

The background of the cover is a photograph of a soldier wearing a full-body olive green chemical defense suit. The soldier's face is visible through a large, clear, rectangular visor. They are wearing black tactical gloves and holding a black Motorola walkie-talkie to their mouth. A black corrugated breathing tube is connected to the suit. On the left wrist, a black band has white text that reads "931 01-2018" and "ABD 02-002". The overall scene is set against a bright, slightly cloudy sky.

**gt**

Volume 18 Number 3

# guardtimes

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



# FROM THE LEADERSHIP

## Our Military Forces Always Meet the Challenge

After 28 years in uniform, I am honored to take on the role of command sergeant major for the New York Army National Guard.

The role of the state command sergeant major is not about the rank or position; it is about responsibility and commitment to the welfare and readiness of the enlisted force.

I have experience that spans both operational deployments and stateside missions. I have served in leadership positions from the squad level to battalion and brigade level commands.

I believe I have a clear understanding of what it takes to build cohesive, effective units in today's dynamic military environment.

I plan to focus on strengthening the non-commissioned officer corps, retention and recruitment of our most valuable asset-- our Soldiers-- and the professional development and quality of life of our force.

We can do this by professional NCO leadership. This means setting and enforcing standards, enhancing our leadership development programs, increasing communication with junior Soldiers-- in person and through electronic means--and reinforcing integrity and discipline in our day-to-day actions.

I believe our leaders are the main reason Soldiers want to come to our organization and end up staying in our organization.

As we continue to build and strengthen our NCO leaders, they will become the future of our organization.

Modern leadership requires mentorship, talent management,

engaged, informed and invested in their Soldiers improve performance and decrease disciplinary issues. This environment creates a culture where leaders lead, standards matter, and Soldiers believe in one another.

As leaders, we must communicate clearly, consistently, and credibly.

As our force adapts to evolving missions and modern challenges, we must be ready to change also.

Aligning our priorities with the Army's transformative process is key to producing a ready force.

We will listen to our Soldiers and identify strengths and challenges and work to position them to be better Soldiers and contributors to our communities.

But the National Guard continues to balance its dual mission: standing ready to respond at home to emergencies and natural disasters, while also maintaining combat readiness for federal deployments.

This constant balancing act requires leaders who not only understand doctrine and discipline but who also possess adaptability, emotional intelligence, and a commitment to taking care of people.

Modern conflicts are no longer fought solely on land—they extend across cyber, space, air, maritime, and information domains.

Our leaders must ensure their units are trained, equipped, and mentally prepared to operate in these environments.

This means embracing joint training, leveraging tech-

nology, and prioritizing realistic, scenario-based exercises that test adaptability and problem-solving.

Leaders must invest in developing junior leaders and be prepared to lead in uncertain and complex environments.

Professional military education, cross-functional experiences, and leader development programs are key tools in this effort.

Focusing on the readiness of our force is not just about the numbers. It is about ensuring our Soldiers are prepared to answer for any mission, in combat or in support of our state or their communities.

Engaged leaders are key to preparing our Soldiers. Leaders should emphasize development, training, counseling and enforcing standards.

I believe discipline is about clarity. Soldiers must know what is expected of them and understand the why behind those expectations.

I expect leaders to be fair and consistent when addressing issues, correcting behavior and most importantly, rewarding excellence.

This consistency will create trust within our organization.

I plan to lead, listen and advocate for our Soldiers. I will be



**Command Sgt. Major  
Leylan Jones**

visible, approachable and mission focused. I plan to get to know our Soldiers, develop them and stand beside them when duty calls.

I understand the importance of leading by example.

I will strive to be the leader who knows your name, knows your story, and knows what drives you.

I am committed to addressing challenges head-on, remaining approachable and holding high standards.

I look forward to this new role and am excited to get out on the road and hear and learn about all the outstanding things our New York force is doing. **gt**



*FORT DRUM, N.Y. - Chief Warrant Officer 2 John Prian, Captain Meg Brown, Staff Sargent Greg Antunes, and Chief Warrant Officer 2 Thomas Ball of 3rd Battalion, 142nd Aviation Regiment conduct a post mission debrief following flight training in an LUH72 Lakota at Fort Drum, NY, during their annual training, Aug. 13, 2025.*

**gt** and succession planning. Leaders who are



# guardtimes

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*FORT DRUM, N.Y. — Pilots and Crewchiefs from 3rd Battalion 142nd Aviation Regiment conduct a final conditions check at dusk prior to starting Night Vision Goggle Aerial Door Gunnery during their annual training, Aug. 13, 2025.*

FRONT COVER: New York Army National Guard Soldier with the 222 Chemical Company, assigned to the Perimeter Monitoring team, Decontamination (DECON) element scans the area for Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear agents, chiefly known as CBRN, as part of a Homeland Response Force exercise on Fort Indiantown Gap, PA, Aug. 5, 2025. The Homeland Response Forces for FEMA Region II conducts vital training to ensure rapid response to chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear incidents, whether local or regional. Photo by Staff Sgt. Jordan Sutton, 369th Sustainment Brigade.

BACK COVER: Airmen from the New York Air National Guard's 106th Rescue Wing Security Forces Squadron bear crawl during a Defender Challenge at the 106th Rescue Wing, Francis S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base, Westhampton Beach, N.Y., September 7, 2025. Courtesy photo.



# FACES of the FORCE

## New York Run for the Fallen



NEW YORK — Master Sgt. Ryan Milton, a fuels systems specialist with the 109th Airlift Wing, (shown left, holding American flag) joined the New York Run for the Fallen, not realizing how deeply the mission would impact him. In 2014 the New York Run for the Fallen began its mission to Honor and Remember New York's fallen heroes and the families left behind. What began his love for running, quickly grew into a lifelong commitment to honoring fallen service members and supporting Gold Star families. Over the years, Milton has evolved from a core runner to the Run Coordinator.

"Year ten, we decided to bring the run to as many families across New York as possible by creating a 10-day, 500-mile run from Buffalo to New York City. We presented 20 flags to families, ran to Ground Zero and finished aboard the USS Intrepid. Our team of runners over the years has been nothing short of amazing. Most years we have 16-24 runners on the team ranging in ages from 16-68. We have Gold Star fathers and sisters, veterans and civilians, Purple Heart recipients and so many more. They take this mission into their hearts and run the most meaningful, purposeful miles anyone of us has ever undertaken," Milton said.

Guided by the motto "It's not about us, it's about them," he continues to ensure that heroes' names and sacrifices are never forgotten. Courtesy photos.





# Army Officer is There as Former Iraqi Interpreter Finishes U.S. Army Basic Training

Story by Eric Durr, *Guard Times* staff

FORT JACKSON, S.C. — In 2008, when New York Army National Guard Lt. Col. Brian Napier was a lieutenant running an ad hoc route clearance platoon north of Baghdad, he developed a bond with Zeyad Al Mifrij, his Arabic interpreter.

Al Mifrij rode with Napier on 210 missions, and they worked together every day, Napier recalled. And not only did he speak to the locals for Napier, Al Mifrij helped develop intelligence that identified IED locations and saved lives.

“In order to be effective, and rather than just waiting for the bombs to show up, we tried to get ahead of it by maintaining and building relationships with the locals,” Napier recalled.

So, when U.S. Army Reserve Pfc. Zeyad Al Mifrij graduated from basic training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina on Sept. 11, 2025, Napier made sure he was there.

“I just had to be there,” said Napier, who now serves as the executive officer of the 42nd Infantry Division Artillery.

His visit to Fort Jackson to be there with Al Mifrij, his wife Sarab, and children Hussein, Abdalhafiz, Yasir and Iris, is just the latest installment in a relationship that began 17 years ago, Napier said.

Napier met Al Mifrij when he was told that his firing platoon in the 2nd Battalion, 11th Field Artillery Regiment, a part of the 2nd Stryker Brigade of the 25th Infantry Division, was to be converted into a route clearance platoon.

“There were too many bombs, not enough route clearance platoons, so they gave my platoon of cannoneers a crash course and off we went,” he said.

The platoon was equipped with MRAPS —the mine resistant ambush protected vehicles— and Huskey vehicle mounted mine detection systems. And, they had Zeyad Al Mifrij.

“Zeyad was my trusted link to not only communicate with locals, but determine what information was likely not true,” Napier recalled.

Mifrij, who had degrees in computer science and graphic design, always talked about how much he loved the United States,” Napier said.

And unlike some Arabic interpreters, he liked the Army and the work and wanted the team to succeed, Napier recalled. He also talked about being in the American Army, Napier said.

As Napier got ready to rotate home at the end of his 15-month deployment, Al Mifrij, asked his lieutenant to write an endorsement to help him immigrate to the United States. The interpreter wanted to take advantage of a program which allowed Iraqis who helped U.S. forces immigrate to America.

It took time, and more letters and endorsements from other American officers. And there were bureaucratic hang ups when the birth of Yasir in 2012 required the family to start the visa process all over again, Napier recalled.

But in 2017 the family finally arrived in the United States and settled outside of Cleveland, Ohio.

Al Mafrij turned out to be good at making money in America, Napier said.

He got a job and within six months he was buying, renovating and selling small houses.



Army Reserve Pfc Zeyad Al Mifrij, left, poses for a photograph with New York Army National Guard Lt. Col. Brian Napier during Al Mifrij's Sept. 11, 2025, graduation from basic combat training at Fort Jackson, North Carolina. The two men met in 2008 when Napier was a lieutenant in the 25th infantry Division and Al Mifrij was his Iraqi interpreter. Since then, with Napier's help, Al Mifrij and his family moved to the U.S. and he joined the Army Reserve at age 45. Courtesy Photo.

Eventually, he became the manager of a Walmart store and completed a degree in cyber security. But he never forgot that dream of joining the U.S. Army and giving back to his adopted country, Napier said.

But with one son in college, Al Mifrij was no longer a young man. He also had to make sure he had the time to leave his job for basic and advanced training.

But his computer background allowed him to get an age waiver to enlist as a signal support specialist working in computer security Napier said. And, he added, he was happy to write an endorsement for Al Mifrij security clearance.

So, on Sept. 11 —on the 24th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks— Al Mifrij became a 45-year-old private first class heading to Fort Stewart, Georgia for his advanced individual training.

He's happy that he could be there for Al Mifrij and help him and his family along their American journey, Napier said.

“I am just incredibly proud of him,” Napier said.

“I mean he had had so many struggles along the way, and he had said he was going to find a way to join the Army, and he did it,” he said. 🇺🇸



# AROUND THE STATE

## NY National Guard Provides Honors for WWII Soldier who Died in Japanese POW Camp

Story by Richard Goldenberg, *Guard Times* staff

BOONVILLE, N.Y. — Eight New York Army National Guard Soldiers provided funeral honors for a World War II Soldier who survived the infamous Bataan Death March --only to die in a Japanese POW camp later-- on August 23, 2025.

Army Private Harland Hennessey, a resident of Boonville New York, was interred next to the graves of his parents.

