Volume 17 Number 3

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



FROM THE LEADERSHIP

Your missions are essential at home and overseas

The New York Military Forces continue to be always ready and always there to respond to the calls of our State and Nation. More than ever, our missions in 2024 validate that sentiment.

Global and domestic deployments, state active-duty missions, training and readiness partnerships as well as building and sustaining personnel strength all featured prominently among the year's successes.

It has been a year of significant milestones which could not have happened without our people who are at the heart of all we do.

Our recruiting and retention efforts in the New York Army and Air National Guard continue to exceed national standards.

As of October 1st, the Army Guard stood at 11,168 fully qualified assigned Soldiers, or 108% above authorization, while our Air Guard is at 5,772 qualified assigned, or 103% above authorization.

I want to thank our recruiting and retention professionals, battalion career counselors and command teams throughout the force for building and sustaining our personnel levels setting the standard for the National Guard.

Thanks for this accomplishment, also our currently serving Soldiers and Airmen, who refer their friends, peers or relatives to join our formations.Your personal endorsement of a military career informed by your own experiences in the New York National Guard is as important as a supportive network of friends and family to a new servicemember and reinforces trust within the organization.

Your referrals illustrate that we are all part of the recruiting and retention effort.

Thank you for inspiring others to serve.

Globally, our National Guard remains a vital contributor of forces instrumental to national defense and force projection overseas.

In 2024, the Soldiers of the 222nd Military Police company returned from an Eastern Europe deployment supporting US European Command elements deployed in the Baltic states.

The 101st Expeditionary Signal Battalion, 642nd Aviation Support Battalion, and detachments of the 1st Battalion,126th Aviation and the 4th Finance Detachment completed deployments to the Middle East while the 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team and the 105th Airlift Wing supported Exercise African Lion in Tunisia and Marocco in support of US Africa Command.

Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 224th Aviation, and the 1569th and 1427th Transportation companies completed Southwest Border deployments supporting US Northern Command. The joint New York and New Jersey, 173rd Cyber Protection Team also mobilized in support of U.S. Cyber Command.

The 109th Airlift Wing continued its support to the National Science Foundation in Antarctica and Greenland, while reinforcing partner capacity with Denmark's Joint Arctic Command. This is vital to the national Arctic Strategy.

New York's newly forged partnership with the Kingdom of Sweden, signifies the confidence that the Department of Defense has in the New York National Guard's reputation. This endorsement illustrates national leaders trust in our capacity and future potential to collaborate with one of NATO's newest members.

The future will see the 42nd Infantry Division deploy to the Middle East and 206th MP Company go to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba as the New York National Guard continues to contribute to the needs of the theater combatant commanders.

Here at home, our state active duty missions continue to provide ready, reliable and flexible capability to civil authorities across New York.

The year 2024 began with a snowstorm in western New York, in which members from across New York Military Forces provided assistance.

As I write this column New York National Guard Soldiers and Airmen have deployed to North Carolina and Florida to assist with recovery efforts in areas devastated by Hurricanes Helene and Milton.

Enduring federal and state active-duty missions here in New York provide enabling capability to law enforcement and community-based organizations confronting illicit drugs in our communities, conduct vulnerability studies of critical key facilities and cyber infrastructure and provide capabilities in the event of a response to a chemical biological, radiologic or nuclear disaster.

Our servicemembers continue to be a deterrent and responsive presence in the New York City transportation system as fully integrated public safety partners.

And in New York City, Buffalo and Rochester our servicemembers remain instrumental in providing relief to stressed public service providers on the asylum seeker resource mission.

Later in this issue of the Guard Times, you'll find an article in which Governor Hochul took the time to recognize the efforts of members of state active-duty missions who performed heroically during the course of their assignments.



Maj. Gen. Michel Natali

The work our Soldiers, Airmen, Sailors, Marines, New York Guard and our civilian workforce performs each and every day is appreciated and remains essential for our State and Nation.

As Thanksgiving and the Holidays approach, I'm truly thankful for the families that support us in all we do and for our servicemembers who are always ready and always there. Happy Holidays and Happy, Safe and Prosperous New Year!

EXCELSIOR!



JERICHO, Vt. —Master Sgt. Scott Potter, combat arms team leader for the 109th Security Forces squadron, instructs SFS personnel in the proper use of the M240 Machine Gun at the Ethan Allen training site in Vermont on August 1, 2024. Nineteen Airmen assigned to the 109th security forces squadron spent their August drill weekend honing their weapons handling and tactical skills. Photo by Master Sgt. Jamie Spalding, 109th Airlift Wing.

NEW YORK ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

AIR NATIONAL GUARD

guardtimes

Volume 17, Number 3

Governor Kathy Hochul, Commander in Chief
Maj. Gen. Raymond Shields, The Adjutant General
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30 Joint Water Bucket Training on the Hudson



NEWBURGH, N.Y.—Members of the 105th hosted its biennial Comprehensive Airman Fitness Day on Sept.8, 2024. Units from across the wing competed in a variety of events, with the Base Defense Group winning the overall tournament. Courtesy photo.

FRONT COVER: New York Naval Militia Landing Craft (LC350) sets perimeter in the Hudson River off Schodack Island State Park as New York Army National Guard UH-60m Blackhawk conducts Bambi Bucket operations as part of exercise Empire Challenge on Sept. 6, 2024. Photo by Stephanie Butler, Guard Times staff.
BACK COVER: Technical Sgt. Eric LaClair, a team leader with the 109th Security Forces Squadron, qualifies with the M320 grenade launcher at the Ethan Allen training site in Vermont on August 1, 2024. Photo by Master Sgt. Jamie Spalding, 109th Airlift Wing.

Guard Soldier Designs Korea, and Vietnam Commemorative Medals

Story and photo by Stephanie Butler, Guard Times staff

LATHAM, N.Y.— New York Army National Guard Staff Sgt. Lauren Hicks turned her love for art into state commemorative medals designed to honor New York state residents' service in the Korean and Vietnam Wars.

Hicks, who lives in Saratoga Springs, is the talent behind the New York's Korean War Commemorative Medal and Vietnam War Commemorative Medal, which the New York Division of Military and Naval Affairs is distributing.

It was a process that involved interviewing veterans and learning about the two wars, as well as using her drawing skills, Hicks said.

"I take pride in being able to be the creator of this medal, "she said. "It's very fulfilling to know that I am making a difference in somebody's life."

The two medals were approved by the legislature and New York Governor Kathy Hochul in 2022. The law tasks the Division of Military and Naval Affairs, the state entity which oversees the New York National Guard with creating, manufacturing and distributing the medals.

The commemorative medals cannot be worn on a uniform, but are intended as the state's recognition to veterans, according to State Senator Daphne Jordan, the bill's senate sponsor.

"These new medals will publicly recognize the service and sacrifice or our Korean and Vietnam veterans," she said.

The awards are now available to veterans; who can apply for one by going to the New York State Military Awards and Decorations page on the Division of Military and Naval Affairs website, https://dmna.ny.gov/awards/.

Hicks, an administrative specialist in the military personnel office at Joint Force Headquarters who deals with military awards, said she learned about the commemorative medals and thought it would be a challenge to design them. So, she went to her boss and volunteered.

Col. Mark Frank, the New York Army Guard's director of military personnel, who is also responsible for New York state military awards, said he was happy to take her up on the offer.

"Hicks mentioned that she loves to draw and design." Franks said. "She volunteered her nights and weekends to draft multiple design options for the new commemorative medals."

Hicks, a Louisiana native and an 11-year veteran of the Missouri and New York Army Guards, said she fell in love with art at a young age. She's had no formal training, but her mother paid for private lessons with a college art student, Hick's said.

Her research process, Hicks said, involved going to VFW and American Legion Posts and talking to veterans there.

She listened to their stories and noticed their tattoos. She took a particular interest to their tattoos, she said.

"Whatever Soldiers were willing to tattoo on their body is what they think of for that location, or that event that happened," Hicks explained. "So, I looked up a lot of Vietnam and Korean inspired tattoos, from those I was able to get a lot of good ideas."

She also studied photographs of the Korean and Vietnam War memorials in Washington D.C., for inspiration as well. The committee which picked the final designs liked those best.

The memorial's ability to captivate and the publics ability to recognize the iconic design and its meaning meant the designs on the medals would be easily identifiable, Hicks said.



Staff Sgt. Lauren Hicks stands with her final sketches of the New York State Korean War Commemorative Medal(right), and the New York State Vietnam War Commemorative Medal (left). On November 11, 2022, New York State Korean War Commemorative Medal, and the New York State Vietnam War Commemorative Medal were signed into state law.

> "These new medals will publicly recognize the service and sacrifice or our Korean and Vietnam veterans."
>
> *-- Staff Sgt. Lauren Hicks*

The Vietnam War Memorial features a wall of names with the statues of three Soldiers -- wearing the uniforms of that war-- in front.

The Korean War Memorial is focused on the 11 statues of a squad of Soldiers, clad in ponchos, on patrol.

The Vietnam War medal Hicks designed, features the wall and the three Soldiers.

The Korean War medal features three Soldiers on patrol in the rain, with at traditional Korean house called a Honak in the background.

Hicks, who also enjoys creating art with recycled bottles and drawing in her spare time, is now at work on her next art project; designing the commemorate Iraq and Afghanistan War medals that the Division of Military and Naval Affairs will issue next.gt

Lance P. Sijan Winner for 2024

Story by Eric Durr, Guard Times staff

LATHAM, N.Y— New York Air National Guard Chief Master Sgt. Greg Mihalko, a Stephentown resident, has been named the Air National Guard's recipient of the Lance P. Sijan Leadership Award for 2024.



Chief Master Sgt. Greg Mihalko courtesy Photo.

The award recognizes Airmen who have demonstrated the highest quality of leadership in their jobs and in their lives.

The award, created in 1981, takes its name from Capt. Lance P. Sijan, a pilot shot down over Vietnam in November 1967 who evaded capture for six weeks. Sijan died in captivity and was awarded the Medal of Honor Posthumously.

Mihalko serves as the senior enlisted leader for the New York Air National Guard headquarters in Latham. He oversees 58 Airmen who support the 5,800 members of the New York Air National Guard.

With five wings and an air defense sector, the New York Air National Guard is the largest in the country. There are over 100,000 Airmen serving in the Air National Guard across the United States.

Mihalko was recognized for his job performance, as well as his volunteer work off duty.

During this past year, Mihalko raised $3,700 for the We Care For America Foundation. This money provided education grants for Airmen and their dependents, and assistance to Airmen in need.

He conducted a campaign that 423 Department of Military and Naval Affairs employees supported, which contributed to a memorial scholarship honoring New York Army National Guard Chief Warrant Officers 2 Casey Frankowski and John Grassi. The two pilots lost their lives in a helicopter crash in Texas on March 8.

Mihalko joined the Air Force in 1989 and transferred to the New York Air National Guard's 109th Airlift Wing in 1993.

