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DMNA

Warren County Sheriff Eyes State Land on Fox Farm Road

Glens Falls Post Star, April 24, 2025 :

QUEENSBURY – The Warren County Sheriff's Office will look to obtain a piece of state-owned land on Fox Farm Road in Queensbury to enhance operational capabilities.

Warren County Sheriff Jim LaFarr explained that the property will be used for agency training, emergency communications, operational deployments, emergency response, and secure storage.

The parcel of land in Queensbury will be “very useful for us,” LaFarr said.

“They [New York State] have vacated the property, and it would be ideal for us to use as a training, storage, and communications facility,” LaFarr said.

The land on Fox Farm Road has been classified as “stockpiled property” owned by the New York State Division of Military and Naval Affairs. The property has not been in use for years.

“They have no use for it. They're essentially walking away from it. It'll be amazing for our sheriff's office. We can do so much with it,” LaFarr said.

https://poststar.com/news/local/article_50e81985-c80f-49c9-a3fd-4d9a9bf42790.html

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DOCCS Support

Female National Guard members deployed in NY prisons allegedly filmed while undressing: “Incredibly disturbing”

New York Post, April 22, 2025 ::

National Guard members deployed in New York prisons have endured unacceptable treatment, including female members filmed changing clothes and exposure to noxious fumes from makeshift drug use, The Post has learned.

Governor Kathy Hochul drafted in 8,200 members of the state National Guard and declared a state of emergency in February after an illegal strike by prison workers left facilities dramatically understaffed.

However, after being mandated for duty, the guardsmen were badly trained and subjected to various horrors in the prison environment, according to a source.

A group of eight female members stationed at the Taconic Correctional Facility in Bedford Hills, NY, were housed in prison facilities where they were allegedly subject to “humiliating surveillance” by video while they slept and changed their clothes.

The women had asked for the video surveillance to be switched off, but the cameras remained on, the source told The Post.

“They were told that the cameras were not active, but they knew the cameras were on because of offhand comments made by prison staff,” the source said, adding the women are now seeking legal representation.

A spokesperson for the minimum security prison said they were aware of the accusations and an investigation is underway by the prison service and New York State Police.

“Our top priority is ensuring the safety and security of all individuals who enter our facilities. We are aware of these incredibly disturbing allegations ... [We] will impose strong disciplinary action for anyone who is found to have violated the privacy of these individuals,” a statement to The Post read.

Other national guardsmen serving in New York prisons said increasingly desperate inmates pulled the lithium batteries out of their prison-issue tablets and “cooked” them to get high, according to the insider. The Post is not naming the facilities in order to protect sources.

As a result, the guard members inhaled these fumes, leaving them worried they would test positive for drug use after mandatory urine testing.

The source said drug addicted prisoners got so desperate because their usual sources – regular prison guards as well as their personal visitors – weren't able to supply. All visits by the public were suspended during the 22 day strike.

“In response to a reported increase of exposures to illegal substances, we are investing in legal mail scanners to detect substances and protect staff, the National Guard, and the incarcerated population,” added the statement from the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision.

It also said staff will confiscate damaged tablets and discipline those who tamper with them.

The state of emergency was declared on Feb. 19 after 12,000 prison guards walked off the job during a wildcat strike, impacting 42 out of 45 state prisons.

Three weeks later, Hochul fired 2,000 corrections guards who then refused to return to work.

After the Guardsmen were drafted in, they were given only rudimentary training to prepare them for some of the most ruthless people in the state.

“The training consisted of a couple of hours, with some people coming to the base to warn soldiers to watch out for prisoners who are master manipulators,” the source told The Post.

National Guard soldiers watched over inmates in medium-security prison dorms as well as those in maximum-security cell blocks, according to the New York National Guard's website.

Duties included “conducting head counts, delivering meals and monitoring special housing units for inmates in solitary confinement,” according to an April press release.

More than seven weeks after the strike, almost 3,000 guard members are still on prison duty as a result of a staff shortage. All who remain are volunteers, and they receive bonus pay for their work.

<https://nypost.com/2025/04/22/us-news/female-national-guard-in-ny-prisons-filmed-undressing-source/>

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Emergency Response

Hold back the tide of NYC's stormwater

New York Daily News, April 23, 2025 :

Note: the writer is a New York Army National Guard officer and was formerly commander for JTFES

In October 2012, I prepared with my National Guard unit for Superstorm Sandy. I still remember the feeling of uncertainty about what was about to happen — then the aftermath, fellow New Yorkers' homes literally washed away — for the rest of my life.