The New York Honor Guard also conducted the plane side ceremony in Rochester when Hennessey's remains arrived on



Army Private Harland J. Hennessey, of Boonville, N.Y., died as a Prisoner of War in 1942 and remained unidentified for some 82 years before the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency identified his remains in 2024. He was buried with full military honors by the New York National Guard Military Forces Honor Guard on August 23, 2025.

August 21.

Being part of this service was memorable, said Army Guard Sgt. Justin Kehati.

"It's extremely humbling," Kehati said.

Hennessey was the first resident of Boonville to be drafted, when he joined the Army on May 29, 1941. He was assigned to the 803rd Engineer Battalion, part of the United States Army Air Forces.

He was assigned to the American garrison in the Philippines — then an American territory— and fought the Japanese following their invasion of the island of Luzon on Dec. 8, 1941. Hennessey and other American and Filipino Soldiers fought a rear-guard action on the Bataan Peninsula until they were forced to surrender on April 9, 1942.

The 78,000 surrendered Soldiers were marched 65 miles to a prisoner of war camp over six days, and many died or were killed by the Japanese along the way. Hennessey made it to a prisoner camp in Cabanatuan in central Luzon.

Hennessey's prison camp was overcrowded, and prisoners faced shortages of food and water, leading to malnutrition and outbreaks of malaria and dysentery. He died in November 1942, and his family was notified of his death by the International Red Cross and the U.S. Army on July 10, 1943.

His remains, along with other unknowns, were relocated in 1947 to the Manila American Cemetery



New York Army National Guard Soldiers assigned to the New York Military Forces Honor Guard carry the remains of U.S. Army Pvt. Harland Hennessey funeral services with full military honors in Boonville, N.Y., Aug. 23, 2025. Hennessey, who died as a Prisoner of War in the Pacific during World War II, was buried in a common grave and remained unidentified for more than 80 years before being identified through DNA and dental records. Photo by Tech Sgt. Alexander Rector, 174th Attack Wing.

and Memorial in Fort Bonifacio, Taguig.

In 2018, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency began working to identify the unknown remains taken from the Cabanatuan camp. Using DNA provided by Hennessey's nephew John Hennessey, also a Boonville resident, Harland Hennessey's remains were identified on September 23, 2024.

"It's just really amazing for the families to know that the military supports them and supports their family member that passed away," said Sgt. Alexandra Johnson, the mission coordinator for the Hen-

nessey ceremony.

"We get to bring him home and honor him and the sacrifice that he made to his country," she said.

"It's important to honor those who served before us and their sacrifice that they made, so we can live the way that we do," added Cpl. Gabriel Estrada, another Honor Guard member.

The Boonville Veterans of Foreign Wars chapter (5538) named itself the Harland J. Hennessey VFW Post in his memory in 1945. The post continues to the present day and played a key part in honoring Hennessey's service. **gt**



# "Lone Survivor" Actor Honored by Medal of Honor Society While Visiting 106<sup>th</sup> Rescue Wing

Story by Capt. Cheran Campbell, 106th Rescue Wing

FRANCIS S. GABRESKI AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, New York — Actor Taylor Kitsch was honored by the Congressional Medal of Honor Society during a visit with the Airmen of the New York Air National Guard's 106th Rescue Wing on August 6, 2025.

Kitsch, who portrayed Navy SEAL Lt. Michael Murphy in the film, "Lone Survivor," was accompanied by other actors on a USO-sponsored visit and toured Francis S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base in Westhampton Beach, New York.

Kitsch received the Bob Hope Award for Excellence in Entertainment from the Honor Society. The award honors members of the entertainment industry who positively portray or support the U.S. military.

Michael Murphy, who grew up in Smithtown, New York, was killed in action on June 28, 2005, in Afghanistan and posthumously received the Medal of Honor for his actions.

The story of that battle became the book and movie, "Lone Survivor," about the only member from Murphy's four-man SEAL team who survived, Petty Officer Marcus Luttrell.

Kitsch accepted the award from Daniel Murphy, Michael Murphy's father, who lives in Wading River, New York.

"I'm honored to be here to present this, not only to a very special person, but also a good friend," Murphy said.

"I can tell you this, when Lone Survivor came out, the first email I got was actually from Taylor, saying, 'What do you think?' And I said A1, number one," Murphy said.

Kitsch received the award from Murphy with a smile and a hug and said that Michael Murphy had changed his life for the better.

"I'm so grateful to have played Mike," Kitsch said.

"You know, Marcus Luttrell, the Lone Survivor—at my first meeting with him, there was a moment where he said, 'You're going to carry this torch, whether you like it or not, for the rest of my days,' and man...have I enjoyed this journey," Kitsch added.



Taylor Kitsch (right) and Dan Murphy (left) take a photo after Murphy presented Kitsch with the Bob Hope Award for Excellence in Entertainment from the Congressional Medal of Honor Society at Francis S. Gabreski Airport in Westhampton Beach, N.Y., August 6, 2025. Kitsch received the award from the Congressional Medal of Honor Society for his portrayal of Michael Murphy in the movie, "Lone Survivor" and is the 39th recipient of this prestigious award. Photo by Staff Sgt. Sarah McKernan, 106th Rescue Wing.

According to the Congressional Medal of Honor Society website, the only way someone can receive the award is through a nomination from a Medal of Honor recipient.

Kitsch, star and executive producer of the Prime Video series, "The Terminal List: Dark Wolf," was nominated by Thomas Kelley of Massachusetts, who is a Vietnam Navy war veteran.

Kitsch and his series costars, Tom Hopper, Luke Hemsworth, and Shiraz Tzarfati, toured the base as part of the USO visit.

Co-executive producer Jack Carr, former Navy SEAL and "The Terminal List" author, was also a part of the USO-sponsored group.

According to Jennifer Wahlquist, Vice President of the USO's Global Entertainment Division.

"It allowed the actors the opportunity to meet the men and women who make sacrifices each and every day in service to our country and learn about the unit's storied mission and history, all of which aligns directly with our mission to strengthen America's military

and let them know America supports them," Wahlquist said.

The group met with Airmen over lunch and received orientation flights on board an HH-60W Jolly Green II rescue helicopter and an HC-130J Combat King II search and rescue aircraft.

The USO group also tested their skills operating a firehose with the 106th Rescue Wing's Fire Department.

"This was more than a celebrity visit—it was a moment that connected our mission with those who share it through storytelling," said Col. Jeffrey Cannet, commander of the 106th Rescue Wing.

Master Sgt. Joseph Graziano, a member of the wing communications group, said the visit was a boost for morale.

"Our conversation ranged from our families' experiences to some of our trials," he said. **gt**



106th Rescue Wing Commander, Col. Jeffrey Cannet, Command Chief Master Sergeant Edward Rittberg and Vice Commander Col. Andrew Wineberger pose with some of the cast and executive producers of the "The Terminal List: Dark Wolf," at Francis S. Gabreski Airport in Westhampton Beach, N.Y., August 6, 2025. Taylor Kitsch, Tom Hopper, Luke Hemsworth, Shiraz Tzarfati, Kat Samick, and Jack Carr met with Airmen over lunch and received orientation flights on board an HH-60W Jolly Green II rescue helicopter and an HC-130J Combat King II search and rescue aircraft during the USO (United Service Organizations) sponsored visit. Photo by Staff Sgt. Sarah McKernan, 106th Rescue Wing.



# THE JOINT FORCE

## Army and Air Guard Conduct Joint Medical Evacuation Exercise

Story by Eric Durr, *Guard Times* staff

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

Seventy-five Soldiers and Airmen from the 105th Airlift Wing, 109th Airlift Wing, Charlie Company of the 1st Battalion, 171st General Support Aviation Battalion, Keller, and the 466th Area Support Medical Company—

took part in the drill conducted at Camp Smith Training Site and Stewart Air National Guard Base, the home of the 105th Airlift Wing.

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

It's tough to get the chance for Soldiers and Airmen to train together, Chubb explained.



Soldiers from the West Point's Keller Army Community Hospital examine a "patient" during a medical evacuation exercise conducted with the New York Army and Air National Guard at Stewart Air National Guard Base in Newburgh, New York, on June 6, 2025 during a medical evacuation training exercise. The Active Army Soldiers joined the Guard's men in conducting a "tail-to-tail" drill in which casualties were off-loaded directly from an Army Medevac helicopter into the C-17. Photo by Senior Airman Sarah A. Post, 105th Airlift Wing.



New York Air National Guardsmen with the 105th Attack Wing, assigned to the Advanced Life Support, Medical Element (MEDEL) receive a non-ambulatory casualty from decontamination, as part of a Homeland Response Forces exercise on Fort Indiantown Gap, PA, Aug. 5, 2025. The Homeland Response Forces for FEMA Region II conducts vital training to ensure rapid response to chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear incidents, whether local or regional.



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

"This was a big success," he emphasized.

The 109th Airlift Wing is based at Stratton Air National Guard Base outside Schenectady, while Charlie Company from the 1-171st is based at the Frederick Douglas-Greater Rochester International Airport, while the 466th's armory is in Queensbury.

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

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

explained.

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

The back of the C-17 was converted into an intensive care unit, managed by members of the Critical Care Air Transport Teams from both the 105th and the 109th Airlift Wings.

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

Requiring the medics and medical technicians to diagnose the injury based on the moulage is more realistic than giving the "victim" a card explain what their wound is, Chubb said.

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

said.

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

"This exercise allows Keller (and the U.S. Army) to sustain a ready military force that refines Soldiers in the field of warrior tasks and military medicine," said Col. Sean J. Hipp, Commander, Keller Army Community Hospital.

"This successful exercise is the result of incredible coordination



New York Air and Army National Guard medical personnel examine a "casualty's" triage tag before loading victim into the cargo bay of a 105th Airlift Wing Globemaster III airlifter at Stewart Air National Guard Base in Newburgh, New York, on June 6, 2025 during a medical evacuation training exercise. The Army and Air Guard medical personnel joined Active Soldiers from Keller Army Community Hospital at West Point in conducting a "tail-to-tail" drill in which casualties were off-loaded directly from an Army Medevac helicopter into the C17. Photo by Senior Airman Sarah A. Post, 105th Airlift Wing.

and execution by the multiple agencies and will build long-term partnerships in the region," Hipp said. **gt**

## Homeland Response Forces FEMA Region II Training

*Photos by Jordan Sutton, 369th Sustainment Brigade*



FORT INDIANTOWN GAP, P.A. — New York Air National Guardsmen with the 107th Attack Wing, assigned to the Fatality, Search & Recovery Team (FSRT) element document and retrieve remains, as part of a Homeland Response Forces exercise on Fort Indiantown Gap, PA, Aug. 5, 2025. The Homeland Response Forces for FEMA Region II conducts vital training to ensure rapid response to chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear incidents, whether local or regional.





## NY National Guard Experts Mentor Swedish Division Staff During Exercise

Story by Eric Durr, Guard Times staff

New York National Guard personnel who acted as mentors during the Swedish Army's first division-level command post exercise in more than 25 years are recognized for their efforts during a ceremony at the conclusion of the exercise on Sept. 23, 2024, at Enköping, Sweden. The New York National Guard sent six Soldiers and one Airman to provide expert advice to their Swedish counterparts during the five-day training exercise. (Courtesy photo)

ENKÖPING, Sweden — In 1997, there were seven division headquarters in the Swedish Army. By 2000, with the Cold War over, there were none. Sweden's Army was built around brigades.

