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## **Armories**

### **Getting a Clear View of the UWS's Historic First Battery Armory, for the First Time in Decades**

**West Side Rag, Feb. 3, 2026 ::**

If it seems like a medieval castle just appeared out of thin air on West 66th Street, it's because it has... kind of.

The First Battery Armory, with its imposing brick and granite facade, has been stationed at 56 West 66th Street, between Columbus Avenue and Central Park West, for more than a century. But at just three stories tall, it has long been surrounded by taller modern buildings, making it impossible to view from a distance – at least until recently.

Now, if you're on Columbus Avenue looking southeast, the armory's distinctive turrets can be seen from 350 feet away (according to a Google Maps measurement). This unique view has opened up, for the first time in decades, because of the demolition of 147 Columbus Avenue, a 10-story building that was part of the ABC network's UWS campus. Extell Development, which now owns the area, intends to build luxury residential apartment buildings on the former ABC site, but it has not made public its plans for this particular lot. Based on the current zoning regulations, there are no height limits for the site.

A closer look at the armory reveals not only interesting architectural details, but a winding history that chronicles the changing needs of a neighborhood. In its very long life, First Battery Armory has housed a civilian militia, a television studio, and ESPN offices. Soon it will become a Jewish college, just the latest in its tale of architectural reinvention.

The building was designated an individual landmark in 1989, and its exterior is largely unchanged since it first opened its doors in 1904. But the interior has undergone many iterations; the armory is one of the Upper West Side's best examples of "adaptive reuse" – when an outdated building is repurposed while retaining its historic character – a practice that's especially relevant in a neighborhood that has partially been classified as a historic district.

When it opened in 1904 it was the home of the First Battery, a mounted field artillery unit of the National Guard of the state of New York. Civilian militias were common in those days, and the First Battery Armory was one of ten armories commissioned in New York City in response to workforce riots. Even as far back as 1792, a law required states to have militias as a counterbalance to the federal government.

The First Battery was a "well-regarded volunteer unit," but it did not see active duty during its ten years stationed at the Armory, according to a Landmarks Preservation Commission Designation Report by researcher Michael Corbett.

The building was designed to look like a fortress, but it wasn't really intended to function as one. "The 19th-century National Guard was in large part also a social organization," Corbett writes. "In fact its major activities were athletic events, dances, parties, picnics, and entertainments of all kinds."

The role of armories as social hubs is "something we might use more of in society today as news outlets bemoan the 'loneliness epidemic' in our nation," Sean Khorsandi, executive director of the UWS preservation group Landmark West, wrote in a message to the Rag.

Still, military iconography is clearly visible throughout the Armory, which was designed by Horgan & Slattery, a firm commonly known as the "Tammany architects" for its many contracts with City Hall. Cannons, a horse, spears, and soldiers are

depicted near the top of the building, next to the Latin motto “Semper Paratus,” meaning “always ready.”

Horses played a big role in the early days of the Armory. There were stalls for 76 horses in the basement, Corbett writes. Then, beginning in 1913, the armory transitioned over to home for the 102nd Medical Battalion, a medical unit that served in World War I and World War II.

That unit turned out to be the building’s longest tenant, with the next major change not coming for another six decades. In 1976, after a brief stint as a private club that brought tennis courts to the drillroom, according to the Designation Report, Capital Cities/ABC bought the building at public auction and, in 1977, remodeled the space as a television studio. In addition to daytime TV shows, its credits include the long-running soap opera “One Life to Live.”

In 2012, the building was remodeled again to serve as offices for ESPN, a subsidiary of Disney, also ABC’s parent company. The Armory was part of the media giant’s campus in the West 60s up until last year, when the whole operation relocated downtown to a new building in Hudson Square.

The future of the First Battery Armory promises to be entirely different from its previous lives. Last year, the building was bought by Hebrew Union College (HUC), an academic and professional training institution for Reform Judaism. The college’s current New York campus is located in Greenwich Village, and it plans to “fully occupy” the First Battery Armory in early 2027, a HUC spokesperson confirmed to the Rag.

Construction on the interior is underway to create spaces to study, worship, and gather. “It’s exhilarating to be creating educational and spiritual spaces to cultivate the next generation of Jewish leadership – especially in an iconic New York building,” the school’s spokesperson, who asked not to be named, wrote to the Rag.

Earlier this month, architects from LVCK (a studio that’s part of Beyer Blinder Belle, the firm retained for the project), presented a plan to Community Board 7’s Preservation Committee to install signage for the college. A flagpole and grille with interlacing six-pointed stars above the main entrance, as well as plaques with the college’s logo, are designed to add branding elements for the college while respecting the building’s history and the integrity of its structure.

The plans will be presented again, this time to the city’s Landmarks Preservation Commission, in two weeks – almost 122 years to the day after the First Battery Armory officially opened its doors on February 3, 1904.

Another Upper West Side armory, the 212th Coast Artillery Armory, was lost as part of the urban renewal plan for Lincoln Center. The former site of that armory is now

part of Fordham University's campus. Landmark West has more information about the building – [HERE](#).

<https://www.westsiderag.com/2026/02/03/getting-a-clear-view-of-the-uwss-historic-first-battery-armory-for-the-first-time-in-decades>

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## **Citizens Preparedness**

### **Prepare for emergencies at free class**

**Sullivan County Democrat, February 10, 2026 :**

NARROWSBURG – The Upper Delaware Council (UDC) and New York National Guard invite river valley residents in New York and Pennsylvania to attend a free Citizen Preparedness Training course on Wednesday, March 11, from 5-6:30 p.m. at the Tusten Town Hall Community Room at 210 Bridge St. in Narrowsburg. All are welcome.

With their advance registration at [www.prepare.ny.gov](http://www.prepare.ny.gov), participants will receive one complimentary “go-kit” stocked full of emergency supplies per household.

A minimum of 50 people must sign up for the class to proceed. When registering online for the March 11 Narrowsburg date, provide contact information to receive updates and choose Sullivan County, NY as the host site location.

With severe weather events becoming more frequent and more extreme, the Citizen Preparedness Training Program teaches residents to have the tools and resources to respond accordingly and recover as quickly as possible to a natural or man-made disaster.

The course will teach how to prepare and develop plans for disaster or emergency situations. It includes information about the types of risks and hazards people face.

Visit [www.upperdelawarecouncil.org](http://www.upperdelawarecouncil.org) for a registration link or call the UDC at 845-252-3022 with a request to register on your behalf.

Members of the New York National Guard instruct the public classes for this New York State Homeland Security and Emergency Services program that began in 2014.

<https://www.scdemocratonline.com/stories/prepare-for-emergencies-at-free-class.222495>

## **DOCCS Support**

### **ICE Collaboration and Prisons in Crisis: Four Questions for State Law Enforcement**

**New York Focus, February 11, 2026 :**

A hearing Thursday gives lawmakers an opportunity to grill police and prison leaders.

It's an uncertain time for New York law enforcement. President Donald Trump has toyed with the idea of sending troops into New York City even though reported violence is nearing historic lows. His administration has also threatened the state with an incursion by federal immigration agents. Officials are debating whether to use cops to protect residents against Immigration and Customs Enforcement abuses and how to prevent law enforcement from enabling raids that are already underway.

The state's prisons, meanwhile, are in such dire straits after a guard strike and mass firing that, for a second consecutive year, Governor Kathy Hochul wants to use the National Guard to help staff them. It's unclear when all of the system's 42 facilities will resume normal operations.

The public has questions, and on Thursday, it could get some answers. That's when the state legislature will hold an annual hearing on public safety, part of a monthlong marathon of sessions aimed at unpacking Hochul's state budget proposals. The hearings offer a rare opportunity for lawmakers to publicly grill state agency heads about events of the past year and their plans for the year ahead.

On criminal justice, there's much to discuss — but frustratingly little time to discuss it. Legislators on relevant committees each get between three and 10 minutes to interrogate testifiers.

Luckily, New York Focus is here to help. Here are four questions our justice bureau chief would ask the state's law enforcement leaders.

When do state cops help ICE?

A collection of executive orders, court rulings, and laws limit how state and local law enforcement interact with federal immigration enforcement, but New York's policies are less stringent than those enacted by some other blue states, such as Illinois and Oregon. Progressive legislators and immigrant rights groups have long advocated for sweeping sanctuary legislation. Last month, as nationwide protests against ICE

actions swelled, Hochul proposed a pared-down version of what advocates have been pushing for.

Hochul's bill would bar local police and sheriffs from entering into formal agreements with ICE, but it would still allow for informal collaboration. When New York Focus asked a local police chief who recently signed one of the formal agreements how the bill would affect his department's participation in ICE raids, he responded: "It wouldn't." The lack of a contract would simply preclude ICE from paying his department for its help, he said.

Hochul's proposal would also do little to curb potential collaboration between the New York State Police and ICE. An executive order prohibits state authorities from asking about someone's immigration status and sharing information with the feds for the purpose of civil immigration enforcement. The guidelines are less clear when a case involves criminal charges, including criminal immigration charges like crossing the border illegally. Last year, Hochul's office released a list of circumstances in which state authorities are allowed to assist immigration agents, all of which focused on criminal investigations, but the list was vague and her office declined to elaborate on them.

That leaves key questions unanswered. How and when do the State Police work with federal immigration authorities? Are they helping ICE track down people accused of being in the country illegally? Do they follow Hochul's guidance? If so, how do they interpret it?

What information does state law enforcement share with the feds?

Even when cops aren't directly helping ICE, they could be enabling the agency's crackdown.

Since 9/11, the federal government has created a vast information-sharing network that funnels intelligence from state and local police to the feds and vice versa. The clearest example is the national network of fusion centers, regional hubs that bring together local, state, and federal law enforcement to share information. The network is run by ICE's umbrella agency, and ICE's deportation branch recently touted its heavy use of fusion center resources.

As governor, Hochul has expanded New York's participation in this information-sharing network. The State Police operate one of the country's oldest fusion centers — the New York State Intelligence Center, or NYSIC — and the governor has funneled millions of dollars into boosting its surveillance capabilities, including by launching a social media monitoring team.

While the center's operations are largely secret, it's likely that ICE can access much of the intelligence it compiles. Last year, for example, New York Focus uncovered a NYSIC-run gang registry that's accessible to ICE.



Police gang databases have been shown to contain widespread errors, encourage racial profiling, and turn low-level infractions into major criminal cases. They're sometimes used to target immigrants. The State Police said last year that its gang database has never been audited. Who in Albany is overseeing the State Police's use of this powerful tool?

And how often does ICE query NYSIC? Do the State Police know how immigration authorities are using the data they make available to the fusion center? Have they put any safeguards in place to limit ICE's use of the data?

Is prison chaos the new normal?

Nearly one year ago, amid increased scrutiny over the filmed murder of an incarcerated man by corrections officers, New York state prison guards launched a wildcat strike. Hochul deployed the National Guard to help staff the prisons. The strike lasted three weeks and led to the firing of some 2,000 guards.

Since then, the prison system has been operating in a consistent state of crisis. Citing a staffing shortage, the system has kept its facilities in varying states of lockdown, with incarcerated people confined to their cells and dorms, often missing school and programs — including programs they need to complete to earn their release.

The Department of Corrections and Community Supervision, which runs the state prison system, has claimed it is recruiting new staff and working on returning to normal operations, but the pace of progress has been glacial. In her budget proposal for next fiscal year, Hochul proposed \$535 million to extend the National Guard deployment. If approved, it would put the total cost of the strike at over \$1.2 billion.

How long can the state sustain that level of support? Is it necessary? When will DOCCS reach its recruitment goals?

Are prisons following the law?

To help deal with its post-strike crisis, DOCCS has stopped following several parts of a 2022 solitary confinement reform law.