That was a defining, first-hand experience of the reality of the era we are living in.

But I am just one of many. Most of us have a similarly devastating firsthand experience, from the fires that tore through the ritziest parts of L.A. this year, and the smoke that wafted over New York's wealthier and lower-income zip codes alike last year. We are beyond the days when anyone gets to sit this out.

Stronger, more frequent storms are a kitchen table issue. It's time to address them with cement and steel, trees and grass, neighborhood by neighborhood, with the same urgency and focus that we devote to solving the housing crisis.

This Earth Week, the Adams administration completed a \$42 million investment in flood reduction infrastructure and trees in Flatbush and Canarsie, two of the most heat-vulnerable neighborhoods in the city. Going towards more than 900 infiltration basins, nearly 300 rain gardens and more than 200 new trees, the investment will absorb 122.5 million gallons of rainwater, the equivalent of 184 Olympic-sized swimming pools.

Individually, they don't look like much: a street tree, a strip of grass next to the sidewalk. But that's just it: they're integrated into our city's infrastructure, hiding in plain sight, doing double duty — the way all our infrastructure must — to beautify these neighborhoods and keep us safer against deluge.

They are just one piece of our broader stormwater management puzzle. We're updating sewers in key areas, like Knickerbocker Ave., but sewer expansions are disruptive. We're installing 100 miles of porous pavement by 2031, so the streets you commute on also do double duty in ways you'd never know.

We're sinking basketball courts to hold water during major storms — we will open the first one of these "cloudburst projects" in Jamaica, Queens soon. We set aside \$300 million in the last budget to study a "five borough blue belt strategy" — testing the feasibility of installing ecologically rich drainage systems that look like ponds and wetlands but are integrated with pipes to route water away from homes and businesses citywide.

And then there's coastal resiliency. If you've driven up the FDR recently, you've probably seen a series of interlocking parks rising above you to the east, another example of double duty in grander scale, itself just one piece of a broader effort to protect the city's coastline from storm surge.

You might extrapolate that if rainwater assets in just Flatbush and Canarsie cost \$42 million, that fully funding this litany of citywide interventions would cost much more.

You would be right. Mitigating the effects of climate change citywide is so expensive that our local tax dollars can't possibly fully pay for it. It will require partnership across all levels of government.

The federal government doesn't yet have regular, recurring revenue streams with which to pay for it all either. Traditionally, cities and states have had to compete for limited funds to fight a foe we all face together. So what's to be done? On the emissions side, there's money to be made by private industry.

A business can invest in electric vehicle chargers and then earn money on their use. Local Law 97, which mandates emissions reductions from our largest source of carbon dioxide, our buildings, is creating a cottage industry of consultants and builders to help.

Not so for our effort to protect our city from ever-stronger storms.

A climate resiliency task force, made up of leaders from the business, advocacy and finance communities, recently set out a series of recommendations, including establishing Business Improvement District style-districts to fund the maintenance of our coastal resiliency infrastructure, like flood walls that need to be able to quickly protect us when needed.

The city is evaluating those recommendations for feasibility, but on the premise they are absolutely right: we must be creative about how we fund environmental preparedness in the long-term — the cost of inaction is much higher.

In the meantime, protecting ourselves requires all of us. If you're a homeowner, know your zone and make sure your insurance covers flooding. Everyone should know their exit strategy and keep potable water and flashlights on hand.

This is a sobering moment. With advocacy and preparedness, we can meet it head on.

Roth is New York City's deputy mayor for operations.

<https://www.nydailynews.com/2025/04/23/hold-back-the-tide-of-nycs-stormwater/>

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History

Duty Calls :WWII soldier, Cohoes native ID'd after POW camp death

Times Union, April 21, 2025 ::

Note: this story includes a NYNG mention.

Army Maj. James J. O'Donovan, a native of Cohoes and a highly decorated soldier, was finally laid to rest 80 years after he died inside the Cabanatuan POW Camp in Bataan, Philippines.

O'Donovan, a graduate of La Salle Institute in Troy, was buried with full military honors at the Miramar National Cemetery in San Diego.

He had earned a Distinguished Service Cross, our nation's second-highest honor for combat bravery, as well as a Silver Star, a Bronze Star Medal and a Purple Heart for battlefield wounds.

