350 on the Niagara River.

Patrol Boat 440, which uses a computer controlled steering system and water jet propulsion, handled differently than the Swedish boats which use a mechanical steering system, Freeman said.

"You have to do smaller movements because it is more sensitive," she said.

"We're learning and hopefully we're learning from each other as well," Vilbern said. **gt**



Members of the 24th Civil Support Team load their utility terrain vehicle onto New York Naval Militia's Landing Craft 350 during a training evolution at the New York Police Departments Harbor Charlie in Brooklyn, on June 3, 2025.



Ten New York Soldiers Receive Purple Heart

Story by Lt. Col. Jean Marie Kratzer, Joint Force Headquarters

Ten New York Army National Guard Soldiers who received the Purple Heart on May 10, 2025 at the Purple Heart Hall of Honor in New Windsor, New York, display their certificates. They are joined by their leadership at left. Photo by Sgt 1st Class Sebastian Rothwyn, 138th Public Affairs Detachment.

NEW WINDSOR, N.Y. — Ten New York National Guard Soldiers received the Purple Heart- the award given to military members wounded in action -during a May 10, 2025, ceremony at the National Purple Heart Hall of Honor in New Windsor, New York.

The ten Soldiers were injured during a January 28, 2024, drone attack on a U.S. base in Jordan known as Tower 22. Three U.S. Army Reserve Soldiers were killed in the attack, and forty other personnel were injured.

Lt. Col. Darren Ketchum, the commander of their unit, the 101st Expeditionary Signal Battalion, presented the medals. Major General Raymond Shields, the adjutant general of New York, attended the ceremony.

Ketchum praised the ten men for their actions that day.

"This decoration is not sought, and it's not given lightly. It is earned through courage in the face of danger. Today, we recognize those who stood firm when faced with the harshest realities of combat," Ketchum said.

The Soldiers, "endured injury from hostile actions resulting from the enemy attack at Tower 22 and continued to uphold the highest standards of duty, courage and resilience," Ketchum said.

The ten honored during the ceremony were:

- Staff Sgt. David Barrientos, from Zebulon, North Carolina

- Sgt. Anthony Gist, from Floral Park
- Sgt. Ryan Kissoon, from Richmond Hill
- Sgt. Guillermo Renderos, from Yonkers
- Sgt. Jarvis Ho So, from Brooklyn
- SPC Christian Tiburcio, from Manhattan
- SPC Matthew Crespo, from Brooklyn
- SPC Domingo Perez, from Brooklyn
- SPC Junior Clarke, from Brooklyn
- SPC Michael Branch, from Brooklyn

"I am honored to have received the medal, but it's never an award we wanted to get," Kissoon said.

"It's a sad relief we made it home that day and others didn't," he said.

Chaplain (Major) Chase Wilhelm the chaplain assigned to Tower 22, told him something he will never forget about that day, Kissoon added.

"We are all from different parts of the country, but we will forever be bonded by blood," he recalled Wilhelm saying.

The National Purple Heart Hall of Honor, now a state park site, was created to preserve the stories of 1.2 million Americans awarded the Purple Heart.

According to park officials, the stories of these ten Soldiers are now part of that record.

Fourteen Soldiers from the battalion's Charlie Company were stationed at the outpost to maintain communications.

The drone hit a section of the base where Soldiers lived. New York Soldiers suffered concussions and other injuries because of the blast.

Despite this, Soldiers who were not severely injured worked together to restore communications as quickly as possible. The combat lifesavers in the unit grabbed aid kits and went to help treat others, despite their wounds.

Other National Guard Soldiers who were uninjured lined up to donate blood to save the lives of badly injured Airmen and Soldiers.

According to 1st Lt. Ian Gallagher, the platoon leader, the Containerized Housing Unit housing some New York Soldiers was "crinkled like a soda can" due to the blast.

He is proud of his men, and proud they are being honored, Gallagher said.

The Charlie Company commander, Capt. Paul Kramarz, said that the Soldiers assigned to the Tower 22 base, were a hand-selected team.

"We knew they would operate at the far reaches of our area of responsibility," Kramarz said. **gt**

Rainbow Leaders attend Dachau 80th Anniversary

Story by Richard Goldenberg, *Guard Times* staff

DACHAU, Germany — The commander of the 42nd Infantry Division, Maj. Gen. Jack James, joined with surviving U.S. Army liberators and descendants in Dachau, Germany, on May 4, 2025 to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Nazi Germany's notorious Dachau Concentration Camp.

James, with a contingent of division leaders and the colors of the Army's famous "Rainbow Division," joined with representatives and descendants of the 45th Infantry and 20th Armored Divisions for the ceremony.

The three units are credited with liberating the Dachau Concentration Camp on April 29, 1945.

"It's an incredible honor to represent the Rainbow on behalf of our division's veterans," James said.



Alan Meltzer, the U.S. Embassy Chargé d'Affaires ad interim in Berlin, greets World War II veteran Lockered "Bud" Gahs at the Dachau Memorial to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the liberation of the notorious concentration camp. Gahs served in WWII with the 42nd Infantry Division, liberating the camp on April 29, 1945. Courtesy photo.

"The liberators of Dachau!"

The Rainbow Division Memorial Foundation, the association that maintains the legacy of the Army unit with roots dating back to 1917 and World War I, helped coordinate the larger presence of WWII Rainbow Division veterans and their families at the event.

"In total, we have between 50 and 80 family members of liberators from the three divisions coming together in Dachau," noted retired Army Lt. Col. Robert Giordano, an Iraq War division veteran and memorials officer of the foundation.

The contingent also included Lockered "Bud" Gahs, a 100-year-old WWII division veteran from Perry Hall, Maryland.

The Dachau Concentration Camp was established by Nazi Germany in 1933. Situated about 10 miles northwest of Munich, the



The 42nd Infantry Division command team, Maj. Gen. Jack James, left, and Command Sgt. Maj. Arnold Reyes, at the entrance to Dachau Concentration Camp on May 4, 2025 to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the camp's liberation by three divisions of the U.S. 7th Army, the 42nd Infantry, 45th Infantry and the 20th Armored Divisions.

camp was designed to hold about 5,000 political prisoners. Nearly 33,000 were present at the camp's liberation.

"This is likely one of the final opportunities to meet with survivors and liberators," James said. "I am really looking forward to speaking with and recognizing these heroes their service and sacrifice."

The multiday ceremony, hosted by KZ-Gedenkstätte Dachau, the camp memorial site and museum, included the dedication of a memorial plaque for the 45th Division, ensuring all divisions have memorials at the Jourhaus gate.

The 42nd Division plaque was installed in 1992.

Other events included ceremonies at the Dachau subcamps on May 1 and 2, guided tours for relatives of former Dachau prisoners and liberators on May 3, and the central commemorative ceremony on May 4.

"When we opened the gates to Dachau, it was only then have we truly understood what we had been fighting for," Gahs said at the ceremony.

A special "Never Again" commemoration was supported by the International Dachau Committee, the original organization of former prisoners. The committee was formed even before liberation in 1945 and includes former prisoners from 37 countries. The group helps oversee the memorials and camp grounds and buildings.

What the Rainbow Division Soldiers discovered at Dachau left an impression of a lifetime, wrote division assistant chaplain (Maj.) Eli Bohnen, the division's Jewish chaplain.

"The human mind refuses to believe what the eyes see," Bohnen

said in a letter to home on May 1, 1945. "All the stories of Nazi horrors are underestimated rather than exaggerated."

One survivor's family only learned the identity of their loved one's liberators in recent years.

Aron Krochmalnik's father, Josef Krochmalnik, was a Jewish survivor of the Lodz Ghetto and several concentration camps, including Auschwitz-Birkenau, Gross-Rosen, Flossenbürg, and Dachau.

It was during Aron's research of his father's Holocaust experience that he discovered 75 years later that the liberators were Soldiers of the Rainbow Division.

Josef Krochmalnik had fled from a death march where SS troops forced concentration camp prisoners away from the arriving allies. Recaptured, Josef and others were at Stadelheim Prison in Munich when the division arrived.

"He was on his way to be killed with his comrades in a bus when these brave American Soldiers stopped the bus and liberated my father, he said in correspondence with the Rainbow Division Memorial Foundation.