Even before the strike, DOCCS never came into full compliance with the law, known as the HALT Act, as New York Focus has reported. It's unpopular among corrections officers, who claim they need freedom to use isolation to maintain order and cited HALT as one of the reasons they went on strike. The prison agency has come up with creative legal arguments to water down what legislators describe as some of its basic tenets. In response to a lawsuit last year, DOCCS claimed that HALT doesn't

apply to a vast majority of the people it incarcerates. The law's main sponsor called the interpretation "demonstrably false."

Can DOCCS and lawmakers come to an agreement on what HALT requires of the prison system? How many incarcerated people remain confined in illegal conditions? When will DOCCS come into full compliance with the law?

<https://nysfocus.com/2026/02/11/state-police-public-safety-prisons-ice-collaboration-budget>

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## **N.Y.'s prison strike response tops \$1B as National Guard deployment continues**

Corrections 1, Feb. 3, 2026 ::

### **The loss of roughly 2,600 corrections officers since the 2025 strike continues to strain operations across 42 New York prisons**

ALBANY, N.Y. — New York's response to the 2025 corrections officer strike is on track to cost taxpayers more than \$1 billion, as the state continues to rely on National Guard troops to fill staffing gaps inside its prison system.

Gov. Kathy Hochul's proposed budget includes an additional \$535 million to maintain the Guard's presence in state prisons, adding to roughly \$700 million already spent through the end of March, state Budget Director Blake Washington told WXXI.

Even before the strike, staffing levels were already below state targets. New York employed roughly 13,500 corrections officers and sergeants — already below the department's staffing target of 14,600. That number has since dropped to 10,919, according to a state fact sheet.

The rising cost highlights persistent staffing shortages across New York's 42 prisons, which worsened during a three-week wildcat strike that began in February 2025. Thousands of corrections officers walked off the job, citing rising violence, mandatory overtime and opposition to a 2021 law limiting the use of solitary confinement.

To pressure officers back to work, the state temporarily suspended portions of the law and offered incentive pay. Hochul ultimately terminated about 2,000 officers and activated the National Guard to stabilize operations.

As of the end of January 2026, about 3,000 Guard members remain assigned to 34 correctional facilities, state officials told WXXI.

“It’s really unsustainable,” said state Sen. Julia Salazar, who chairs the Senate’s corrections committee. “I’m grateful that National Guard members are supplementing the insufficient staff-levels in facilities, but it’s definitely not an ideal solution.”

#### Recruitment efforts fall short

The Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) has expanded recruitment efforts in an attempt to rebuild its workforce. The agency lowered the minimum hiring age from 21 to 18, opened applications to out-of-state candidates and increased academy graduations by 36%, a department spokesperson said.

Still, staffing levels remain well below operational needs, officials said.

“DOCCS has really been doing yeoman’s work in doing that, but it’s tough sledding. It’s slow-going,” Washington said. “So, the governor is not going to leave the incarcerated folks or the professional staff, or the correctional officers themselves in a lurch.”

National Guard personnel volunteer for prison assignments and receive their base military pay — at least \$1,671 every two weeks — plus a \$2,000 biweekly supplement and housing allowances for those who travel, according to the Division of Military and Naval Affairs.

By comparison, the starting biweekly salary for a corrections officer is about \$2,550, not including overtime. DOCCS also offers \$3,000 recruitment bonuses, officials said.

#### Union supports deployment

The New York State Correctional Officers and Police Benevolent Association does not oppose the Guard’s continued presence.

It is “understandable based on the staffing shortages that still exist — before the strike and afterwards,” said union spokesperson James Miller told WXXI.

Republican state Sen. Mark Walczyk, whose district includes three correctional facilities, said the state should prioritize policy changes that address officer safety inside prisons.

“The governor should address the safety concerns that the corrections officers have brought up,” said Walczyk, a major in the U.S. Army Reserve. “It’s bad for the National Guardsmen. It may be bad for their long-term mission in retention and recruitment. This is certainly not why somebody signs up to serve their community or their country.”

Salazar, meanwhile, has called for closing additional facilities to reduce staffing needs. DOCCS announced plans in November to close Bare Hill Correctional Facility, and state prisons were operating at 76% capacity as of October, according to the Correctional Association of New York.

<https://www.corrections1.com/jail-management/n-y-s-prison-strike-response-tops-1b-as-national-guard-deployment-continues>

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## For Information

### Castro says Texas National Guard is working inside ICE detention centers, including Dilley

News4 San Antonio ( Texas), February 3, 2026 ::

*Note: This item is being provided for your information.*

SAN ANTONIO — Texas National Guard members are working at ICE detention facilities in Texas, including the one in Dilley, U.S. Rep. Joaquin Castro said on Monday.

In a Facebook live video, Castro gave an update on the homecoming of 5-year-old Liam Conejo Arias and his father, Adrian Conejo Arias, after a federal judge ordered their release from immigration detention in Dilley, Texas.

He also discussed the conditions at the facility, where two cases of measles were recently confirmed by officials with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

Castro said the guard members, deployed under orders from Governor Greg Abbott, are dressed in plain clothing.

“The Texas National Guard that is embedded under Greg Abbott's orders. He has forced the Texas National Guard to do deportation work at these detention centers,” Castro said. “So the Texas National Guard are not in their uniforms. He doesn't let them wear their uniforms. They're basically camouflaged as civilians in these detention centers.”

Castro also shared his plans to tour more detention centers on Friday, including the South Texas ICE Processing Center in Pearsall.

<https://news4sanantonio.com/news/local/castro-says-texas-national-guard-is-working-inside-ice-detention-centers-including-dilley>

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## **2 West Virginia National Guard members shot in DC will receive Purple Heart medals, Hegseth says**

Stars and Stripes â€¢ February 8, 2026:

*Note: This item is provided for your information.*

Two West Virginia National Guard members who were shot in Washington, D.C., will receive Purple Heart medals, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth announced Friday.

In November, Spc. Sarah Beckstrom was shot and killed by an Afghan national near the White House. A second member of the West Virginia Guard, Staff Sgt. Andrew Wolfe, was also shot and has since been recovering.

Speaking at a reenlistment ceremony on the National Mall in Washington, Hegseth said the two were being honored for their actions while serving in support of the D.C. Safe and Beautiful Task Force mission.

“We had a terrible thing happen a number of months ago. Andrew Wolfe. Sarah Beckstrom. One lost, one recovered, and thank God miraculously. Both soon to be Purple Heart recipients because they were attacked by a radical,” Hegseth said. “And medals to be given to those who responded in that moment which is not an easy assignment it’s the real deal, it’s the frontline.”

Hegseth administered the oath and reenlisted more than 100 National Guard personnel from nine states in front of the Washington monument. They are among more than 2,600 guardsmen currently serving in Washington.

<https://www.stripes.com/theaters/us/2026-02-08/west-virginia-national-guard-purple-heart-20668850.html>

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## **Command Responsibility at Home: Governors, the Guard, and Domestic Readiness**

War on The Rocks, February 5, 2026 ::

*Note: This article is provided for your information.*

Late last year, the Supreme Court blocked an attempted National Guard deployment into the Chicago area — but months earlier, far from the headlines, a federal memo was already reshaping what Guard “readiness” means at home. The Supreme Court’s order was procedural, not a final merit ruling. But it delivered a rare, immediate check on a Guard deployment that Illinois state officials argued violated the legal limits on federal power over state forces.

The Chicago case matters but the more consequential development occurred months earlier, largely outside public view. In August 2025, the National Guard Bureau directed each state to establish a National Guard “quick reaction force” for civil-disturbance operations, standardizing timelines, curriculums, and equipment that, once treated as the minimum for readiness, can quietly become permanent.

Governors, as commanders-in-chief of their state National Guards when operating in State Active Duty or Title 32 status, bear the ultimate accountability for domestic deployments. Federal directives that redefine readiness around civil-disturbance missions and equipment do more than standardize training: They can narrow state flexibility and pull governors into a federally authored template. Over time, that shift can create mismatched priorities that undermine public trust and complicate local partnerships, particularly when Guard forces operate alongside civilian law enforcement.

Governors should not treat the quick reaction force as a technical training matter or a partisan dispute, but as a problem of federalism and risk management. Proactive state policy, ideally codified in statute or executive guidance, can define mission priorities, narrow and bound civil-disturbance roles, and set clear conditions for Guard support to civil authorities. Without that clarity, federal standards will harden into defaults, leaving states to manage the consequences.

Nothing in the recent quick reaction force guidance required new legislation. It relied on existing authorities that already shape Guard training and equipping, as earlier guidance has for counter-drug missions, cybersecurity support, and overseas mobilizations. But this directive carries a distinct consequence: It reshapes the baseline for what “ready” means for domestic employment, effectively placing governors on the hook for missions and timelines written in Washington. If a Guard deployment goes wrong, public anger, litigation, and political fallout will land at the steps of statehouses — not the Pentagon.

Much of the coverage framed the Chicago story as a debate over civil unrest. The deeper issue is federalism and the Guard’s dual purpose. Guard forces remain under a governor’s control unless they are formally federalized under the Constitution’s “calling forth the militia” authority and implementing statutes. In state status, it is the governor — not the federal government — who determines domestic missions, training priorities, and employment rules.

## The Legal Structure Favors the Actor Who Moves First

The Supreme Court's decision in *Perpich v. Department of Defense* (1990) affirmed that the federal government may train and deploy Guard units for national purposes without gubernatorial consent. In practice, that gives Washington leverage to push standardized requirements onto states when those requirements are tied to federal funds, equipment, or readiness assessments.

When Guard units remain under state authority, however, governors hold sweeping control. They can determine how forces are organized, trained, and equipped; what missions they prioritize; how they integrate with state and local emergency management and law enforcement; and what limits apply to any domestic activation. Those powers are reflected in state law and, for Title 32 forces, in the basic command relationship: state command with federally supported training and resourcing.

This balance works only when both levels of government actively do their part. Federal authorities will always shape national-level readiness through funding, equipping, and mobilization requirements. States, however, must translate those inputs into policy for domestic employment: which missions are primary, what guardrails apply to civil-disturbance support, and how the Guard integrates with civilian agencies. The federal government has an enormous procedural advantage, so without deliberate state policy governors default into reacting to federal templates rather than shaping their own state-centric plan.

That is how administrative drift can happen. A federally directed quick reaction force becomes normalized. Capabilities that already exist for public-order support become more widely resourced, standardized, and exercised as a default rather than an exception. Timelines written in Washington shape expectations in state and local agencies. And the Guard's public identity can shift from a primarily state-focused flexible emergency management partner to a federal military force increasingly associated with domestic security functions.

All of this would remain legal. The question is whether it is wise.

## Governors Should Act Like Commanders, Not Customers

Many governors treat the Guard as a specialized emergency resource, calling on it when hospitals overflow, when fires grow too large, or when roads are buried in snow, without directing what the force should prioritize and train for year-round. That model overlooks important responsibilities of command: deciding what a military force is for, what it should be ready to do first, and what it should do only under narrowly defined conditions.

Military commanders do not merely deploy troops — they decide what those troops are asked to prepare for. Once a mission becomes the training default, it becomes

the institutional default. Quick reaction forces built around formations, shields, and nonlethal crowd-control tools will refine those skills until they feel routine. If governors want their Guard to excel in wildfire aviation, cyber incident response, medical surge support, and infrastructure protection, those should be standing missions. Conversely, civil-disturbance support should be clearly bound and focused on public safety — protecting civilians and responders from immediate harm and activated under explicit rules rather than treated as a primary readiness benchmark.

There is precedent for states to proactively shaping the guard for potential federal activation. California built “Task Force Rattlesnake” to integrate Guard units into wildfire response. Multiple states developed Guard cyber assistance teams after ransomware attacks on hospitals and local governments. These missions built public trust because they matched the Guard’s traditional role as a partner to civil authorities rather than a coercive instrument in domestic politics.