But when Sweden joined NATO in 2024, Sweden's Army decided it needed divisions again.

For help in exercising their first division headquarters in 25 years, the Swedish Army turned to the New York National Guard.

From Sept. 13 to Sept. 24, six Soldiers and one Airman advised 150 Swedish officers and non-commissioned officers during a five-day division command post exercise at Sweden's Ground Combat School in Enköping.

"The doctrine and tactics of a division have changed a lot in 30 years, and we were there to help them catch up," explained Lt. Col. Nicholas Whaley, the commander of the New York Army National Guard's 204th Engineer Battalion.

When Sweden picked New York to conduct training and exchanges

under the Guard's State Partnership Program, the New York Army Guard's 42nd Infantry Division headquarters was a reason.

Swedish officers visited the 42nd during a Warfighter Command Post exercise in February 2025 before the headquarters deployed to the Middle East.

"We were lucky that we had a group of experienced division staff officers who were not deployed with the 42nd," Whaley said. "All of us that went had experience on multiple division Warfighters and deployments," he added.

Col. Jeffrey Csoka, who serves on the Joint Force Headquarters operations staff, was the 42nd Infantry Division's operations officer.

He worked with the Swedish division's command group.

"I spent a lot of time with the (operations officer), with the division commander, and their staff," he said.

"We spent a lot of time in meetings figuring out what the prod-

ucts they needed were," he added.

The Swedes had a very ambitious exercise planned, Csoka said.

They did okay, he said, but with a division staff of only 150 compared with the 600 people in the 42nd Infantry Division headquarters—they were limited in many ways as to what they could accomplish in the time they had.

Chief Warrant Officer 4 Jonathan Molik, the Director of Intelligence and Security for Joint Force Headquarters—New York, worked with the Swedish division's intelligence section, along with their targeting and air ground coordination teams.

"We helped them by sharing some of our doctrine, which is NATO doctrine, and talked about what is required to be in the fight now," Molik said.

There are far more "enablers" for the division fight that range from small drones everywhere on the battlefield, to cybernetic warfare on the internet. Just in the past ten


years, the items that staffs must deal with have grown tremendously, he said.

They did help the Swedish team orchestrate a Combat Aviation Brigade deep strike, as part of the training exercise, Molik said.

Chief Warrant Officer 4 Thomas Fancher, who now serves as the force integration officer for Joint Force Headquarters—New York, brushed up his skills as a targeting officer for this exercise.

He worked with the Swedes to apply the lessons the 42nd learned during their February 2025 Warfighter on integrating air, cannon and missile fires to hit targets, Fancher said.

Working with the Swedish soldiers was incredibly rewarding, the New Yorkers said. The Swedes learn English in school so there was no language barrier, and their Swedish counterparts were incredibly receptive to what the Guardsmen had to share, they said.

"It was awesome," Fancher said. 



# Space Operators Hosts Brazilian Counterparts

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

SYRACUSE, N.Y. — New York Air National Guard Airmen assigned to the 222nd Command and Control Squadron hosted a delegation of Brazilian space operators and engineers for an exchange of ideas and best practices in space operations at Hancock Field Air National Guard Base in Syracuse, N.Y., Aug. 18–22, 2025.

The 222nd is a space operations unit whose Airmen provide support to the National Reconnaissance Office which manages the nation's satellite surveillance systems.

The weeklong event brought together representatives from the Air Force Research Laboratory, U.S. Space Force, and Brazil's Space Operations Center, along with the Air Guardsmen, to discuss advanced satellite operations, space weather, and surveillance initiatives.

Organizers said the exchange helped align procedures and identify future opportunities for cooperation.

The New York National Guard has had a State Partnership Program relationship with the Brazilian military since 2019. The program pairs U.S. National Guards with foreign militaries for training and information exchanges.

New York Air National Guard Staff Sgt. Jason Capostagno, a space systems operator with the 222nd from Rochester N.Y., said the Brazilian team arrived with "highly skilled" operators who shared insights on joint commercial operations, software tools, and space weather.

He added that the discussions gave Airmen a clearer picture of Brazil's priorities and how their feedback could be integrated into U.S. systems.

Capt. Leah Elsbeck, also with the 222nd, explained that while the exchange wasn't training in the traditional sense, it broadened Airmen's understanding of international cooperation.

She emphasized the value of continuity in the Guard's State Partnership Program, noting that she has watched Brazil expand from a single satellite to a robust program.

"Brazil space folks are extremely proficient and extremely talented," she said.

"Their program being newer and smaller than ours, they all have to be experts in their

field, but they also have to be experts in most space fields for operational purposes," Elsbeck added.

Senior Airman Max Dean said Brazil plays a role in Joint Commercial Operations, which provides near real-time space domain awareness to partner nations. He said that system helps build trust and "makes space safer for everyone involved."

"I think that this is beneficial towards building trust and transparency between the US and partner nations," he added.

The Airmen also stressed the personal side of cooperation.

Capostagno described his Brazilian counterparts as kind and generous, adding, "I never leave a joint event without learning something useful."

Brazil has been a leader in South American space development since the 1960s, when it created the National Institute for Space Research to oversee satellites and atmospheric science programs.

According to the institute, Brazil launched its first sounding rockets in the 1970s and later established the Alcântara Launch Center, which provides unique advantages due to its equatorial location.

The Space Operations Center, inaugurated in 2020, now coordinates satellite

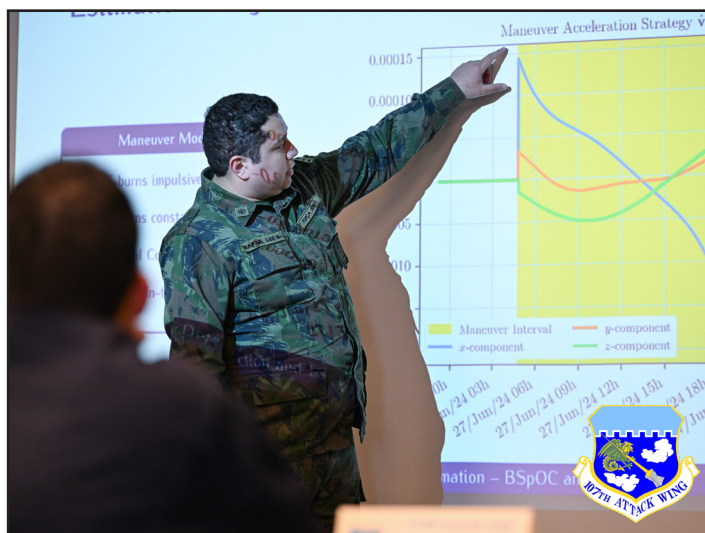


Representatives pose in front of an MQ-9 Reaper remotely piloted aircraft assigned to the 174th Attack Wing during a subject matter expert exchange event at Hancock Air Field, August 19 2025. Representative from the Brazilian Space Operations Center (COPE), 222 Command and Control Squadron, AFRL, SOUTHCOM, and commercial defense contractors attended to help advance joint space capabilities between the U.S. and Brazil.

operations across the Brazilian armed forces. In 2024, U.S. Space Command announced it would embed a liaison officer at COPE to further cooperation.

For the 222nd, the Syracuse exchange was another step in that long-standing partnership.

Events like this reinforce how much partner nations can contribute to U.S. space capabilities, Dean added. **gt**



Capt. Rafael Rodrigues Luz Benevides of the Brazilian Air Force delivers a brief on advance satellite orbital operations during a subject matter expert exchange event hosted by the 222 Command and Control Squadron at Hancock Air Field, August 19, 2025. The event was held to assist the Brazilian Space Operations Center (COPE) with advanced space operations.



## NY Harlem Hellfighters' Receive Congressional Gold Medal During Capitol Hill Ceremony

Story by Eric Durr, Guard Times staff

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Black New York National Guard Soldiers, known as “hellfighters” by their German enemies one hundred years ago, were recognized with Congress’ highest recognition during a Sept. 3 ceremony at the U.S. Capitol.

The Congressional Gold Medal was presented to descendants of some of the 4,000 Soldiers who served in the 369th Infantry Regiment, nicknamed the Harlem Hellfighters, during World War I.

The medal is the “highest honor that this body can bestow on any group or individual,” said Mike Johnson, the speaker of the House of Representatives.

The Congressional Gold Medal allows the House and the Senate to “show our national appreciation for the achievements and contributions of truly great Americans,” Johnson said.

The official recognition of Harlem Hellfighter heroism made the event “a joyous occasion,” said Col. Bryon Linnehan, the commander of the Hellfighters of today, the New York Army National Guard’s 369th Sustainment Brigade.

Each of the 4,000 Hellfighters had their own story of courage and sacrifice, Linnehan told an audience which included Secretary of Defense

Pete Hegseth; Air Force General Dan Caine, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; and Air Force General Steven Nordhaus, the Chief of the National Guard Bureau.

“Today’s Hellfighters honor all of these men to preserve their legacy and example,” Linnehan said in his remarks.

Army Major General Ray Shields, the Adjutant General of New York, and New York Army National Guard Command Sgt. Major Leylan Jones, the state senior enlisted leader, were also part of the New York National Guard delegation at the ceremony.

The 369th Infantry got its start in 1916 as the 15th New York Infantry, a National Guard unit for Black Americans who wanted to serve in the segregated Army of the time in the days before World War I.

While the unit was based in Harlem, it eventually included Black Americans from across the country after the United States entered World War I in 1917.

When the Soldiers left for France in 1917, they got a new regimental number. They were denied combat duty with the American Army, but rather fought with the French Army.



Debra Willett, center left, accepts the Congressional Gold Medal for the Army’s World War I 369th Infantry Regiment, the “Harlem Hellfighters,” from Speaker of the House of Representatives Mike Johnson (LA-04), during a ceremony in Emancipation Hall at the U.S. Capitol, September 3, 2025, in Washington. Willett is the granddaughter of Harlem Hellfighter Sgt. Leander Willett. Photo by Christopher Kaufmann, Army Multimedia and Visual Information Division. Courtesy photo.



U.S. Army Col. Bryon Linnehan, Commander of the 369th Sustainment Brigade, New York Army National Guard, addresses the audience during a Congressional Gold Medal award ceremony for the Army’s World War I 369th Infantry Regiment, the “Harlem Hellfighters,” in Emancipation Hall at the U.S. Capitol, September 3, 2025, in Washington. Photo by Christopher Kaufmann, Army Multimedia and Visual Information Division. Courtesy photo.

The 369th Infantry Soldiers served in combat for 191 days, took 1,400 casualties, earned 171 Croix de Guerre medals -- France’s highest award for valor-- and were the first Americans to march into Germany at war’s end.

When they came home in 1919, 3,000 Hellfighters marched up New York’s Fifth Avenue, cheered on by hundreds of thousands.

But despite their fame, veterans of the 369th were “lynched” when they came home: killed by White mobs who resented Black veterans.