The 42nd Division captured Munich on April 30, the day that Hitler took his life in Berlin. Just over a week later, on May 8, the war ended in Europe and the Rainbow Division finished duties as an occupation force in Austria.

"In Munich, they liberated my father after five years," Krochmalnik said. "His weight? 35 kilos (77 pounds)."

"My father didn't know who liberated him," Krochmalnik explained. "I discovered the Rainbow and the fundamental meaning for me as a survivor's kid. Without them, I would not exist." **gt**

Aircrews Train with Forest Rangers for Firefighting

Story and photos by Richard Goldenberg, Guard Times staff



Aircrews assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 142nd Aviation Regiment, conduct water bucket drops in Schuylerville, New York, May 8, 2025. The New York Army National Guard aircrews trained alongside Department of Environmental Conservation Forest Rangers to better prepare for crew coordination and communications techniques in water drops to battle wildfires.

SCHUYLERVILLE, N.Y. — New York Army National Guard helicopter crews partnered with state Department of Environmental Conservation Forest Rangers to hone their firefighting skills along the Hudson River near Schuylerville on May 8.

The dozen Army aircrewmembers included Soldiers assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 142nd Aviation Regiment, flying two UH-60M Black Hawk helicopters from the Army Aviation Support Facility in Latham.

The helicopters practiced lifting water from the river and dumping it on simulated targets. The Rangers trained in crew coordination and communication techniques to provide greater precision and safety in water drops.

“Just solving comms (communications) before a wildfire can make all the difference,” said Forest Ranger Michael Thomsson, who supports Hamilton County in the heart of the Adirondacks.

“Training like this gives us a head start for when it’s really needed,” he said.

During firefighting operations, Army National Guard aircrews support Rangers on the ground and often place a Ranger in the aircraft.

The team works together to guide the Army Guard pilots onto the target.

The helicopter crews practiced dropping water from 660-gallon buckets. The collapsible buckets are slung underneath the helicopters.

Army National Guard helicopter crews conduct training every spring to qualify new pilots and refresh crews for employing the buckets, practicing water pickup and drops.

The training is necessary because a bucket full of water weighs two tons, and pilots need to practice flying with that additional weight under their aircraft to fly safely in an emergency.

The training is an important first step in preparing crews for actual wildfires, said Capt. Alyssa Griffith, a pilot and operations officer assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 142nd Aviation’s Headquarters Company.

“The familiarization training is important because it gets you ready for the demands of the water bucket as an external load,” she said.



New York Army National Guard aircrews assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 142nd Aviation Regiment, perform familiarization training with water buckets for aerial firefighting in Schuylerville, New York, May 8, 2025.

“Things like power management and crew coordination are really just the first hurdles. When you get a bucket out over a real fire, that’s when it gets interesting,” Griffith added.

The New York Army National Guard employs helicopter firefighting equipment when local agencies request support through the New York State Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Services.

New York State Police helicopters typically provide initial aerial firefighting for the state. Army National Guard helicopters, which carry a bigger bucket, are called in for heavier fires.

The most recent deployment was March 8. Three UH-60M Black Hawk helicopters from Ronkonkoma worked together with an HH-60W Jolly Green II rescue helicopter assigned to the 106th Rescue Wing to extinguish fires in the Long Island Pine Barrens.

And last fall, New York Army National Guard aviators dropped 550,160 gallons of water on the 5,200-acre Jennings Creek fire in Delaware County along the border with New Jersey between November 11 and 20, 2024, to bring the blaze under control.

Griffith said that experience last fall gave her a new perspective on battling wildfires.

“We learned quickly how to maneuver among other aircraft, account for variations in winds due to the heat of the fires and make drops where Rangers needed them,” she said. 

NY Officer Candidates Train in Albania

Story by Eric Durr, *Guard Times* staff

RRETH-GRETH, Albania — Three New York Army National Guard officer candidates spent April 19 to 30 in Albania refining their tactical leadership skills alongside officer trainees from the New Jersey National Guard, Albania and Kosovo.

The New Yorkers were there at the invitation of the New Jersey Guard, which has a State Partnership Program with Albania.

This is the third year that participants in the New York Officer Candidate School, known as OCS for short, have taken part in the Albanian training.

Eight OCS candidates from New Jersey were part of the mission.

Three OCS cadre members from New York's 106th Regional Training Institute accompanied the team to help run the training.

The OCS candidates spent several days leading their squads through 18 Situational Tactical Exercise lanes.

These lanes included movement to contact, knocking out a bunker, squad attacks, conducting ambushes, reacting to ambushes and reconnaissance missions.

The varied challenges are designed and evaluated by OCS cadre to sharpen candidates' decision-making skills under pressure and build battle-drill proficiency. OCS cadre members from the Colorado and Connecticut National Guards also took part in the training.

Taking part in the Albanian deployment was great training for the officer candidates, according to Major Anthony Cosentino, the senior instructor for the New York Army Guard OCS program.

By taking part in the Albanian exercise, the would-be lieutenants got more "looks" while they were

leading troops, Cosentino said.

A "look" means an evaluation in OCS-speak, Cosentino explained.

The three New York Officer Candidates – Mohammed Huda, Mark Sheppard and David Zhorzholiani—each got five evaluations leading a squad during the two weeks, he said.

With only three New York OCS candidates in the second phase of the 12 to 18-month program, giving each candidate troop-leading time can be challenging, Cosentino said.

New York teams up with Connecticut's Headquarters to run a regional National Guard Officer Candidate School program.

Going to Albania gave the OCS candidates additional hands-on training before their final two weeks of training at Fort Indian-town Gap, Cosentino said.

They also got the chance to work with NATO allies, which provides a challenge—and opportunity—that most officer candidates don't get, he added.

Huda, a 32-year-old signal Soldier from Queens, said that while there was a bit of a language barrier between the Americans and the Albanians and Kosovars, the biggest challenge was the tactical training itself.

"There were just so many things we had to accomplish within the training, so it was easy to forget or miss something," he said. "The more we did this type of training, the better we got."

While there was "a bit of a language barrier," enough of the Albanians could speak English so that everybody could communicate, he said.

Also, both the Kosovar and Al-



New York Army National Guard Officer Candidate Mohammed Huda, front, directs Albanian, New Jersey and New York Army National Guard officer candidates into position during a Situational Tactical Exercise lanes drill in Rreth-Greth, Albania on April 24, 2025. The New York National Guard Officer Candidate School candidates have been participating in the overseas training with New Jersey for the last three years. Photo by Capt. Kyle Marr, New Jersey National Guard.

banian militaries follow the same NATO-standard practices the U.S. Army does Huda added.

"Luckily, they know our Ranger book," he said.

He got an opportunity to lead a 12-person squad, which he would not normally have had a chance to do, Huda said.

Along with learning to communicate, the Americans also had to learn to use the Albanian rifle instead of the M-4, Cosentino said.

But the Americans quickly adapted he said.

"Obviously the communication barrier was an obstacle in the beginning and then working together with brand new people you've just met," Cosentino said.

"You did see challenges right off the bat, but by day five I was impressed. They were firing on all cylinders. They were doing things that I've seen active-duty units do," he said.

"It was quite impressive on how the improvement and the team cohesion came together," Cosentino said. **gt**



New Jersey Army National Guard, Officer Candidate, David Bransfield, conducts a STX lane alongside Albanian Armed Forces and Kosovo cadets during Eagle Strike 2025 in Rreth-Greth, Albania on April 24, 2025. Photo by Capt. Kyle Marr, New Jersey National Guard.

NY's Newest State Command Sergeant Major

Story by Eric Durr, *Guard Times* staff



Command Sgt. Major Leylan Jones accepts the flag of the New York State Division of Military and Naval Affairs from Maj. Gen. Michel Natali, left, the assistant adjutant general, Army, on July 7, 2025 in Latham, N.Y. Jones was named as the top enlisted Soldier in the 11,632-member New York Army National Guard. Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Sebastian Rothwyn, 138th Public Affairs Detachment.

LATHAM, N.Y. — A Trumbull, Connecticut man who served two tours in Iraq, took over as the top enlisted Soldier in the 11,632-member New York Army National Guard during a July 7 ceremony at New York National Guard headquarters in Latham, New York.