Mihalko has served in a number of leadership positions, and has deployed to Antarctica, Greenland, and in support of operations during the Persian Gulf War and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Mihalko's awards include the Air Force Achievement Medal, the Air Force Commendation Medal and the Air Force Meritorious Service Medal with 2 Oak Leaf Clusters, and the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal. **gt**

Guard Officer Earns Sapper Tab

Story by Eric Durr, Guard Times staff

SYRACUSE, N.Y.— New York Army National Guard 1st Lt. Rebeka "Beki" Eaton is now one of four New York National Guard Soldiers who wear the Sapper Tab.



1st Lt. Rebeka Eaton, poses for a photograph after completing the Sappers Leader Course at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri on June 14, 2024 and earning the Sapper Tab. She is one of four New York National Guard Soldiers who can wear the coveted award and the first New York National Guard woman to do so. Courtesy photo.

The combat engineer equivalent of the Infantry's Ranger Tab, earning it means completing 28 days of challenges in the Sapper Leader Course.

"The school is tough, and the days are long," said Lt. Col. Nicholas Whaley, the commander of the 204th Engineer Battalion, one of the Soldiers who wear the tab.

"Students ruck multiple miles daily, carrying their personal, squad, and platoon gear," he said.

"It requires a high level of physical fitness, but also mental toughness, and academic knowledge in those combat engineer skills," he added.

Eaton tackled the Sapper Leader Course in 2023 after a deployment to East Africa.Things went well until the end of the course, when she learned she hadn't completed the leadership requirements.

"That was truly disappointing," she said. "Sometimes, things just don't work out the way we hope for."

"Beki, being a very driven leader, turned that very moment into motivation to go back and earn her Sapper Tab," said Capt. Dylan Kuhn, her commander.

Eaton returned in 2024 in which she successfully completed the course earning the right to wear the tab.

"Throughout the course you rely heavily on your teammates and this specific group of Soldiers were selfless and worked cohesively leading to high levels of success," Eaton said.

Going back a second time, "takes a high degree of resilience and motivation," Whaley said. Eaton has nothing to be embarrassed about, he emphasized.

Being the first New York National Guard woman to earn this tab, "is a little bit exciting," she said. It's good to make a little piece of history, Eaton added. **gt**

Airman and Soldiers Aid in Rome Storm Cleanup

Story by Staff Sgt. Eric Bryant, 174th Attack Wing

ROME, N.Y.— The New York National Guard sent 60 Soldiers and Airmen to Rome, N.Y. on July 17 to 19 to aid in debris removal after a tornado hit the city the evening of July 16.

The 174th Attack Wing, based at Hancock Field Air National Guard Base deployed 25 Airmen, while the 2nd Battalion, 108th Infantry, headquartered in Utica, deployed 25 Soldiers. An additional 10 Soldiers were responsible for supporting the mission.

New York Governor Kathy Hochul, who visited Rome on July 17, declared a state of emergency which enabled her to mobilize National Guard personnel and provide state resources to the city more rapidly.

The storm also hit areas in Central New York and the Albany Area, although Rome suffered the most damage, according to state officials.

Working in teams of five, the 174th Airmen helped clear branches and tree limbs from yards, driveways, and walkways. Some of the large debris items had been blocking people in their homes.

Additionally, the 174th sent their five-member debris clearance team which operated two skid steers and dump truck to clear roads.

Tech. Sgt. Alexander Parent, a Rome resident who is assigned to the Eastern Air Defense Sector said the storms impact was immense.

"As soon as it stopped, we came out to the front porch and saw our neighbors on their front porch. We were just yelling over to see if everyone was fine."

He and his close neighbors moved through everything, making sure everyone was alright, and the elderly residents making sure they were not trapped inside, Parent said.

Parent, who was not on the state active duty response, said he was grateful to know that the City of Rome had help.





Above, Airmen assigned to the 174th Attack Wing clear debris in Rome, New York on July 17, 2024 along side city employees. Below, Air National Guard Chief Master Sergeant Wayne Lawton, a member of 174th Attack Wing, maneuvers a skid steer to clear debris in Rome, New York on July 17, 2024. The New York National Guard deployed 25 Airmen from the 174th Attack Wing, based at Hancock Field Air National Guard Base in Syracuse, to help clear debris left by a July 16, storm. Photos by Master Sgt. Barbara Olney, 174th Attack Wing.

Rome Fire Department Deputy Chief Michael Liddy Rome Fire Department said that the scope of the damage was tremendous.

The department had responded to various calls, including a collapsed building, Liddy said.

The priority of work was clearing main roads so first responders could get through the city, and making sure it was done safely, Liddy said.

Liddy said that there were many challenges in responding to such a large disaster because "It stresses the manpower…trying to rotate and keep everyone fresh." but at the end he said he was grateful to have the Airmen help move clear the path for emergency responders.

Master Sgt. Nathan Roczen, a part of the debris clearance team said that the mission was a good one.

Roczen valued "being as available as we can and being eager to help out where we can." gt

42nd Infantry Division Band Summer Tour

Photos by Staff Sgt Trevor Cullen, 42nd Infantry Division Band Public Affairs







Various Locations, N.Y. — Soldiers of the 42nd Infantry Division Band, under the Command of Chief Warrant Officer 2 Ethan Wagner, conducted their 2024 Summer Concert Tour. The tour saw the band travel around the Capital District of New York and included locations like Lake George, Latham, Saratoga Springs, Niskayuna, and Corinth, NY.

The Soldiers of the Band provide a particularly special function lending musical support to Military functions along with being an olive branch between the American Public and the New York Army National Guard. This Summer Tour was not just an opportunity for these Soldiers to play music but as a self-sufficient unit they are responsible for their own logistics and planning. During this Annual Training over Thirty Soldiers set up and tore down hundreds of pieces of equipment at multiple venues across the State.

The Soldiers of the Band are Soldiers first and musicians always, they perform every task that is expected of a Soldier and on top of that perform music at the highest level. These Soldiers will continue to support the New York Army National Guard and their Nation by providing the only musical support in the State.

***Top -** Lake George, NY Concert, featuring the Concert Band*

***Top Left** -Staff Sgt. Drew Gansz playing the electric guitar in Corinth NY*

***Bottom Left** - Staff Sgt. Mallorie Meyer who served as the vocalist in Corinth, NY*

***Sixth Photo**-The Brass Band posing for a photo during an evaluation performance at Camp Smith, NY.*



Guard honors WWII Soldier Posthumously

Story by Staff Eric Durr, Guard Times staff

LATHAM, N.Y.— Major General Ray Shields, the adjutant general of New York, honored a World War II Soldier who died in combat--80 years to the day after he was killed--during a ceremony at New York National Guard headquarters on Sept. 16, 2024.

Shields presented the New York State Conspicuous Service Cross to the niece and grand-niece of Pvt. John Greschiak, a resident of Watervliet, New York, who was killed in action on Sept. 16, 1944, during a rescue mission conducted outside Niedersgegan, Germany.

The medal recognizes distinguished federal military service by a New Yorker. Because Greschiak, who joined the Army in 1943, was awarded the Purple Heart posthumously, his family was entitled to request and receive the New York medal on his behalf.

"Serving our nation in a combat zone is not a common occurrence today," Shields said." And even in World War II, at the height of the largest war ever fought, it was not where the average Soldier would find themselves."

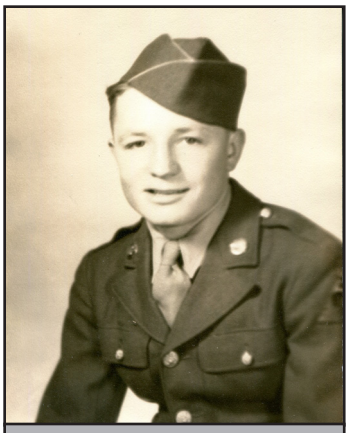
"Being at the "tip of the spear" in ground combat, is the very essence of serving one's nation and fighting for the welfare of their fellow Soldiers," he said.

"That's what Private Greschiak was doing when he was killed by enemy fire," Shields added.

Donna Cramer, Greschiak's niece and an Albany, New York resident, thanked Shields for holding the ceremony to honor the uncle she never met.

Her uncle, who was 19 when he was killed, was the youngest of four children and her mother and her aunts never spoke about him, Cramer said.

The headquarters ceremony



Army Pvt. John Greschiak, a member of the 5th Armored Division, who was killed in action on Sept. 16, 1944, was honored by the New York National Guard with the posthumous award of the New York State Conspicuous Service Cross during a Sept. 16, 2024, ceremony at New York National Guard headquarters in Latham, New York. Courtesy photo.

took place thanks to the efforts of Peter Clouse and his son Zachary, both Coeymans' New York residents.

In 2019, the two started out tracking down the details of the military career of Peter Clouse's uncle James Scalzo— "Uncle Jimmy" --who was also involved in the fight in Niedersgegen.

He and Zach learned more about the action in which his uncle received the Bronze Star for valor; they also learned about Pvt. John Greschiak, Clouse said. The more they learned, the more they wanted to know, he said.

Eventually, he said, that led him to Donna Cramer's driveway and a conversation that led them to the ceremony with Shields, after he helped the family apply for the Conspicuous Service Cross.

The Clouses went through records held by the National Archives, documents at the U.S. Army Engineer Museum and Archive at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, and records held by the Michigan Army National Guard's 107th Engineer Battalion, Peter Clouse said.

Finally, they were able to put the story together.

On Sept. 16, 1944, Tech Sgt. James Scalzo was assigned to the 245th Engineer Combat Battalion, a corps-level unit assigned to the 5th Armored Division.

Scalzo's battalion launched a two-jeep, eight-man reconnaissance team west to see what was in front of the division.

At Niedersgegen, they ran into 50 German soldiers at a farm who ambushed the patrol. The two officers and two enlisted men were wounded and captured., and one jeep was destroyed.

Scalzo and the other three Soldiers escaped.

They reported the fight and the division sent a platoon to rescue the captured men.

A platoon of one tank and two half-track with 17 men was dispatched.Greschiak was one of those Soldiers.

Under covering fire from the tank, the wounded Americans were rescued. In the fighting, Greschiak was killed.

When he and Zachary realized that Greschiak had lived nearby, they decided to find his family.

Eventually they found a name of a daughter of one of the sisters, Donna Cramer, Clouse said.

The phone number he tried was no good, but he had an address and decided to go there, Clouse recalled.

He went to the house, and rang the bell. As he was getting back in his car, Cramer drove up. He got out and the conversation started, he said.

Thanks to the Clouses she and the rest of her family learned more about this relative who died so young, said Cheri Gagliardi, Greschiak's great-nice and a Rotterdam resident.

"It's good to know that he was saving people and he did not die in vain," she said. gt



Major General Ray Shields, the adjutant general of New York, displays a photograph of Pvt. John Greschiak, a World War II Soldier who was killed in action on Sept. 16, 1944, during a ceremony at the New York National Guard headquarters in Latham. New York, on Sept. 16, 2024. Photo by Stephanie Butler,Guard Times staff.