The major earned those combat medals while serving with the 3rd Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, when Japanese forces invaded the Philippine Islands in December 1941. He was among 78,000 U.S. and Filipino service members who were captured and subjected to the 65-mile Bataan Death March after U.S. forces fell to the Japanese. Thousands died before they reached the POW camps.

For months, the U.S. War Department had listed O'Donovan as missing in action, but the listing was eventually changed to killed in action.

O'Donovan survived the march but died in the POW camp of Beriberi on Oct. 18, 1942 at age 34. The Department of Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency officially identified his remains on Feb. 4, 2024. His remains were exhumed in 2019 from the Manila American Cemetery and Memorial, Philippines, for laboratory analysis and identification.

His daughter, Gail Unwin of San Diego, and grandsons Steve and John Unwin attended the military funeral. Gail received an encased American flag after the ceremony. Army Military Honor Guard and Patriot Guard Riders also honored O'Donovan.

He enlisted in the New York Army National Guard's Company D, 105th Infantry regiment in Troy while a senior at La Salle in 1927. He reached the rank of sergeant before he was commissioned as a second lieutenant. For a time, he was a military science and tactics professor at La Salle, a military preparatory school.

O'Donovan had led hundreds of soldiers during attacks against the Japanese invaders. During the Battle of Bataan, he was wounded during one of those attacks. After he recovered from his wounds, he returned to the battle a month later. The American and Philippine forces fought for five months before they were forced to surrender. They also had to fight starvation and disease.

His first combat leadership test came at Layac Junction, gateway to the Bataan peninsula. His soldiers' mission was to delay the Japanese Army, buying time for defenses to be made further south at the Main Line of Resistance. After an eight-hour artillery barrage, the Japanese attacked. Two companies from 1st battalion of the 31st Infantry fled the defensive line, exposing the flanks of adjoining units. O'Donovan, with two companies from 3rd battalion, rushed forward under fire amidst constant shelling to counterattack and restore the line. For his actions, he was awarded the Silver Star Citation and the Bronze Star Medal.

The award citations read:

Silver Star: "During the counterattack made by the 3rd Battalion, 31st Infantry near Layac Junction, Bataan Province, Philippine Islands, on January 6, 1942, Major O'Donovan set a fine example for the attacking elements by his bravery under severe enemy fire. Major O'Donovan's leadership and bravery under fire were important contributing factors to the success of the attack."

Bronze Star: "For Meritorious achievement in military operations against an armed enemy of the United States while serving with Headquarters Company, 3d Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment on 6 January 1942 in the Philippines. His dauntless efforts and unwavering courage in the Asiatic-Pacific Theater of Operations are traits to emulate. Major O'Donovan's outstanding performance of duty in active ground combat was in keeping with the finest traditions of military service and reflects great credit upon himself, the Philippine Division, and the Army of the United States."

While at Abucay Hacienda, he personally led several assaults against prepared enemy positions hiding in mango groves and sugar cane. On one of these missions, he led a patrol in a flanking maneuver and attacked the enemy, leaving 12 dead. He was himself hit by a grenade and hospitalized for three days. He was awarded the Purple Heart. O'Donovan was at other times wounded in the arm and again slightly wounded in the head by sniper fire.

After one battle, Capt. Donald G. Thompson wrote: "I was with Jim throughout that long, terrible, night fighting ... continuously until 7:00 in the next morning! He was an inspiration to me, as well as all the men in the covering force for his fearlessness, his

good judgment and his superior commanding ability. How we got out of that action that night I'll never know, but Jim O'Donovan had a great deal to do with it!"

For his actions at Abucay Hacienda, Jim was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

Distinguished Service Cross citation: "For extraordinary heroism in action in the vicinity of Abucay Hacienda, Bataan, Philippine Islands, during the period January 20-24, 1942. During the four-day battle of Abucay Hacienda, Major O'Donovan was serving as battalion executive officer. His constant exhibition of bravery and effective leadership in front line positions under intense rifle, machine gun, mortar and artillery fire was a significant factor in the successful resistance of his unit. On the night of January 24th, Major O'Donovan, in command of a covering shell of three depleted companies, was charged with securing the withdrawal of his regiment. Shortly after the withdrawal was under way, a general attack was launched by the enemy. Again, his competent leadership and exhibition of bravery in the most advanced positions, contributed to the efficient accomplishment of his mission and the consequent successful withdrawal of the regiment."