Command Sgt. Major Leylan Jones replaced Command Sgt. Major Edwin Garris who retired after 37 years of military service.

Garris, a retired Buffalo police captain, served in the Persian Gulf War as well as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In his role, Jones provides advice to New York National Guard leadership on issues involving the training, readiness, and discipline of the New York Army National Guard's enlisted Soldiers.

Major General Michele Natali, the assistant adjutant general, Army, praised Jones past leadership and readiness for his new role.

"I charge you to focus on the continued readiness, for the formation for future mission and stay committed to our Soldiers and take care of their families," Natali said.

"You bring a great deal of knowledge, expertise, and dedication from your previous assignments," he added.

In his remarks, Jones said he would "bring the same passion, discipline, and dedication that has guided my career to this new chapter."

"I look forward to serving alongside each of you as we continue to defend our communities, support our nation and uphold the proud legacy of the New York Army National Guard," Jones added.

Jones enlisted in the active Army in 1997 as an infantryman and then trained to become a mortar crewman. After serving in the 25th Infantry Division at Fort Lewis, Washington he joined the New York Army National Guard in

2001.

He initially served in the 1st Battalion, 105th Infantry Regiment, and then transferred to the 2nd Battalion, 108th Infantry Regiment. He deployed with the 108th Infantry to Balad, Iraq from 2003 to 2005 as a mortar team squad leader.

He deployed to Talil, Iraq from 2009 to 2010 as a finance detachment sergeant in the 37th Finance Detachment.

Jones also served in the 427th Brigade Support Battalion and the 1156th Engineer Company. He has served as a company first sergeant and a battalion command sergeant major.

Most recently he was the command sergeant major for the 369th Sustainment Brigade, based in Manhattan with elements throughout eastern New York. **gt**

Harlem Hell Fighters Welcome New Leadership

Story and photos by Sgt 1st Class Sebastian Rothwyn, 138th Public Affairs Detachment

NEW YORK — The 369th Sustainment Brigade, known as the Harlem Hellfighters, welcomed new leadership during a Change of Command and Responsibility ceremony held April 27, 2025.

Colonel Bryon Linnehan assumed command from Col. Patrick Clare, and Command Sgt. Maj. Javier Lugo took over senior enlisted advisor duties from Command Sgt. Maj. Leylan Jones.

The 369th has a history dating to its origins as the 15th Colored Regiment in 1913. It served in World War I and the Gulf War. The unit's legacy was a key theme throughout the ceremony.

The first part of the combined ceremony entailed the outgoing Command Sgt. Maj. Leylan Jones passing responsibility to incoming Command Sgt. Maj. Javier Lugo.

The ceremony featured the presentation of bouquets to the families of the outgoing and incoming leaders. Red roses were presented to Jones' wife Eva and Clare's wife Nicole, as a symbol of heartfelt gratitude signifying the bonds of loyalty and affection between the Soldiers and families. Yellow roses

were presented to Linnehan's wife Kristy as a symbol of new beginnings, welcoming the family with a bond of unity.

Clare, presiding over his final change of responsibility with the brigade, shared many remarks about how invaluable Jones was during their 18-month tenure, highlighting Jones' focus on unit readiness, leadership during the Warfighter Exercise 25-3, and his guidance during the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision, or NYS DOCCS, mission.

Clare described Jones as "my trusted advisor, my right hand man, and epitome of what a senior enlisted leader should be."

"Your steady hand, wise counsel and genuine care for our troops have left your indelible mark on the brigade," Clare said to Jones.

Jones, who was awarded a Meritorious Service Medal said, "Today marks the end of an unforgettable chapter for me, one filled with pride, challenges, growth, and above, above all, the privilege of serving alongside the men and

women of this legendary unit."

In his farewell remarks, Jones expressed honor in serving with the Harlem Hellfighters and his thanks to them for their trust, commitment and relentless drive.

"While we are fiercely proud of our history, it is the Soldiers standing here today who continue to write that legacy," said Jones. "You are the reason this unit remains steady, reliable and resilient. You are the reason we succeed."

Incoming Command Sgt. Maj. Javier Lugo acknowledged the brigade's worldwide recognition and historical significance. He pledged to equip the soldiers and NCOs for success and expressed his enthusiasm about joining the Hellfighters.

"The 369th is known worldwide," Lugo said. He spoke about when he was deployed with the 101st Expeditionary Signal Battalion, how active duty Soldiers acknowledged the tremendous history of the 369th and that he was excited to be here.

The second part of the ceremony consisted of Col. Patrick Clare relinquishing command to Col. Bryon Linnehan.

Brig. Gen. Isabel Smith, commanding general of the 53rd Troop Command, presided over the change of command ceremony. She commended the outgoing and welcomed the incoming leaders.



Brig. Gen. Isabel Smith, commanding general of the 53rd Troop Command, passes the guidon to Col. Bryon Linnehan, incoming commander of the 369th Sustainment Brigade, during his change of command ceremony at the Harlem Armory in New York, NY, April 27, 2025.

"It's a privilege to be here today to honor and recognize the accomplishments of Col. Patrick G. Clare, and to welcome Col. Bryon Linnehan as the incoming commander of the 369 Sustainment Brigade," Smith said.

"I truly thank you for your outstanding leadership and most of all, for your friendship," Smith said to Clare.

She welcomed Linnehan, expressing confidence in his leadership and that it would be invaluable as he navigated the challenges and opportunities that lay ahead.

"I have full confidence in your ability to build upon the strong foundation laid by Col. Clare and Command Sgt. Maj. Jones, to lead the brigade to even greater heights."

"I'm humbled to be able to return to Harlem to serve alongside you all. You continue to distinguish yourselves, whether it be on deployment or here at home," Linnehan said. **gt**



Col. Bryon Linnehan, the incoming commander of the 369th Sustainment Brigade, passes the guidon to Command Sgt. Maj. Javier Lugo during his change of command ceremony at the Harlem Regiment Armory in New York, April 27, 2025.

Lending a Lift to the 258th Field Artillery



FORT DRUM, N.Y. — A UH-60M Black Hawk helicopter assigned to Company A, 3rd Battalion, 142nd Aviation Regiment prepares to lift an M-117 howitzer belonging to Battery A of the 1st Battalion, 258th Field Artillery Regiment during a training exercise on June 8, 2025 at Fort Drum, N.Y. The 258th Field Artillery battery was conducting crew drills as part of the company gunnery qualifications. Both units benefited from the joint training, according to unit commanders. Courtesy photo.

LI Law Enforcement Salute Rainbow Division Departure Ceremony



GARDEN CITY, N.Y. — Members of the Nassau County Police Department and New York City Police Department joined Soldiers and families of the 42nd Infantry Division for the unit deployment ceremony on June 1, 2025 at the Nassau County Police Academy, Garden City, N.Y. The division headquarters will deploy for Operation Spartan Shield in the Middle East this summer. Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Trevor Cullen, 42nd Infantry Division Headquarters.



53rd Troop Command Welcomes New Senior Enlisted Leader

CAMP SMITH, N.Y. — Army Brig. Gen. Isabel Smith, commander of the 53rd Troop Command, passes the unit guidon to Command Sgt. Maj. Anthony Giamberdino, the incoming senior enlisted leader of the troop command, during a ceremony conducted at Camp Smith, near Peekskill, N.Y., June 7, 2025. This ceremony celebrated the retirement of outgoing senior enlisted leader Command Sgt. Maj. Marc Maynard's for his 39 years of military service as he conveyed responsibility to Giamberdino. Photo by Sgt. Richelle Cruickshank, 53rd Troop Command.

Chemical Troops Train for Decon



FORT INDIANTOWN GAP, Penn. — Soldiers assigned to the 222nd Chemical Company, set up a vehicle decontamination lane to clean for chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear contaminants and high yield explosives during an exercise at Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania, June 7, 2025. CBRN specialists are essential for conducting thorough decontamination procedures, ensuring personnel and equipment are safe from hazardous materials. Photo by Spc. Annie M. Riley, 109th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment.