Her knowledge of that history made the ceremony in the Capitol’s Emancipation Hall especially powerful, said Staff Sgt. Jodian Beckford, a member of the 369th “Sustainment Brigade’s 1501st Field Feeding Company, who attended the ceremony.

As a Black Soldier herself, it was “more than just a regular day for me,” she said.

“They were being embraced not by families only, but America as a whole. It was an out-of-body experience for me,” Beckford said.

“They were fighting for more than just for the U.S. They were fighting for themselves, to be a part of America,” she added.

Army Spec. Matthew Aronberg, an MP





The Congressional Gold Medal sits on display before a ceremony honoring the Army's World War I 369th Infantry Regiment, the "Harlem Hellfighters," in Emancipation Hall at the U.S. Capitol, September 3, 2025, in Washington. Photo by Christopher Kaufmann, Army Multimedia and visual Information Division.



Debra Willett, center, displays the Congressional Gold Medal for the Army's World War I 369th Infantry Regiment, the "Harlem Hellfighters," during a ceremony in Emancipation Hall at the U.S. Capitol, September 3, 2025, in Washington. Willett is the granddaughter of Harlem Hellfighter Sgt. Leander Willett. Photo by Christopher Kaufmann, Army Multimedia and visual Information Division.

who won the 369th's Best Warrior competition in 2024, said "it was a complete honor to be there surrounded by the families of the actual heroes."

"It is very humbling to be there and learn the history, hearing the family stories. Everybody is so passionate about it," Aronberg added.

The effort to create a Congressional Gold Medal for the Harlem Hellfighters began when

Long Island Congressman Tom Suozzi embraced the idea and with the support of New York's Congressional delegation, and others, a bill was signed into law by President Joe Biden commissioning the medal in 2021.

"My grandfather and the other brave men that fought alongside him never thought that their courage and their exploits would be cel-

Debra Willett, the granddaughter of a Hellfighter, began pushing for honor.

ebrated in such a revered setting," Willett said.

"They sacrificed, and they thought that they were making a difference, and today proves that they did," she added.

While in Washington, the 369th delegation of 11 officers and enlisted Soldiers, also laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery.

They also visited the grave of Sgt. Henry Johnson, a 369th Soldier from Albany who was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for his heroic actions.

Finally, the day was capped with a reception at the French embassy in Washington.

"It was an important time for them to connect with the unit's history, and also be part of it," Linnehan said.

But the most impressive part of the day, for him, Linnehan recalled, was when the descendants of Harlem Hellfighters in the audience were asked to stand up.

"That was moving, having the descendants there," he said. "I really appreciated that our country's leadership turned out for them."

The 369th delegation was presented with a bronze version of the gold medal presented to Willett.

That's appropriate, Linnehan said. The Frenchmen the Black Americans of the 369th fought besides, called them the "hommes de Bronze" or "men of Bronze" because of their color and their courage, he added. <sup>gt</sup>



Soldiers from the "Harlem Hellfighters," visited the Lincoln Memorial after a ceremony in Emancipation Hall at the U.S. Capitol, September 3, 2025, in Washington. Courtesy photo.



# Army Finance Soldiers Sharpen Skills During Diamond Saber Exercise

Story by Eric Durr, Guard Times staff

**JOINT BASE MCGUIRE-DIX-LAKEHURST** — One hundred and fifty members of the New York Army National Guard's 27th Finance Battalion spent July 12 to 26 sharpening their field finance skills during exercise Diamond Saber 2025.

The Army Reserve-run exercise at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst (JBML) lets finance Soldiers practice the procedures they employ in austere locations overseas, according to Lt. Col. Sara Mitchell, the commander of the 27th Finance.

Two of the 27th's four finance companies—the 14th and the 37th, totaling about 60 Soldiers—took part in the training. Soldiers from the headquarters and the 4th and 7th companies helped run the exercise, Mitchell said.

Finance Soldiers manage money for the Army, and disburse it to keep missions running, Mitchell explained.

The exercise, named after the Finance Corp's diamond-shaped emblem, consists of one week of classroom instruction and one week of field training.

The training at JBMDL involved about 500 finance personnel from the Army and other services.

The Finance Corps is the smallest Army branch, with only about 3,000 Soldiers. Getting that many finance personnel in one place is great for professional development, Mitchell said.

The annual training program launched in 2004, and the New York finance Soldiers have been participating since 2018, Mitchell said.

The week-long field exercise is especially important because it gives Soldiers a chance to work with the Army's Deployable Disbursing System (DDS) computer system, said 1st Lt. Michael Catalano, the executive officer of the 37th Finance Company.

There is a "sandbox"—a training simulation system—that allows finance Soldiers to exercise with DDS, but it is difficult to implement

back at the armory, Catalano said.

During Diamond Saber, a network is set up so the full system can be employed, he explained.

"This is the only hands on training our Soldiers will get for something like dispersing," Catalano said.

The 14th and 37th companies were selected for training because they are preparing to deploy overseas in 2026, Mitchell explained.

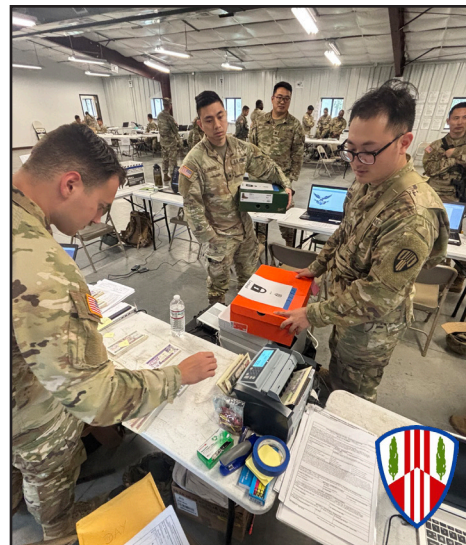
Taking part in the Diamond Saber training let the Soldiers get used to working together and refine their standard operating procedures, Catalano said.

Their major mission during deployment is dispersing funds used to pay contractors and make purchases, he said. Of course, the finance office will cash checks and collect money from Soldiers when required, Catalano added.

1st Lt. Kenneth Roque, the commander of the 14th Finance Company, said training was: "extremely valuable because it gives us the opportunity to do 'reps' on what we actually do in the military."

Soldiers lose some of the skills they develop in the field when they come back home, Roque said.

"Having an operating or field training exercise like Diamond Saber allows us to keep those



New York Army National Guard 1st Lt. Michael Catalano, the executive officer of the 37th Finance Company, and the Disbursing Agent, disburses training funds to his cashiers at the beginning of the business day allowing them to perform transactions for the day during Exercise Diamond Saber in July at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst. The two-week long finance training exercise enables finance Soldiers to spend a week operating as they would when deployed. Courtesy Photo.

skills in mind," he added.

Besides working with the computer systems, the Soldiers also got experience dispersing cash using special training currency that looks and feels like the real thing, according to Sgt. 1st Class Seth Wieland, who helped oversee the training.

The Soldiers had to deal with "foreign" funds as well as U.S. dollars and exchange the proper amounts of dollars for other currencies.

They also had to deal with money that had been contaminated or captured from the enemy.

And when the power went out in the training environment, the Soldiers tracked transactions manually.

The Soldiers also practiced "vault-to-vault" transactions.

This term is the term used when large sums of cash are transferred from one finance location to another, said Roque. 📷



New York Army National Guard Soldiers of the 14th Finance Company running a simulated finance office during Exercise Diamond Saber in July at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst. The two-week long finance training exercise enables finance Soldiers to spend a week operating as they would when deployed. Courtesy Photo.



# 42<sup>nd</sup> Band Performs on Ship, in Parks in August

Story by Eric Durr, *Guard Times* staff



The 42nd Infantry Division Band played aboard the USS Intrepid Museum as part of their summer tour. The soldiers entertained the New York City audience with rock and roll, show tunes, concert music and patriotic selections during the 90-minute "Salute to Service" concert. Courtesy photo.

NY Army National Guard Band played in the Hudson Valley, New York City, Long Island, and Camp Smith, Cortlandt Manor, New York — Twenty-seven Soldiers of the New York Army National Guard's 42nd Infantry Division Band played free performances in the Hudson Valley and on Long Island, August 1 to 9, 2025.

The band also played at the Intrepid Museum in New York City.

The summer performances included:

**August 1:** in Verplanck, at the Cortlandt Summer Concert and Movie Series on the Cortlandt Waterfront Performance Stage.

**August 2:** in Hicksville, New York at the 2nd Annual Veterans Appreciation Pancake Breakfast and Resource Fair. August 2 in

**August 3:** East Meadow at the Harry Chapin Lakeside Theater in Eisenhower Park.

**August 4 and August 5:** at the Intrepid Museum in New York City.

**August 6:** at the Usdan Summer Camp for the Arts in Wheatley Heights.

**August 7:** Fort Wadsworth on Staten Island at the Battery Weed overlook.

**August 8:** Port Washington at the Sousa Bandshell in Sunset Park.

**August 9:** Nanuet Public Library.

The band is commanded by Chief Warrant Officer 2 Ethan F. Wagner. The Non-commissioned officer in charge is Sgt. 1st Class Jared Anderson. **gt**



Twenty-seven soldiers of the New York Army National Guard's 42nd Infantry Division "Rainbow" Band performed Aug. 3 at the Harry Chapin Lakeside Theater in Eisenhower Park, East Meadow, N.Y. The soldiers entertained the Nassau County audience with rock and roll, show tunes, concert music and patriotic selections during the 90-minute "Salute to Service" concert. The band, which traces its history to World War I, most recently led a contingent during the Army's 250th birthday parade in Washington, D.C., June 14. Chief Warrant Officer 2 Ethan F. Wagner commands the band, stationed at Camp Smith Training Site near Peekskill, N.Y. (U.S. Army photos by Mark Getman)



# NY EOD Soldiers Conduct Validation Training for Counterparts From Three Other States

Story by Richard Goldenberg, Guard Times staff

CAMP DAWSON AIR FORCE RESERVE STATION, West Virginia —Members of the New York Army National Guard's 501st Ordnance Battalion, an explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) headquarters, ran a training event for 142 Soldiers from four different states from July 31 to August 4 at Camp Dawson, West Virginia.

The Glenville, New York- based battalion designed the two-week exercise to create demanding environments to test the training of the EOD platoons from four different companies.

While the battalion has five EOD companies "assigned" to it and aligned for training, four are in three other states and Puerto Rico. Only the 1108th Ordnance Company shares the Glenville location with the 501st headquarters.

That makes it difficult to pull all the units together in one place for training, explained Maj. Alexandra Collier, the battalion executive officer.

Getting Soldiers from the four EOD companies all in one place is a special event, said the battalion's Command Sgt. Major Micah Bowman.

"There's synergy in having such a broad depth of experience," Bowman said, noting that

bringing together the four EOD companies brought together some of the most knowledgeable EOD personnel from the entire east coast.

The 387th EOD company from Massachusetts, the 430th EOD Company based in North Carolina and the 753rd EOD from West Virginia took part in the annual training.

The Puerto Rico based company aligned for training with the 501st is the 1600th EOD Company.

Like so many Army National Guard elements, training proficiency begins with individuals and sections before moving to squads, platoons, companies and battalions, Bowman explained.