174th Airmen Attend Historical Marker Ceremony

ITALY, N.Y. —U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Nathan Erickson, the 174th Attack Wing chief of safety, Maj. Matthew Abraham, the 174th Attack Wing director of staff, and 1st Lt. Mason Farnham, a logistics officer assigned to the 174th Logistics Readiness Squadron, pose for a photo in front of a newly placed historical marker in Italy, N.Y., on Aug. 14. The marker commemorates six U.S. Army Air Forces Soldiers that perished during a B-25 bomber crash in 1943. Photo by Tech Sgt. Alexander Rector.



MIG Killer F-15C, Retired and Donated to Empire Aerospace Museum in Schenectady

SCHENECTADY, N.Y. —A MIG Killer, F-15C from the Massachusetts Ari Guard's 104th Fighter Wing arriving at Stratton Air National Guard Base to be demilitarized and retired on August 12, 2024 after donated to Empire State Aerospace Museum.

Civil Support Teams Learn from Brazilian Counterparts

Story and photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jonathan Pietrantoni, 138th Public Affairs Detachment

RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL— Thirty-five New York National Guard Soldiers and Airmen spent a week in Rio De Janeiro learning how to help secure a major soccer tournament from a chemical, biological, or radiological attack from Brazilian Soldiers.

The members of the New York National Guard's 2nd and 24th Civil Support Teams, who specialize in identifying, chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear weapons, spent July 8-12 practicing their craft at Rio's Maracanã Stadium.

The New Yorkers worked with members of the Brazilian Army's 1º Batalhão de Defesa Química, Biológica, Radiológica e Nuclear, which translates into English as the 1st Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Defense Battalion.

These Soldiers provided support for security missions when Brazil hosted soccer's World Cup in 2014 and the Summer Olympic in 2016.

The exercise simulated a chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear attack – known as CBRN--during a soccer match at the stadium, which is home to the Brazilian soccer club Flamengo F.C.

This training is relevant because the final matches of the 2026 Soccer World Cup tournament will be held at the New York New Jersey Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey and the two Civil Support Teams, called CSTs for short, expect to provide support, explained Lt. Col. John Giroux, the commander of the 2nd CST.

"As we look forward to hosting in the U.S. especially in New York for the World Cup finals in 2026, we will take the lessons, skills and partnership we learned here to ensure our spectators have the safest World Cup possible," Giroux said.

The Brazilians, he said, "have extensive experience in world-level events such as the World Cup, and Olympics."

The 2nd CST is based at Stratton Air National Guard Base outside Schenectady, New York, while the 24th CST is based at Fort Hamilton in New York City.

> "As we look forwart to hosting in the U.S. especially in New York for the World Cup finals in 2026, we will take the lessons, skills and partnership we learned here to ensure our spectators have the safest World Cup possible."
>
> *-- Lt.Col.John Girox, Commander 2nd CST*

Brazilian Army Lt. Col. Luiz Bifano, the commander of the 1st Battalion, said his Soldiers enjoyed training with the New York National Guard Soldiers.

"The training was a great insight on how to work as a team in small unit with high skills and a high level of equipment and preparation," Bifano said.



2nd Lt. Jonathan Morrison, assigned to the 24th Civil Support Team, New York National Guard, puts a simulated casualty on a litre with Brazilian Army soldiers assigned to the 1st Battalion, Defense Quimica Biological Radiological Nuclear, during Operation Maracanã in Rio de Janeiro, on July 12, 2024. Operation Maracana is a simulated-CBRN training exercise between the NYNG and Brazilian Armed Forces at the Maracanã stadium in preparation for the World Cup in 2026.

During the week both units worked together in CBRN related tasks, including surveillance, reconnaissance, sampling, and decontamination. The training led up to a simulated attack at the stadium.

Americans and Brazilians taught classes on CBRN skills, equipment and demonstrated how they do their jobs.

Staff Sgt. Raven O'Neil, a member of the 24th CST, helped demonstrate the hasty decontamination for small numberes of people.

"The Brazilian soldiers are accustomed to running over 200 people



U.S. Army Capt. Salvatore Scannapeico, assigned to the 2nd Civil Support Team, New York National Guard, discusses techniques sampling methods on identifying unknown powder substances during Operation Maracanã in Rio de Janeiro, on July 9, 2024.



U.S. Army Capt. Benjamin Eachon, assigned to the 2nd Civil Support Team, New York National Guard, attends to a simulated casualty on a litre during Operation Maracanã in Rio de Janeiro, on July 9, 2024.

through their decon line, so they were eager to learn something new and different which made it exciting for us to teach," O'Neil said.

Training prior to the event helped to build a familiarization with each unit's equipment and capabilities, both Brazilians and Americans said.

Capt. Salvatore Scannapico, the science and medical officer assigned to the 2nd CST, demonstrated different sampling techniques.



New York National Guard and Brazilian Armed Forces service members train together in different Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear techniques during Operation Maracanã in Rio de Janeiro, on July 12, 2024.

"We really were able to share different tactics and procedure ways to acquire a sample and break down how similar and different the equipment we use in the field," Scannapico said.

"We're genuinely building a stronger partnership through learning and those bonds are only going to better help us work with each other in the future," gt

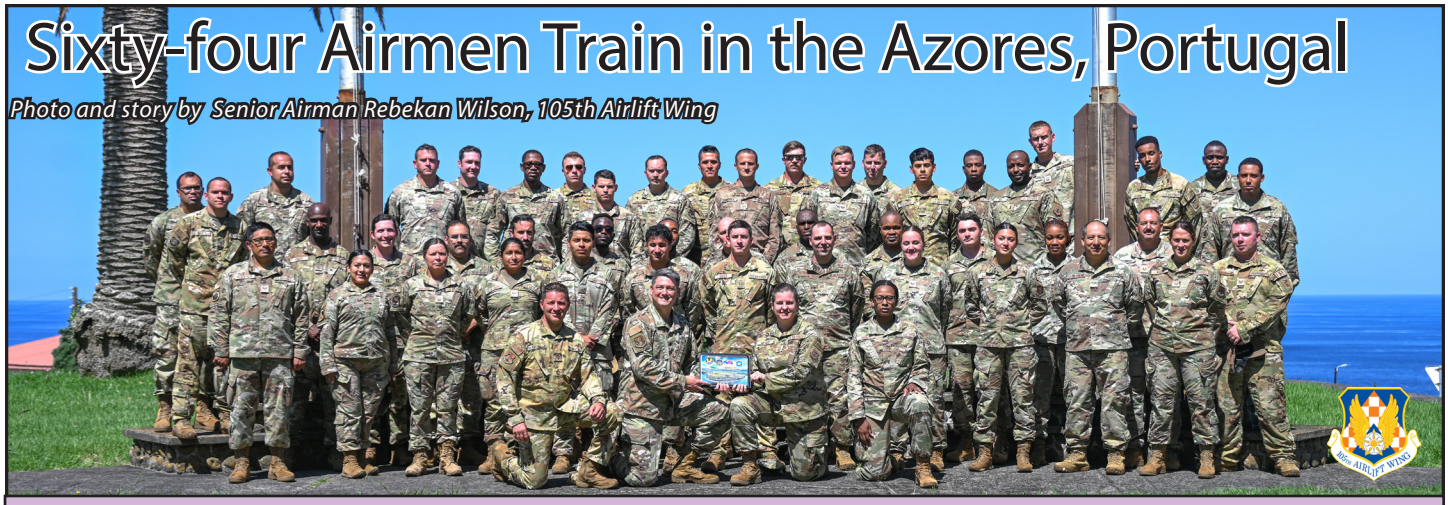
Hellfighters Visit the Met



NEW YORK— Army National Guard Soldiers with the 369th Sustainment Brigade received a tour of The Harlem Renaissance and Transatlantic Modernism exhibition at The Met Fifth Avenue, Gallery 999, New York, N.Y. on July 23, 2024. Dr. Denise Murrell, PhD, Merryl H. & James S. Tisch curator at large with The Metropolitan Museum of Art, organized the exhibition and hosted the Soldiers on the tour. The Metropolitan Museum of Art is sometimes simply referred to as The Met. Photo by Staff Sgt. Sebastian Rothwyn, 369th Sustainment Brigade.

Sixty-four Airmen Train in the Azores, Portugal

Photo and story by Senior Airman Rebekan Wilson, 105th Airlift Wing



Guardsmen with the 105th Airlift Wing's Civil Engineer Squadron pose for a photo at Lajes Field, Terceira Island, Azores, Portugal, on Aug. 8, 2024. The 105th CES traveled to the Azores in a deployment for training, equipping Airmen with hands-on skills in unique environments.

LAJES FIELD AIR BASE, Portugal — Sixty-four New York Air National Guardsmen from the 105th Airlift Wing traveled to the Azores—a cluster of Atlantic islands that belong to Portugal—to train with their Portuguese counterparts from July 28 to Aug. 10.

The deployment for training included Airmen from the 105th Civil Engineer Squadron and Fire Department, 105th Force Support Squadron and 213th Engineering Installation Squadron. Each section got the opportunity to do hands-on training with each other and Portuguese airmen.

During the deployment, the civil engineers honed their skills in structure maintenance, base support and chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear defense, according to Lt. Col. Benjamin Thomas, the engineer squadron commander.

"Trips like these allow us to bring all of our capabilities and skills to an unfamiliar location and prepare us for future operations, no matter where they take us, Thomas said."

One unique training opportunity Lajes offered was operating an aircraft arresting system. This device prevents fighter aircraft from crashing if they land with faulty landing gear. It's only found at fighter bases.

"The 105th does not have fighter aircraft but every Air Force firefighter and power production technician is expected to be able to operate these devices," Thomas said. "It was a very great experience for our team."

Airmen with the 105th Fire Department conducted search and rescue training, vehicle extrications and live burn simulations.

They trained with the Azorean fire department at Lajes and participated in real world operations, said Senior Master Sgt. Antonio Latona, the superintendent for fire and emergency services for the 105th Airlift Wing.

"One of the many benefits of doing a joint training is the experience we gain by integrating with teams from different countries who have different needs and expectations than us," Latona explained.

Meanwhile, the 213th conducted a survey of communication towers at Lajes Air Field.

Using their findings, they prepared a project package for follow-on teams to install air-to-ground radio antennas, a task that will enhance the base's communication capabilities, according to Senior Master Sgt. James Heimbuecher, the cyberspace systems integrator for the 105th.

"Specifically, we're determining what parts they need, what tools they need to bring and the steps for the Airmen to actually come and put the antennas in place and connect them into the radio system," Heimbuecher said.

"By training in different locations, we learn to develop solutions in the moment for things that we didn't prepare for, providing us with knowledge we can bring back to our unit," he said.

The 105th Force Support Squadron team provided additional support to base operations at Lajes. Their responsibilities included assisting in the post office, maintaining the base gym and helping in the dining facility.