Dachau Program

Two speakers will focus on life in the Dachau Concentration Camp and the camp's liberation.

Their talks will be part of a free program at 2 p.m. Saturday, April 26 at the New York State Military Museum at 61 Lake Ave., Saratoga Springs.

Evelyn Loeb of Delmar, whose father, Walter Loeb, was arrested following Kristallnacht in Germany and detained at Dachau in 1938, will discuss her father's experience at Dachau.

Walter Loeb was released in the late winter of 1939 and obtained passage to the U.S. in 1940. He would go on to serve in the U.S. armed forces in the Pacific theater during World War II. He passed away in 2009.

Retired New York Army National Guard Col. Richard Goldenberg will discuss the 42nd Infantry Division's role in the liberation of the prison. He will discuss the division's advance across Germany and the details of the liberation of the prison.

The 42nd Infantry Division was dubbed the "Rainbow Division" in World War I because it was made up of National Guard units from across the country. In World War II it was made up of draftees.

Today, the division is part of the New York Army National Guard. Goldenberg served as the division's public affairs officer for many years, including its 2005 deployment to Iraq.

The program will be sponsored by the Friends of the New York State Military Museum and the Jewish War Veterans of the United States.

News of your troops and units can be sent to Times Union, Duty Calls, Terry Brown, Box 15000, Albany, NY 12212 or brownt@timesunion.com.

<https://www.timesunion.com/news/article/duty-calls-wwii-hero-buried-honors-decades-death-20284422.php>

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New York Air National Guard

Rensselaer County veteran honored at New York Mets game

WTEN, April 22, 2025 ::

STEPHENTOWN, N.Y. (NEWS10) — The New York Mets honored a Rensselaer County resident earlier this month at Citi Field in Flushing, Queens. New York Air National Guard Chief Master Sergeant Greg Mihalko of Stephentown was recognized as the “Veteran of the Game” during the seventh inning stretch of the Mets’ April 5 matchup versus the Toronto Blue Jays.

Having served in the Air Guard for over 36 years, Mihalko is currently the Senior Enlisted Leader for the Air Staff of the New York State Department of Military and Naval Affairs. His service has involved deployments in support of the Persian Gulf and Iraq Wars, and he’s earned numerous honors throughout his career, including three Air Force Meritorious Service Medals, an Air Force Commendation Medal, and a Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal.

Mihalko, whose grandparents were Mets fans, has been following the baseball team since he was a child. He called his experience on the field “overwhelming.”

“It’s been a dream of mine from the first time I went to [the former] Shea Stadium to be on the field during a Mets game,” Mihalko said. “I always had dreams of being in front of 40,000 fans cheering for me. It didn’t happen the way I imagined, but it finally happened.”

Mihalko was joined at the game by his wife Kristin, his daughter Olivia, and his son Mitch, who’s a member of the 109th Airlift Wing’s Security Forces Squadron. He was nominated for the recognition by his military colleagues.

“Chief Mihalko has spent his career serving others, and the staff here wanted to do something special to show how much that’s meant to all of us,” said Captain Joshua

Bowers, Executive Director of the New York Air National Guard. “It’s not every day you get to honor a friend and colleague like this, especially in a way that connects to something he’s loved his whole life.”

<https://www.news10.com/news/rensselaer-county/rensselaer-county-veteran-honored-at-new-york-mets-game/>

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Meet the New York Air National Guard’s Record-Setting Recruiter

NationalGuard.mil, By Senior Airman Sarah Post, 105th Airlift Wing, April 23, 2025 :

STEWART AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, N.Y. – One recruiter at the New York Air National Guard’s 105th Airlift Wing is standing out from his peers, having recruited more Airmen in 2024 than any other recruiter in the Air Force and making history in the process.

Tech. Sgt. Franklin Angel, 105th production recruiter, was named the top-producing recruiter in the nation for 2024, recruiting 80.5 new Airmen. He also was awarded the Blue Suit Award for the second consecutive year, an achievement that made him the first Air National Guard recruiter to win the award twice.

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

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

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

“We’re not just supporting the Air Force as a whole, we’re supporting our communities and state,” Angel said. “Everyone sees our C-17s flying around, but they also see us serving during state emergencies, doing missions only the Air Guard can undertake. It’s amazing seeing people go from their civilian job to their Guard

job, go on deployments and missions, and then be able to go back their regular day-to-day when the mission is over.”