Federal law and longstanding practice authorize the Guard to support civil authorities during disorder, including under federalization authorities in extreme cases. The question is not whether civil-disturbance missions exist — the key is balance.

Supporters of a standardized quick reaction force make fair points: speed, interoperability, and a common “floor” for training can help governors respond to riots, mass violence, or cascading emergencies that overwhelm local capacity. A quick reaction force can also reduce ad hoc decision-making by ensuring units have pre-trained leaders, equipment, and communications plans. But those benefits depend on policy. Without state-defined mission priorities and guardrails, the same standardization that improves speed can also institutionalize a posture that governors did not choose. While supporters highlight these benefits, critics argue the quick reaction force concept is a dangerous step toward easier federalization for suppressing domestic unrest, fusing state Guards into a tool for national control. Governors should counter this by defining their own policies.

#### Without State Policy, Crisis Improvisation Becomes the Rule

The United States has already seen the consequences of unclear Guard policy. During the 2020 unrest in Minneapolis, state and local leaders issued conflicting instructions about Guard authority, coordination with police, and use-of-force standards. A legislative review described inconsistent guidance and limited integrated planning with civil authorities, producing slow mobilization, unclear chains of command, and elevated risks for civilians and soldiers.

Courts can block specific deployments, but judicial rulings remain a temporary patch, not a structural fix: reactive, fact-bound, and dependent on litigation posture. The Supreme Court’s December order in the Illinois case underscored the point. The judiciary can hold the line case-by-case, but it cannot supply the state policies governors need to prevent federal templates from hardening into “readiness” norms.



In Portland, Oregon, a federal judge issued an injunction in early November 2025 blocking a National Guard deployment while she assessed the administration's asserted legal basis — and later issued a final order permanently barring the deployment. The details differ by case, but the pattern is consistent. Courts intervene only after the deployment decision has already become a crisis.

When policy is absent, improvisation can fill the vacuum. And improvisation under political pressure often rewards visible, coercive action over slower de-escalatory options. For instance, during the 2014 Ferguson, Missouri protests, an absence of clear state guidelines led to a heavily militarized police response with armored vehicles and tear gas, escalating tensions instead of prioritizing de-escalation through community dialogue. Similarly, in the 2020 Portland protests, federal agents' ad hoc tactics — unmarked vans and aggressive crowd control — amplified violence, as later investigations revealed.

The time to decide the Guard's role is before the template hardens.

### A State-Level Policy Framework for De-Risking the Guard

A credible state policy framework — ideally enacted through state statutes for durability across presidential administrations for domestic Guard employment — rests on five principles grounded in existing law and recent experience. While the federal quick reaction force imposes a uniform standard, this proposal empowers each state to customize its own, avoiding irony by prioritizing federalism over top-down control.

The first principle is mission design. Governors should issue written guidance that the Guard's primary state missions are wildfire suppression, flood response, cyber incident assistance, medical surge capacity, and critical infrastructure resilience. Civil-disturbance missions should be defined narrowly and framed in support terms — perimeter security, evacuation routes, logistics, and medical aid — with any crowd-control role specified only under explicit conditions and legal constraints. Under Title 32 training authorities, governors may direct training curriculums that reflect these priorities.

The second principle is disciplined civil–military coordination. Habitual training relationships between Guard units and local police should be established and led by civilian instructors specializing in de-escalation, communications, and constitutional rights. Colorado's 2020 law restricting certain uses of chemical agents and requiring detailed reporting provides a model for integrating civil-rights protections into Guard policy. The goal is a shared operating picture with distinct roles, not a state-federal merged force.

The third principle is interstate alignment. The Emergency Management Assistance Compact, approved by Congress in 1996, allows governors to exchange Guard resources during disasters. It also allows states to pre-agree on mission limits.

Governors should negotiate a regional compact specifying that Guard deployments across state lines will occur only for life-safety missions and that any support for public-order operations must be explicitly authorized in writing by both governors. These agreements should also establish common standards for documentation, use of force, and the public release of after-action reviews.

The fourth principle is parallel capacity. Federal law allows states to create State Defense Forces that cannot be federalized. Even a small unit focused on cyber assistance, logistics, shelter operations, and basic medical support provides resilience when federal mobilizations draw heavily on the Guard. Parallel forces strengthen governors' hands by ensuring that some emergency capacity always remains under state control.

The fifth principle is accountability through law. State legislatures can require timely public reporting of Guard deployments, establish clear thresholds for activations, mandate civilian oversight, and codify life-safety priorities. Transparency is not a burden — it is a prerequisite for public trust.

### The Moment to Act Is Now

Chicago shows the judiciary can sometimes stop a National Guard deployment. The quick reaction force guidance shows how Washington can still rewrite a domestic default setting without deploying anyone at all.

The quick reaction force memorandums were legal, but legality is not the standard by which state governors should measure risk. Administrative precedents settle quickly. Once the Guard's posture shifts toward rapid domestic coercive capability, it will not shift back without political cost.

Governors have only a short period to articulate policy before the federal default becomes the national norm. They do not need confrontation, but clarity. They need to define missions, training standards, oversight mechanisms, and partnerships before federal guidance fills the void. And they need to act collectively — across party and state lines — before the institution they command evolves into something they never debated or approved.

The Guard remains one of the most trusted public institutions in America precisely because it has anchored itself in local community, not national politics. The citizen-soldiers who rescue neighbors from fires, staff shelters in winter storms, rebuild washed-out roads, and restore hospital communications after cyberattacks embody the Guard's historic purpose. Domestic coercion is the edge of that mission, not its core.

If governors want to keep it that way, they should begin acting like commanders-in-chief now, not when the next federal memo arrives. That means acknowledging the legitimate case for speed and interoperability while still insisting that states define

mission priorities, thresholds, and guardrails for domestic employment. State policy and statutes are how governors keep the Guard trusted, mission-effective, and aligned with the communities it serves.

Jesse Humpal is an active-duty Air Force officer and assistant professor at the U.S. Air Force Academy. He can be followed @jessehumpal on X.

The views are his own and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the U.S. Air Force Academy, the Air Force, or the Department of Defense.

<https://warontherocks.com/2026/02/command-responsibility-at-home-governors-the-guard-and-domestic-readiness/>

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## **Pentagon warns Scouts to restore ‘core values’ or lose military support**

Washington Post, February 3, 2026::

**The relationship dates back decades, but Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth has criticized the organization for allowing girls to join and changing its name from Boy Scouts.**

*Note: This item is provided for your information.*

The Pentagon issued a warning late Monday to Scouting America, formerly known as the Boy Scouts, saying the organization risks losing its long-standing partnership with the U.S. military unless it rapidly implements “core value reforms.”

The public warning, delivered on social media by Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell, comes just months before thousands of Scouts are expected in West Virginia for National Jamboree, a once-every-four-years camping summit that relies on hundreds of National Guard and active-duty service members for medical, security and logistical support. A sudden loss of that support could jeopardize the youth gathering.

The organization has been in Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth’s crosshairs for years, ever since the group allowed girls to join and in 2024 said it would rebrand as Scouting America to project its inclusiveness. Hegseth is an avowed critic of diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives and has worked aggressively during his tenure atop the Pentagon to purge what he calls “woke” programs — and people — from the institution.

The Pentagon in recent days had begun finalizing plans to end all support for the Scouts, seeking input from the National Guard and the military's active-duty components on the potential impact of such a move, said multiple people familiar with a draft memo detailing the plans.

If Scouting America does not comply with Hegseth's demands, which have not been made public, the group could also lose its access to military facilities — which would have a disproportionate impact on military children who participate in Scouting troops at U.S. bases overseas, people familiar with the matter said. Like some others interviewed for this report, they spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the Pentagon's deliberations.

In his post to social media, Parnell said that after a review of the organization, the Pentagon is near a final agreement whereby it would continue supporting the organization because Scouting America has “firmly committed to a return to core principles.”

“Back to God and country — immediately!” Parnell wrote, assailing what he called Scouting America's “unacceptable” decisions in recent years “that run counter to the values of this administration,” including “an embrace of DEI and other social justice, gender-fluid ideological stances.”

It was not immediately clear what changes the Scouts might agree to, including whether the organization would return to being for boys only. Neither the Pentagon nor Scouting America addressed questions seeking details on the scope of what it would require of the group.

“For nearly 116 years Scouting has stood as a cornerstone of American ideals, good citizenship, service and adventure for American youth. We are encouraged by tonight's social media post by the Pentagon and we look forward to providing more details as we move ahead,” Scouting America said in a statement to The Washington Post late Monday.

Pentagon press secretary Kingsley Wilson said the Pentagon “would have more to announce soon.”

Left uncertain is the fate of this year's Jamboree, a massive 10-day summit scheduled for July and expected to draw more than 15,000 Scouts from throughout the country to West Virginia. In the past, upward of 500 National Guard personnel, military reservists and active-duty service members have provided a range of equipment and logistical support for the event — all now in doubt if the organization does not meet the Pentagon's demands.

“They are on the clock,” Parnell wrote on social media, “and we are watching.”

Scout troops spend years planning and raising money — through popcorn sales and other fundraisers — to travel to the Summit Bechtel Reserve for Jamboree. A spokesperson for Scouting America did not answer questions about what would happen to the summit if military support is pulled, saying in a statement that the West Virginia National Guard, which leads the Defense Department's involvement in Jamboree, "has indicated that they are fully prepared to support" the event.

In a statement, the West Virginia National Guard said that "no official communication has been disseminated to us that would contradict or cease ongoing preparations" and that, for now, military officials are planning to support Jamboree.

Since becoming defense secretary a year ago, Hegseth has moved aggressively to purge the military of DEI programs and to fire senior leaders whom he accused of being overly focused on them. He pushed out transgender service members, too, referring to them as "dudes in dresses," and directed the military's service academies to get rid of books, student organizations and courses that in his estimation were "woke."

Threats to sever the Defense Department's ties with the Scouts appear to be the latest evolution in this broader, highly politicized campaign.

NBC News and NPR have previously reported that the Pentagon was considering cutting ties with the Scouts. In November, when NPR disclosed the draft memo's existence, Scouting America released a statement emphasizing that it has "always" been nonpartisan.

"Over more than a century," it continues, "we've worked constructively with every U.S. presidential administration — Democratic and Republican — focusing on our common goal of building future leaders grounded in integrity, responsibility, and community service."

A dissolution of the two entities' partnership would end what for many decades has been a mutually beneficial relationship, as a significant portion of the nation's military officers have Scouting backgrounds, according to the organization.

It would mark a shift for Hegseth's boss, too. During his first term in office, in 2017, President Donald Trump appeared at Jamboree and told the thousands of assembled Scouts how proud he was to be there — and that 10 of his Cabinet members at the time had been Scouts.

"The Scouts," Trump said at the time, "believe in putting America first."

A year later, the organization began admitting girls.

The rebrand of Scouting America was announced in 2024, as the organization worked to move beyond decades of scandals involving sexual abuse allegations

made by thousands of Scouts who say they were abused by Scout leaders or volunteers.

As a Fox News commentator then, Hegseth said allowing girls to join and then renaming the Scouts was “basically the end” of the group, and he blamed “the left” for the change.

“They didn’t want to improve it. They wanted to destroy it or dilute it into something that stood for nothing,” Hegseth said on “Fox & Friends.”

President Donald Trump waves after speaking to Scouts during the 2017 Jamboree. (Saul Loeb/AFP/Getty Images)

The Scouts’ interconnectedness with the military is reflected in Army and Air Force policy, which says that the services’ most junior enlisted members, known as an E-1, can be automatically bumped up to the next higher pay grade if they join having previously earned the rank of Eagle Scout. In the Navy, attaining Eagle Scout allows an enlisted member to jump from the rank of E-1 to E-3.