This experience allowed them to develop skills outside their usual scope, "This experience allowed us to see how other squadrons run and experience first-hand the impact we have on other units and the mission, " said Staff Sgt. Christina Navarro, a personnel specialist with the squadron.

Eleven civil engineers also visited Moron, Spain, to complete fencing and airfield erosion remediation.

Lt. Col. Robert Forrester, the officer in charge of the group, said he was impressed by his team's readiness and enthusiasm when approached with this new project,

The group installed more than 700 linear feet of residential vinyl fencing installations, including 12 doors, 126 panels and 138 posts. They also leveled and shaped the ground, then installed 1,000 linear yards of fabric reinforcements, 2,000 linear yards of sediment control materials and more than 600 stakes to hold everything together.

"The skills training was great but the mission training was even more important," Forrester said. "These joint trainings not only provided unique skill development but also reinforced teamwork and international collaboration in military operations, Thomas explained.

"One of the best benefits of this trip has been being able to bring skills and collaboration together from parts of the 105th like the 213th Engineering Installation Squadron and 105th Force Support Squadron," Thomas said. gt

NY Air National Guard Unit Supports Navy SEALs

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

WATERTOWN, N.Y. — For three weeks this July, the New York Air National Guard's 174th Attack Wing hosted more than 40 East Coast-based Naval Special Warfare Operators (SEALs) and combat support personnel for a joint training exercise dubbed Oxblood East.

During the exercise the SEALs focused on honing their joint terminal attack controller (JTAC) skills by conducting fire support and close-air-support training scenarios.

The training reinforced skills taught at the Special Operations Terminal Attack Controller Course at Yuma Proving Ground, Ariz. That course equips special operation troops with the tactics, techniques, and procedures required to request, control, and adjust surface-to-surface fires; to provide targeting information in support of close air support; and to perform terminal guidance operations.

The Adirondack Range, where the training was held, is located at Fort Drum, NY and is staffed by 15 Airmen from the New York Air National Guard's 174th Attack Wing. "They like our training, and they like our range, said Lt. Col. Ryan Hubbard, the commander of Detachment 1, 174th Operations Group. "We're one of the only ranges on the East Coast that can accept high explosive munitions and we've gotten a lot of good feedback."

As the U.S. Navy's premier maritime special operations force, U.S. Navy SEALs are highly trained in a multi-faceted skill set of warfighting functions, one of which is coordinating joint fires. To maintain skill proficiency and deployment readiness, SEALs must train routinely to enhance their lethality.

"The training here provided my team an opportunity to refine our warfighting tactics and remain ready to conduct operations when called upon," said the Ground Force Commander on site. "Joint training between the Air National Guard and Naval Special Warfare enhances real-world operations by ensuring seamless coordination and effective support in combat scenarios, expanding the Navy's capabilities in high-end conflicts."



An East Coast-based Naval Special Warfare Operator (SEAL) calls in an airstrike to a 174th Attack Wing MQ-9 Reaper during a Joint Terminal Attack Controller recertification training exercise at Fort Drum, NY, on July 24, 2024. This photo has been altered for security purposes by blurring out service members faces.



A group of East Coast-based Naval Special Warfare Operators (SEALs) conduct Joint Terminal Attack Controller training at Fort Drum, NY, on July 24, 2024.

With participating aircraft sourced from the United States Army, Air Force and Marines, the exercise was a true joint training event.

Due to its size and remote location, the Adirondack Range allows for a variety of training scenarios and is routinely used by numerous Department of Defense entities and airframes.

"The Adirondack Range is a gem and enables incredible joint training opportunities for the 174th Attack Wing and our joint service partners," said Col. John O'Connor, the 174th Attack Wing commander. "We were proud to host the Navy SEALs and support this unique training event."

During the three-week training event, more than 135 training sorties were conducted by a range of fixed and rotary-wing aircraft which allowed the SEALs to recertify their special operations terminal attack controller skills and remain deployment-ready. gt

Hochul Praises National Guard for Subway Security

Story by Eric Durr, Guard Times staff

NEW YORK — New York Governor Kathy Hochul thanked New York National Guard Soldiers and Airmen for helping to decrease crime in the New York City subway system, during a Sept. 12 event at which she highlighted the contributions of New York's military forces.

Speaking at the Harlem Armory, Hochul said that crime in the subway has dropped 26 percent, since March, when she directed the New York National Guard to assist the New York Police Department and the Metropolitan Transit Authority Police in increasing subway security.

Joint Task Force Empire Shield, the National Guard security force in New York City, conducts 120 missions each day to assist the police in keeping the system, safe, Hochul said.

At one point, the number of crimes in the subway averaged 50 each week. Last week, that number was 29, she said.

Seeing National Guard Soldiers and Airmen in the subway system has made New Yorkers feel safer, Hochul said.

"I can't tell you the number of people who have approached me on the street, and in diners, and in phone calls, who have said, 'Thank you for putting the National Guard in the subways," the governor said.

In March, following a rise in subway crime, Hochul announced a five-point plan to address safety in the subway system, which 3.2 million city residents use daily.

She announced that police officers, backed by National Guard troops, would be checking the bags of anybody entering the subway system to prevent weapons from being carried onto the trains.

The visibility of the increased police and National Guard presence has also helped deter criminals, Hochul said.

In August, New York City had the lowest number of murders and shootings in the last four decades, Hochul said.

Hochul also praised the New York Defense Forces, which also includes the New York Naval Militia and the New York Guard, a state volunteer force, for always being ready to respond when needed.



New York Governor Kathy Hochul and Major General Michel Natali, assistant adjutant general, Army for the New York National Guard, center, pose with members of the New York National Guard and New York Naval Militia who she recognized at a Sept. 12, 2024 event at the Harlem Armory in New York City. Hochul praised the members of New York's military forces for the role they have played in lowering crime in the subway and serving the people of New York. Courtesy photo from the New York Governor's Office.



New York Governor Kathy Hochul speaks to members of the New York National Guard and the press, during a Sept. 12, 2024 ceremony held at the Harlem Armory in New York City, recognizing members of the New York National Guard and the New york Naval Militia for their role in serving the citizens of the New York. Hochul presented awards to four service members and also praised the National Guard for helping to lower crime in the New York City subway system. Courtesy photo from the New York Governor's Office.

When the state faces an emergency, she calls on the state's defense forces, because she knows they will get the job done. Hochul told the Guard men and women in the audience.

"When I say the National Guard is going to be there, even before the disaster hits, I sleep better at night," she said. "Please know how grateful I am for that."

Hochul, also noted that the New York Army National Guard had been rated the best in the nation for recruiting and retention for 2023 and was also rated number one for strength health as well.

Hochul honored four military personnel and two New York National Guard units during the Harlem Armory event.

New York Army National Guard Staff Sgt Joel Strickland and Sgt. Desany Jacques were honored for their actions on May 20, 2024, when they used their training and medical aid kits to help save the life of a subway rider who was stabbed.

She also recognized two members of the New York Naval Militia who were on state active duty at hotels housing migrants who had been flowing into the city, when they saved the lives of two children.

Marine Corps. reservist Brian Salcedo was on duty at the Superlake Hotel on June 28, 2024, when a mother began screaming that her child was not breathing. Salcedo applied the Heimlich maneuver, and the child coughed up a dime and started breathing again.

Marine Corps. reservist Patricio Rubilar was assigned to the Bellerose Inn on June 12, 2024, when he was notified by a migrant parent that his six-year-old was choking. Rubilar responded immediately, applied the Heimlech maneuver, and saved the child.

Finally, she recognized the men and women of the New York Air National Guard's 106th Rescue Wing for their service in responding to weather emergencies on Long Island and their role in search and rescue operations in both peacetime and wartime. gt

Air National Guard Sergeant Sings at Yankee Stadium

Story by Eric Durr, Guard Times staff

BRONX, N.Y.— On Saturday, August 10, New York Air National Guard Senior Master Sgt. Mayra Winnie belted out "God Bless America" in front of 41,996 people.

Winnie, the personal and development superintendent for the New York Air National Guard's headquarters detachment, performed as part of the New York Yankees Military Appreciation Day game.

According to the team's website, 41,996 was the headcount for the stadium that day.

Getting to sing in Yankee Stadium before thousands of people was "like a dream," Winnie said.

"I'm from Amsterdam (New York), we don't normally get to do things like that," she said.

Winnie's performance of Irving Berlin's classic song, made famous in World War II by singer Kate Smith, came during the Seventh Inning Stretch during a game between the Yankees and the Texas Rangers.

Her husband, Air Guard Senior Master Sgt. Matthew Winnie, and her daughters Riley, Reagan, and Mia, got the chance to be there too.

Winnie's trip to Yankee Stadium started when she and other Air Guard headquarters personnel were brainstorming ways to get more attention to the New York Air National Guard.

Lt. Col. Kristen Gibson, the New York Air Guard recruiting officer, said she started looking for the opportunity to do something with the Yankees, when Major Gen. Denise Donnell, then the New York Air Guard commander, introduced her to Capt. Steve Palladino from the 105th Airlift Wing.

Palladino introduced her to people in Yankees marketing.

Yankees marketing asked Palladino if the New York Air Guard could find an Airman to sing "God Bless America", Gibson said.

Winnie, who said she loves the song, volunteered to sing that song.

Winnie, who was named the Air Force Support Senior Noncommissioned Officer for the year for the entire Air National Guard this spring, joined the Air Guard in 2005.

She initially served as an intelligence specialist, before going on to hold a variety of administrative positions in the 109th Airlift Wing. The wing, based outside Schenectady, flies the ski-equipped version of the C-130 and routinely conducts missions in Antarctica and Greenland.

She's been honored for performance several times, to include being the 109th Airlift Wing Senior Noncommissioned Officer of the Year.

She started honing her singing skills while being part of the 109th Airlift Wing's worship team, Winnie said. When she deployed to Qatar, she sang during church services there as well, she said.

At home in Schenectady, Winnie now serves as the video director for Bethel Full Gospel Church in nearby Rotterdam. She sings occasionally and directs five cameras and three camera operators who livestream services, Winnie explained.

While she is a confident singer, Winnie said she still took two voice lessons to prepare for her Yankee Stadium gig, Winnie said. She wanted to make sure she got it right, she explained.

The biggest challenge in singing at a massive stadium is the delayed effect in the sound system Winnie said.

That challenge is evident to anyone who has seen the classic scene in "Pride of the Yankees where Garry Cooper, playing Lou Gherig, declares himself "the luckiest man on the face of the Earth" as the words echo from the stadium speakers.

Fortunately, she got a chance to practice before her big moment, so she knew what to expect, Winnie said.

They also gave her earphones to wear, which helped drown out the extra sound. That made it easier, she said.

Getting a New York Air National Guard Airman up on the Jumbotron in Yankee Stadium, is great exposure, Gibson said. Not only was Winnie's performance seen in the stadium, but it was also broadcast nationally, she added.

"I saw it in Florida," Gibson said.