This annual training focused on platoon validations. Bowman said.

"We don't have squads, we have EOD teams," he said, "and our objective was to tackle platoon level tasks, employing teams in different training scenarios."

An EOD platoon operates with 8 to 11 Soldiers divided into teams of three Soldiers.

The scenarios included an ammunition holding area disaster, where an attack led to secondary explosions and fires with scattered munitions.

A second training lane reflected EOD response to unexploded ordnance following a chemical agent attack. And a third scenario involved securing an enemy weapon system for technical analysis, involving captured enemy vehicles with unexploded munitions around the site requiring EOD assessments for recovery, shipment and future



Army National Guard Soldiers assigned to the 430th EOD Company, part of the North Carolina Army National Guard, and the 387th EOD Company, Massachusetts Army National Guard, conduct measurements to aid in the identification of an unexploded ordnance item during platoon validation training of the 501st Ordnance Battalion held at Camp Dawson, W. Va., August 4, 2025. Courtesy photo.



Army National Guard Soldiers assigned to the 430th EOD Company, part of the North Carolina Army National Guard, and the 1108th EOD Company, New York Army National Guard, conduct Explosive Ordnance Disposal under Chemical and Biological conditions in order to complete platoon validation training at Camp Dawson, W. Va., August 4, 2025. Courtesy photo.

intelligence analysis.

"They're doing a real-world mission that has impacts," Bowman said, and honing EOD proficiency comes from demanding and realistic training scenarios.

The battalion worked hard to make sure there were enough training aids to make the scenarios realistic, Bowman said.

Bowman led an effort to include actual vehicles recovered from battlefields in Ukraine as part of the training. Inert ordnance and vehicles were borrowed from Aberdeen Proving Grounds in Maryland.

Aberdeen Proving Grounds is the home of the Army's 20th Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, Explosive (CBRNE) Command and other major EOD units.

Aberdeen loaned the 501st Russian wheeled and tracked vehicles, along with a variety of foreign munitions that most Army Guard EOD technicians would be unfamiliar with, Bowman said.



“We typically train on vehicles and weapons of the U.S. arsenal, contributing to the recovery of systems for battlefield recovery,” Bowman said.

“But here, we added complexity to the training by having Soldiers train for recovering a red (enemy) vehicle to turn over for analysis,” he added.

“It’s pretty novel for our Soldiers to walk into a scenario and see Russian equipment.”

The logistics challenge in getting the units, coordinating with supported elements such as the National Ground Intelligence Center for equipment, and moving training aids to West Virginia required a huge planning and coordinating effort, Bowman said.

“There were so many different aspects of resourcing we hadn’t thought of,” he said, “especially for all the rolling stock and training aids.”


Supporting the 501st EOD’s effort were Soldiers assigned to the New York Army Guard’s

1427th Transportation Company, and the 466th Area Support Medical Company. Both are based in Queensbury, N.Y.

“This was one of the best resourced events I’ve seen in the Army National Guard,” Bowman said.

The annual training period concluded with a change of command for the 501st Ordnance Battalion, with Maj. Kimberly McCarty, taking command.

McCarty, a veteran of the Afghan War and recipient of a Master Explosive Ordnance Disposal Badge, replaced Lt. Col. Justin Coutts in a ceremony August 9 in Glenville, N.Y.

“Everyone walked away with their objectives met,” Bowman said. “For our Soldiers, it was pretty euphoric at the end, with a real sense of accomplishment.” 



New York Army National Guard 1st Lt. Sarah Machina, the 2nd Platoon Leader assigned to the 1108th Ordnance Company (EOD), explains to Command Sgt. Maj. James Kendrick, the Army National Guard Command Senior Enlisted Leader, how she planned site management during platoon validation training actions at Camp Dawson, W. Va., August 4, 2025. Courtesy photo.



(Above) EGYPT- U.S. Army Soldiers assigned to the 42nd Infantry Division in support of Task Force Spartan, and Soldiers assigned to the 1-143rd Infantry Regiment, stand behind their unit flags on the Mohamed Naguib Military Base, Egypt, Sept. 1, 2025. Multinational operations and exercises, including BRIGHT STAR, increase the ability of our collective partners to operate in a joint, high-intensity environment, improving readiness, responsiveness and interoperability.

(Top Right) U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Patrick Clare (right), the Deputy Commanding General of the 42nd Infantry Division and U.S. military exercise director for BRIGHT STAR 2025, shakes hands with Egyptian Army Col. Mohamed Abdelrahman (left), the Port Operations Officer in Charge, at the Alexandria Port, Egypt, Aug. 29, 2025.

(Bottom Right) EGYPT- U.S. Army Soldiers assigned to the 3-278th Armored Cavalry Regiment, in support of Task Force Reaper, unload tactical vehicles from a cargo ship at the Alexandria Port, Egypt, Aug. 29, 2025. BRIGHT STAR 2025 builds on the strategic security relationship between Egypt and the United States, a historic partnership which plays a leading role in counterterrorism, regional security, and efforts to combat the spread of violent extremism.



## 42nd Soldiers at Bright Star 2025

Photos by Staff Sgt. Andrew Valenza, 42nd Infantry Division





# 42nd Infantry Division Soldiers Mark Division Birthday in Kuwait

Story and photo by Capt. Stephanie Sylvain, 42nd Infantry Division

CAMP ARIFJAN, KUWAIT — Soldiers of the 42nd Infantry Division commemorated their 108th birthday, September 5, 2025, marking over a century of dedicated service to the nation.

Despite being deployed in support of Operation Spartan Shield (OSS) as part of Task Force Spartan, the Division took time to honor its rich history and the Soldiers who continue to uphold its legacy.

The celebration, organized by Lt. Col. Katie Schin, Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion commander, and her staff, featured a full day of events.

The day began with a spirited two-mile victory run, followed by a luncheon at 1200 hours. The celebration culminated in an awards ceremony recognizing the outstanding contributions of soldiers within the unit and cake cutting.

A highlight of the ceremony was the reenlistment of 11 Soldiers, reaffirming their commitment to serve the Army for years to come.

Lt. Col. Schin presided over the oath of enlistment, underscoring the Division's continued strength through the dedication of its personnel.

The 42nd Infantry Division's origins date



New York Army National Guard Soldiers assigned to the 42nd Infantry Division renew their oaths of enlistment during a Sept. 5, 2025 ceremony at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait. The 42nd Infantry Division Soldiers celebrated the division's 108th birthday while deployed to the Central Command area.

back to August 1917, when it was organized at Camp Mills, Long Island, New York, following America's entry into World War I.

Recognizing the potential strain of wartime losses on individual states, the government strategically assembled the Division from National Guard units representing 26 states and the District of Columbia.

Shortly after its formation, Col. Douglas MacArthur famously dubbed the unit the "Rainbow Division," noting its diverse composition stretched "like a Rainbow from one end of America to the other."

This moniker reflects the Division's enduring spirit of unity and national representation.

Throughout its history, the 42nd ID has distinguished itself in both World Wars, enduring the trench warfare of World War I and bravely liberating the infamous Dachau concentration camp during World War II in 1946.

The Division's commitment extends beyond overseas conflicts.

Following its return from WWII, the 42nd

ID continued to serve domestically, responding to emergencies and natural disasters.

The "Rainbow" battalions played a critical role in the recovery and security operations following the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, at the World Trade Center.

Today, the 42nd ID continues to serve, currently deployed to Kuwait in support of Operation Spartan Shield.

Through OSS, Task Force Spartan maintains a vital U.S. military presence in Southwest Asia, strengthening defense relationships and building partner capacity.

Spc. Steven Diakite, a Signal Soldier with the 42nd ID, expressed hope for the future, stating, "I hope next year when we get home, that we will have the opportunity to make this a bigger celebration and bring friends and family for the 109th anniversary."

The 108th birthday celebration served as a powerful reminder of the 42nd Infantry Division's enduring legacy of service, sacrifice, and commitment to the defense of the nation. **gt**

## Soldiers Train in Chile

Photo by Capt. Danielle Dias, US Army Southern Command

ANTUCO, CHILE— New York Army National Guard Spc. Rosa Ibarra a mass communications specialist with 138th Public Affairs crosses a two-rope bridge under the supervision of Chilean army mountain instructors during Exercise Southern Vanguard 25 in Antuco Chile Aug. 16 2025. Exercise Southern Vanguard 25 underscores the U.S. Army's enduring commitment to regional partnership as U.S. forces deploy to Chile to conduct combined mountain warfare field and command post training alongside Chilean forces with participation from Argentina and Peru - strengthening interoperability shared readiness and mutual trust while advancing regional security and cooperation across the Western Hemisphere.





# Artillery Troops Train at NTC

Story by Richard Goldenberg, *Guard Times* staff



New York Army National Guard Soldiers assigned to Bravo Battery, 1st Battalion, 258th Field Artillery prepare a firing position during their support as the opposing force, or OPFOR, of a training rotation at the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, Calif., in August 2025. The battery deployed 100 Soldiers to support the force on force exercise, supporting the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, the training center's full-time opposing force, to be the enemy force for a training rotation. Courtesy photo.

FORT IRWIN, Calif — Two hundred forty-six New York Army National Guard Soldiers deployed to Fort Irwin, California, the home of the Army's National Training Center in the Mojave Desert, from July 15 to August 8.

Just under half that force were field artillery Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 258th Field Artillery Regiment from New York City.

The Soldiers served as the opposing force, known as the OPFOR, as part of the Army's 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, the training center's full-time opposing force, to be the enemy force for a training rotation, "fighting" the Florida Army National Guard's 53rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team.

At the National Training Center, the 53rd Brigade, with close to 5,000 Soldiers, conducted train-

ing against the OPFOR in mock battles across an expansive desert.

All actions of the simulated battle are tracked by mentors who observe and control the entire battlefield, providing assessments and preparing feedback. The Soldiers and their leaders culminate their training in a post-training review of what actions worked, what can be improved and what leadership lessons were learned.

The New York Soldiers included C Company of the 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment, based at Camp Smith Training Site in Cortlandt Manor; B Battery of the 1st Battalion, 258th Field Artillery, located at the Jamaica Armory in Queens; and an Electronic Warfare Platoon of the 152nd Brigade Engineer Battalion, located at Hancock Field Air National Guard Base in Syracuse.

All of the units are part of the

27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, which has elements across New York.

B Battery is equipped with six 105-millimeter M119 howitzers and its 100 artillerymen helped round out the OPFOR artillery team.

The team of infantry and artillery Soldiers arrived and conducted weapons qualification and integration training with the OPFOR before movements out into the maneuver training area, referred to as "the Box" by generations of Army Soldiers to participate in actions at the combat training center.

"In the Box, B BTRY practiced reconnaissance, (target) selection, and occupation of positions and simulated fire missions," said Capt. Greg Cheung, the B Battery commander. "Bravo Battery leveraged mobility, concealment, and dispersion in the vast Mojave Desert to

survive (the simulated battle)."

In the vast desert landscape, fighting a near-peer threat requires quick fire missions and the ability to rapidly relocate, or displace, to prevent counter fire if found, Cheung explained.