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

After receiving his first Blue Suit Award in March 2024, Angel had a choice: take a step back from the top spot or continue striving for excellence in his service to the Guard.

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

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

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

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

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

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

To conclude the week’s festivities, there was a formal award ceremony to recognize each award winner, with Angel as the top performer. Angel acknowledges that it will be a challenge to beat his record 2024 year. It is a challenge he is willing to take on in 2025, though, because part of his job as a recruiter requires adapting to change and finding new ways to recruit.

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

“Everyone at the event asked, ‘Are we going to see you again next year?’” Angel said. “At first, I thought definitely not, but when I kept hearing it, I thought, well, maybe I can and maybe I should.”

With renewed motivation and a supportive network behind him, Angel is embracing the challenge of 2025 and highlighting that anything is possible within the New York Air National Guard.

<https://www.nationalguard.mil/News/News-Features/Article/4163940/meet-the-new-york-air-national-guards-record-setting-recruiter/>

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New York Army National Guard

Female National Guard members deployed in NY prisons allegedly filmed while undressing: ‘Incredibly disturbing’

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National Guard members deployed in New York prisons have endured unacceptable treatment, including female members filmed changing clothes and exposure to noxious fumes from makeshift drug use, The Post has learned.

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However, after being mandated for duty, the guardsmen were badly trained and subjected to various horrors in the prison environment, according to a source.

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“They were told that the cameras were not active, but they knew the cameras were on because of offhand comments made by prison staff,” the source said, adding the women are now seeking legal representation.

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“Our top priority is ensuring the safety and security of all individuals who enter our facilities. We are aware of these incredibly disturbing allegations ... [We] will impose strong disciplinary action for anyone who is found to have violated the privacy of these individuals,” a statement to The Post read.

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<https://nypost.com/2025/04/22/us-news/female-national-guard-in-ny-prisons-filmed-undressing-source/>

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Female Soldiers Will Have to Pass ‘Sex-Neutral’ Physical Test, U.S. Army Says

New York Times, April 22, 2025 :

Women in U.S. Army combat roles will be expected to pass the same “sex-neutral” physical test as male soldiers, that military branch announced on Monday, weeks after Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth ordered the elimination of lower physical fitness standards for women in combat. The change could hinder the Army’s ability to recruit and retain women in particularly dangerous military jobs.

The new test, the Army Fitness Test, will replace the Army Combat Fitness Test, and “is designed to enhance Soldier fitness, improve warfighting readiness, and increase the lethality of the force,” the Army wrote in its announcement. The new scoring standards will be phased in beginning on June 1, the Army said.

Like its forerunner, the new test will be administered to active duty soldiers twice a year, and once per year to National Guard and Reserve troops. If soldiers fail the test two times in a row, they may be removed from the Army.

The new fitness test is very similar to the previous one. It consists of five events: dead lifts, push-ups, planks, a two-mile run and a workout where soldiers sprint, then drag a weighted sled and carry kettlebells.

The new Army Fitness Test eliminates the standing power throw, an event sometimes called the ball yeet, which is widely disliked by service members; it requires soldiers to throw a 10-pound medicine ball backward over their heads. The biggest overall change will be in how the test is scored for 21 close combat occupations that are likely to be involved in heavy fighting in wartime: Women in those categories will be graded on the “male” scale, which is likely to significantly reduce the number of them who meet the requirements.

For example, to pass the dead lift event, women ages 17 to 21 will need to lift at least 140 pounds, instead of the 120 required under the old standards. They will also have to run two miles in 22 minutes, instead of 23 minutes and 22 seconds.

After their introduction in June, active duty soldiers in the 21 combat specialties will be held to the new standards in January 2026, and National Guard and Reserve troops will need to meet them by June. The test for noncombat units, also called combat-enabling roles, will continue to be assessed based on sex and age, the Army said. If a currently enlisted close combat unit member cannot pass the new test, they would be required to change their military occupation, said Sgt. Maj. Christopher Mullinax.

The new test comes three weeks after Mr. Hegseth ordered the elimination of lower physical fitness standards for women in combat positions. In 2022, the Army had eased the standards for women and older members.

Mr. Hegseth, a former National Guard infantryman and Fox News host, has previously opposed the inclusion of women in some combat roles. In a recent book, he wrote that “women cannot physically meet the same standards as men.”

“Dads push us to take risks,” he wrote. “Moms put the training wheels on our bikes. We need moms. But not in the military, especially in combat units.”