"We cannot really put a price tag on it, or what the media advertising return on it is," Gibson said, about Winnie's performance.

"But just anecdotally, just being able to reach a wider audience of a winning organization like the Yankees, has got to be good exposure," Gibson said. gt



New York Air National Guard Senior Master Sgt. Myra Winnie belts out "God Bless America" during the seventh inning stretch of a New York Yankees game on August 10, 2024 at Yankee Stadium in the Bronx. Winnie's performance was part of a New York Air National Guard effort to get more public exposure as part of a recruiting effort. (New York Yankees courtesy photo.)

Sgt. Peter Fillion is Army National Guard Best Warrior

Story by Eric Durr, Guard Times staff



Army National Guard Sgt. Peter Fillion, an Amherst, New York resident who won the Army National Guard's Best Warrior Competition, poses for a photo during the 2024 competition at the Army Mountain Warfare School, Jericho, Vermont, on Aug. 5, 2024. Photo by Sgt. Lianne M. Hirano, 117th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment.

JERICHO, Vt.— New York Army National Guard Sgt. Peter Fillion, an Amherst resident, part-time architect, and graduate student, is now one of two Best Warriors in the 325,000- Soldier Army National Guard.

Fillion, an infantryman in the 2nd Squadron, 101st Cavalry Regiment who was a specialist when he first competed, beat six competitors from across the country in the junior enlisted Soldier category.

Each of these Soldiers had previously won their unit, state, and regional Best Warrior events, before competing for the national award at Ethan Allen Firing Range in Jericho, Vermont from August 4 to 8.

Noncommissioned officers compete against other sergeants in their category.

Fillion will now compete alongside other Best Warrior finishers in the Army's Best Squad Competition from Sept. 29 to October 10.

It's the first time a New York Soldier has taken home this honor, according to Command Sgt. Major Edwin Garris, the New York Army National Guard's top enlisted leader.

Being best in the entire Army Guard "is kind of surreal," Fillion said.

"It's an interesting feeling because you've had a major accomplishment in one area, but in your civilian life you just go back to who you were before," he said. "They're happy for you, but they don't really understand what it took to get there."

What it took "to get there", Fillion said, was a lot of exercise and brainwork.

"These competitions are really good at testing you both physically and mentally," Fillion said.

His strong Christian Faith was helpful in sustaining him through those tough parts, he said.

Best Warrior competitions include marksmanship, a physical fitness test, land navigation, military skills, boards where Soldiers are quizzed on their military knowledge, and several long distance "ruck march" events to test endurance.

"Ruck marching is the most difficult because you are carrying weight and walking for a long time and everything kind of hurts but you just keep going," he recalled.

Fillion's edge in the competition came in the areas involving military knowledge, Garris said.

"That's where he shines," Garris said.

At that level of competition everybody is physically fit, or they wouldn't have gotten that far, he explained.

"But the separation, is the mental aspect of it," Garris said. "You may be able to move, shoot and communicate, but can you think on your feet?"

Fillion agreed.

"A lot of units send their top dog physically, but they often overlook how many points can be earned on intellectual tasks," he said. "There are many times I wasn't the strongest person, but I was the one that knew the most about unified land operations."

His best event in the field was land navigation, Fillion said. The event started at 4:30 a.m. and he navigated through the darkness to find all the points he needed and return first, he said.



Army National Guard Sgt. Peter Fillion, the winner of the Army National Guard's 2024 Best Warrior competition, rucks down steep terrain in the 12 mile final event during the 2024 Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition at the Army Mountain Warfare School, Jericho, Vermont, on Aug. 8, 2024. Photo by Sgt. Lianne M. Hirano, 117th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment.



U.S. Army Command Sgt. Maj. John T. Raines, left, the command sergeant major of the Army National Guard, shakes hands with New York Army National Guard Sgt. Peter Fillion, an infantryman who won the 2024 Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition, held in Jericho, Vermont, on Aug. 8, 2024. Photo by Sgt. Lianne M. Hirano, 117th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment.

Getting ready for the Best Warrior was a balancing act, Fillion said.

He was working his job at Kideney Architects in Buffalo, and taking a full course load at the University of Buffalo while preparing for the competition.

His wife Samantha, an intensive care unit nurse in Buffalo, helped him immensely by acting as his study partner, Fillion said.

He had to identify his priorities and stick to them but be flexible, he said.

"Sometimes you should be studying but sometimes your family is more important, so you have to put that to the wayside," he said.

His unit also helped him get ready by putting him on orders in the weeks prior to the national competition so he could focus on preparing, Fillion said.

"I made sure to spend a lot of time working on my physical ability, making sure my legs were super strong," Fillion said. "That was my main focus, working out, because I had done a lot of the intellectual stuff."

The other big challenge during the competition was the lack of sleep, Fillion said.

"Although the activities may not go into the late evening you are up late preparing for the event that is tomorrow. So, whether it be studying for a board or packing a ruck for the ruck march the next day you are always up a little bit later than you want to be," he said.

While he and the six Soldiers he was competing against, started out wary of each other, but by the end they were great friends, he said.



Army National Guard Sgt. Peter Fillion, who won the 2024 Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition, finishes the final ruck of the National Best Warrior Competition, on August 8, 2024, near Jericho, Vermont. Photo by Sgt. Everett Babbitt, 118th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment.

As he moves onto the Best Squad event—competing with Soldiers he was competing against—he's going to be working to improve his endurance and shooting skills, Fillion said.

He's also thinking about where he'll go with the Army National Guard.

He's half-way through his initial six-year enlistment and looking at the different paths he could take in the Guard.

"I have enjoyed my time in the Guard so I am not in a hurry to do get out. I've been giving it 110 percent and I will keep on giving it 110 percent, "he said.



U.S. Army National Guard Soldiers pose for a photo at the completion of the biathlon event during the 2024 Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition at the Army Mountain Warfare School, Jericho, Vermont, on Aug. 6, 2024. Photo by Sgt. Lianne M. Hirano, 117th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment.

204th Engineer's Test Skills During "Rodeo"

Story and photos by Stephanie Butler, Guard Times staff

WALTON, N.Y. — Thirty-four New York Army National Guard engineers from across the state spent August 10 testing their engineering equipment skills, during the 204th Engineer Battalion's Fourth Annual Engineer Rodeo.

Soldiers from the battalion's three companies and the headquarters company tested their ability to load gravel into a dump truck, pilot a skid steer, load a grader onto a trailer, and back up a truck/trailer combination.

The two-Soldier teams even got a chance to scoop up and dunk a ball using the High Mobility Engineer Excavator, a high-speed, four-wheel drive, armored tractor with a front end loader and a backhoe.

The rodeo is both fun and good training, said Spec. Joseph Warner, a member of the 1156th Engineer Company.

"I have participated the last three years, it is good to see everyone in the different units, it is great to learn from those who are good on the equipment," Warner said. "I like seeing them get better each year, learning with exercises like this."

The rodeo also offers a chance to get members of the far-flung battalion together in one place, said Major Kevin O'Reilly, the battalion executive officer.



Pfc. Keith Alvarado (operating the 10 ton dump truck) and Spec. Joseph Warner (operating the excavator), both assigned to 1156th Engineer Company, worked together to load and dump the truck to practice operating skills. This station was part of the 204th Engineer Battalion, 4th annual, engineering rodeo in Walton, NY, on August 10, 2024.

"This event is an opportunity to bring Soldiers together from different units, backgrounds, and cultures, and have them build a mutual respect for Soldiers from other companies, while also trying to prove their company is the best," O'Reilly added.

The events selected focus on core skills and equipment that all the units possess which keeps a level playing field, O'Reilly said.

The rodeo's challenges focus on real world skills, and real world obstacles engineers must deal with, according to Capt. Christopher Monteferante, the commander of the 827th.

"Part of it is practicing the technical skills of using the equipment, but it is also reinforcing the need to plan, prepare, rehearse, before the event," Monteferante said.

"It gives them an opportunity to adapt and make decisions in a safe environment," explained Monteferante.

Pfc. Keith Alvarado, a member of the 1156th Engineer Company, based in Camp Smith near Peekskill, said he valued the chance to learn how to operate the HMEE tractor.

"I had never been inside the HMEE, I had to learn the new machine," Alvarado said." It was great to get some stick time, after only a little while the muscle memory comes back."

Event judges evaluated each event based on the Soldiers ability to follow instructions, take safety precautions, ask permission to proceed at appropriate times, and the time it took to complete each task.

"We hope this is an opportunity for Soldiers to practice the skills they need to be successful in the future," Monteferante said.

This year, the 827th won.

This was "inspiring" he said, because on August 9, the company was provided 15 Soldiers to respond to flooding in Stueben County.

"Within an hour of the call we had Soldiers on the road," he said. "Then the very next day the 827th won the engineering rodeo." gt



Pfc. Anthony Ricottilli, assigned to 1156th Engineering Company, unchained grader from the M870 trailer as a part of a training exercise. This station was part of a five- station engineering rodeo hosted by the 204th Engineering Battalion in Walton, NY, on August 10, 2024.

Guard Engineers Build Wilderness Road in Alaska

Story by Eric Durr, Guard Times staff



Army National Guard Spec. Logan Storrings and Spec. Thomas Butera, members of the 204th Engineer Battalion's Quarry Platoon guide two excavators grubbing out a roadway in rugged terrain near Cordova Alaska in June, 2024. The platoon was participating in Innovative Readiness Training by working to help build a road between the Cordova airport and a deep water spill control terminal on Prince William Sound. Photo by 1st Lt. Madison Chase, 204th Engineer Batallion.

CORDOVA, Alaska --Twenty-one Soldiers from the New York Army National Guard's 204th Engineer Battalion spent two weeks in June building a road in Alaska, as part of an Innovative Readiness Training mission.

From June 10 to June 26, the members of the battalion's Quarry Platoon, who are based in Binghamton, New York, helped build a kilometer of road that will eventually stretch eight kilometers, or 5 miles, near the Cordova, Alaska. The road, including three bridges, will link a unique oil spill response base being built on Prince William Sound to the airport in Cordova.

Construction on the Shepard Point Tribal Transportation Oil Spill Response and Marine Casualty Facility began in 2023.

Prince William Sound was the location of the 1989 Exon Valdez disaster, during which 11 million gallons of oil-contaminated over 1,300 square miles of coastline. The Shephard Point spill response center, which includes a deep-water dock, is the last of three centers being built to deal with any future marine disaster.

However, the port needs to be linked to the airport. Army engineer units from across the country, including New York, are building the road.

The Department of Defense Innovative Readiness Training program matches military units with civilian communities where they can help residents and hone their military skills simultaneously.

These range from medical units working at local clinics to, in this case, engineer units building a road.

Steep mountainous terrain along the Prince William Sound separates the City of Cordova from the Sheppard Point site, making watercraft the only means of transportation between the two locations, according to 1st Lt. Madison Chase, the Quarry Platoon's leader.