"At least once per day, Bravo Battery displaced and conducted a survivability move, relocating to a new position a few hundred meters away," he said. "The battery came under fire from enemy indirect fire, close air support, and even a night special forces raid."

The new environment provided challenges for sections and gun crews for relocations, Cheung said, especially after so many Soldiers are accustomed to annual training at the firing range at Fort Drum, N.Y.

Occupying positions to fire in the box so frequently and more widely dispersed stressed the sections, especially with the requirements to be readily available for fire missions.

"I feel I can safely say that most of us know most of the firing points (at Fort Drum) like the back of our hands," he said.

C Company of the 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry, a light infantry company, deployed to support the OPFOR infantry forces.

Members of the opposing force wore desert camouflage, retired from Army service 20 years ago, to make them distinctive on the training battlefield.

Individual and crew served weapons are modified with laser emitters and forces inside the box wear a harness with sensors to determine kills. This means units have to deal with resupply of ammunition, evacuation and treatment of wounded personnel and repair or evacuation of vehicles.

"Overall, I think we got a lot more training value at this annual training," Cheung said. **gt**



## 106<sup>th</sup> Galaxy Camp Strengthens Military Families through Science, Leadership and Community

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

FRANCIS S. GABRESKI AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, WESTHAMPTON BEACH, N.Y. — The 106th Rescue Wing hosted 60 children of New York Air National Guard Airmen during the 19th annual Galaxy Camp at Francis S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base, July 14-18, 2025.

The weeklong program, organized by the wing's Airman and Family Readiness Office, provided hands-on learning, field trips, and an introduction to science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), with a focus on building family resilience and leadership.

"Galaxy Camp has grown from a simple idea into a key part of our wing's connection to families," said Lisa D'Agostino, 106th Rescue Wing Airman and Family Readiness Program manager. "It's about developing confidence, leadership and resiliency for the next generation, and it simply wouldn't be possible without the outstanding support of wing leadership, our Airmen and the volunteer junior counselors."

Throughout the week, the camp emphasized the Air National Guard's core values of safety, teamwork and communication.

The opening day featured STEM activities led by Dr. Dadriane Townes, the executive director

of The DEE Approach, who engaged participants in physics and weather experiments and an aviation challenge to build and launch model aircraft.

"The enthusiasm and participation from the campers and service members alike shows the strength of this community and the value of educational engagement," Townes said. "Experiences like Galaxy Camp create positive memories for young people and reinforce the commitment of Guardsmen to their families."

On July 15, the group visited the Suffolk County Farm and Education Center in Yaphank, learning about local agriculture and the importance of food and animal care to military and community resiliency.

Campers visited the Cradle of Aviation Museum in Garden City, where they explored more than 75 historic aircraft and participated in interactive STEM exhibits on flight, space, and aviation science, including flight simulators, cockpit displays, and educator-led workshops.

Volunteers from Human Understanding and Growth Services (HUGS) visited the camp on July 17 to lead interactive sessions focused on wellness, personal growth, and leadership development.

Tracy Collins, catering director for two Chick-fil-A restaurants, visited the camp on July 17 and spoke to campers about the importance of helping others. Chick-fil-A sponsored lunch for the group that day.

The final day included



Galaxy Campers, children of Airmen from the 106th Rescue Wing, participate in archery training at Suffolk County Farm and Education Center, Yaphank, N.Y., July 15, 2025. Each camper learned to handle bows and arrows safely and practiced focus, discipline, and teamwork as part of the hands-on STEM and resilience programming during the 19th annual Galaxy Camp. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Kevin J. Donaldson, 106th Rescue Wing.

demonstrations by the 106th Rescue Wing Fire Department and tours of both the HH-60W Jolly Green II search and rescue helicopter and the HC-130J Combat King II search and rescue aircraft.

Campers also toured the headquarters of the wing's pararescue squadron, where Airmen train to deploy behind enemy lines for combat search and rescue missions. Campers received briefings on pararescue operations and explored specialized rescue vehicles and equipment.

The camp concluded with a graduation ceremony, where all attendees received certificates of excellence.

Col. Jeffrey Cannet, 106th Rescue Wing commander, addressed the participants during graduation.

"To our campers and junior counselors, thank you for your energy, teamwork and willingness to try new things," Cannet said. "You have represented yourselves and the 106th Rescue Wing exceptionally well."

The benefits of Galaxy Camp are celebrated across generations of wing families. ✎



Galaxy Campers, children of Airmen from the 106th Rescue Wing, participate in hands-on STEM activities at the Cradle of Aviation Museum during the 19th annual Galaxy Camp, Garden City, N.Y., July 16, 2025. The campers took part in educator-led workshops, applying scientific principles through flight simulators and engineering challenges that fostered curiosity and critical thinking. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Kevin J. Donaldson, 106th Rescue Wing.



# 107<sup>th</sup> Medical Group Supports Pennsylvanians

Story by Capt. Jason Carr, 107th Attack Wing



Service members from across the United States armed forces pose for a group photo prior to launching Operation Healthy Ellwood, Ellwood City, Pennsylvania, July 22, 2025. Operation Healthy Ellwood is supported through the Department of Defense's Innovative Readiness Training program that aligns mission-essential training with community need. Photo by Senior Airman Alexis Morris, 512th Airlift Wing.

ELLWOOD CITY, Pa. — Twenty Airmen from the New York Air National Guard's 107th Attack Wing's Medical Group, stationed in Niagara Falls NY, were among 160 joint service members from 25 units supporting Operation Healthy Ellwood, an Innovation Readiness Training (IRT) mission, July 23 to Aug. 1, 2025.

The Department of Defense-led effort provided free medical, dental, optometry, and veterinary services to the residents of Ellwood City— no ID, insurance, or income required.

By the end of the mission a total of \$1.2M in services was provided to the Ellwood City community.

According to the Department of Defense Innovation Readiness Training website, the program is designed to bring needed care to underserved American communities while giving military personnel realistic, hands-on training. Service members from the U.S. Air Force, Army, and Navy participated.

Over the 10-day mission, the team conducted more than 3,500 general consultations, 1,255 optometry visits, 922 dental appointments, 836 medical exams, and 380 veterinary appointments, said Tech. Sgt. Kimberley Cyna-Capodicasa, a medical technician from Grand Island, N.Y., assigned to the 107th.

"The majority of our group was able to accomplish a lot of great training during this time — both for the Air Force and for working in a deployed medical setting," Cyna-Capodicasa

said.

For Col. Nicole Hurley, a command nurse with Air Force Reserve Command, the mission was personal. Hurley grew up in Ellwood City and has seen firsthand the challenges residents face in accessing care.

"Two years ago, I was invited to a distinguished visitors' event in rural Louisiana," Hurley said. "As soon as I saw the services being provided, the first thing I thought was, 'this needs to come to Ellwood City.'"


The town, located north of Pittsburgh in Lawrence County, once thrived on steel mills, quarries, and coal mining. But its primary hospital, Ellwood City Medical Center, closed in early 2020 after years of financial struggles.

The facility has remained inactive despite a 2022 sale to a California-based investment group.

By bringing critical services to the region, Operation Healthy Ellwood helped fill

the gap, while Airmen exercise expeditionary skills in a real-world environment.

1st Lt. Eric Marburger, acting assistant logistics officer and transportation officer for the mission, also assigned to the 107th, grew up in nearby New Castle, Pa.

"To be part of a team dedicated to providing service, not only for a community in need, but to the county I grew up in, was extremely rewarding," Marburger said. 



Senior Airman Kyla Honey, 512th Aerospace Medicine Squadron optometry technician, checks a patient's vision during the Operation Healthy Ellwood Innovative Readiness Training in Ellwood City, Pennsylvania, July 22, 2025. The IRT mission is to produce mission-ready forces through military training opportunities that provide key services for American communities. Photo by Staff Sgt. John Rossi, 512th Airlift Wing.





## 2000 Visit New York Air National Guard Showcase in Rome

*Story by Eric Durr, Guard Times staff*

Visitors to the New York Air National Guard Showcase 2025, held at the former Griffiss Air Force Base in Rome, New York on Sept. 13, 2025, inspect an HH-60W Jolly Green II rescue helicopter. The event gave 2,000 visitors the chance to see New York Air National Guard aircraft up close and to learn about opportunities in the Air National Guard. Photo by Capt. Tanasha Walker, 224th Air Defense Sector

ROME, New York— About 2,000 people turned out for the New York Air National Guard's Showcase 2025 held on Saturday, Sept. 13 at what was once Griffiss Air Force Base.

New York Air National Guard wings from Long Island to Syracuse deployed aircraft to the event hosted by the Griffiss Institute at what is now Griffiss International Airport.

Aircraft on display included an HC-130J Combat King search and rescue plane, and an HH-60W Jolly Green II rescue helicopter from the 106th Rescue Wing, an MQ-9 Reaper remotely operated aircraft flown by the 174th Attack Wing, and a CH-47F Chinook heavy lift helicopter operated by the New York Army National Guard.

There were also exhibits of equipment and high-tech gear like a robot dog now used to provide security around some air bases.

Tom Arcura, one of the visitors, said he, his wife Chelsie and his son Emerson, had a great time checking out the aircraft and the exhibits.

"Any chance to see aircraft up close is great," Arcura said.

Arcura said he works for General Atomics, the firm which builds the MQ-9 but had never seen an actual aircraft.

"I was really interested to see that, since I have only seen models and videos," Arcura explained.

Zack Zegarelli, another visitor, said he got a kick out of watching his son check out the aircraft.

"He would go from seat, to seat, to seat, just running around like it as a playground," Zegarelli said.

Brig. Gen. Paul Bishop, the former commander of the Rome-based Eastern Air Defense Sector, who serves as Chief of Staff of the New York Air National Guard, was the driving force behind the event.

He got the idea during a change of command ceremony held at Stewart Air National Guard Base for the incoming commander of the 105th Airlift Wing, Bishop said. As part of the event, each of the New York Air National Guard's four wings which own and operate aircraft had a plane on display, he recalled.

It was very impressive, and he wanted to do

the same thing in Rome, Bishop said. When Griffiss Air Force Base was an active Air Force facility, the annual base open house was a big deal and he wanted to bring that energy back as a community outreach effort, he explained.

"It's exciting to see a youngster light up when they have an opportunity to see up close, and touch, an airplane for maybe the first time," Bishop said.

"But then, to build on that enthusiasm and generate some ideas to fly those, or maintain those, or do the services for those folks that do, is exciting," Bishop added.

Capt. Peter Hiffa, a member of the Eastern Air Defense Sector, who served as the project officer for the showcase, said that the Air Guard also reached out to other technology companies in the area to be part of the event.

"Just because you don't wear a uniform doesn't mean you're not important," Hiffa said.

The goal, he said, is to make this an annual community outreach and recruiting event.

"We want to show what the New York Air National Guard does," he said. **gt**



# 109<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing Launches Flight-line Orientation Program

Story and photos by Master Sgt. Jamie Spaulding, 109th Rescue Wing

STRATTON AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, Schenectady, N.Y. — On the flight-line at Stratton Air National Guard Base, Airmen from the 109th Maintenance Group lean over open engine panels while flight engineers from the 139th Airlift Squadron take notes, ask questions, and trade their usual in-flight checklists for wrenches and technical orders.