Guardsman Run WNY Armed Forces Day 5K

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Soldiers assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 153^d Troop Command Brigade run in the Western New York Armed Forces Day 5K alongside veterans and civilians in Buffalo, N.Y., May 17, 2025. The Guardsmen participated in the race — which celebrates all who served or are currently serving in the military — to build physical fitness and unit camaraderie. Photo by Maj. Avery Schneider, 153rd Troop Command.



Rainbow Division HQ Mobilizes

Story by Eric Durr, *Guard Times* staff

GARDEN CITY, N.Y. — Five hundred New York Army National Guard Soldiers assigned to the headquarters of the 42nd Infantry Division were saluted on Sunday, June 1, as they prepared to depart for an overseas deployment.

Ceremonies were held on Long Island, in Syracuse, and in Albany for the 500 Soldiers and over 2,400 family members.

The Soldiers of the "Rainbow Division" will deploy to the Central Command's area of responsibility, where the headquarters will command Task Force Spartan.

The 42nd Infantry Division headquarters elements conducted the same mission from March to November 2020.

The New York Army Guard Soldiers have been preparing for this mission for the past year.

The Soldiers will train at Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania, for two weeks before moving to Fort Cavazos, Texas. They will go on federal active duty, there, and conduct additional training.

The New York National Guard Soldiers will replace members of the 38th Infantry Division of the Indiana National Guard.

They are expected to return from their mission in 11 months.

The largest farewell was held at the Nassau County Police Academy in Garden City, Long Island, where Maj. Gen. Jack James spoke to 240 Soldiers and over 1,000 family members.

In his remarks, James told the Soldiers that he was proud of them and assured their families that the Guardsmen were ready for the mission.

"This team, these Soldiers, are truly remarkable. There is no mission this group cannot accomplish," James said.

James also thanked the families for their service "on the home front" while the 42nd Infantry Division executed their mission.

"I want to thank each of you for supporting your Soldier while he or she goes forward and does the job our country has asked of them," James said.

At the Empire State Convention Center in Albany, Maj. Gen. Michel Natali, the assistant adjutant general, Army, assured the 180 Soldiers there that the Army National Guard would support their families while they are deployed.

He also urged the Soldiers to watch out for each other.

"Treat one another and those you encounter with dignity and respect and apply lessons learned from those who deployed before you to do your jobs," Natali said.

At the University of Syracuse's National Veterans Resource Center, Brig. Gen. Patrick Clare, the division's assistant commander

for support, delivered similar messages to the 80 Soldiers and their 450 guests attending that event.

The division was born in 1917 when elements from 26 state National Guard's were combined into one multi-state division to deploy quickly to France in World War I. Then colonel, later five-star general Douglas MacArthur said the division would reach across America "like a rainbow" and the nickname stuck.

In World War II the "Rainbow Division" fought across southern Germany, capturing the cities of Wurzburg, Nuremberg and Munich and liberating the infamous Dachau concentration camp.

The division became part of the New York National Guard in 1947.

42nd Infantry Division Soldiers responded in the wake of the 9/11 attacks in New York City.

The division headquarters and major support elements deployed to Iraq in 2005 to lead Task Force



Maj. Gen. Jack James, the commander of the 42nd Infantry Division, speaks to Soldiers and family members gathered for a farewell ceremony at the Nassau County Police Academy in Garden City on June 1, 2025. Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Sebastian Rothwyn 138th Public Affairs Detachment.

Liberty, marking the first time a National Guard division headquarters had gone to war since 1953.

The division headquarters deployed to the Central Command area in 2020. **gt**

"This team, these Soldiers, are truly remarkable. There is no mission this group cannot accomplish,"

—Maj. Gen. Jack James, commander of the 42nd Infantry Division



Soldiers of the 42nd Infantry Division and family members fill the Empire State Convention Center in Albany during a farewell ceremony held on June 1, 2025. Five hundred Soldiers assigned to the division headquarters are deploying to the Central Command area of operations this summer. Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Harley Jelis, 42nd Infantry Division.

NY Soldiers March in Army's 250th Birthday Parade

Story by Sgt. Jordan Sutton, 369th Sustainment Brigade



New York National Guard Soldiers of the 42nd Infantry Division pose for a photograph in front of the Capitol in Washington, D.C. on June 13, 2025. The Soldiers were in Washington to march in the Army Birthday Parade on June 14, 2025. Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Trevor Cullen, 42nd Infantry Division.

WASHINGTON — Four hundred forty-five Soldiers from the 42nd Infantry Division marched in the Army's 250th birthday parade, in the heart of the nation's capital, Washington D.C., on June 14, 2025.

The 42nd Division was the only National Guard unit participating in the parade.

The Headquarters and Headquarters Company of the 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team led the division's formation, with 65 Soldiers marching directly behind the Rainbow Division colors.

Soldiers from other division units filled in the rest of the formation.

The parade order of march told the story of the Army, starting in the Revolutionary War and continuing to the present day.

The 42nd and 82nd Divisions, which both formed during World War I, marched in the

section of the parade that highlighted World War I, led by the 42nd Infantry Division Band.

The 82nd Airborne Soldiers wore replicas of World War I uniforms.

Major General Jack James, the division commander, led the 400-Soldier contingent from the 42nd Infantry that followed the 82nd Airborne.

Over 6,700 Soldiers from Active, Reserve, and National Guard components took part in the parade, according to the Army.

"This is a very proud moment in our history," said 1st Sgt. Anthony Wolf, a member of the 27th Brigade's headquarters company.

"Being the only National Guard unit here to represent the Army on such a significant milestone — it's an honor. We're here to continue a time-honored tradition and show that the Army keeps rolling on," Wolf said.

The New York Soldiers arrived in Washington on June 11, joined by a 30-Soldier contingent from the 1st Battalion, 182nd Infantry of the Massachusetts Army National Guard.

Before marching, Soldiers conducted a full rehearsal on June 13, and were given downtime to explore Washington, D.C.

The USO also set up a station at the General Services Administration National Capital Region facility. The unused building housed the New Yorkers, and 4,800 other Soldiers.

Soldiers enjoyed movie screenings and met with social media personalities including celebrity Chef Robert Irvine and other Army-focused social media influencers.

Sgt. Brednan Vanhorn, an information technology specialist in the 27th Brigade Headquarters said being in the parade was exciting.

"This is my first time being in a ceremony or

a parade like this," said Vanhorn. "It feels good to be a part of something that celebrates our past in the Army."

Spc. Jordan Hill, another headquarters company information technology specialist, said it was an honor.

"This is my first time in D.C., and it feels very honorable," said Hill. "I had family who served in the military, so to be here for the 250th — it's the highest honor I've experienced so far."

"Participating in the Army's 250th Birthday parade is a once-in-a-lifetime experience," said 42nd Infantry Division Command Sgt. Major Arnold Reyes.

"Celebrating the Army today also serves to honor the freedoms and values that our nation upholds. It Makes me proud to wear this uniform and to continue its legacy," Reyes added. **gt**



Soldiers of the New York Army National Guard's 42nd Infantry Division "Rainbow" Band march in the Army's 250th Birthday Parade in Washington, D.C. on June 14, 2025. The band led the World War I section of the parade which included Soldiers of the 42nd Infantry Division and 82nd Airborne Division Soldiers marching in replica World War I uniforms. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Andrew Enriquez, DC National Guard.



Maj. Gen. Jack James, commander of the 42nd Infantry Division, poses with members of the 82nd Airborne Division wearing World War I period uniforms prior to the start of the Army's 250th Birthday Parade in Washington D.C. on June 14, 2025. The 82nd Airborne and 42nd Division marched to highlight the Army's role in World War I. Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Trevor Cullen, 42nd Infantry Division.

Skibirds Launch 2025 Greenland Missions

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

Pilots from the 109th Airlift Wing land an LC-130 Hercules aircraft on a ski landing area, Greenland, during support in last year's 2024 season, May 9, 2024. A ski landing area is also known as a "skiway." Photo by Senior Airman Jocelyn Tuller, 109th Airlift Wing.

STRATTON AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, N.Y. — The 109th Airlift Wing has commenced its annual deployment to Greenland, initiating the 2025 season of logistical support for National Science Foundation research stations there.

The wing, based at Stratton Air National Guard Base in Scotia, New York, flies the largest ski-equipped aircraft in the world.