He later backtracked, saying in December that “if we have the right standard and women meet that standard, Roger, let’s go.”

<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/22/us/new-army-fitness-test-women.html>

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North Country locals promoted in National Guard

North Country Now, April 23, 2025 :

Two North Country National Guardsmen were promoted last month in recognition of their capability for leadership and additional responsibility.

The promotions were announced by Major General Ray Shields, the Adjutant General for New York state.

Thomas McCarthy of Winthrop, assigned to the Company B, 427th Brigade Support Battalion, received a promotion March 14 to the rank of Private 1st class.

Coby Mills of Lisbon, N.Y, assigned to the Company A, 2nd Battalion, 108th Infantry Regiment, received a promotion March 25 to the rank of Specialist.

Army National Guard promotions are based on a Soldier's overall performance, demonstrated leadership abilities, professionalism and future development potential.

These promotions recognize the best qualified Soldiers for a career in the New York Army National Guard.

For more information about the New York Army National Guard, visit www.dmna.ny.gov or www.1800goguard.com

<https://northcountrynow.com/stories/north-country-locals-promoted-in-national-guard,295017>

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Two Soldiers Win New York's Best Warrior Contest

**Military Spot.com, April 21,2025 ::
Apr 25, 2025**

APRIL 21, 2025 – After four days of physically demanding tasks, mental challenges, and military skill assessments, a cavalry scout and infantryman earned top honors in this year's New York Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition.

Spc. Christian Habecker, a member of Bravo Troop, 2nd Squadron, 101st Cavalry Regiment, took the Best Warrior title in the junior enlisted category. The 21-year-old Habecker, enlisted in the Army in 2023 and lives in Houghton, N.Y.

In civilian life Habecker works as a powerline tree trimmer.

Staff Sg. Alejandro Sanchez Mendez, who is assigned to Charlie Company of the 2nd Battalion, 108th Infantry Regiment, was named Best Warrior in the non-commissioned officer category.

Sanchez Mendez, age 40, is a resident of Brooklyn and enlisted in the New York Army National Guard in 2018.

He is graduate of the Army Mountain Warfare School at Camp Ethan Allen, Vermont, and the Brazilian Jungle Warfare School International Jungle Operations Course. He completed the French Desert Commando Course and the Norwegian

Foot March while deployed to the Horn of Africa with Joint Task Force Wolfhound in 2022-2023.

In civilian life, Sanchez Mendez is a carpenter. In 2021, he received the American Legion Spirit of Service Award for his volunteer efforts to help rebuild homes and schools destroyed in natural disasters.

The two will represent New York at the northeast states regional competition to be held in in Pembroke, New Hampshire from May 19 to 23. The winners there will compete at the national level for best in the Army National Guard.

In 2024, New York Army National Guard Sgt. Peter Fillion, who is also a member of Charlie Company, 2nd Battalion 108th Infantry, won the national Best Warrior competition in the junior enlisted category.

Habecker said the competition gave him a clearer sense of his limits—and how far he could go beyond them.

“I came in wanting to challenge myself, and I definitely did,” he said. “Winning is an honor, but just getting through the week with this group was something to be proud of. I’m excited to represent New York at the next level.”

Sanchez Mendez said the event was a reminder of why training matters.

“This competition brings out the best in everyone,” he said. “No matter where you place, you come out of it sharper, more focused, and more connected to the team.”

The annual event brought together eight Soldiers—including two from Sweden—who competed in a series of rigorous events designed to test their readiness, resilience, and core soldiering skills.

Over the course of the week, participants tackled day and night land navigation, a simulated weapons qualification course, a multi-event firing range, and a task-based round-robin covering everything from casualty care to tactical movement.

Each also stood before a board of senior enlisted leaders to test their knowledge, bearing, and professionalism.

The competitors also competed to earn the German Armed Forces Proficiency Badge. This test, administered by German officers assigned to the United States Military Academy at West Point, included a 100-meter swim, pistol qualification, a timed sprint, flexed arm hang, and a 12-mile ruck march under full load.

Fillion, the 2024 Best Warrior Winner, took part in this event, where he won the gold medal, according to Sgt. 1st Class James Monetsano, the Best Warrior NCOIC.

Six Soldiers represented units across New York. They won their battalion competitions before competing at the brigade level for the right to compete statewide.