The quarry platoon's mission is usually just what the names says, according to Chase, the platoon leader. They blast and crush rock for use in road building.

Those skills were all used during the mission, Chase said.

Quarry Soldiers assisted in performing rock crushing with an on-site mobile rock crushing unit. Quarry Soldiers also assisted civilian demolitions experts with the emplacement of explosives used to transform steep mountainsides into leveled areas, he said.

This provided a great training opportunity, he added. This gave his Soldiers a better understanding of how their demolition skills can be applied to road building projects, Chase explained.

They also got a chance to work as horizontal engineers alongside civilian crews, he said.

The quarry platoon Soldiers constructed access roads which will be used by other engineering units later.

The New York Soldiers also moved several hundred cubic meters of mud emplacement a bridge abutment, Chase said.

The platoon's heavy equipment operators trained on dozers, dump trucks and other earth moving equipmentin tight quarters near steep drop-offs along the Alaskan coast, Chase said.

The road project overseen by the Alaska Army National Guard and is due to be finished in three years, Chase said.

"This was a great opportunity for junior Soldiers and experienced Sergeants alike to get hands-on experience operating equipment and overseeing construction in an austere environment," Chase said.gt

MP Takes Top Prize in 2024 TAG Match

Story by Spc. Jean Sanon.138th Public Affairs Detachment

CAMP SMITH, N.Y.— Staff Sgt. Eric Guest, a military police officer assigned to the Joint Force Headquarters, was the overall individual winner out of 46 total competitors at the 45th annual "TAG Match" competition, held at Camp Smith, Sept. 11-15, 2024.

Guest scored a total of 460 points, a combined score for both pistol and rifle shooting. He also received the Novice Individual Combat Rifle Match award, scoring 240 points. The Novice award goes to the first time competitor with the highest score.

The TAG Match, official known as the Adjutant General's Marksmanship Sustainment Training Competition is held annually to promote and provide marksmanship and small arms sustainment training.

Guest said he really enjoyed the five-day competition. "Overall, it was a great experience. You Couldn't ask for better weather," Guest said.

"I do see myself doing this again next year and I'm going to see if I can get some of my friends who haven't competed yet to give it a try," he said. "You can't beat getting paid to shoot other people's ammo."

Guest was also a member of the four-Soldier team which took home the Team Combat Match Award with a total of 1,310 points. Each team members individual scores were tallied for the overall team score.

Dubbed Team Black Sheep, the team included Staff Sgt. Kevin Heady, and Sgt. 1st Class Adam Scanlon, who are both also assigned to JFHQ; and Master Sgt. Wess Peek, assigned to 153rd Troop Command.

Sgt. 1st Class Jeffery Proctor, one of the state's marksmanship coordinators, said he wanted more Soldiers involved in the match.

"This will be my third year doing this", Proctor said. "I feel like we just need to continue to push this out to the state and get more people interested and participating in this event."

This sort of training helps New York Military Forces members hone their skills so they can train other members of their units more effectively, Proctor explained.

The annual competition is also open to members of the New York Naval Militia, and the New York Guard, the state's volunteer defense force.

Staff Sgt. William Liu, a member of the 24th Civil Support Team, said the competition was challenging.



Soldiers coming off the range after the Run Down event of The Adjutant General (TAG) Match on Camp Smith Training Site, N.Y., on Sept. 13, 2024. The purpose of TAG Match is to improve individual proficiency in combat marksmanship in a competitive environment. Photo by Spc. Zack Dickter, 138th Public Affairs Detachment

"The intensity is a surprise; it's definitely different from the regular army qualifying with their weapons system, the competitiveness, and camaraderie," Liu said. gt

42nd Soldiers Tune-Up Staff Functions During AT

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

FORT DRUM, N.Y.—Six hundred and sixty New York Army National Guard Soldiers are fine-tuning mission command functions during their Annual Training at Fort Drum, N.Y., from August 3 to 17.

Soldiers from the 42nd Infantry Division, the 42nd Infantry Division Artillery, the 27th Infantry Brigade, and the 369th Sustainment Brigade are participating in two command post exercises over the two weeks.

The command post exercises serve as a test environment to train and evaluate the Division's staff sections and subordinate brigades regarding their communications within participating headquarters, according to Col. Marshall Hunt, the 42nd Infantry Division's chief of staff.

The training and preparation for the event included setting up communication systems, three command posts, and mission command systems.

"The division staff is continuing to construct lessons learned from the last Warfighter and building on their ability to enable information and support the general officers," Hunt said.

During the exercise, forces and events are simulated in a notional environment as the commander and staff plan, coordinate, synchronize, and exercise command and control over operations during a mission.

During the command post exercise, known as a CPX, the division sets up three command elements: the main command post, the tactical command post, and the rear command post.

"Command post exercises are a critical step in training brigade and division staffs in preparation for warfighter exercises, "explained Lt. Col. Gary Clark, the long-range planning officer for the 42nd Infantry Division.

"More importantly, they train the staff to properly function in real-world missions,



Sgt. Maj. Matthew Stark, a senior division operations advisor with the 42nd Infantry Division, briefs the staff of the division and the 369th Sustainment Brigade as the division gears up to conduct staff exercises as part of the Soldiers' Annual Training. Photo by Staff Sgt. Sebastian Rothwyn, 369th Sustainment Brigade.

whether large-scale combat operations, contingency missions, or civil support operations," Clark emphasized.gt

369th Completes Expando Van Training

Story and photos by Sgt. Ryan Scribner, 369th Sustainment Brigade

FORT DRUM, N.Y. — Nine New York Army National Guard Soldiers with the 369th Sustainment Brigade, completed Expando Van training, on August 5, 2024, at a motor pool in the O'Brien Readiness Training Center here during the brigade's annual training.



U.S. Army Sgt. Samuel Santamaria, an ammo supply sergeant with the 369th Sustainment Brigade support operations section, material management, performs a U-turn during the driving test portion of the M1087A1.

M1087A1 Expandable Van training began during the brigade's inactive duty training weekend in May 2024 and culminated with a driving test.

The test was given to Soldiers who passed the preliminary written test, preventive maintenance checks and services (PMCS) evaluation, vehicle operation and ground guide practice, and were evaluated on their ability to safely, legally and skillfully operate the vehicle.

However, Spc. Isaac Adjei, an automated logistics specialist with the brigade's support operations (SPO), distribution integration branch, failed to pass the driving test on his first attempt.

"My first time through, I forgot to do something critical during the test," Adjei said. "I felt like I let my section down."

According to the Army, driver's training increases readiness by providing Soldiers with a wider range of skills to complete tasks.

Expando Van driving training enables Soldiers to effectively move a vehicle that can expand to become a mobile work center or even command center, which is crucial for maintaining communication and coordination in the field.

For a Soldier relatively new to his section, Adjei understands that his assignments—driver's training as one example—are preparations that will enable him to contribute to future missions.

Pfc. Katherine Londono, another automated supply specialist in the brigade's SPO, noted that her senior leadership emphasized the importance of vehicle training during the May-August training periods, explaining that the vehicle will be used in future convoy operations and requires trained operators to drive.



Sgt. Robert Huguenot, a human resources sergeant with the 369th Sustainment Brigade support operations section, alongside Pfc. Katherine Londono, a supply specialist in the same section, PMCS during the PMCS portion of the M1087A1.

"The passage of months between the start of this course and the culmination helped me understand better what my section does, and why this training matters," Londono said.

Completing training to standard is essential for the success of future missions, but it also introduces significant pressure on Soldiers. This pressure is common in military training, and ultimately, each service member, after receiving training, determines how to manage and respond to it.

This is why the Army deems proper instruction from competent instructors one of its most important tasks.

Pfc. Ketlyne Altidor, a third automated supply specialist with the SPO, said that she was nervous before she took the driving test, but Sgt. Erik Morales, a wheeled vehicle mechanic, and driving instructor with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 369th Special Troops Battalion, advised her clearly, confidently, and calmly, and she felt more confident as the miles went on.

Adjei was told by Morales, his instructor, the specific mistake he made and when he took the driving test again, he passed and is now authorized to drive the Expando Van.

This rigorous training—and retraining when needed—program ensured that the Soldiers not only met the Army's high standards but also prepared them for future convoy operations where their skills in operating the Expando Van will be crucial.

The combination of hands-on experience, guidance from seasoned instructors, and the dedication to mastering these vital tasks underscores the importance of such training in the brigade's mission readiness.

"After retaking and ultimately passing the driving test, I feel like I have more tools to contribute to the success of team!" Adjei said. **gt**

Ceremony to Honor Sgt. Kenneth Wrobel

FORT DRUM, N.Y.-- NY Army National Guard Soldiers with the 42nd Infantry Division render a salute at the memorial display during a ceremony to honor the life of U.S. Army Sgt. Kenneth Wrobel at Fort Drum, N.Y., on August 8, 2024. Wrobel served with the 42nd ID Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion maintenance section as a utilities equipment repairer sergeant for over nine years, including the 2020 deployment of the 42nd in support of Operation Spartan Shield. U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Sebastian Rothwyn, 369th Sustainment Brigade.



109th Finishes Greenland Science Support Season

Story by Jaclyn Lyons, 109th Airlift Wing



An LC-130 Hercules aircraft from the 109th Airlift Wing sits at Summit Station, Greenland, on 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.

STRATTON AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, N.Y.— The New York Air National Guard's 109th Airlift Wing, wrapped up its 2024 support for National Science Foundation research in Greenland at the end of August.

Throughout the season, which began in April, the 109th Airlift Wing's Airmen conducted essential airlift missions to support scientific research on the Greenland ice cap.

The 109th Airlift Wing flies the LC-130. These are the largest aircraft in the world equipped with skies so they can land on snow and ice. These are also the only ski-equipped aircraft flown by the United States military.

The unit's primary responsibilities included transporting personnel, equipment, and supplies to remote locations.

These included Summit Station- a research station near the apex of the Greenland ice sheet--and East Grip a science camp that drills and retrieves ice cores from the Northeast Greenland Ice Stream.

Supplies to rebuild Summit Station, which is manned year around for critical weather information and climate research, were carried to the station by 109th aircraft.

The wing's Airmen flew over 500 hours and transported 1.8 million pounds of cargo, 70,000 gallons of fuel and 1200 passengers in support of Arctic operations.

> "Each year, our aircrews and support staff demonstrate exceptional skill and resilience in these demanding conditions"
>
> *- Colonel Rob Donaldson, the commander of the 109th Airlift Wing*

Their efforts ensured the uninterrupted flow of supplies and personnel crucial to maintaining operations and conducting research in one of the world's most challenging environments.

"Each year, our aircrews and support staff demonstrate exceptional skill and resilience in these demanding conditions," said Colonel Rob Donaldson, the commander of the 109th Airlift Wing.

"The successful completion of this season underscores the dedication of our personnel in supporting the aims of the great power competition at large, and specifically, our mission in supporting U.S. interests in the Arctic," Donaldson said.