The Scouts have served as a sort of feeder program for the military’s service academies, too. According to Scouting magazine, in 2017 about 20 percent of cadets at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point had attained the rank of Eagle Scout. At the U.S. Naval Academy for the Class of 2020, about 17 percent of male midshipmen had participated in Scouting.

It was not immediately clear how many current cadets or midshipmen have Scouting backgrounds. Spokespeople for the academies referred questions to the Pentagon.

The relationship between Scouting and the Pentagon is codified in law, too. Title 10 Section 2554 of the U.S. Code authorizes the defense secretary to provide all the support the Scouts might need at Jamboree — such as cots, flags and refrigerators — to the extent that it “will not interfere with the requirements of military operations.” It also states that the Pentagon must seek a waiver from Congress if the military intends to cut its support, and explain why giving that assistance “would be detrimental to the national security of the United States.”

Spokespeople for the House and Senate Armed Services committees did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Mariana Alfaro contributed to this report.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2026/02/03/hegseth-boy-scouts-scouting-america/>

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## The National Guard's 'one weekend a month, two weeks a year' slogan is outdated

We Are the Mighty.com, Feb. 5, 2026 ::

*Note: This opinion article is provided for your information.*

The United States military seems to attract some of the best our country has to offer. Perhaps not always the brightest, but when the stakes are high, American service members will go above and beyond to accomplish the mission.

From motorpool Mondays to holding key terrain on Guadalcanal, Americans always bring a natural grit you won't easily find elsewhere. But not everyone joins just to serve. Many people join for the various benefits each branch offers. For some people, the reserve component is just the right place. And then there's the National Guard.

The National Guard falls into a strange area. While most people may think they primarily operate at the state level, the reality is that they frequently operate at both levels. And while most people may still associate "one weekend a month, two weeks a year" with the National Guard, the slogan is outdated.

Not only is it outdated, but it was true only for a brief period in the last century. For the majority of its history, the National Guard has served alongside its active-duty counterparts.

Before the Vietnam War, the National Guard was involved in, like, everything. With its origin dating back to 1636, it's hard not to be. It was involved in everything before the United States of America was one of those things.

And yet, we still often gloss over the fact that three of the biggest wars of the 20th century involved the National Guard. I mean, it would have been hard to avoid calling the Guard, considering how many people we needed to fight those wars. The National Guard saw combat across every major theater, alongside everyone else who fought—even the Normandy Landings are a part of that resume.

It's almost impossible to explain why the "one weekend a month" slogan is outdated without mentioning the National Guard's long history of service. It's also hard not to mention that units going to war really cannot operate on that type of mentality.

Where the "one weekend a month" slogan really draws its origin from is Vietnam-era policy.

President Lyndon B. Johnson made it clear that the National Guard's responsibility was to protect the homeland. As a result, the National Guard's mobilization was

limited. Despite what your grandpa or uncle might tell you, 9,000 National Guardsmen and women served in-country, with 100 giving their lives. But the mentality at the time was that joining the Guard could get you out of seeing combat.

Given the growing civil unrest at the time, it makes sense that the Guard was underutilized overseas. But, somehow, the National Guard caught this reputation for being easy and laid-back, while everyone else had to go fight. While the National Guard stayed in this “weekend warrior” box for several more decades, everything changed with the War on Terror.

## Global War on Terror

When the GWOT started heating up, active duty units relied heavily upon Guard units to make up for their lack of numbers. In 2005, the National Guard made up 41% of all units deployed to Iraq. Guard units had already been extending weekend drills and annual training periods to better prepare for deployments to places like the National Training Center in California or the Joint Readiness Training Center in Louisiana.

The National Guard did not stop deploying in support of the War on Terror, and it still trains to be ready for those deployments the way it was 20 years ago.

## The 2020s

California Army National Guard's Task Force Rattlesnake (Redding, California) create a fire line Sept. 1, 2020, at Bonny Doon, Santa Cruz County, California, during the CZU Lightning Complex Fire in Santa Cruz and San Mateo counties, California. Cal Guard's specially-trained Rattlesnake teams are assisting the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) contain the massive wildfire that scorched more than 85,000 acres since igniting Aug. 16. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Eddie Siguenza)

The California Army National Guard's Task Force Rattlesnake create a fire line at Bonny Doon, Santa Cruz County, California, during the CZU Lightning Complex Fire. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Eddie Siguenza)

Since 2020, the National Guard has been mobilized stateside every year for some type of situation. 2020 saw massive, widespread mobilizations in response to civil unrest, for medical support, and fighting wildfires. In 2021, the Massachusetts National Guard was driving buses, and the Oregon National Guard was staffing hospitals. All of this in addition to weekend drills, annual training, and deployments.

Maybe there are units out there that are still operating under that old slogan. But for the majority of the Guard, “one weekend a month, two weeks a year,” is a relic of a bygone era. You won't see a private complaining about finally being able to pay for their brand new Dodge Challenger, though.



<https://www.wearethemighty.com/feature/national-guard-slogan-one-weekend-a-month-two-weeks-a-year/>

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## **Grand Jury Refuses to Indict Democratic Lawmakers in Connection with Illegal Military Orders Video**

**Associated Press, February 10, 2026 :**

*Note: this item is provided for your information.*

WASHINGTON (AP) — A grand jury in Washington refused Tuesday to indict Democratic lawmakers in connection with a video in which they urged U.S. military members to resist “illegal orders,” according to a person familiar with the matter.

The Justice Department opened an investigation into the video featuring Democratic Sens. Mark Kelly and Elissa Slotkin and four other Democratic lawmakers urging U.S. service members to follow established military protocols and reject orders they believe to be unlawful. All the lawmakers previously served in the military or at intelligence agencies.

Grand jurors in Washington declined to sign off on charges in the latest of a series of rebukes of prosecutors by citizens in the nation’s capital, according to the person, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to publicly discuss the matter. It wasn’t immediately clear whether prosecutors had sought indictments against all six lawmakers or what charge or charges prosecutors attempted to bring.

Grand jury rejections are extraordinarily unusual, but have happened repeatedly in recent months in Washington as citizens who have heard the government’s evidence have come away underwhelmed in a number of cases. Prosecutors could try again to secure an indictment.

Spokespeople for the U.S. attorney’s office and the Justice Department didn’t immediately respond to requests for comment Tuesday.

The FBI in November began contacting the lawmakers to schedule interviews, outreach that came against the backdrop of broader Justice Department efforts to punish political opponents of the president. President Donald Trump and his aides labeled the lawmakers’ video as “seditious” — and Trump said on his social media account that the offense was “punishable by death.”

Besides Slotkin and Kelly, the other Democrats who appeared in the video include Reps. Jason Crow of Colorado, Chrissy Houlahan of Pennsylvania, Maggie Goodlander of New Hampshire and Chris Deluzio of Pennsylvania.

Slotkin, a former CIA analyst who represents Michigan, said late Tuesday that she hopes this ends the Justice Department's probe.

"Tonight we can score one for the Constitution, our freedom of speech, and the rule of law," Slotkin said in a statement. "But today wasn't just an embarrassing day for the Administration. It was another sad day for our country," she said.

Kelly, a former Navy pilot who represents Arizona, called the attempt to bring charges an "outrageous abuse of power by Donald Trump and his lackies."

"Donald Trump wants every American to be too scared to speak out against him," Kelly said in a post on X. "The most patriotic thing any of us can do is not back down."

In November, the Pentagon opened an investigation into Kelly, citing a federal law that allows retired service members to be recalled to active duty on orders of the defense secretary for possible court-martial or other punishment. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth has censured Kelly for participating in the video and is trying to retroactively demote Kelly from his retired rank of captain.

The senator is suing Hegseth to block those proceedings, calling them an unconstitutional act of retribution. During a hearing last week, the judge appeared to be skeptical of key arguments that a government attorney made in defense of Kelly's Jan. 5 censure by Hegseth.

[https://apnews.com/article/trump-military-orders-democrats-video-e1435655587ad9715c4d1cc776edd545?\\_vfz=medium%3Dstandalone\\_top\\_pages](https://apnews.com/article/trump-military-orders-democrats-video-e1435655587ad9715c4d1cc776edd545?_vfz=medium%3Dstandalone_top_pages)

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## **'Risk of escalation': Penn civil war simulation mirrors Minneapolis today, professor says**

The Daily Pennsylvanian, Feb. 2, 2026 ::

*Note: This item from the Penn State University student newspaper is provided for your information.*

Amid a federal immigration enforcement crackdown in Minneapolis, The Daily Pennsylvanian sat down with University of Pennsylvania Carey Law School professor

Claire Finkelstein to discuss how the recent events mimic her 2024 experiment simulating how the United States could descend into civil war.

Following the deployment of an estimated 3,000 Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents to the city, Minneapolis has become a center for tension between state and federal authorities. The situation resembles a September 2024 simulation conducted by the Center for Ethics and the Rule of Law, which was designed to test how friction between different levels of authority could spiral into unprecedented domestic conflict.

In the past month, two people were shot and killed by federal agents during ongoing protests — including Alex Pretti, whose death is being investigated by the Department of Justice. On Jan. 17, Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz mobilized the state National Guard.

“What we were testing out was the risk that tension between the state and federal government could result in escalation that would eventually pit National Guard troops against federal forces,” Finkelstein said. “That is called green-on-green violence, and it has not happened in the history of this country — at least since the Civil War.”

The simulation — conducted two months before the 2024 presidential election — aimed to identify legal questions that courts might confront but scholars were not currently considering, Finkelstein explained. By anticipating these scenarios, CERL hoped to “forestall this kind of escalation” and provide courts and legal analysts time to address these unsettled questions before they became crises.

“Where matters are not legally settled, that’s a point where troops can be confused, governments can be confused, and rifts between the federal government and state government can open even wider,” Finkelstein — who serves as CERL’s faculty director — said.

She added that the only historical precedent similar to the center’s simulation was Little Rock, Arkansas — following the Supreme Court’s *Brown v. Board of Education* decision — when it was not clear whether National Guard troops would abide by President Eisenhower’s order enforcing school integration.

Finkelstein said the simulation did not anticipate *Trump v. Illinois*, in which a court struck down the legal reasoning the federal government previously used to justify the deployment of the National Guard. CERL filed an amicus brief on behalf of over 150 members of Congress in that suit.

She said that the legal victory may have inadvertently facilitated the current situation where 1968 Wharton graduate and President Donald Trump’s administration deployed ICE agents rather than the National Guard.

“The closing of the [U.S. Code §] 12406 deployment options on the National Guard for the Trump administration is partly why they deployed so many federal agents to Minneapolis,” Finkelstein said. “They seem to be using ICE as a kind of paramilitary force in lieu of the National Guard.”

She warned that the shift from the employment of the National Guard to ICE represents an escalation due to differences in training between the groups. The result, she said, is “in a way worse than it was when the National Guard was deployed.”

“Unlike the National Guard, who are well trained and understand the boundaries, these ICE agents are poorly trained and seem not to have any interest in following the limits on the use of force at all,” Finkelstein said. “They have sort of wantonly engaged in lawless activity, seemingly quite heedless of the consequences and, in some cases, baiting confrontation.”

Other elements of CERL’s simulation also materialized in Minnesota. Like in the simulation, federal agents are engaging in what Finkelstein characterized as unlawful uses of force against protesters, and the state National Guard has been mobilized “to try to keep the peace ... and to try to protect the lawful right to protest.” Finkelstein also noted that local law enforcement has been “potentially overwhelmed,” which also occurred in the simulation.

Most “damaging,” Finkelstein said, is the federal government’s pattern of defying court orders — citing a Minnesota judge who attached an appendix documenting nearly 100 instances in which the federal government did not comply with judicial directives.

“The best hope for de-escalation is when you have a court that’s willing to get involved, is clear-sighted about what’s going on, and can resolve disputes between the federal government and the states,” she said. “But if the federal government is not willing to follow court orders, the hope for that sort of intervention is weak.”