Beginning in April and continuing through August, the mission involves transporting personnel, cargo, and fuel to remote Arctic science stations on the Greenland ice sheet.

The 2025 operation is structured into six rotations of from 75 to 100 Airmen. They will operate four LC-130 aircraft based at the airport in Kangerlussuaq.

The LC-130 "Skibirds" are the world's largest ski-equipped aircraft capable of landing on snow and ice. This unique capability enables the wing to deliver essential supplies to research sites situated on the Greenland ice sheet.

In 2024, the 109th Airlift Wing transported 1.8 million pounds of cargo, 70,000 gallons of fuel, and 1,200

passengers to various science stations across Greenland, while flying over 500 flight hours.

The support included flying supplies to Summit Station, the National Science Foundation's high-altitude, year-round Arctic research facility near the apex of the Greenland ice sheet. The wing also supported East Grip, a science camp that drills and retrieves ice cores from the Northeast Greenland Ice Stream.

This year's mission also includes support for the reconstruction of Summit Station. Plans

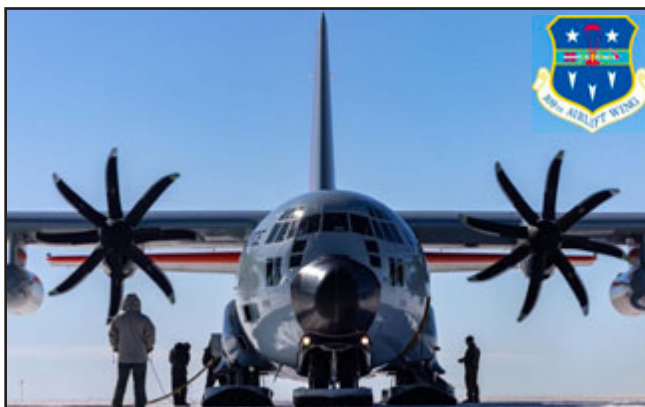
for the new station include elevating structures above snow drifts and incorporating renewable energy and autonomous systems to enhance sustainability.

"The Greenland season is a critical opportunity for us to support the National Science Foundation's efforts, particularly with the rebuilding of Summit Station," said Col. Robert Donaldson, commander of the 109th Airlift Wing.

"Our Greenland deployments, which take us to some of the most austere polar environments on Earth, also demonstrate the wing's power projection capabilities with the LC-130 and our remarkable Airmen making it happen," Donaldson said.

In addition to the operation, the unit will conduct flight training for its pilots and flight crew as well as Barren Land Arctic Survival Training or "BLAST" at Raven Camp, a requirement for all personnel deploying to polar regions. This training ensures that Airmen are prepared to operate safely and effectively in extreme Arctic conditions.

The 109th Airlift Wing remains the sole unit in the world with ski-equipped LC-130s. **gt**



An LC-130 Hercules aircraft from the 109th Airlift Wing sits at Summit Station, Greenland, May 9, 2024. Summit Station is ideal for studying long-range intercontinental transport and its effects on the ice sheet surface. Photo by Senior Airman Jocelyn Tuller 109th Airlift Wing. 109th Airlift Wing.

106th Rescue Wing Celebrates 50 Years of Rescues

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Sarah McKernan

FRANCIS S. GABRESKI AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, N.Y. — Airmen, alumni, leaders and friends gathered at the New York Air National Guard's 106th Rescue Wing to commemorate 50 years of the unit's rescue mission, with a ceremony held at Francis S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base on June 7, 2025.

In 1975, the 106th, which had been an Air Defense Command interceptor unit, adopted combat search and rescue missions and became the 106th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Group. In 1995, the group was officially redesignated as the 106th Rescue Wing.

"For half a century, this wing has answered the call to fulfill the most noble of Air Force missions, to save lives," said Colonel Jeffrey Cannet, the 106th Rescue Wing commander.

"Since 1975, we've been a beacon of hope, a symbol of courage and a testament to the unwavering commitment to our principles, that others may live," he added.

Former commanders of the 106th also attended and emphasized the importance of the mission in their remarks.

Major General Michael Bank, who is currently the New York Air National Guard commander, retired Colonel Shawn Fitzgerald, retired Colonel Michael Canders, and retired Colonel David Hill, who was the first commander of the 106th Rescue Wing, all spoke.

Also in attendance were the New York Air National Guard Command Chief, Michael Hewson, former vice wing commanders, former wing command chiefs, distinguished retirees, and former wing members.

In his remarks, Cannet reflected on the significance of wing achievements over the past 50 years, emphasizing the dedication and sacrifice that have defined its mission.

"Today, we celebrate not just the passage of time, but the extraordinary achievements that have defined the past five decades," said Cannet.

"We celebrate the countless hours of rigorous training, the daring missions often conducted in the face of extreme adversity, and the unwavering resolve that has enabled us to achieve a truly remarkable feat, saving 2,974 lives,"



New York Air National Guard Col. Jeffrey Cannet, 106th Rescue Wing commander, delivers his remarks during the wing's 50th Anniversary of Rescue commemoration ceremony on Francis S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base, Westhampton Beach, N.Y., June 7, 2025.

Cannet said.

Hill was among the speakers at the ceremony and reflected on his decades of service and the evolution of the unit.

"It's been 28 years since I last stood before the 106th Rescue Wing, and as I thought back over the years here, a lot happened," Hill said.

"I spent the time from 1970 until 1997 here in this unit, 27 years, through a lot of change. In the 22 years that I was here flying, we saved about 234 lives, and now it's 2,974 lives that you have saved. It's to see all your facilities, your beautiful aircraft, and your faces here doing the job," Hill said.

Bank addressed the Airmen of the 106th in his remarks.

"There is no other wing in the state of New York, or, I would argue, in the Air National Guard, that exemplifies integrity, excellence, and service more than this one," Bank said.

"And it's because of the people like you, and your predecessors, and the people that trained you, that mentored you, that let you

grow, and then also trusted you to lead and do the right things when you have to get comfortable with the uncomfortable," Bank added.

In his closing remarks, Cannet commended the wing's current Airmen for upholding the proud legacy of the 106th and emphasized their responsibility in shaping the future of the mission.

"To the current members of the 106th, I commend you for your unwavering dedication and your commitment to excellence," he said.

"You inherit a proud legacy, and you are writing the next chapter in the story of this wing. Embrace the challenges that lie ahead, knowing that you are part of something truly special," Cannet said.

At the end of the ceremony, a 50th Anniversary plaque was unveiled by Col. Cannet and Command Chief Master Sgt. Rittberg.

The plaque will be displayed with other historical items in the wing's headquarters building. **gt**