The end of the Greenland support season also signifies the beginning of preparations for the next operational cycle.

The 109th Airlift Wing will now shift focus to preparing for the annual Operation Deep Freeze support season, supplying United States scientific facilities in Antarctica.

The wing's support season for the Antarctic mission begins in October and will run to February of 2025.gt

106th Rescue Wing Celebrates Annual Family Day

Story by Senior Airman Sarah McKernan. 106th Rescue Wing



The 106th Rescue Wing celebrated Family Day at Francis S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base, N.Y., on Sept. 7, 2024. The wing holds Family Day each year to express its appreciation for the support families provide to their Airmen. Photo by Staff Sgt. Sean Madden, 106th Rescue Wing.

FRANCIS S. GABRESKI AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, N.Y. — Airmen, family and friends gathered at the 106th Rescue Wing for a day full of fun at the wing's annual Family Day, September 7, at F. S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base, N.Y.

The festivities kicked off on Saturday morning with spouse incentive flights, a tradition which has taken place on Family Day for the last ten years, said 106th Rescue Wing Airman and Family Readiness Program Manager Lisa D'Agostino, who has been an integral part of Family Day for the last 18 years.

The flights on the HC-130J Combat King II search and rescue aircraft provide 106th spouses with a glimpse into the daily operations of their military spouse and serves as a gesture of appreciation for the constant support they offer, D'Agostino explained.

Michael Stango, a new spouse of the 106th, recalled his experience taking part in the incentive flight.

"My experience with the 106th has been amazing so far and I was so fortunate to get on a spouse flight… because not too many people get to experience that," Stango said. "It was just incredible, and I am so happy to be a part of the 106th."

Immediately following the last flight, Family Day officially commenced with various games, food and booths with local vendors for families to enjoy.

"We couldn't do this without our local community," D'Agostino explained. "Sometimes local vendors don't know how to support the wing, so knowing that they can come out here on Family Day and be a part of it, this is their way of giving back to our service members and their families."

On the flightline, attendees had the chance to explore both an HC-130J and an HH-60W Jolly Green II search and rescue helicopter up close and learn more about the 106th's search and rescue mission.

Airman 1st Class Sherie Donaldson, a personnel specialist of the 106th Force Support Squadron and military spouse, enjoyed her first Family Day as a service member.

"Family Day was truly special for me," Donaldson said. "After six years as a military spouse, stepping into my role as an Airman and having my husband introduce me to everyone felt like a full-circle moment. It was heartwarming to see our daughter enjoying all the kids' activities, and the base did an amazing job of welcoming families. It reminded me of the strength and resilience that come from being part of this community, making all the sacrifices worth it."

Colonel Andrew Wineberger, Vice Commander of the 106th, highlighted the significance of Family Day.

"Family Day is a great opportunity for all of us to get together, not just military members, but their families, and it's our way of appreciating all their efforts," Wineberger said. "We know how hard they work behind the scenes making things happen for our military members to come out and support us, so this is our way of thanking them."

D'Agostino recalled what it means to her seeing all her team's efforts come together.

"This is a way of saying thank you to the families and service members for all they do, but when you see those families and the service members having fun, the comradery, enjoying everyone's company, seeing our service providers and local community come here and want to be a part of Family Day, it means the world," D'Agostino said.

STEM Camp Returns to 106th Rescue Wing

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



Students walk on the flight-line to begin their first day of STEM Camp 2024, hosted by the 106th Rescue Wing located at Francis S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base, N.Y., on August 1, 2024. STEM Camp 2024 is the second 106th Rescue Wing, Air and Space STEM Outreach program and expanded the student body from only Department of Defense dependents to include students from the local area.

FRANCIS S. GABRESKI AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, N.Y. — Thirty-eight students got hands-on experience with how the Air Force uses science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) during the camp program hosted by the New York Air National Guard, 106th Rescue Wing, August 1 to 4, at Francis S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base.

In 2023, the program was the first Air National Guard STEM camp and the students who attended were dependents of service members assigned to the 106th Rescue Wing. This year, the program expanded to include local area students.

The DoD funded program is designed to help encourage community engagement with the military while providing educational programs and activities designed to interest kids in STEM fields.

During the four days, the students learned how to load cargo on an HC-130 Combat King II search and rescue aircraft, how the HH-60 rescue helicopters operate, and how damaged aircraft are repaired. They also learned how a base communicates locally and globally, and how the 106th Rescue Wing would respond to a humanitarian crisis.

The first day,campers worked to generate aircraft load plans, calculate weight and balance, and learn about other related technologies.

Students went to a simulated aircraft loading area and measured several vehicles, including an armored truck known as a medium tactical vehicle and a 20-ton forklift, to calculate the centerline of the equipment weight.

On day two, the students were introduced to the maintenance section of the unit.

Students learned about hydraulic systems inside aircraft and were allowed to use tools to bend and fasten aluminum tubing through which hydraulic fluid flows.

Campers also worked on an aircraft engine, removing parts to better understand the inner workings.

"I had the most fun the day we toured the different sections like hydraulics and avionics and communications because it was hands-on and we got to do a lot," said Meadow D., a STEM camper. "I liked it a lot more than I expected to because they explained how things are relevant and they made it cool."

On day three campers received preflight briefings about terrain obstructions and landmarks that could interfere with flight operations, weather, navigation, Students coordinated simulated helicopter rescues of injured people and missions to deliver critical supplies.

"I think the most important lesson is that everybody has a role to play," said Master Sgt. Joseph Graziano, 106th Communications Squadron Senior Enlisted leader and key STEM camp planner.



Students sit in an HH-60W Jolly Green II search and rescue helicopter during their second day of STEM Camp 2024, hosted by the 106th Rescue Wing.

On day four, campers went for flights on both the HC-130J Combat King II rescue aircraft and the HH-60G Pave Hawk rescue helicopter, which the wing operates.

Every student flew in both airframes from Francis S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base over Long Island and back.

"Hopefully this program can be replicated across the state," said Brig. Gen. Michael Bank, commander of the New York Air National Guard. gt



Students are taught how to position a satellite radio antenna during their second day of STEM Camp 2024, hosted by the 106th Rescue Wing located at Francis S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base, N.Y.,on August 2, 2024.

107th Attack Wing Hosts Leadership Course

Story and photos by 1st Lt. Jason Carr, 107th Attack Wing

NIAGARA FALLS, N.Y. — The 107th Attack Wing at the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station hosted the Contemporary Base Issues Course, bringing together 270 Air National Guard members from across the United States on July 12-13. The event aimed to enhance the leadership skills of Air National Guard members.

One of the course instructors, Lt Col Ambar Vyas, Staff Judge Advocate assigned to the 147th Attack Wing (TX), explained that the main goal of the course is to empower military leaders with tools and concepts they need to think critically and solve problems together.

"The beauty of CBI is the course evolves every session; there's no block that's static, we continue to improve, based off the feedback we get real time from the people who are taking the course as well as feedback at the national level."

-Maj. Gen. Chuck Walker, Air National Guard Assistant to The Judge Advocate General of the Air Force

"In CBI, that concept is called "roundtabling," getting together and having the tools to think dynamically, critically and candidly about how to solve problems to address current issues," Vyas said.

The course covered key topics like military justice, ethics, and domestic operations. These subjects are essential for the Air Force and provide a strong foundation for leaders.

"This course is meant to give information that can be utilized at the command level, in the mid-grade level, and kind of an introduction at a lower level," said Col Michelle Hagel, Joint Force Headquarters Judge Advocate (ND). "There's something for everybody to start being able to identify those issues that really are plaguing the Air National Guard".

The course also adapts to address current issues, such as sexual assault, which has become an important topic in recent years.

"We're going to keep talking about it as long as it's a problem and it's a problem if there's one", said Hagel. "So we're going to talk about it because it's not just because it's still happening, it's because we want to prevent it from happening as well."

Maj. Gen. Chuck Walker, Air National Guard Assistant to The Judge Advocate General of the Air Force, and his team led the event.



Lt. Col. Terence Coyne, Staff Judge Advocate assigned to 143d Airlift Wing in Rhode Island, presents centered on duty standards required by drill status guardsman, on July 12 2024, Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station. The host wing, the 107th Attack Wing stationed at Niagara, has worked for the past four years to host this course.

The two-day seminar included lectures and interactive discussions, encouraging active participation and a deeper understanding of the topics.



Attendees of the Contemporary Base Issues listen to instructors at the Heritage Center and hosted by the 107th Attack Wing, on July 12 2024 at Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station. The two-day seminar included lectures and interactive discussions, encouraging maintaining ethical standards, readiness, address mental health challenges, and improving leadership skills.

"The beauty of CBI is the course evolves every session; there's no block that's static, we continue to improve, based off the feedback we get real time from the people who are taking the course as well as feedback at the national level," said Walker.

This format helped participants gain practical tools to maintain ethical standards, readiness, address mental health challenges, and improve leadership skills.

Vyas, who also teaches a Cyber Law course, shared their motivation for joining the team. He saw this as a chance to improve the Air Force and enjoyed using their skills to engage and educate participants.

"I was approached by two CBI members who thought I would be a good fit for the program. Teaching at CBI is prestigious and offers a great experience that many former leaders in the Guard have had," Vyas said.

Hosting the Contemporary Base Issues Course is a big achievement for the 107th Attack Wing, which waited over four years for this opportunity. The course is hosted by different units each time, allowing various units to benefit from the training and share best practices.

The event marked a significant step in enhancing the leadership skills of Air National Guard members. By covering a wide range of important topics and encouraging participation, the course ensured that leaders are well-prepared for the challenges of today's military environment, Vyas said. gt



Justin Stacy, A lead firefighter assigned to the Hancock Field Air National Guard Base fire department, carries a role-player to safety while participating in a disaster drill at Syracuse Hancock International Airport, on Aug. 10, 2024. The drill, which is conducted every three years, allows the fire department, the airport authority and local emergency response agencies to hone their emergency response plans. Photo by Tech Sgt. Alexander Rector, 174th Attach Wing.

174th Airmen Participate in Airport Disaster Drill

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

SYRACUSE, N.Y.— Fourteen members of the Hancock Field Air National Guard Base Fire Dept. participated in the Syracuse Regional Airport Authority's triennial disaster drill at Syracuse Hancock International Airport, Aug. 10, 2024.

The drill is mandated by the Federal Aviation Authority which requires the airport to do a full-scale exercise to implement and refine its emergency action plan.

"This year's scenario involved a simulated crash between an Air National Guard HH-60 Pave Hawk helicopter and a regional passenger jet," said Senior Master Sgt. Derek Natoli, the deputy fire chief for the Hancock Field Air National Guard Base Fire Department.

The fire department, which is staffed by uniformed guardsmen and federal civilian firefighters, began full-time operations in 2022. Prior to then the City of Syracuse Fire Department provided firefighting services to the airport.



Air National Guard firefighters assigned to the 174th Attack Wing, participate in a disaster drill at Syracuse Hancock International Airport on Aug. 10, 2024. The drill, which is conducted every three years, allows the fire department, the airport authority and local emergency response agencies to hone their emergency action plan.