It is the latest session of a new cross-training program that is quietly reshaping how two of the 109th Airlift Wing's most technical career fields work together. Maintainers and flight engineers, who usually meet only during pre-flight walk-arounds or post-mission debriefs, are now stepping into each other's worlds to better understand the LC-130's every bolt, switch, and sensor.

The 109th Airlift Wing is the only unit in the world that flies ski-equipped LC-130 Hercules aircraft, delivering critical cargo and scientists to remote research sites in Greenland and Antarctica in support of the National Science Foundation. In such unforgiving environments, trust between the people who maintain the aircraft and those who fly them is not optional—it's life-saving.

"When you're landing on an ice runway 800 miles from the nearest hangar, there's no room for doubt," said Tech. Sgt. Stephen Cernak, a flight engineer who recently spent time shadowing the maintenance crew.

"Understanding what our maintainers do and what they're paying attention to on the aircraft gives

me confidence when I'm monitoring those systems in the air."

Aircraft maintainers who are formally designated AFSC 2A5X1/2A5X2 are responsible for every major system on the LC-130. They inspect engines and propellers, repair hydraulics and electrical networks, and prepare the aircraft for the bitter cold and shifting weather of the polar regions.

Flight engineers (AFSC 1A1X1) are enlisted aircrew members who serve as technical experts during missions. From their seat between the pilots, they monitor fuel flow, engine performance, pressurization, and electrical output while advising on performance limits and emergency procedures.

"It's easy to get tunnel vision in your own specialty," said Tech. Sgt. Jeffrey Bates, a crew chief who recently participated in the training. "There's a lot of stuff that happens behind the scenes that goes unnoticed when the plane is not flying, like inspections, basic servicing, and scheduled maintenance. Now, when I hand over an aircraft for a mission, I understand exactly what the engineer is looking for, and why." Leaders



Airmen with the 109th Airlift Wing participate in Flight-Line Orientation Training, a program to familiarize Flight Engineers and Maintainers with each other's roles to enhance unit readiness and capabilities.

say the initiative is already paying dividends. Pre-flight inspections are smoother, communication is clearer, and Airmen on both sides report a greater sense of mutual respect.

"The better we understand each other's jobs, the stronger our team becomes," said Master Sgt. Christopher Dumond, one of the program's coordinators. "That's critical when you're operating at the ends of the Earth. Due to the singular nature of our ski mission and the limited amount of maintenance personnel that travel with us, these new flight engineers with no prior maintenance experience must know these skills to keep the

mission going."

As the 109th gears up for another year of Arctic and Antarctic missions, the cross-training effort is expected to expand, with more Airmen rotating through each discipline. The goal is simple: an LC-130 team that can anticipate problems before they occur—whether on a frozen sea-ice runway or 30,000 feet above the Southern Ocean.

For the Airmen of the 109th, it's one more way to ensure that when the mission calls, every wrench turn and every engine reading is backed by a shared understanding of the aircraft that makes pole-to-pole power projection possible. **gt**



Airmen with the 109th Airlift Wing participate in Flight-Line Orientation Training, a program to familiarize Flight Engineers and Maintainers with each other's roles to enhance unit readiness and capabilities.





U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. James Liston, an HH-60W Jolly Green II pilot, assigned to the 106th Rescue Wing, New York Air National Guard, walks on the flight line during exercise Resolute Force Pacific 2025 at Misawa Air Base, Japan, July 22, 2025. The 106th Rescue Wing serves as a real-world rescue asset in support of REFORPAC, a first-in-a-generation Department-Level Exercise involving more than 400 joint and coalition aircraft and more than 12,000 members at more than 50 locations across 3,000 miles. Photo by Tech Sgt. Sean Madden, 106th Rescue Wing.



# 106<sup>th</sup> Rescue Wing Serves as Real-World Rescue Asset During Japanese Based Exercise

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

MISAWA AIR BASE, Japan — Over 100 U.S. Air Force Airmen, from the New York Air National Guard's 106th Rescue Wing, deployed to Misawa Air Base, Japan, in support of exercise Resolute Force Pacific 2025, the largest contingency response exercise ever conducted in the Indo-Pacific region, July 10 to August 8, 2025.

The exercise is part of the first-in-a-generation Department-Level Exercise series, encompassing all branches of the Department of Defense, along with allies and partners, employing more than 400 joint and coalition aircraft and more than 12,000 members at more than 50 locations across 3,000 miles.

The 106th served as a real-world rescue capability throughout the duration of the exercise, postured to respond to personnel recovery requirements in the event of a real-world emergency.

"We are actually here for real-world search and rescue for [everyone] participating in the exercise," said Maj. Patrick Osahor, HH-60W Jolly Green II helicopter rescue pilot with the 106th Rescue Wing's 101st Rescue Squadron. "Because of the density of the aircraft participating in REFORPAC, the 106th Rescue Wing, along with other rescue squadrons, are actually supporting that effort in the context of, if an actual real-world emergency does happen, we are ready to be there to pick up those individuals."

The 106th integrated closely with other ANG rescue units including aircrew from California and New Mexico, and pararescuemen from Alaska.

"Working with multiple organizations and the end result being the ability for us to be able to work together to come to a common goal is significant," said Osahor. "The more we can do these types of exercises and get this level of integration, the better prepared the squadron will be to execute in any environment in the future."

Major Jason Bagwell, an HC-130J Combat King II combat systems officer with the 188th Rescue Squadron, 150th Special Operations Wing, New Mexico ANG, explained how REFORPAC provided an opportunity to see the impact of training efforts executed back home.

"Operating with other units in the National Guard has been excellent," he said. "At Kirtland Air Force Base, we are responsible for training the entirety of the rescue enterprise, and so I get an opportunity to come out and fly with the units that I've been training for the past couple of years, seeing how they're operating in the real world and seeing them excel in the real mission."

For many Airmen, REFORPAC provided a firsthand look at how their efforts contribute to the broader mission.

"It feels great, honestly, being a part of it because it's hard to see sometimes just the impact that you may have on a big mission, especially one as big as this, but it feels like being a part of something greater," said Staff Sgt. Victor Otton, an electrical engineer specialist with the 106th Rescue Wing.

Reflecting on the mission, Osahor emphasized the importance of readiness within the rescue community.

"Being in the rescue community is the 911 call," he said. "If we are never called to perform our jobs as rescue Airmen, then that is a good day. The capacity to be able to train and be prepared to receive that

call and execute at the highest level though, is the reason why we're here." **gt**



U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. John Marin, an HH-60W crew chief with the 106th Rescue Wing, works with a Japan Air Self-Defense Force refueling technician to refuel an HH-60W Jolly Green II search and rescue helicopter during exercise Resolute Force Pacific (REFORPAC) 2025 at Misawa Air Base, Japan, July 22, 2025.



U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Harrison Heintz, an HH-60W crew chief with the 106th Rescue Wing, assists a Japan Air Self-Defense Force refueling technician with refueling operations during exercise Resolute Force Pacific (REFORPAC) 2025 at Misawa Air Base, Japan, July 22, 2025.





ORANGE COUNTY, N.Y.  
— Civil Air Patrol cadets get a tour of the U.S. F-22 Raptor Demo Team aircraft on the flightline at Stewart Air National Guard Base, New York, Aug. 22, 2025. The demo team landed at Stewart ANGB in preparation for the New York Air Show at the Orange County Airport, Montgomery, New York. Photo by Senior Airman Sarah Post, 105th Airlift Wing.

## On the Flightline at the 105<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing

## 174th Attack Wing Hosts 4th Annual Runway 5K



HANCOCK FIELD AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, N.Y. — Participants in the 4th Annual 174th Attack Wing Runway 5K jog across the tarmac at Hancock Field Air National Guard Base, Aug. 2. More than 450 participants registered to complete the run, which was hosted in partnership with the Syracuse Hancock International Airport. Photo by Tech Sgt. Alexander Rector, 174th Attack Wing.



HANCOCK FIELD AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, N.Y. — Members of the New York Air National Guard's 174th Attack Wing stand in formation while preparing to present the colors during the 4th annual Runway 5K, Aug. 2. More than 450 participants registered to complete the run, which was hosted in partnership with the Syracuse Hancock International Airport. Photo by Tech Sgt. Alexander Rector, 174th Attack Wing.



# 109th Wraps Up Successful Greenland Season

*Story and photo by Jocelyn Tuller, 109th Airlift Wing*



A group from The Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) visits Kangerlussuaq, Greenland to learn more about the mission of the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the 109th Airlift Wing of the New York Air National Guard, August 6, 2025. The mission of the Council on Foreign Relations is to inform U.S. engagement with the world.

**STRATTON AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, N.Y.** — The New York Air National Guard's 109th Airlift Wing has wrapped up its 2025 support season for National Science Foundation research in Greenland.

The season began in April and concluded at the end of August, with the 109th conducting essential airlift missions to support scientific research on the Greenland ice cap. The unit's primary responsibilities included transporting personnel, equipment and supplies to remote locations.

The wing's Airmen flew more than 360 hours and transported 1 million pounds of cargo, 80,000 gallons of fuel and 630 passengers in support of Arctic operations.

Their work ensured the continued flow of supplies and personnel, enabling operations and research in one of the world's most challenging environments.

The close of the Greenland support season also marks the start of

preparations for the next operational cycle.

The 109th will begin its annual Operation Deep Freeze support season in October, supplying U.S. scientific facilities in Antarctica.

"The 109th's success in completing this year's Greenland mission proves our aircrew and support staff have unwavering dedication and exceptional skill, even in the harshest conditions," said Col. Steven Slosek, commander of the 109th Airlift Wing. "Now, as we transition to Antarctica, that same spirit will drive us as we support U.S. interests. This adaptability is the heart of the wing's success."

The Antarctic support season runs from October through February 2026.

The LC-130 Hercules aircraft flown by the 109th are the largest ski-equipped aircraft in the world, capable of landing on snow and ice. **gt**



A member from The Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) sits in the flight deck of a LC-130 Hercules in Kangerlussuaq, Greenland, August 6, 2025. The mission of the Council on Foreign Relations is to inform U.S. engagement with the world.



# 106<sup>th</sup> Security Forces Squadron Tests Skills at Defender Challenge

Story and photos by Tech. Sgt. Daniel Farrell 106th Attack Wing

Francis S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base, N.Y. — Two Hundred Airmen from 31 Air National Guard and active duty units from across the country.

Trained with Airmen from the New York Air National Guard's 106th Rescue Wing at Francis S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base from August 4 to 8.

The Air Guardsmen were there for Montauk Lightning II, an exercise focused on Air Force combat support services.

participated in Montauk Lightning II, an exercise based out of the New York Air National Guard's 106th Rescue Wing, in Westhampton Beach, New York. The exercise spanned across multiple locations throughout eastern Long Island, from August 4 to 8, 2025.

"It is focused around field feeding, personnel accountability, casualty and mortuary affairs, tent building and search and recovery operations," said Capt. Douglas Duncan, the commander of the 106th Force Support Squadron and the exercise planner.