Sgt. Alexandro Dierdonne, a member of Bravo Company, 3rd Battalion, 142nd Assault Helicopter Regiment, said he had been looking forward to the competition.

“It is definitely a goal to strive for, winning the Best Warrior,” he said.

Other competitors in the 2025 Best Warrior Competition were:

Spc. Brian Ciarlante, a member of the 1108th Explosive Ordnance Disposal Company

Staff Sgt. Daulton Bull, a member of the 1108th Explosive Ordnance Disposal Company

Sgt. David Amendola, a member of the 442nd Military Police Company

The other two competitors — Swedish Army Pvt. Jesper Andersson and Cpl. Simon Drie Runnander—members of Sweden’s First Brigade, took part in the event as part of the National Guard State Partnership Program.

The program, launched in 2024 between New York and Sweden, aims to strengthen multinational collaboration and improve operational readiness through shared training.

“This has been one of the toughest training experiences I’ve ever done, but also one of the most rewarding,” said Drie Runnander. “Working side by side with American Soldiers pushed me outside my comfort zone. I’ve learned a lot that I’ll take back to Sweden.”

<https://www.militaryspot.com/news/two-soldiers-win-new-yorks-best-warrior-contest>

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Cayuga County New York Army National Guard Members Promoted

Auburn Citizen, April 20 ::

LATHAM — Maj. Gen. Ray Shields, the adjutant general for the state of New York, announces the recent promotion of members of the New York Army National Guard in recognition of their capability for additional responsibility and leadership:

Michael Mack, of Sterling, assigned to the 102nd Military Police Battalion, received a promotion March 12 to the rank of sergeant first class.

Braydince Swartout, of Auburn, assigned to the Company C, New York Army National Guard Recruiting & Retention Battalion, received a promotion March 28 to the rank of private first class.

For more information about the New York Army National Guard, visit dmna.ny.gov or 1800goguard.com.

https://auburnpub.com/life-entertainment/article_bcee11d7-ae76-4213-b143-57f4201472b9.html

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Helicopter firefighter training being held in eastern Orange

Mid-Hudson News, April 22, 2025 ::

NEW WINDSOR – If you see Black Hawk helicopters flying above the New Windsor area today and tomorrow (Tuesday and Wednesday), don't panic. It's only a firefighting training drill at Clear View Pond.

Six New York Army National Guard UH-60M Black Hawk helicopter crews based in Long Island will be training.

The Army aviators, who are based at Army Aviation Support Facility #1 in Ronkonkoma, will be teaming up with the Department of Environmental Conservation Forest Rangers.

The helicopters will practice lifting water from the pond and then dumping it on simulated targets.

Eight Army National Guard aviators and 11 Rangers will be taking part in the training using two UH-60M helicopters. They expect to be flying after 11 a.m. each day.

During firefighting operations, the Army National Guard aircrews work with Rangers on the ground, and sometimes a Ranger in the aircraft. They work together to guide the Army Guard pilots onto the target.

The helicopter aircrew will operate from the New York State Police Aviation-Newburgh at Stewart International Airport.

The helicopter crews and Rangers will train to drop water from 660-gallon Bambi Buckets.

The collapsible buckets are hung underneath the helicopters. Each spring, Army National Guard helicopter crew members and maintenance personnel retrain on how to attach the buckets to Black Hawk helicopters and then practice picking up water and dumping it.

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

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

Both UH-60 M Black Hawk helicopters and Ch-47F Chinook heavy lift helicopters worked with firefighters to extinguish the blaze.

State Police helicopters provide initial firefighting capabilities for the state. The Army National Guard helicopters, which carry a bigger bucket, and are called in for heavier fires.

<https://midhudsonnews.com/2025/04/22/helicopter-firefighter-training-being-held-in-eastern-orange/>

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Space Force

Governors 'Alarmed' by Looming Transfer of Air National Guard Units to Space Force

Military. Com, April 22, 2025 ::

This item is being provided for your information. The NYANG's 222nd Command and Control Squadron is not impacted by this move.

A bipartisan group representing all U.S. governors is sounding the alarm about a looming move to transition Air National Guard units into the Space Force without approval from the affected states as efforts to reverse the decision continue in Congress.

In a new statement published Tuesday, Colorado Gov. Jared Polis and Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt, chairman and vice chairman, respectively, of the National Governors Association, decried Legislative Proposal 480, a plan for Space Force to take control of some state Air National Guard units. Polis and Stitt warned that the service is moving quickly to sidestep state governors by taking control of those units possibly as soon as this year.