She further argued that another critical factor in de-escalation is accountability.

“If federal agents are allowed to violate the law with impunity, then it will keep happening, and it will escalate, and they’ll do more of it,” Finkelstein said. “But some well-placed prosecutions would stop that.”

Beyond Minnesota, Finkelstein emphasized that the dynamics unfolding are not geographically isolated and that Philadelphia could be particularly vulnerable to similar federal action.

“Philadelphia is one of the places that I think would be on the government’s list to have the same situation repeat itself, and indeed, in our simulation, the events took place in Philadelphia,” Finkelstein said.

She noted that both Minnesota and Pennsylvania have Democratic governors who are prominent figures within the party and potential presidential contenders for 2028.

She also pointed to recent federal actions across the country — including a raid on the Fulton County elections office in Georgia and a letter from Attorney General Pam Bondi demanding voter roll data — as evidence that political considerations are intertwined with federal enforcement decisions.

For Finkelstein, the implications extend beyond courts and law enforcement. She said that Penn students have a responsibility to be aware of their rights, and that the University has a responsibility to educate them.

“Understanding these rights should be an extremely high priority for the Penn community right now,” she said. “We have a lack of civic knowledge in this country.”

She added that remedying that knowledge deficit requires deliberate action from educational institutions.

“Educational institutions need to be at the forefront of educating their own students and educating the country about the constitutional rights of citizens,” Finkelstein said. “Penn needs to do as much as it possibly can to really prepare the Penn community for what could be a repetition of the Minnesota situation coming to Pennsylvania.”

<https://www.thedp.com/article/2026/02/penn-simulation-civil-war-national-guard-minnesota-trump-ice>

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## **National Guard troops were quietly withdrawn from some U.S. cities**

Washington Post, February 11, 2026 :

**The deployments encountered repeated legal setbacks that stymied President Donald Trump’s desire for a show of force in Los Angeles, Chicago and Portland, Oregon.**

*Note: this item is provided for your information*

The Trump administration has withdrawn all federalized National Guard troops from U.S. cities, after its repeated attempts to surge forces into Democratic-run states encountered judicial roadblocks.

The pullout was completed last month with no public acknowledgment from the White House or the Pentagon other than a social media post weeks earlier in which

President Donald Trump announced the troops' removal. It was a remarkable turnabout after Trump and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth had insisted the mobilizations were necessary to combat what they claimed was unchecked violence and to support enforcement of the nation's immigration laws.

The White House on Wednesday referred questions to Trump's Truth Social post from December warning it was "Only a question of time!" before crime would begin "to soar again," necessitating a return "perhaps in a much different and stronger form."

The Pentagon did not address questions about the withdrawal.

The deployments — including more than 5,000 troops to Los Angeles, about 500 into Chicago and 200 to Portland, Oregon — were ordered despite the vehement opposition from state and local leaders who labeled the administration's actions an unlawful abuse of presidential authority. All of those service members were sent home by the end of January, according to U.S. Northern Command. The vast majority of the troops sent to L.A. were demobilized in late July, leaving 100 in the area before the pullout.

More than 2,500 National Guard members remain in D.C. in response to Trump's ordered deployment, but under a nonfederal status. Their mission — part crackdown on crime and part sanitation duty — is expected to last until the end of the year. Additionally, there is an ongoing Guard presence in Memphis and New Orleans, but those missions, while funded by the federal government under a novel agreement with the Trump administration, are overseen by each state's governor.

Spokespeople for the White House and the Pentagon did not immediately address questions about the troops' withdrawal.

In late December, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a temporary order blocking Trump from carrying out the Chicago deployment because, it said, the president's ability to federalize the National Guard likely applies only in "exceptional" circumstances. The ruling has called into question any broader plans by the administration to use federal troops domestically to respond to civil unrest.

The deployments have cost more than \$496 million, the Congressional Budget Office reported in January.

The troops in Chicago, L.A. and Portland were deployed under federal orders known as Title 10, which allows the president to exert federal authority over a state's National Guard, such as when those troops are deployed overseas in wartime. If the deployment is on U.S. soil, they can still be put in Title 10 status, but the law places significant restrictions on what they can do. Importantly, they cannot perform law enforcement activities, such as making arrests and conducting searches, so in many

cases, the personnel involved in Trump's domestic deployments were relegated to guarding federal buildings and carrying out other menial tasks.

The laws governing what troops can and can't do on U.S. soil made them "100 percent ineffective in doing what [Trump] wanted them to do," which was to help control the protests that grew from his immigration enforcement directives, said Randy Manner, a retired Army two-star general and former acting vice chief of the National Guard.

"The administration," Manner said, "finally realized the amount of resistance that was coming up, in terms of legal and public condemnation, was more than anyone anticipated."

The pullback from L.A., Chicago and Portland also raises questions about the administration's plan to create a nationwide quick reaction force of National Guard members designated to deploy immediately into any area experiencing civil unrest. In the months since The Washington Post first reported that the Pentagon was considering creating such a unit, the administration has appeared to take a different tack, favoring expanded use of Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents, Customs and Border Protection personnel and other Department of Homeland Security forces who dress and are equipped like soldiers but are not subject to the same legal restrictions on their use of force.

The administration's critics have said Trump and other officials' fiery rhetoric in virtually all cases defied reality, as unrest in Los Angeles, Chicago and Portland never reached a breaking point.

In some instances, Guard members were used for duty outside the scope of their original mission, including one operation to assist ICE agents during a raid on a marijuana farm 100 miles from downtown Los Angeles.

Troops assigned to the mission in other cities were restricted by court decisions that barred them from taking to the streets, forcing commanders to sequester them at depots where they trained for mobilizations that never fully took full shape.

The Pentagon in January ordered about 1,500 active-duty troops to prepare for a deployment to Minneapolis, the site of mass demonstrations objecting to violent immigration enforcement raids and the killing of two American citizens by federal agents. That deployment never materialized, and the Trump administration — facing widespread criticism, including from some Republicans — dialed back the number of ICE and CBP personnel there.

In Memphis and New Orleans, hundreds of National Guard troops remain deployed under Title 32, or state control, which allows broader powers for law enforcement and in conducting arrests. In those cases, Trump found supportive Republican governors

who allowed a surge, and by making an official request to the White House for support, they received federal funds to pay for the deployment.

In Washington, where Trump said Guard members were mobilized to help reduce crime, they initially were tasked with picking up trash and clearing debris, while others patrolled inside Metro stations and gathering spots like the National Mall and Union Station. As D.C. was hit by a severe ice storm in early January, Guard members assisted in clearing roads and sidewalks.

In November, two National Guard members were shot by an attacker near the White House, killing Army Spec. Sarah Beckstrom, 20, and severely injuring Air Force Staff Sgt. Andrew Wolfe, who is still recovering.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2026/02/11/national-guard-los-angeles-chicago-portland/>

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## Funeral Honors

### New York National Guard Honor Guard teams conduct 6,166 military funeral honors

Rome Sentinel, January 31, 2026 ::

LATHAM — New York National Guard Soldiers and Airmen provided military funeral honors at 6,166 graveside services in 2025, according to an announcement on Monday by state officials.

Altogether, the 69 soldiers who serve in the New York Army National Guard Honor Guard conducted 5,051 military funerals during the year, while the 61 airmen who serve on six base honor guards conducted services 1,565 times last year.

Since 2000, federal law has mandated that the military provide funeral honors for any former military member who was not dishonorably discharged. The New York Army and Air National Guard, as community-based military forces, conduct many of these funerals.

Federal Public Law 106-65 requires that at least two service members attend a funeral, ensure that taps is played — usually with an “electronic bugle” — and that a flag is provided to the family of the former service member.



Retired military members and those who die on active duty are eligible for more elaborate services, which can involve up to nine honor guard members and include a rifle salute.

In 2024, the New York Army and Air Guard conducted 8,783 military funeral services, while in 2023, military funeral honors were conducted 9,083 times. In 2022, the New York National Guard provided 9,824 funeral honors services.

New York Army National Guard Sgt. Justin Kehati, a member of the Honor Guard since 2022 based at the Harlem Armory office, said he's noticed the decline in the number of funerals over time.

His team used to do as many as four funerals a day; now they average around two, Kehati said.

"It's sad to say, but almost all of our World War II vets have already passed on, and the Korean War vets too," Kehati said. "Overall, it seems the trend for military funerals is that they are slowing."

In 2000, when the military funeral law went into effect, there were 1.3 million veterans in New York, and 349,819 of them were World War II veterans, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

In 2023, according to the Department of Veterans Affairs, there were 662,404 veterans in New York. At that time there were just over 5,000 World War II vets still alive.

In 2010, the New York Army National Guard alone conducted 10,300 military funerals and 90 percent were of World War II veterans.

The New York Army National Guard runs a centralized program with 24 full-time Honor Guard members and 44 part-time members based out of six locations across the state, according to 2nd Lt. Jillian Jindrick, the honor guard officer-in-charge. The program's budget in fiscal year 2025 was \$2.5 million.

Of the 68 soldiers serving on the honor guard, 24 work on the mission full-time while 44 volunteer part-time.

Each soldier goes through 40 hours in the precise movements — folding and presenting the flag, "playing" the bugle and receiving the casket — involved in a military funeral. The soldiers also go through regular refresher training, Jindrick said.

He got involved in the funeral honors program because he was nervous around death and funerals and thought that the job would help him overcome that anxiety, Kehati explained.

It worked, and now he finds the job very rewarding, he added.

“Being there for the families and letting them know that their loved one is really cherished by the country, and if that helps ease their grief, that is worth it and then some,” Kehati said.

Families request Army military funeral honors through their funeral home director, who contacts the New York team to schedule the services.

The New York Air National Guard operates honor guard programs at three of its four airbases in Syracuse, Scotia, and Westhampton Beach.

The 107th Attack Wing teams up with the U.S. Air Force Reserve’s 914th Airlift Wing at Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station. New York Air Guard and Air Reserve members serve together on a team which covers western New York and part of Pennsylvania.

The Air Guard programs work with the Air Force casualty assistance centers at Hanscom Air Force Base and at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst to coordinate events.

Air National Guard honor guard members go through the same type of training that the Army provides for its honor guard teams, according to Master Sgt. Terra Martin, the non-commissioned officer in charge of the 109th Airlift Wing honor guard.

The Air Force also offers mobile training teams to teach airmen the skills needed.

The Air Guard reduced funding for base honor guards during 2025, which resulted in cutbacks of full-time honor guard members.

The 105th Airlift Wing at Stewart Air National Guard Base in Newburgh lost funding for full-time honor guard members in March and ended their programs.

The 109th Airlift Wing at Stratton Air National Guard base outside Schenectady, and the 106th Rescue Wing at Francis S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base in Westhampton Beach, had to reduce full-time guard members.

Of the 61 airmen who provide military funeral honors, 50 participate as part-time honor guard members.

During 2025, the New York Air Guard wings conducted the following funerals:

105th Airlift Wing (Newburgh)- 36

106th Rescue Wing (Westhampton Beach, Long Island) - 580

107th Attack Wing (Niagara Falls) - with the 914th Airlift Wing of the Air Force Reserve - 380

109th Airlift Wing (Scotia) - 250

174th Attack Wing (Syracuse) - 331

Eastern Air Defense Sector (Rome) - 33

During 2025, the New York Army National Guard conducted the following funerals from eight regional detachments.

Latham (Albany area) - 356

Camp Smith (Peekskill) - 366

Harlem - 505

Long Island - 1969

Buffalo - 771

Rochester - 333

Bronx - 338

Syracuse - 413

The Army Guard Long Island detachment and the 106th Rescue Wings do more funerals than others because of the population in the region and the existence of the Calverton National Cemetery on Long Island, according to Jindrick and Capt. Cheran Campbell, the public affairs officer for the 106th Rescue Wing.