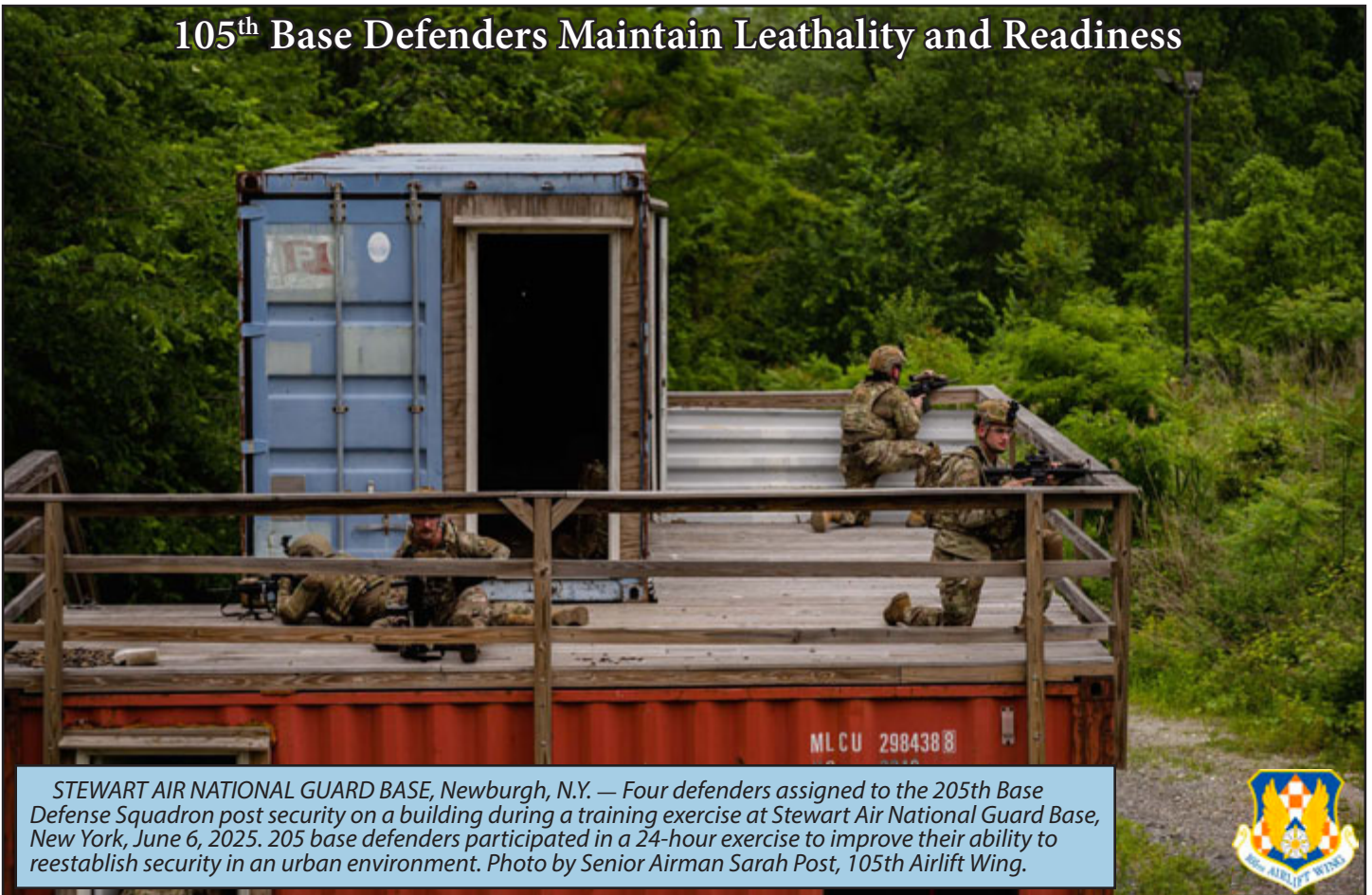
Air Force Col. Jeffrey Cannet, 106th Rescue Wing commander, Maj. Gen. Michael Bank, New York Air National Guard commander, retired Cols. David Hill, Michael Canders, and Shawn Fitzgerald, former commanders of the 106th, attend the 106th Rescue Wing's 50th Anniversary of Rescue commemoration ceremony on Francis S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base, Westhampton Beach, N.Y., June 7, 2025.

NY Airmen Overseas for Paris Air Show

PARIS — 105th Airmen flew to Paris from June 16-22 and participated in the Salon International de l'Aéronautique et de l'Espace, the Paris Air Show. While there, Airmen displayed the capabilities of the C-17 Globemaster III and the MQ-9 Reaper, delivered from the 174th Attack Wing, below right. Participating Airmen were recognized with challenge coins, below left, from Scott Delius, the Secretary of Defense Representative in Europe. Courtesy photos.



105th Base Defenders Maintain Lethality and Readiness



STEWART AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, Newburgh, N.Y. — Four defenders assigned to the 205th Base Defense Squadron post security on a building during a training exercise at Stewart Air National Guard Base, New York, June 6, 2025. 205 base defenders participated in a 24-hour exercise to improve their ability to reestablish security in an urban environment. Photo by Senior Airman Sarah Post, 105th Airlift Wing.

EADS Wins Seven Annual Air Force North Awards

Story by Timothy Jones, Eastern Air Defense Sector

TYNDALL AIR FORCE BASE, Fla.— The Eastern Air Defense Sector (EADS) received the command and control unit of the year award and six individual awards at the March 17 Continental U.S. North American Aerospace Defense Command Region (CONR) -First Air Force and Air Forces Northern (AF-NORTH) annual awards ceremony.

“It’s a remarkable achievement to win individual awards in organizations as large as CONR and AFNORTH and I congratulate our six winners on their outstanding accomplishments,” said Col. Joseph F. Roos, EADS Commander. “As a commander, the command and control unit of the year award is especially gratifying because it recognizes the professionalism, technical excellence and personal dedication that I see every day.”

Award recipients were:

- The Eastern Air Defense Sector, Command and Control Unit of the Year. The nation’s busiest air defense sector, EADS investigated more than 16,500 potential threats last year and enforced 186 temporary flight restrictions for Presidential travel. The unit earned the highest possible “mission ready” rating in all 21 graded areas during its alert force evaluations and completed a \$13 million operations floor modern-

ization project. During the modernization project, EADS built an alternate operations floor and conducted its around-the-clock air defense mission without pause.

- Lt. Col. Matthew Smith, Manlius, Air Force Northern Outstanding Field Grade Officer. Smith led the standards and evaluations section through 33 assessments and served as the flight commander for a 42-member crew. Smith coordinated airspace security efforts as a liaison officer at the U.N. General Assembly that helped protect the President and nearly 200 foreign delegates. He was also a prominent contributor to the Air Force’s revised operational manual for Battle Control Centers, writing 17 entries for the updated publication.

- Capt. Matthew Cummings, Outstanding Company Grade Officer. Cummings earned two exceptionally qualified ratings during operational assessments, which placed him in the top one percent of evaluated Airmen. Cummings integrated U.S. Army, Air Force Northern and Canadian Forces during a bi-national drill, providing critical cruise missile defense training for the units. Other accomplishments included training more than 80 Army Soldiers for the air defense mission in the National Capital Region.



Senior Airman Kyle Larsen, center, receives the outstanding junior enlisted Airman of the year award March 17, 2025 at the Continental U.S. North American Aerospace Defense Command Region - 1st Air Force recognition ceremony at Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla. Lt. Gen. Luke Ahmann, left, the commander, and Chief Master Sgt. Nate Durfee, the Command Chief, presented the award to Larsen. EADS Airmen and civilians received seven awards at the event. Photo by Lt. Col. Andrew Scott, Air Force Northern.

- Capt. Daniel Steere, Air Force Northern Outstanding Company Grade Officer. A member of EADS’ 223rd Air Defense Squadron in the Washington, D.C. area, Steere managed a communications security account at 10 sites and earned the highest rating of mission readiness on three inspections. The primary manager for a \$100 million information technology contract, he ensured the reliability of 23 separate Army and Air Force mission systems. Steere was also recognized for creating an 18-month Airman development plan.

- Senior Airman Kyle Larsen, Air Force Northern Outstanding Junior Enlisted Airman. Larsen

conducted 297 hours of surveillance of the National Capital Region’s airspace, where he detected and reported 2,900 potential threats. In addition, he worked 71 temporary flight restrictions for presidential travel, where he coordinated with nine government agencies and monitored and reported five airspace violators.

- Nick Amicucci, Air Force Northern Outstanding Civilian. An EADS facility operations specialist, Amicucci improvised temporary ventilation for the unit’s data center, ensuring that \$12 million in mission-essential equipment was protected and maintained. Amicucci planned and oversaw heat-

ing, ventilation and air conditioning automation upgrades and led the unit’s design efforts for a major construction project.

- Larry Thornton, the CONR Outstanding Civilian. An exercise designer, Thornton supported a bilateral exercise with the Mexican Air Force, providing cross-border training in preparation for the upcoming World Cup soccer events. He also developed training to prepare EADS and its federal agency partners for the Republican and Democratic National Conventions and facilitated U.S. Army crew certifications in the National Capital Region, qualifying 86 Soldiers for air defense operations. 



106th Rescue Wing Conducts Combat Rescue Training

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

New York Air National Guard pararescuemen assigned to the 106th Rescue Wing treat a simulated patient during a rescue exercise onboard an HC-130J Combat King II search and rescue aircraft along the coast of Long Island, N.Y., May 3, 2025.

FRANCIS S. GABRESKI AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, WESTHAMPTON BEACH, N.Y. — Air National Guard members assigned to the 106th Rescue Wing participated in a combat search and rescue exercise at Francis S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base, May 3, 2025.