"Montauk Lightning is an exercise focused on combat support services," said Capt. Douglas Duncan, 106th Force Support Squadron commander and exercise planner.



Airmen from the New York Air National Guard's 106th Rescue Wing Security Forces Squadron practice Tactical Combat Casualty Care (TCCC) during a Defender Challenge at Francis S. Gabreski, Westhampton Beach, N.Y., September 7, 2025.

"For the [Force Support Squadron] it is focused around field feeding, personnel accountability, casualty, mortuary affairs, tent building, and search and recovery operations."

The large-scale exercise led by the 106th Rescue Wing Force Support Squadron created a hub and spoke-style deployment environment consisting of teams geographically separated across Southampton, Westhampton, and Riverhead, on eastern Long Island. according to Chief Master Sgt. Neil Allison, the 106th Force Support Squadron senior enlisted leader.

(Story Continued on page 29)



GREENLAND — Members from the 109th participated in the annual Running of the Moskus race in Kangerlussuaq, Greenland. The purpose of the race is to unite the community in a fun event and to raise money for the Kangerlussuaq School. Courtesy Photo



“Typically wings tend to focus on home station support verses getting after their deployed expeditionary requirements,” said Duncan. “Montauk Lightning allows folks to get out of their comfort zones...actually getting after combat support services.”

The exercise started with a day of classroom training at the State University of New York, Stony Brook campus in Southampton. Then the Airmen dispersed to their field locations.

A simulated headquarters at the Southampton campus pushed information out to the exercise locations. Allison explained.

In Westhampton, Airmen moved into an empty field and turned it into a functional area of operation. This included setting up a tactical operation center for command and control, tents for services lodging, search and recovery, and a mortuary affairs collection point, according to 1st Lt. Lisa Tijerina, a member of the Iowa Air National Guard’s 132nd Force Support Squadron, and exercise facilitator.

Montauk Lightning II marked a significant increase in size and scope of the exercise from last year, according to Duncan.

“The national troop movements that took place are not what we are used to seeing in exercises,” said Duncan. “It was thousands of personnel that got moved throughout the three days, that our members had to in-process, account for, lodge, beddown.”

The exercise play also called for an increase in the number and frequency of casualties, Duncan said.

“In one location we had 20 casualties occur in 1 hour,” Duncan, said.

Force Support Squadron personnel are expected to search and recover bodies after rescue operations have been completed. Exercise planners sourced meat and organs from a local butcher shop for participants to recover to make it very visceral and real, according to Duncan.

“Not only did we have our mannequins, the support from the butcher shop provided real flesh to imitate what the Airmen could be experiencing in the real-world,” said Tijerina. “It brought Airmen a new perspective on how it would smell, how you can or cannot operate with flesh and blood, and how to transport human remains with dignity and what that really means.”

For participants, the use of flesh helped put prior training into perspective.

“I feel like it’s one thing seeing it in books and on computers, and another thing actually being hands on,” said Staff Sgt. Jhoanna Barcelo Vega, a member of the Arizona Air National Guard’s 162nd Force Support Squadron

Airmen from the New York Air National Guard’s 106th Communications Flight, Iowa Air National Guard’s 132nd Communications Squadron, and Maine Air National Guard’s 265th Combat Communications Squadron participated in the exercise, allowing the simulated deployment to include communication challenges as well.

“We really stressed their communications,” said Duncan. “Most exercises they don’t go this route...we actually brought internet down and we actually stressed them to problem-solve as to how they will actually communicate in an environment where communication doesn’t exist.”

Overall, exercise Montauk Lightning II saw a 135% increase in participation from last year.

“This year Montauk Lightning II had over 200 personnel...and we could have taken a lot more, but we ran out of space.” **gt**



**U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Justin Pierre-Louis, a 106th Security Forces specialist, ruck marches during a Defender Challenge at the 106th Rescue Wing, Francis S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base, Westhampton Beach, N.Y., September 7, 2025. A Defender Challenge is a Security Forces competition that test skills in physical fitness, weapons handling, base ground tactics and operational skills.**



**Airmen from the New York Air National Guard’s 106th Rescue Wing Security Forces Squadron bear crawl during a Defender Challenge at the 106th Rescue Wing, Francis S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base, Westhampton Beach, N.Y., September 7, 2025.**



**Airmen from the New York Air National Guard’s 106th Rescue Wing Security Forces Squadron run with a weapons tripod during a Defender Challenge at the 106th Rescue Wing, Francis S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base, Westhampton Beach, N.Y., September 7, 2025.**



## New York Guard Member Saves Firefighters Life With Kidney Donation

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

**NEW YORK —** On July 2, 2025, New York Guard Chief Warrant Officer 2 Theodore “Teddy” Earley saved a life.

Earley, a personnel specialist in the New York Guard’s 56th Company, donated a kidney to New York City Fire Department Emergency Medical Services Lieutenant P.J. Acosta that day.

Acosta, a 43-year-old, 24-year veteran of the FDNY, was in end-stage renal disease. The only thing keeping him alive were regular lengthy dialysis sessions, which prevented him from working.

“Mr. Earley did indeed save my life, and I am here today because of him,” Acosta said.

“He gave me a second chance to live and see my daughter graduate college and get married one day and gave me a chance to be a grand-

father in the future. He gave me a chance to go back to the job that I love and wear the uniform again and retire my way, not on a disability,” Acosta said.

Earley’s trip to the operating room at Montefiore Hospital in the Bronx began in March when he saw a fire department social media post seeking a kidney donor for Acosta.

Friends and family had been tested, but none of those kidneys were a match.

Earley said he decided he had to do something.

“I said to myself, ‘Teddy, this guy has dedicated 24 years of his life. If you don’t try to do anything for this guy, you are not going to be able to sleep.’”

The day after he saw the post, Earley was in the hospital starting tests to see if he could spare one of his two kidneys for Acosta.

Before joining the New York Guard, the state’s self-defense force — Earley served in the Army National Guard from 2007 to 2017. He served in both the 1st Battalion, 258th Field Artillery and the 2nd Battalion, 108th Infantry.

He deployed to Afghanistan in 2012 and sustained back injuries which resulted in him leaving the Army Guard in 2017 as a sergeant.

He didn’t want to give up uniformed service, so he joined the New York Guard, which augments the New York National Guard on state missions.

He also got involved in the Fire Bell Club of New York, a group which supports the New York City fire department, where he serves on their board of directors.

It turned out that Earley, a Dutchess County resident, was not just a match for Acosta’s kidney, he was a perfect match.

Acosta, meanwhile, was told that a total stranger was able and willing to donate a kidney to him.

So, on July 2, both men were in the hospital for Earley to donate and Acosta receive a kidney.

Earley was released after one day in the hospital, and when Acosta was released two



**New York Guard Warrant Officer 1 Theodore Earley, left, a veteran of the New York Army National Guard, donated a kidney to Fire Department New York EMS lieutenant P.J. Acosta, right, in July, 2025. Earley, a member of the board of directors of the Fire Bell Club, which supports the fire department, was a 100 percent match for Acosta who was suffering from end-stage renal disease. The New York Guard is the state’s self-defense force which augments the New York National Guard on state missions. Courtesy photo.**



**New York Guard Warrant Officer 1 Theodore Earley, a veteran of the New York Army National Guard, donated a kidney to Fire Department New York EMS lieutenant P.J. Acosta in July, 2025. Earley, a member of the board of directors of the Fire Bell Club, which supports the fire department, was a 100 percent match for Acosta who was suffering from end-stage renal disease. Courtesy photo.**

days later, Earley was there to say hello for the first time.

Earley said he’s proud of his work with the Firebell Club, supporting the fire department, and says donating his kidney was just an extension of that support.

Earley “has become family,” Acosta said.

“We speak every day and see each other often. My entire blood family and Fire Department family are very grateful,” Acosta said.

Acosta must take a regime of pills to prevent his body from rejecting the kidney, but he has had no side effects from the surgery, Earley said.

In fact, the back pain he had from Afghanistan now seems to have vanished, he added.

He is “a thousand percent grateful” he decided to donate the kidney, Earley said.

“Clearly P.J. is a solid guy, you know he dedicated nearly 25 years of his life in service of others,” Earley said.

“Just knowing that I can give back to somebody who has done that, it’s very humbling,” Earley said. **gt**



## New York Naval Militia Supports Navy and Coast-guard Training Exercise on St. Lawrence River

Story by Stephanie Butler, *Guard Times staff*

ALEXANDRIA BAY, N.Y. — Members of the New York Naval Militia joined U.S. Navy reservists and Coastguardsmen to work collectively to complete Operation Commanding Force at Alexandria Bay on the Saint Lawrence River, July 18, 2025.

Medical corpsman from the Navy Reserve completed their two-week medical field hospital training at Fort Drum, N.Y., before heading to Alexandria Bay for the practical portion of their training.

Operation Commanding Freedom is a triage exercise for Navy medical personnel, known as corpsmen, to identify and treat medical emergencies with the scenario of water rescue.

The corpsmen boarded two New York Naval Militia boats in groups of five, along with one additional Coast Guard boat.

The Coast Guard is stationed at Alexandria Bay; they predominantly used the exercise to practice retrieving 'victims' from the water.

"We would send a set of personnel overboard, the Coast Guard would come and retrieve them from the water and take them to the pier where they would assess injuries and treat before staging the next set," explained Capt. Maryetta Nolan, chief of staff for the New York Naval Militia.

During the exercise they used all three boats to do an abandon ship drill in which they were all able to gather in a circle in the water and follow man overboard procedures.

"It was a good opportunity to pull people out of the water in a controlled environment where they had helmets and life preservers," Nolan said.

"It wasn't really a big exercise, but it was a good exercise for the medical personnel after spending a whole week at Fort Drum to be able to be out on the boats practicing what they had learned," Nolan added.

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

The 40 hospital corpsmen, nurses and doctors attending Operation Commanding Force are assigned to the Navy Reserve Navy Medicine Readiness and Training Command in Portsmouth, Va., which provided medical training oversight during the training rotation.

The rotation included an additional 16 Sailors from Navy Medical Forces Atlantic, based in Bethesda, Md. Some arrived from as far away as California and New Mexico, while others had a closer trip from upstate New York and Cleveland, Ohio.

"Our overall intent is to get everyone's annual training requirements completed here at Fort Drum, because there is no other place where we could get all the

different training courses we need all in one place," she said. "And that's originally what Operation Commanding Force was created to do. Over the years we've added new things and, thankfully, the Army has been very supportive of that," said Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Autumn Jeffries, assistant for the training officer.

"Every year we've been able to expand the training, and I think it gives our Sailors the best training opportunities that they can have right now," said Capt. Milan Moncilovich, command of the Navy Reserve Naval Medicine Readiness and Training Command, Portsmouth.

"They're not getting this type of hands-on training anywhere else, so we've enhanced the program both on land and on the water to give them a broad dichotomy of training – what we call reps and sets in terms of what they need to do," he said. **gt**



Naval Militia Members along with Reserve Corpsman of the United States Navy work together on the St. Lawrence River as part of a training exercise on July 18, 2025.



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