[https://www.romesentinel.com/news/new-york-national-guard-honor-guard-teams-conduct-6-166-military-funeral-honors/article\\_e36464df-9e54-441b-88e0-a005f65d739a.html](https://www.romesentinel.com/news/new-york-national-guard-honor-guard-teams-conduct-6-166-military-funeral-honors/article_e36464df-9e54-441b-88e0-a005f65d739a.html)

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## History

### **A Bourbon Steeped In History: Old Hillside Honors The Harlem Hellfighters**

**Black Enterprise.com, Feb. 2, 2026 ::**

The founders of the Black-owned bourbon brand, Old Hillside Bourbon Company, knew they would honor the Harlem Hellfighters from the moment they set foot inside the 369th Regiment Armory in Harlem in 2024 for a tour. Co-founder Emmanuel Waters confirmed that it was the kind of visit that makes the hairs on the back of your neck stand up.

“For me, personally, it was hearing the stories of fighting for a country that didn’t fight for you,” Walters said during an interview with BLACK ENTERPRISE. “They fought at a time when they literally couldn’t even drink out of the same water fountain as white people. Then, traveled across the world because they couldn’t even fight in their own country.”

### **Who Are The Harlem Hellfighters**

People are familiar with the first Black military aviation unit, the Tuskegee Airmen, and the Montford Point Marines, the first Black Marines, but very few know the significance of the 369th Infantry Regiment, known as the Harlem Hellfighters.

Formed in 1917, this New York National Guard Unit preceded both groups and reportedly numbered in the thousands. The Harlem Hellfighters were the first all-Black U.S. combat unit to serve in Europe. They spent 191 days in combat on the front lines, longer than any other American unit in WWI history.

Despite their achievements and their status as one of the most decorated American units of WWI, these men were largely overlooked and uncelebrated. They returned to severe racism and segregation, and were not taken care of by Veterans Affairs.

“The VA only gave Henry Johnson, who was stabbed about 20 times, disability up to 85%,” said Waters. Eighty-six percent is what you needed to have the military take care of you for the rest of your life. They rated him 1% below just so they couldn’t give him benefits based on racism.”

Johnson is one of three men that Old Hillside Bourbon Company is honoring with its limited-edition bourbon.

### **Old Hillside Bourbon Company Honors The Harlem Hellfighters’ Bravery**

Each bottle of Old Hillside Bourbon Company’s limited release this Black History Month features one of three men: James Reese Europe, Henry Johnson, and Benjamin O. Davis, Sr. Each label will come with a story of the unit and a biography of the gentleman on the label.

“This is the first product where we actually made the story create the bourbon,” said Waters.

The bourbon is finished in French oak wine barrels for 191 days, the exact number of days the Harlem Hellfighters spent on the front lines in France. The barrels originate from the same region where the Hellfighters fought, creating a rare and powerful connection between place, history, heritage, and spirit.

“Then, to top it off, we set the proof at 112. They were one unit, fighting for one enemy for two countries, thus the 112 proof,” said Waters. “Everything was meticulously done.”

The bourbon pours a warm, deep amber with subtle ruby undertones from the Pinot Noir finishing cask. On the nose, consumers will notice honeyed grain and delicate vanilla that open into gentle red-fruit accents and soft oak. On the palate, the team describes it as “mellow and approachable,” with smooth caramel and light brown sugar balanced by a “restrained whisper of rye spice.”

“With every release we do, if people are researching the story that we’re telling, then we did our job. That is what our brand is about. We want consumers to know Black history,” Waters added.

### **Purchasing The Limited Release**

Only 150 cases will be released across the three unique commemorative labels. The bottles are available on the company website for \$110 each. A portion of the proceeds will benefit the Whiskey Valor Foundation, supporting veterans and their families through community programs and initiatives.

As for what’s next for the founders, they want to continue to expand in an industry that lacks representation. The U.S. spirits industry is valued at \$40 billion. While Black people represent 12% of consumers, they own less than 1% of the spirits brands.

“We need the industry to represent its consumers, which is why we are fighting in a space that’s very tough to compete in,” said Waters. “We’ve been fighting for going on six years now, so every day that we’re open is a blessing.”

<https://www.blackenterprise.com/old-hillside-harlem-hellfighters/>

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**History: The Harlem Hellfighters earned honor in war but returned to a nation that denied them equality**

Survival World, February 10, 2026:

The Harlem Hellfighters, a segregated African-American regiment of the New York National Guard, entered World War I not just as soldiers but as men burdened with proving their worth. From the outset, their own government sought to limit their potential, relegating them to labor duties instead of combat.

For many white officials, the idea of Black soldiers fighting alongside their white counterparts was simply unacceptable. These men were expected to build roads, dig trenches, and unload ships rather than pick up a rifle.

Yet, despite the humiliation and the obvious racism that permeated the ranks, the Harlem Hellfighters were determined to fight – and they would go on to do so with a ferocity and valor that stunned the world.

### **Sent to the French as a ‘Throwaway’ Unit**

When the U.S. finally relented and assigned them to combat, it wasn’t under American command. In a move that underscored the racial attitudes of the time, the regiment was handed over to the French Army. This transfer was a direct contradiction to General John J. Pershing’s promise that American troops would not be integrated into foreign units.

That rule, however, did not seem to apply to Black troops. Many in the U.S. military had little faith in their ability to perform under pressure, but the French – who had long employed colonial African troops – had no such reservations. Given French rifles and helmets, the Harlem Hellfighters entered the trenches, ready to prove everyone wrong.

### **Henry Johnson: A One-Man Army**

One of the most legendary figures to emerge from the Harlem Hellfighters was Private Henry Johnson. His story reads like something out of a war movie – except it was real. One night, while stationed at a listening post with Private Needham Roberts, Johnson heard the wire cutters of an approaching German raid.

Before long, they were under full attack. When his rifle jammed, Johnson fought back with the butt of his gun, a knife, and eventually his bare hands. Against overwhelming odds, he managed to fend off dozens of enemy soldiers, preventing the capture of his injured comrade. He sustained multiple wounds but refused to surrender.

The French awarded him the Croix de Guerre, their highest military honor, while his own country ignored his heroism for nearly a century.

### **Fighting a Two-Front War: The Battlefield and Jim Crow**

The Harlem Hellfighters fought longer and harder than any other American regiment in World War I. They spent 191 days in continuous combat, longer than any other unit, and never lost a single foot of ground to the enemy. Their bravery and skill shattered the racist myths that had justified their exclusion from frontline service.

However, while they had earned the respect of the French and even their German adversaries, their own government refused to acknowledge their sacrifices. The U.S. military went as far as to issue a warning to French officers not to treat Black soldiers as equals, fearing that such treatment might embolden them to demand fair treatment back home.

### **A Hero's Welcome Denied**

American troops returned home to parades and celebrations when the war ended – except for the Harlem Hellfighters. While they did march in a segregated parade in New York, they were not greeted as equals. The racism they had left behind was still waiting for them. Despite their service, many found themselves denied jobs, harassed by white citizens, and in some cases, even lynched.

Henry Johnson, once the unbreakable warrior of No Man's Land, returned home with injuries that made it impossible for him to work. His records had been conveniently "lost," meaning he received no disability pay or veterans' benefits. He died penniless in 1929, his heroism all but forgotten by the nation he had nearly died to defend.

### **A Delayed Recognition**

It took nearly a century for the United States to acknowledge the full scope of the Harlem Hellfighters' contribution. In 2015, Henry Johnson was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor, the recognition he had deserved the moment he returned from war.

The regiment as a whole, once dismissed as inferior soldiers, is now recognized as one of the most decorated American units of World War I. Their story serves as both an inspiration and a painful reminder of how America has historically treated its Black heroes.

### **Why Their Story Still Matters**

The Harlem Hellfighters were more than just soldiers; they were pioneers in the fight for racial equality. Their actions forced the military to reconsider its policies on Black service members, setting the stage for the eventual integration of the armed forces.

However, their struggle did not end with the war. They fought for democracy abroad, only to be denied it at home. Their story reflects the larger American paradox: a nation built on ideals of freedom and equality, yet historically unwilling to extend those ideals to all its citizens.

## **The Power of Remembering**

### **Why Their Story Still Matters**

American history tends to be selective in what it remembers. The Harlem Hellfighters should be a household name, yet their story is often overlooked in mainstream narratives of World War I. Their legacy is one of resilience in the face of injustice, of proving one's worth even when the world refuses to acknowledge it. By remembering their sacrifices, we honor not just their heroism but also the ongoing struggle for racial justice in America.

### **Lessons from the Harlem Hellfighters**

The Harlem Hellfighters' story raises uncomfortable but necessary questions about race, patriotism, and who gets to be remembered. Why were they denied the recognition they had so clearly earned? Why did it take nearly a century to right that wrong? And most importantly, how many more stories like theirs remain buried under the weight of systemic discrimination? Their story is not just about World War I – it is about America's past, present, and future.

### **A Call to Honor the Overlooked**

To truly honor the Harlem Hellfighters, it is not enough to simply recognize them in history books. Their legacy should serve as a call to action, both in ensuring that no soldier's sacrifice is ever disregarded again and in confronting the broader issues of racial injustice that persist today. They fought with everything they had, not just for their country, but for their right to be seen as Americans. That fight is still ongoing, and their courage should inspire us to keep pushing forward.

### **The Hellfighters' True Victory**

The Harlem Hellfighters may have been denied the honor they deserved in their time, but history has a way of correcting its mistakes. They did not just fight in a war; they fought for recognition, for equality, and for the right to serve a country that had so often turned its back on them. Their true victory is not just in the battles they won but in the barriers they broke. The least we can do is remember their names.

<https://www.survivalworld.com/history/the-harlem-hellfighters-earned-honor-in-war-but-returned-to-a-nation-that-denied-them-equality/>

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**Remembering a Forgotten Leader and New York's First African American CPA: The Legacy of General Wilmer F. Lucas**



When Brigadier General Wilmer F. Lucas retired from the United States Army Reserve, he did so as a war hero who had led the Harlem Hellfighters at the World War II battle of Okinawa. For his heroics, he won the Army's Legion of Merit and other awards—but he was also a hero on the home front too, as he was the first African American CPA in the state of New York, and the fifth in the nation. His firm made it possible for many other African American CPAs to receive the necessary audit experience to qualify for certification. General Lucas was a trailblazer in the accounting profession.

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In 1929, the first African American to pass the CPA Examination in the state of New York was Wilmer F. Lucas, who was 32 years old at the time ("Captain Wilmer F. Lucas First Negro [sic] Certified Public Accountant," *New York Age*, Sept. 7, 1929, p. 6; T. A. Hammond, *A White-Collar Profession: African American Certified Public Accountants Since 1921*, University of North Carolina Press, p. 21, 2002). In 1938, he joined Alfred W. Tucker to form the New York City CPA firm of Lucas, Tucker & Company. By hiring African American apprentices, the firm was able to employ many young accountants in New York who themselves went on to become CPAs. While practicing as an accountant, Lucas was also active in the US Army Reserve—specifically the 369th Infantry Regiment of the New York National Guard—and progressed through the ranks, reaching the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel in the group also known as the Harlem Hellfighters. The National Guard unit was called up to active service in early 1941, just before the United States' entry into World War II; Lucas had advanced to the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel. His wartime service in the Pacific Theater earned him several accolades, including the Legion of Merit, the second highest military decoration given to American soldiers. After the war, Lucas continued both his accounting and military careers and was eventually promoted to Brigadier General in the Army Reserve in 1957 (G. Harris, "Gen. Lucas Dies at 82," *New York Amsterdam News*, p. 4, May 10, 1980). He was active with the NYSSCPA, serving as a member of various Society committees and later as a director of the then 16,500-member Society (*New York Amsterdam News*, 1969, p. 32). In his later years, he founded and served as chairman of Carver Federal Savings and Loan Association, the second largest Black-owned institution of this type in the United States (Harris 1980).