The exercise involved aircrews from the 102nd Rescue Squadron, which operates HC-130J Combat King II search and rescue aircraft,

crews from the 101st Rescue Squadron, which fly HH-60W Jolly Green II rescue helicopters, pararescuemen from the 103rd Rescue Squadron, intelligence analysts, and communications specialists from the 106th Operations Group.

According to Maj. Patrick Harding, an HC-130J Combat King II pilot, planner, and instructor for the exercise, the objective was to simulate a combat search and rescue mission in an overwater environment.

The training instructed crew members who had just transitioned to the HH-60 Whiskey helicopter and demonstrated how to direct a rescue scene from the HC-130J, Harding said.

The mission scenario involved the recovery of a downed fighter pilot over the ocean, represented by an Airman with simulated injuries. The operation required a search by an HC-130J and extraction by HH-60W rescue helicopters, with pararescuemen onboard to provide medical support and execute the recovery.

Once located, the HC-130J crew guided helicopters to the pickup location where rescue personnel simulated a water extraction of the “injured” pilot from the ocean.

Upon retrieving the simulated downed pilot, pararescuemen began treating simulated injuries while their helicopter flew to rendezvous with the HC-130J on the ground. Once there, they transferred the simulated patient from the helicopter to the plane for further treatment

and more rapid transit to a hospital.

“For our younger loadmasters, we wanted them to get more exposure working with an entire task force, and specifically working with pararescuemen and a team,” said Staff Sgt. Salvatore Abamonte, an HC-130J Combat King II loadmaster and planner of the exercise. “They did come onto the airplane with a live patient, and they were actually working on the patient, so having them integrate was important.”

Also part of the scenario was helicopter air-to-air refueling. Combat King II aircraft can simultaneously transfer fuel to two HH-60W Jolly Green II helicopters during flight. The HC-130J extends hoses and drogues while the helicopters are equipped with an extending boom connecting with the airplane's hoses.

During aerial refueling, loadmasters use a signal light with colored lenses as well as radio communication to direct the operation from the rear, opening the ramp of the HC-130J.

Abamonte explained that the unit conducts helicopter refueling as often as possible to make sure newer loadmasters get as much practice as possible.

“The full mission profile we did, to capture all the points we're looking at, is to advance our younger aviators and continue to hone the skills of our most experienced aviators so that we maintain our ability to save lives in the most effective and quick way possible,” Harding said. 



Two New York Air National Guard HH-60W Jolly Green II rescue helicopters assigned to the 106th Rescue Wing fly over the Atlantic Ocean along the coast of Long Island, N.Y., May 3, 2025. The helicopters are preparing to conduct midair refueling from an HC-130J Combat King II search and rescue aircraft.

NY Security Forces Airmen Sharpen Heavy Weapons Skills at Fort Indiantown Gap

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

FORT INDIANTOWN GAP, Penn. — Twenty-five members of the New York Air National Guard's 107th Attack Wing Security Forces Squadron honed their heavy weapons proficiency during annual qualification training held here, May 16–22.

The training focused on familiarization and live-fire certification with a range of crew-served and specialized weapons systems, including the M320 grenade launcher, M249 and M240B machine guns, Mk 19 automatic grenade launcher, M2 .50-caliber machine gun, and the M110A1 sniper rifle.

"It's all about readiness and keeping people current and familiar with how to properly implement these weapon systems downrange," said Staff Sgt. Colin King, a Combat Arms Trainer with the squadron.

"Especially since next year is a deployment year—it's a big deal."

All Security Forces personnel are required to qualify with grenade launchers and machine guns, though they are typically assigned only one of these weapon systems

during a deployment.

They also carry their standard-issue M4 carbine and M18 9mm pistol.

Select Airmen are trained for the squadron's Special Weapons and Tactics team, operating the M2, Mk 19, and sniper systems in specialized mission sets.

Qualification on the M110A1 sniper rifle is limited to those who demonstrate advanced marksmanship and complete the two-week Advanced Designated Marksman Course, held at Fort Bliss, Texas.

"That's my favorite firearm to train with—the M110," King said.

"It's so satisfying making first-round impacts at distance. But the M2 is a very, very close second."

The unit previously conducted this training at Alpena Combat Readiness Training Center in Michigan.

However, logistical considerations made the move to Fort Indiantown Gap more practical.

"Cutting through Canada was a 'shorter' trip," joked one Airman, who asked not to be identified.

"But since we have to bring all



Tech. Sgt. Matthew Coons, Combat Arms Trainer assigned to the 107th Attack Wing Security Forces Squadron, gives a safety brief before familiarity and qualification training on the M320 Grenade Launcher, Fort Indiantown Gap, Penn., May 20, 2025. The M320 offers many advantages from the typically used M203, namely in munition versatility, longer range, easier loading, and improved accuracy.

our weapons and ammo with us, we can't go through the border. So whoever's driving the gear has to loop around. It adds two or three hours."

Fort Indiantown Gap is an 18,000-acre training center operated by the Pennsylvania National Guard. **gt**

"It's all about readiness and keeping people current and familiar with how to properly implement these weapon systems downrange,"

— Staff Sgt. Colin King, Combat Arms Trainer, 107th Security Forces Squadron



Staff Sgt. Andrew Mach, assigned to the 107th Attack Wing Security Forces Squadron, "zeroes in" his M110A1 sniper rifle during annual heavy weapons qualification on May 20, 2025 at Fort Indiantown Gap, Penn. Qualification on the M110A1 sniper rifle is limited to those who demonstrate advanced marksmanship and complete the two-week Advanced Designated Marksman Course, held at Fort Bliss, Texas.



New York Air National Guard Staff Sgt. Robert Gabrielini, an emergency management specialist with the 105th Civil Engineer Squadron, New York Air National Guard, exits a UH-60 Black Hawk assigned to the Puerto Rico Army National Guard during the 2025 Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico emergency management deployment for training at Fort Allen, Juana Diaz, Puerto Rico, May 19, 2025. Photo by 1st Lt. Eliezer Soto, 156th Airlift Wing.

107th Emergency Management Trains in Puerto Rico

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

PUERTO RICO — Three members of the New York Air National Guard's 107th Attack Wing Emergency Management team participated in a multi-state training exercise hosted by the Puerto Rico Air National Guard, May 13–19.

The Deployment for Training event, coordinated by the 156th Civil Engineer Squadron, was held at Camp Santiago Joint Training Center in Salinas and Fort Allen in Juana Diaz.

According to a release from Puerto Rico Air National Guard, the exercise included units from the U.S. Virgin Islands, New York, New Jersey, South Carolina, Hawaii, Oklahoma, California, and Vermont.

The training featured combat-simulated scenarios designed to challenge emergency response capabilities in an austere environment. It took two years to plan and resulted in more than 120 hours of hands-on training, according to the release.

"The most difficult part was the heat and humidity, especially when wearing our heavy protective chemical gear," said Senior Airman Vincenzo Costanzo, a 107th Emergency Management journeyman.

"My favorite part was the field training," she added. "I got to experience different field conditions, sleep in tents, and participate in a lot of different scenarios. One group even got to ride in a Black Hawk—that was really cool to see."

The 107th Attack Wing previously participated in a similar large-scale readiness event called Niagara Warrior at Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station in October 2024. That exercise required Airmen to respond to dynamic threats in a simulated contested environment, reinforcing the Agile Combat Employment, or ACE, concept.

According to Air Force doctrine, ACE is "a proactive and reactive operational scheme of maneuver executed within threat timelines to increase survivability while generating combat power."

"Puerto Rico is a perfect location to train our Airmen for the future fight since it has similar geographical characteristics to the Indo-Pacific region," said Senior Master Sgt. Paul Clementi, Emergency Management superintendent for the 107th Attack Wing.

Clementi added that the training "focused on creating a different environment where emergency specialists could execute their CBRN (Chemical, Biological,

Radiological, and Nuclear) mission by assembling into small teams and exerting leadership among the noncommissioned officers."

Leaders highlighted the value of the location and realism of the training.

"The Caribbean's resemblance to the Pacific region enhances our ability to prepare for operations in that theater," said U.S. Air Force Col. Evaristo Orengo, commander of the 156th Wing, in the original article.