"This is our first time at the helm of the triennial drill," said Natoli, who has participated in every drill since joining the unit in 2010. "My first drill in 2013 was the most memorable. Having to deal with 30 to 40 people screaming for help and having to process everything. It was a good eyeopener for me."

Having only operated on a full-time basis for two years, this year's drill was the first for many of the department's firefighters. "Training like this helps Airmen understand why we're here and it gives them an understanding of what we would do if an accident like this happens," said Natoli. "It's important to do training like this to exercise your capabilities. To know what you did well and what you need to work on to identify your best practices."



Four Syracuse Regional Airport Authority employees deliver a briefing to volunteers participating in a disaster drill at Syracuse Hancock International Airport, on Aug. 10, 2024.

The drill, though spearheaded by the Syracuse Regional Airport Authority (SRAA), brought together several state and local agencies to ensure a productive training environment. Additionally, more than 60 volunteers participated in the event roleplaying as casualties, family members, and news media.

"The preparedness fostered by the triennial full-scale exercise is essential to responding swiftly and with purpose in the event of a real emergency," said Syracuse Regional Airport Authority Executive Director Jason Terreri. "We greatly appreciate the support and volunteerism of all the participating members of the airport ecosystem – both internal and external to the airport property – who help make this event successful every three years."

During the drill more than 40 personnel from local volunteer fire departments and emergency medical service agencies participated as mutual aid partners. "It's good to see them and it's good for them to come out and participate in the drill," said Natoli. "Hopefully it's a good opportunity for them to spread their wings a little bit and come together with us and work cohesively." gt

106th's First HH-60W Jolly Green II Takes Flight

Story and photo by Staff Sgt. Kevin Donaldson, 106th Rescue Wing

FRANCIS S. GABRESKI AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, N.Y. — The 106th Rescue Wing's first HH-60W Jolly Green II search and rescue helicopter made its first flight from Francis S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base, on Sunday, August 4.

Lt. Col. James Liston, the first 106th pilot to qualify on the new helicopter, said it was an honor to pilot the first flight.

"Being the first and being able to teach everyone here at the 106th is a privilege and a welcome responsibility," Liston said.

"I am absorbing everything I can with the Whiskey program both from Sikorsky, what active duty has done over the last few years, and my test experience so that I can bring that knowledge here and help set the 106th up for success," he added.

The first flight was taken over the north shore of Long Island where Liston demonstrated the automatic approach and hover functions that the aircraft has both over land and water.

Liston utilized the Electro-Optical/InfraRed camera to demonstrate its effectiveness in being able to locate and keep eyes on survivors or threats as necessary.

According to Liston, the capabilities of the new model will greatly enhance the 106th's combat search and rescue mission.

The upgraded avionics suite will enable better navigation in adverse weather conditions, while the new communication system will provide clearer communication with military and civilian agencies, said Liston.

Staff Sgt. Joseph Devito, a special missions aviator at the 106th, also known as a SMA, said the new aircraft are much more capable.

"There are a lot more tools at our disposal, specifically for us SMAs," Devito explained.

"I have higher situational awareness and am more of an operator now. Every hour that we log on the Whiskey, we learn new capabilities. We have more tools to conduct combat search and rescue more effectively, efficiently, and safely," he said.

The 106th plans on completing aircrew training on the new model by March 2025 and more aircrew will be completing their initial training on the new model this summer with local training beginning at the end of September, Liston explained.

"It's a really awesome feeling being a part of the first team at the 106th to fly the Whiskey," Devito said. "I feel honored to have been a part of the HH-60G leaving and now being the first one on a Whiskey, and I'll have that for my whole career which is awesome."

The 106th received its first two HH-60W's, reassigned from active duty, in June. The remaining four helicopters will be delivered directly from the Sikorsky Aircraft plant and the unit will be fully transitioned to the new model by June 2025.

The new version of the HH-60 rescue helicopter takes its nickname of "Jolly Green II" from the Sikorsky HH-3 helicopters search and rescue wings used from the 1960s until 1991. The aircraft was nicknamed the Jolly Green Giant because of its size and color, according to the National Museum of the United States Air Force.

The 106th Rescue Wing, based at Francis S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base in Westhampton Beach, New York, operates and maintains the HC-130J Combat King II search and rescue aircraft, and the HH-60G Pave Hawk rescue helicopter. The 106th Rescue Wing is home to a special warfare squadron with pararescuemen and combat rescue officers, specializing in rescue and recovery, and deploys for domestic and overseas operations. gt



A U.S. Air Force HH-60W Jolly Green II search and rescue helicopter assigned to the 106th Rescue Wing based at Francis S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base, Westhampton Beach, N.Y., flies over the north shore of Long Island, on August 4, 2024. Photo by Senior Airman Sarah McKernan, 106th Rescue Wing.



A U.S. Air Force HH-60W Jolly Green II search and rescue helicopter assigned to the 106th Rescue Wing based at Francis S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base, Westhampton Beach, N.Y., flies over the north shore of Long Island, on August 4, 2024. Photo by Senior Airman Sarah McKernan, 106th Rescue Wing.



82nd Airborne Veteran Receives Honor Salute

NEWBURGH, N.Y. - Tech. Sgt. Adriana Dominguez, an Airman with the 105th Security Support Squadron, participated in an Honor Salute for an 82nd Airborne veteran yesterday at the Hospice of Orange & Sullivan Counties. An Honor Salute is a final tribute of appreciation for a veteran's service to our nation. It is a simple but powerful way to express gratitude to those who served. Courtesy photo.



Syracuse Research to Advance the MQ-9

SYRACUSE, N.Y. A team of airmen from 174th Attack Wing's Maintenance Group are aiding in ongoing research by an engineering group from Poway, California and General Atomics. By gathering data they are finding new ways to improve the weight distribution, balancing and center of gravity of the MQ-9 Reaper. Photo by Staff Sgt. Eric Bryant, 174th Attack Wing.

Joint Water Bucket Training on the Hudson

Story by 1st Lt. Ed Shevlin, New York Guard Headquarters, and Stephanie Butler, Guard Times staff

SCHODACK LANDING, N.Y.— The New York Naval Militia, the New York Army National Guard, the New York Guard and the Schodack Landing Fire Company teamed up to execute a wildfire training exercise on the Hudson River off Schodack Island State Park on Sept. 6, 2024.

Seventeen New York Naval Militia members deployed two patrol boats and a landing craft from the Military Emergency Boats Service, or MEBS for short. The Naval Militia also deployed a command trailer on shore to orchestrate the operation.

The boats stopped traffic on the Hudson River, while an Army National Guard UH-60M helicopter crew conducted firefighting exercise over the water.

The 3,200-member Naval Militia is composed of Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard Reserve members who agree to serve on state active duty when called by the state of New York.

The helicopter crew, based at the Albany International Airport in Latham, used a Bambi bucket, which holds 660 gallons of water, to pick up water from the river and then release it, simulating a dump on a fire. The National Guard conducts Bambi bucket training regularly to practice lifting and flying with 5,400 pounds of water suspended below causing the helicopter to react differently.



Members of the New York Naval Malitia, the New York Guard, New York State Department of Homeland Security, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and Schodack Landing Fire Company take part in morning brief outlining the schedule of events for Empire Challenge 2024, at Schodack Island State Park on Sept. 6, 2024. Photo by Stephanie Butler, Guard Time staff.

The training exercise was part of a three-day exercise called Empire Challenge. The exercise tested the New York Naval Militia's boat operators, and the communications capabilities of the Naval Militia, the New York Guard-the states volunteer defense force- the New York National Guard, and the New York State Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Services.

The exercise scenario was based on a multi-agency response to a major wildfire.

"Disasters, natural and manmade happen. We need the ability to communicate. It is the key component to facilitate the response to a disaster in an emergency," explained Mike Carl, a radio engineer for the New York State Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Services.

"If we can't talk to each other, we can't send the help that people need so we're practicing communications and we're honing our skills," Carl added.

Members of the Naval Militia and New York Guard stood up the Naval Militias communication trailer for Empire Challenge. They were able to maintain consistent communication between the patrol boats and the New York Army National Guard UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter, according to Naval Militia Capt. Don McKnight, the commander of MEBS.

The "synergy" taking place in the communications between the patrol boats, the Naval Militia command trailer and the New York Guard communication team was impressive,



Members of the New York Naval Militia and the New York Guard, stand up New York Naval Militia's communication trailer during exercise Empire Challenge simulating a multi-agency response to a major wildfire at Schodack Island State Park on Sept.6, 2024. Photo by Stephanie Butler, Guard Time staff.



Brian Paquin, Maintenance Manager, Schodack Island State Park and Laura Smith, Park Manager, Schodack Island State Park receive a coin from Rear Adm. Michael Perry, Commander New York Naval Militia and Brig. Gen. Peter Riley, Commanding General, New York Guard onboard Landing Craft-LC350, as part of exercise Empire Challenge simulating a multi-agency response to a major wildfire at Schodack Island State Park on Sept.6, 2024. Photo by Stephanie Butler, Guard Time staff.

McKnight said.

"Members from both components worked seamlessly together throughout the entire exercise," McKnight added.

The state Department of Homeland Security deployed their command center to the state park to participate in the operation.

Two New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Rangers flew in the UH-60, to help direct the water drop. The Rangers and the Army aircrew train regularly for firefighting missions.

Involving all these agencies at the same time to make sure that we can all "mesh" in times of crisis, explained Rear Adm., Michael Perry, the commander, of the New York Naval Militia.

The crew aboard the landing craft loaded and offloaded the Rangers ATVs at the park boat ramp. An amphibious vehicle, belonging to the Schodack Landing Fire Company loaded and unloaded at the boat ramp, and also drove on to the landing craft while it was afloat.

"We're learning some things that we never realized that we could do," said Perry, referring to landing craft missions.

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

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

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Nate Laymon, a New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Forest Ranger drives all-terrain vehicle aboard New York Naval Militia Landing Craft-LC350, as part of exercise Empire Challenge simulating a multi-agency response to a major wildfire at Schodack Island State Park on Sept.6, 2024. Photo by Stephanie Butler, Guard Time staff.



Schodack Landing Fire Company Chief Tom Moak drives amphibious vehicle aboard New York Naval Militia Landing Craft-LC350, as Boatswains Mate Senior Chief Angel Santos directs him, as part of exercise Empire Challenge simulating a multi-agency response to a major wildfire at Schodack Island State Park on Sept.6, 2024. Photo by Stephanie Butler, Guard Time staff.



New York Naval Militia Landing Craft (LC350), patrol boat (PB230, and patrol boat (PB231) start to set an exclusion zone in the Hudson River off Schodack Island State Park for New York Army National Guard UH-60m Blackhawk to conduct Bambi Bucket operations as part of exercise Empire Challenge on Sept. 6, 2024. Photo by Stephanie Butler, Guard Time staff.