Because of his service to the nation during wartime, and for his firm's services in expanding the number of African American CPAs in New York, Lucas is deserving of recognition for his many accomplishments during both of his intertwined careers. Wilmer F. Lucas contributed to the field of accounting, the success of his clients and employees, and his nation. This story highlights the contributions of an inspirational leader who paved the way for African Americans to enter the accounting profession.

The Early Years

Wilmer Francis Lucas was born on July 11, 1897, in Washington, DC. He was the son of John and Eliza Lucas, both natives of the state of Virginia. Shortly after the turn of the 20th century, the family moved to New York City, where Wilmer attended public schools and graduated from DeWitt Clinton High School. His parents were listed as living together in the 1910 Federal Census, but they were living apart by 1920. In between those dates, Lucas's mother married Albert L. Jordan, "one of the leading deacons of Abyssinian Baptist Church," who became Wilmer's stepfather. Jordan was still married to Eliza at the time of his death in 1938. The short obituary noted that Jordan, aged 70, had served as "treasurer-trustee of the Abyssinian Baptist Church for more than twenty years" ("A. L. Jordan Dead," New York Age, p. 1, July 9, 1938). Lucas was even referred to as "Wilmer Francis Lucas Jordan" after becoming the only Black finalist and winning a debate tournament ("Wins First Prize in Memorial Contest," New York Age, p. 6, June 15, 1916). This article also noted the beginnings of a fledgling accounting career, as Wilmer was listed as the auditor of Abyssinian Baptist Church and treasurer of the Douglass Students' Club. On his August 24, 1918, draft registration card, his last name was given as Lucas, but Albert Jordan was listed as his "nearest relative" and "stepfather."

#### Wilmer Francis Lucas as an NYU undergraduate student in 1919

Lucas went on to receive his undergraduate degree from NYU in 1919 and an MBA degree in 1922 (Walter H. Waggoner, "Gen. W. F. Lucas, 82; Served as Commander During World War II," New York Times, May 6, 1980). In July 1922, he married Inez Clyde Williams, a teacher ("Lucas-Williams Marriage," New York Age, p. 8, July 15, 1922). The couple had one child, in 1927, a son named Wilmer F. Lucas, Jr. (Waggoner 1980).

The senior Wilmer Lucas worked in an accounting or auditing capacity for several New York City and State agencies during the 1920s. Then, in 1929, he passed the New York CPA Examination and became the first African American CPA in the state, and the fifth in the nation ("Captain Wilmer F. Lucas First Negro Certified Public Accountant," New York Age, p. 6, Sept. 7, 1929). Lucas had received auditing experience as a result of his work with the Jewish CPA firm of Daniel Levy & Company in Manhattan. According to Theresa Hammond's book on African American accountants, Lucas's son and namesake reported that "Father said he was always indebted to the Jewish people for giving him an opportunity" (Hammond 2002, p. 21).

The only known publication authored by Lucas was a 1932 article in Opportunity, Journal of Negro Life in which Lucas lamented the fact that so few Black students majored in business. As a result, there were not many Black people who were qualified to work as service providers to Black-owned businesses (W. F. Lucas, "Educating the Negro for Business—An Investment Loss," Opportunity, Journal of

Negro Life, Vol. X, No. 4, pp. 105-107, April 1932). He also encouraged Black-owned businesses to attempt to find Black employees to serve their businesses and to avoid hiring white-owned firms to provide services such as accounting and insurance. The publication in which Lucas's article appeared was a prestigious journal published by the National Urban League, which often included among its authors some of the leading African American businessmen and literary figures. Even before starting his own business, Lucas was promoting younger men to go into the business professions.

Additional African American partners were added in the 1960s, making the firm the largest Blackowned CPA firm in the country.

### Professional Partnership

In 1937, Lucas started his own firm, Lucas & Tucker, at 209 West 125th Street in Harlem, in partnership with Alfred W. Tucker. Tucker was not a CPA at that time, but he received his certificate in 1938, becoming the second African American CPA in New York and the eighth in the nation (Hammond 2002, p. 147). Tucker was born on July 24, 1894, in the Williamsbridge section of the Bronx. Following his graduation as an accounting major at Columbia University, he taught in public schools ("Tucker Passes Certified Public Accountant's Test," New York Amsterdam News, p. 3, Aug. 6, 1938). In 1950, he became an attorney after graduating from Fordham University Law School. Tucker was the first Black CPA/lawyer in the state ("First Race CPA is Made Lawyer," New York Amsterdam News, p. 3, June 24, 1950). Similar to Lucas, Tucker was active on the board of the Carver Bank, the Uptown Chamber of Commerce, the Morningside Gardens Cooperative, and the NYSSCPA in the 1950s. Tucker was also a World War I veteran (New York Amsterdam News 1959, p. 1).

Before becoming a CPA, Tucker held several accounting-related positions with state agencies such as the New York State Transit Commission, the Municipal Civil Service Commission, and as a senior Public Service Accountant in the Bureau of Valuation and Research of the Public Service Commission, a position that involved the examination of the books of the Consolidated Edison System Companies.

Despite working as partners in their own CPA firm, the volume of business in the early years was such that both continued to work for New York state agencies even after the firm was founded. At the time of his death in April 1959, Tucker was the Principal State Accounts Auditor, and his obituary referred to him a "prominent state official" ("Harlem Mourns Passing of Alfred Tucker," New York Amsterdam News, p. 1, April 18, 1959). The attendance of over 500 Harlem civic and business leaders (including 15 of the firm's previous apprentices) at his funeral spoke to his impact and popularity ("500 Attend Funeral for Alfred W. Tucker," New York Amsterdam News, p. 4, April 25, 1959).

Following the death of his partner, Lucas remained in charge of the firm until his retirement in 1967 ("Gen. Lucas Retires from His CPA Firm," New York Amsterdam

News, p. 6, February 4, 1967). Additional African American partners were added in the 1960s, making the firm the largest Black-owned CPA firm in the country. Although retired, Lucas was still providing consulting work to the firm in 1971 (J. Nolan, "Black Accounting Firm Faces Future," *Journal of Accountancy*, pp. 22-26, March 1971). By 1972, the firm had offices in six states and more than 100 employees, and one of these partners was the venerable Bert Mitchell, whose writing and research highlighted the quantity and quality of Black CPAs in the 1960s and 1970s (J. Zamgba Browne, "How Harlem CPA Firm Proved Blacks Are Capable Businessmen," *New York Amsterdam News*, p. D8, July 29, 1972; B. N. Mitchell, "The Black Minority in the CPA Profession," *Journal of Accountancy*, pp. 41-48, October 1969).

### The Contributions of Lucas & Tucker

Passing the CPA Exam was only one of the challenges of becoming a certified public accountant. Perhaps even more daunting than the exam was meeting the experience requirement needed to receive the CPA certificate. Many early African American CPAs were forced to wait years to obtain their license because they could not get employment in a CPA firm due to racial prejudice, often due to clients who did not want Black advisors working on their engagements, thereby discouraging firms from hiring them. African American CPAs were limited in number, but those few who established firms often tried to hire others in order to provide them with experience and, ultimately, their licenses. This was particularly true in the case of Lucas & Tucker.

Following the death of Alfred Tucker in 1959, an editorial in *The New York Age*, a newspaper for the Black community, lamented the loss of one of the firm's founding partners and noted the contribution that Lucas & Tucker made in providing relevant experience to younger CPAs:

One of the employees of the firm ... reminded us that up until five years ago it was difficult for a Negro graduate in the accounting field to acquire the necessary experience for certification. Lucas and Tucker met this challenge by making it possible for well-trained young people to work in their firm. Since these were inexperienced trainees, the two men gave much time and supervision, as well as money toward this program. A number of individuals who now have offices of their own, or work for city and state government, received their basic experience through Lucas and Tucker (A. A. Hedgeman, "Alfred Tucker Served Us All," *New York Age*, p. 9, May 16, 1959).

Lucas, Tucker & Co. ... "provided the required experience for more than 25 percent of all of the Black CPAs ... in New York." However, the firm was not as progressive in hiring women.

Further, Lucas, Tucker & Co. has been credited to have "provided the required experience for more than 25 percent of all of the Black CPAs who have obtained their

certificates in New York” (Bert N. Mitchell, “The Black Minority in the CPA Profession,” *Journal of Accountancy*, pp. 47, October 1969). However, the firm was not as progressive in hiring women. Hammond noted that one of the earliest Black female CPAs in 1954, Bernadine Coles Gines, who held an MBA from NYU, reported that in the early 1950s, the firm did not hire women (2002).

### Military Career and Rise to Brigadier General

While he was pursuing an accounting career, Lucas was also active in the military. On June 19, 1924, Lucas joined the 369th Infantry Regiment, an all-Black unit of the New York National Guard, as a captain. The high rank was perhaps because he was a college graduate with a master’s degree. The all-Black reserve unit had a rich heritage of active service during World War I, and Lucas was promoted to major in November 1933 (“Wilmer F. Lucas Is Promoted to Major in 369th Regiment,” *New York Age*, p. 1, Nov. 25, 1933). Throughout the 1930s, there were many newspaper articles about Lucas, primarily related to his leadership activities with the 369th regiment, but also because of his and Inez’s social and charitable activities. One 1934 article noted that they had hosted one of the best New Year’s Eve parties in Brooklyn in their home (“Gay New Year’s Eve Party Given by Popular Matrons,” *New York Age*, p. 7, Jan. 6, 1934).

Lucas was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel in December 1940, and then on January 13, 1941, his unit was activated. He held his rank as the 369th was shipped out to California for training as an anti-aircraft artillery unit. Many CPAs who were drafted or enlisted in World War II were assigned to accounting-related duties, especially the officers, but Lucas served as a combat officer (M. E. Jobe and D. L. Flesher, “Eminent Accountants During World War II,” *The CPA Journal*, vol. 85, no. 8, August 2015, pp. 44–53).

The early years of the war were spent in Hawaii, but by 1945, the regiment had been broken up into three units, one of which was the 870th Anti-aircraft Brigade with Lucas in command. It was with this brigade that Lucas was to receive the Army’s Legion of Merit Award “for exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services during the period June 12 to August 2, 1945,” in the area around the Okinawa Archipelago in the China Sea. The citation noted that during this period, the “battalion at two-thirds its regular strength performed daily and nightly amphibious combat missions for 95 days in a most creditable mission until relieved just before V-J day” (“Col. Lucas Given Legion of Merit,” *New York Amsterdam News*, p. 14, Nov. 1, 1947). Lucas would also receive the Conspicuous Service Cross from the State of New York, and, eventually, in 2021, the battalion as a whole received a Congressional Medal of Honor.

The first couple of months of the campaign in Okinawa was reported on by a New York newspaper in July 1945:

Under command of Lt. Col. Wilmer F. Lucas and directed by colored officers, this hard-hitting outfit of former New York State Guardsmen has, during the past 69 days on a combat infantry mission in the Kerama Retto, added the following achievements to the glorious record compiled by its parent organization during World War I. On May 30, during its first patrol in the Kerama Retto captured a Japanese major, one lieutenant, two superior privates, one female nurse, one heavy machine gun, eight rifles and large quantities of ammunition without the loss of a man. Two members of the patrol suffered slight injuries. The Jap [sic] major personally surrendered his sword to Lt. Col. Lucas. ... Through kind treatment of the captured Jap major, the unit succeeded in setting the stage for peace negotiations with an enemy garrison entrenched on a nearby island in which the Jap major volunteered to act as intermediary.