"The Puerto Rico Air National Guard provides a unique platform for Air National Guard units to conduct ACE-focused training and develop mission-ready Airmen, thanks to our strategic location and readily available facilities," he said.

Some content was originally published by Puerto Rico Air National Guard Public Affairs. 



Staff Sgt. Catherine Uttaro, an emergency management specialist with the 106th Civil Engineer Squadron, sets up a perimeter after encountering a simulated unidentified explosive object during the 2025 Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico emergency management Deployment for Training at Fort Allen, Juana Diaz, Puerto Rico, May 18, 2025. Photo by 1st Lt. Eliezer Soto, 156th Airlift Wing.



Staff Sgt. Samantha Betty, an emergency management specialist with the 106th Civil Engineer Squadron, assumes a prone position during the 2025 Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico emergency management Deployment for Training at Fort Allen, Juana Diaz, Puerto Rico, May 19, 2025. Photo by 1st Lt. Eliezer Soto, 156th Airlift Wing.



Airman 1st Class Anita Acevedo, an emergency management specialist with the 156th Contingency Response Group, Puerto Rico Air National Guard, and Staff Sgt. Samantha Betty, an emergency management specialist with the 106th Civil Engineer Squadron, review an Airman's Manual before entering an scenario during training at Fort Allen, Juana Diaz, Puerto Rico, May 18, 2025. Photo by 1st Lt. Eliezer Soto, 156th Airlift Wing.

New York Guard

SLEEPY HOLLOW, N.Y. — The 56th Company of the New York Guard hosted the 107th annual Aqueduct Defense Memorial Service at Sleepy Hollow Cemetery, May 4, 2025.

Fifteen members of the New York Guard joined honor guards and leaders from the New York City Department of Environmental Protection Police and the Veteran Corps of Artillery for the remembrance event.

The memorial service commemorated the loss of 40 New York Guard volunteers of the First Provisional Regiment, who died of the while guarding the Catskill Aqueduct, a primary water source for New York City.

The New York Guard was formed in August 1917 after National Guard troops were federalized and deployed to Europe to fight in World War I.

The primary mission for the New York Guard was infrastructure protection. The attack on Black Tom Island by German saboteurs on July 30, 1916 caused significant damage to the railyard, intending to slow the shipment of American munitions to England.

As New York Guard recruits received their basic training, the Soldiers of the Veteran Corps of Artillery manned their posts along the Catskill Aqueduct until such time as the New York Guard was ready to be deployed.

The Spanish Flu epidemic took the lives of 37 members of the New York Guard during outbreaks in the Hudson valley. The flu was especially deadly among young adults.

"We have a responsibility to remember those who have served before us," said Staff Sgt. Stanley Cohen of the 56th Company, the master of ceremonies. "Continuing to host this event is the least we can do."

The New York Times praised the New York Guard for their work in an editorial on October 7, 1917.

"Protection of the aqueducts and bridges, armories and public building and effective cooperation with the federal government in its military preparations are essential," the Times editors wrote.

The new volunteers deployed along posts along the aqueduct from New Paltz down to New York City.

"The memory of the fallen of the First Provisional Regiment serves as a source of strength for us," said 1st Lt. Frank Marcigliano, the commander of the 56th Company. "It is imperative that we continue to honor the service and sacrifice of those who came before us. There may come a time when we are called upon to step up and take risks to protect our state."

Brigadier General Peter Riley, the New York Guard Commander placed a wreath at the monument and addressed the gathering.

Environmental Protection Police Captain Joey Rosa then read the roll call of the fallen New York Guard members, followed by a ceremonial firing party and playing of taps. **gt**

NY Guard Honors its Past

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



New York Guard Commander Brig. Gen. Peter Riley joins New York City Environmental Protection Police Capt. Joseph Miceli to place a wreath to honor the 40 New York Guard Volunteers who died while defending the Catskill Aqueduct, New York City's water supply, in 1918.

NY Guard Supports Empire Challenge



CAMP SMITH, N.Y. — New York Guard Sgt. 1st Class Alexander Myagkiy, left, and Sgt. Russell Avolio operate the High Frequency radio at Camp Smith in support of the Empire Challenge exercise.

New York Naval Militia

Naval Militia Hosts 'Empire Challenge'

Story and photos by Stephanie Butler, Guard Times staff

NIAGARA, N.Y. — Forty-one New York Naval Militia and New York Guard members conducted an emergency response exercise June 5-6 on the lower Niagara River alongside the Coast Guard, local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies.

The exercise named "Empire Challenge," was centered on Coast Guard Station Niagara and Fort Niagara State Park.

The joint training exercise scenario was built around supporting law enforcement authorities working to stop drug smuggling by boat from Canada to the United States.

The exercise participants tested their ability to communicate and respond to emergencies including a person in the water, swift water rescue, drug smuggling by water and land, and divers entering the Niagara River by helicopter.

The training scenario allowed the New York Naval Militia and the New York Guard to improve their ability to operate with the Coast Guard, and state and local law enforcement agencies, according to Naval Militia Capt. Don McKnight who heads the Naval Militia's Military Emergency Boat Service.

"This collective effort is a testament of Interoperability and proof of capability that in the absence of infrastructure, collectively we can still establish and maintain command, control and communications throughout New York state," said Warrant Officer Richard Martino Jr., the signal officer for the New York Guard.

The New York Naval Militia conducted drone operations during the training.

The Unmanned Aerial Systems—the formal

military name for drones—were launched from land during a reconnaissance mission to follow a "drug smuggler" who came to the Niagara River by means of Lake Ontario on a jet ski.

He was pursued by a Border Patrol boat until he jumped out on shore, where the drone took over the chase.

"Along the international border, there's always smuggling occurring. It's people, it's narcotics, it's weapons, these things happen" said Brady Waikel, the patrol agent in charge for U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

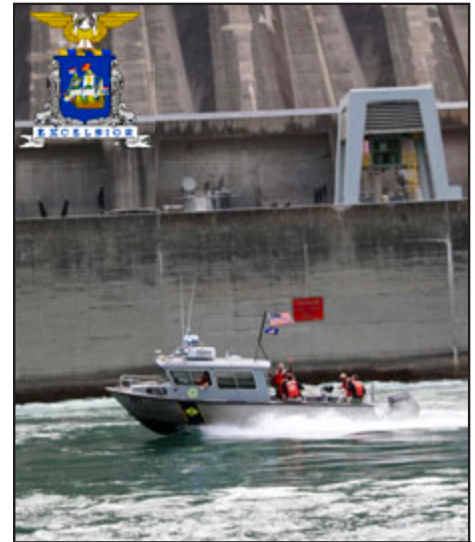
"Luckily for us in Niagara County, it is not an everyday occurrence; it's not something that's happening constantly, but the threat is always there," Waikel added.

"We have to remain vigilant, we have to remain prepared to counter those when they happen," he said.

"This exercise allowed the Naval Militia UAS Unit to operate directly with partner agencies to ensure coverage of the area of operations as well as learn about their tactics, techniques, and procedures," said Maj. Michael Golden, the office in charge of the Naval Militia drone unit.

This year a delegation from the Swedish navy and marines observed the exercise.

"My biggest takeaway from this experience is how easily you work together with other agencies. It seems to me as it's seamless when you need one another to conduct an operation, you support each other," said Swedish First Sgt. Martin Lund, the planning officer for Sweden's 17th Amphibious Regiment.



New York Naval Militia Patrol Boat 281 patrolling the Niagara River passing the Niagara Power Project, during a multi-agency training exercise called "Empire Challenge."

The New York National Guard has a State Partnership Program training and exchange relationship with the Swedish military.

"Exercise Empire Challenge demonstrated the benefit of New York being the only state in the nation with the ability to activate United States Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard reservists to state active duty in support of the New York National Guard," said Rear Admiral Michael Perry, the commander of the New York Naval Militia.

"The federal naval services fund nearly all of the reservist's training and New York gets to employ them on a not to interfere basis with their federal training and duties, which provides great benefit at little cost to New York," Perry added. **gt**



New York Naval Militia Patrol Boat 280 (right), along with the New York State Parks Police boat(center) and U.S. Border Control boat (left) in the Niagara River during a multi-agency training exercise called "Empire Challenge".