"We are particularly alarmed by indications that Space Force leadership is aggressively pushing a plan to fully implement Legislative Proposal 480 (LP 480) and remove units from states by the end of the year," the National Governors Association statement said. "There has still been no formal notification to, coordination with, or consent obtained from the impacted states."

The governors' warning that the active-duty Space Force could be moving quickly to take control of space-focused Air National Guard units found in Alaska, California, Colorado, Florida, Hawaii, New York and Ohio follows a recent effort in Congress to create a Space National Guard and overturn Legislative Proposal 480.

The proposal, authored last year under former President Joe Biden's administration and first reported on by Military.com, would transfer Air National Guard units with space missions into the active-duty Space Force by seeking exemptions from existing laws that require state governors to approve such a move. It was ultimately signed into law as part of last year's National Defense Authorization Act.

"Governors must be part of the conversation from the start, as has been the precedent for over 120 years," the National Governors Association statement said. "We were alarmed when the prior administration pursued this course of action, and we remain alarmed it's continuing to happen now."

Spokespeople for the National Governors Association did not immediately respond to Military.com questions asking about the organization's knowledge of the timeline for the Space Force to take over the units with space missions.

A Department of the Air Force spokesperson told Military.com that "the Space Force is planning to transfer responsibility for the covered space functions performed by the Air National Guard."

"The Space Force, Air Force and National Guard Bureau will jointly determine the specific conditions, resource alignments, and timing for the transfer of each covered space function," the spokesperson added. "In accordance with the law, the Space Force is not planning to relocate the missions out of the affected states."

The original Air Force proposal was strongly condemned last year by the governors of every U.S. state and territory, a point reiterated in Tuesday's statement.

"Governors from all 55 states and territories have repeatedly urged Congress to reject LP 480, which would reassign specified Air National Guard units to the U.S. Space Force without the legally required consent of governors," the National Governors Association said in Tuesday's statement. "National Guard assets are not only critical to national security and military readiness, they are also essential to a governor's ability to respond swiftly to emergencies and natural disasters."

Military.com also first reported last month that bipartisan groups of lawmakers submitted bills in both chambers of Congress aimed at establishing a Space National Guard, which also would explicitly dismantle the proposal to transfer those units to the Space Force. That bill was spearheaded, in part, by Sen. Mike Crapo, R-Idaho.

"Sen. Crapo is still leading efforts in the Senate to repeal LP 480 in the FY2026 NDAA," Melanie Lawhorn, a spokesperson for Crapo, told Military.com on Tuesday.

That legislation may have support from the White House. Notably, on the campaign trail, President Donald Trump promised in August that "as president, I will sign historic legislation creating a Space National Guard."

The National Guard Association of the United States, an organization that lobbies for the reserve component also known as NGAUS, has been vocal against the effort to transfer the Air National Guard space units into the active-duty Space Force, saying it would hurt staffing.

Most recently, NGAUS announced survey results last month that showed only 8% of Air National Guardsmen in space missions would be interested in transferring to the active-duty Space Force.

The Space Force, unlike other service branches, does not have a reserve component like a National Guard. The service is creating a part-time active-duty service model, the first of its kind, but officials have said they won't start accepting applications for that until at least 2026.

Retired Maj. Gen. Francis McGinn, president of NGAUS, told Military.com in an interview Tuesday that it appears the Space Force is rushing to get the transfer done before other efforts stop it.

"What's the rush?" McGinn said. "To me, it's a control thing too. For some reason, they don't want to work with governors as has been seen in how they approached this thing right from the get-go."

<https://www.yahoo.com/news/governors-alarmed-looming-transfer-air-213312861.html>

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Veterans

Ramp installed at retired Colonie veteran's home to help with mobility

**WNYT, April 24, 2025 :
Apr 25, 2025**

A Colonie home is now safer for a retired veteran.

Retired U.S. Army Reserve Officer Rosetta Burke faces an increased risk of falls because of mobility issues.

Officer Burke was the First Female Assistant Adjutant General of New York state, and a major general of the Army National Guard.

A ramp was installed at Officer Burke's home to minimize the danger of tripping or falling.

Jewish Family Services of Northeastern New York installed the ramp with funding support from Albany County.

<https://wnyt.com/top-stories/wnyt-greater-good/ramp-installed-at-retired-colonie-veterans-home-to-help-with-mobility/>

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