In a day of blazing action on June 24, the unit captured a valuable hill position from the Japs, killed 20 enemy soldiers and wounded 10, captured an enemy grenade launcher, destroyed 2 machine gun nests and supplies of ammunition, knocked out 2 enemy pillboxes and burned an enemy encampment. ... In 60 days of operations the men have captured in the neighborhood of 700 prisoners, including Jap officers, soldiers, Korean and Okinawan labor troops (C. Loeb, "Lt. Col. Wilmer F. Lucas, Led New York's 369th Troops as Part of Invasion Forces that Took Jap Held Okinawa," New York Amsterdam News, p. A1, July 14, 1945).

Lucas was an inspirational leader in both the accounting profession and the military.

Some of the details of the fighting during that 95-day mission were summarized in a 1945 article in the Chicago Defender:

Upholding the fighting tradition of the oldest Negro national guard outfit in the United States, the anti-aircraft battalion commanded by Lt. Col. Wilmer F. Lucas, of New York City, once a part of the de-activated 369th Coast Artillery Anti-Aircraft Regiment, is seeing action in the Western Pacific, where it is the only all-Negro combat unit in action. The organization has scored a number of successes which are noteworthy because of the sudden conversion of the outfit from anti-aircraft to infantry (E. P. Waters, "'Ack-Ack' Unit Converted to Infantry 'Overnight,'" Chicago Defender, p. 10, Aug. 11, 1945).

Lucas and the 369th Regiment received a hero's welcome when they returned home in October 1945, and were stationed in Fort Dix, New Jersey ("369th Regiment Due at Ft. Dix," New York Amsterdam News, p. 1, Oct. 20, 1945). Lucas was released from the Army on May 6, 1946, but not before being promoted to full Colonel. All in all, he was out of the profession for more than five years between the start of 1941 and mid-1946. Lucas stayed active with the National Guard unit as a Selective Service officer (Waggoner 1980). In 1957, he was promoted to Brigadier General.

The Life and Impact of Wilmer F. Lucas

Following the War, then-Colonel Lucas returned to accounting and played a small role in politics. In 1946, he became the vice chairman of the campaign to re-elect New York Governor Thomas E. Dewey ("Churches Sponsor Republican Rally," Knickerbocker News, Albany, NY, p. 17, Oct. 8, 1946). In 1948, Dewey ran for president of the United States and lost to incumbent Harry S. Truman. Again, Colonel Lucas was a leader in the campaign, holding the title of assistant campaign manager ("Elks Leader for Dewey," New York Age, p. 2, Oct. 23, 1948). When Dewey declared his intent to forgo reelection as Governor again in 1950, Lucas urged him to run again. Dewey ran and was reelected by a landslide vote.

Lucas was financially successful. The 1950 Federal Census shows that Lucas earned \$19,000 in salary in 1949, and Mrs. Lucas earned \$4,750 (they also reported additional income from dividends and interest). His \$19,000 salary in 1949 would be equivalent to about \$250,000 today. Mrs. Lucas, sometimes accompanied by her husband, avoided the hot summers of the city by summering at their cottage at a resort, Oak Bluffs, in Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts ("Col. Wilmer Lucas and his wonderful Inez," New York Amsterdam News, p. 5, June 27, 1970). There were about 200 Black families who had second homes on the island, including such notables as New York Congressman Adam Clayton Powell Jr., and Massachusetts Senator Edward Brooke (L. D. Powell, "A Bit About Oak Bluffs, Mass.," New York Amsterdam News, p. 7, Aug. 31, 1968). She may have moved there full-time following Lucas' death, as that is where she died in February 1985 ("Lucas, Mrs. Inez," Knoxville News-Sentinel, p.17, Feb. 6, 1985).

Lucas was an inspirational leader in both the accounting profession and the military. He died on May 2, 1980, at the age of 82; although a long-time Brooklyn resident, his funeral was held at the Abyssinian Baptist Church near the armory of his beloved 369th Infantry Regiment in Harlem (G. Harris 1980; Waggoner 1980). Survivors included his wife Inez and namesake son. Lucas was a social and business leader in Harlem and Brooklyn and did much to promote African Americans into the accounting profession. Perhaps New York CPA Edward Mendlowitz, who served in the once all-Black 369th regiment in 1965, said it best in a recent newsletter article: "He was a trailblazer" (E. Mendlowitz, "Harlem Hellfighters: Personal Reflections," Withum, Partners' Network, Feb. 20, 2024).

<https://www.cpajournal.com/2026/02/09/remembering-a-forgotten-leader-and-new-yorks-first-african-american-cpa/>

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**For this Black World War I regiment, battle was on 2 fronts**

**Military Times, February 9, 2026 :**

A series of events — including a 1916 fight on the Mexican border that depleted New York National Guard troops as World War I raged — finally led to the formation of a Black unit.

“We need men in this war effort, and it doesn’t matter what color they are,” Sammons said of the sentiment at the time.

Thousands of Black men answered the call.

“An awful lot of them were patriotic and were red-blooded Americans who wanted to serve their country,” said Krewasky Salter, a retired Army colonel and military historian. “Their motivations for joining were analogous to just about any other American soldier.”

But the Black service member who expected to prove his value and patriotism had a unique burden. That burden grew heavier on April 2, 1917, when then-President Woodrow Wilson declared in his address to Congress calling for war, “The world must be made safe for democracy.”

Salter said that many Black soldiers thought, “If I continue to show my willingness to fight and die for this country, then perhaps I’m going to reap all of the benefits” of American democracy.

By December 1917, the 369th was in France.

A slap in the face

When Gina McVey recounts the story of the Hellfighters, she tells it like it’s old family lore — because it is. As a member of the 369th, her grandfather Lawrence McVey was among the first American infantry soldiers to arrive in France. But instead of rifles, McVey and his fellow soldiers were given pickaxes and shovels, Salter said. Although the regiment was all volunteer and infantry, it was designated as a draftee unit and given manual labor duties.

“That was kind of a slap in the face,” Salter said.

By early 1918, the 369th found their place in the war — under the French flag. Fighting since 1914, France’s forces were depleted. There was pressure for the U.S. to supply reinforcements to French command, but Army Gen. John Pershing, commander of the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF), had marching orders to maintain the independence and identity of American forces.

“So the African American soldier gave Pershing an out, because he wasn’t going to give any of the white soldiers,” Salter said. “So he gave the African American soldier.”



When Gina McVey started researching the 369th, she came upon a now-infamous letter from AEF headquarters to French forces. In it, the French are advised not to eat with or shake hands with Black soldiers and not to “commend too highly” the Black American troops. The danger, the letter stated, was that contact with the French — who didn’t hold the same racist ideologies held in America — would “inspire in Black Americans aspirations which to them [the whites] appear intolerable.”

“It broke my heart,” McVey said of the letter.

Lawrence McVey (middle), who served with the 369th, was honored with France’s Croix de Guerre after leading an attack that left him wounded. Thanks to the efforts of his granddaughter, Gina McVey (left), the medal now resides at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of African American History and Culture. (Gina McVey/National Museum of African American History and Culture via Canva)

Under French command, the men of the 369th performed their duty, serving in the trenches longer and suffering more casualties than any other American regiment. They participated in important battles, including the deadly Meuse-Argonne Offensive, during which they captured the village of Séchault, and were there for the armistice of Nov. 11, 1918.

Regiment soldier Henry Johnson became the first American ever awarded France’s Croix de Guerre military honor after engaging in hand-to-hand combat with an enemy raiding party.

Gina McVey’s grandfather, Lawrence McVey received the same French military honor for his courage in leading an attack that resulted in him being injured. According to his application for veterans disability allowance years later, McVey had suffered a gunshot wound to the arm.

“I’m just so proud that he fulfilled his duties to the best of his ability, and they were instrumental in turning the tide of war,” Gina McVey said. “Knowing that — all the times people have told us we didn’t do anything and we were lazy and we were good for nothing — that we were good for something.”

Another 169 members of the 369th received the prestigious Croix de Guerre. Yet at the time, few Black members received formal American honors.

Honor delayed

Once the glory of their welcome home faded, the members of the 369th and other Black regiments were left to deal with racism intensified by the shifting roles brought on by the war.

“One can see in the press that there’s a great deal of trepidation, of concern about these guys who have been trained to kill and had been transformed in many ways by their war experience and their interaction with people on a global stage,” Sammons said. “So it’s essentially, ‘how are we going to return Blacks to the status quo after the war?’”

Within months of returning home, the country was seized by the Red Summer of 1919, an outbreak of racial violence across dozens of cities. Over the course of 10 months, an estimated 250 Black Americans were killed. In Arkansas, wounded 369th veteran Leroy Johnston and his three brothers were killed in the Elaine Massacre, the deadliest racial confrontation in that state’s history.

It became clear that Wilson’s call to make the world safe for democracy didn’t apply to Black Americans, even those who fought in its name.

Service members of the 369th arrive at Hoboken, New Jersey. (National Archives)

Then in 1925, the Army War College released a report on the role and value of Black soldiers. In the report, Black Americans were described as “inherently weak in character” and accused of having “failed in the World War.”

“This is a devastating document,” Sammons said, adding that it institutionalized the denigration of the Black soldier, something that continued into World War II. It wasn’t until 1948 that then-President Harry Truman signed an executive order desegregating the U.S. military and mandating equality.

For most of the 369th’s Black members, it would take years, even decades, to receive American military honors. McVey received the Purple Heart in 1932. Johnson received the same in 1996, as well as the Medal of Honor in 2015.

In late 2021, the 369th Infantry Regiment was awarded the Congressional Gold Medal — well after its members had died.

“They need to be honored,” McVey said, “because they fought for a country that didn’t fight for them.”

More than a century after the Harlem Hellfighters marched up Fifth Avenue to thunderous cheers, their story still resonates — proof that courage often arrives long before recognition.

As the echoes of that parade fade, the nation can finally hear what was once drowned out: the call to honor all who fought for freedom.

<https://www.militarytimes.com/veterans/military-history/2026/02/09/for-this-black-world-war-i-regiment-battle-was-on-2-fronts/>

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## Harlem Hell Fighters: Black WWI Heroes & Jazz Pioneers

News Directory 3, February 5, 2026 ::

### Remembering the Harlem Hellfighters: A Legacy of Courage and Jazz

As Black History Month continues, today, February 5, 2026, we remember the extraordinary story of the 369th Infantry Regiment, affectionately known as the Harlem Hellfighters. Their bravery on the battlefields of World War I, coupled with their groundbreaking contributions to music, cemented their place in American history.

Originally formed as the 15th New York National Guard Regiment in June 1913, the unit was federalized and reorganized as the 369th Infantry Regiment. Composed primarily of African American soldiers, the Harlem Hellfighters faced significant prejudice even before deploying to Europe. Despite this, they distinguished themselves through unwavering valor.

In December 1917, the 369th became the first all-Black U.S. Combat unit to be shipped overseas for service in World War I. The German army, recognizing their fierce fighting spirit, bestowed upon them the moniker “Hell Fighters” – a name that resonated and ultimately stuck. For an astounding 191 days, the regiment remained in continuous combat, a record unmatched by any other American unit of comparable size.

Their dedication and skill were not only recognized by their adversaries but also by the French government. The entire regiment was awarded the prestigious Croix de Guerre, a testament to their collective bravery. Sergeant Henry Johnson became the first Black soldier to receive this honor, a landmark achievement that highlighted the contributions of African American soldiers during a time of widespread segregation.

The story of Johnson and Private Needham Roberts is particularly compelling. On the night of May 14, 1918, they bravely repelled a German raiding party of at least two dozen soldiers, demonstrating exceptional courage under fire. Their actions were widely reported in newspapers across the United States, from New York to Washington D.C., Kansas City, and Tacoma, and in African-American publications.

Beyond their combat achievements, the Harlem Hellfighters left an indelible mark on the world of music. The regiment’s band, organized and led by Lieutenant James Reese Europe, played a pivotal role in introducing jazz to European audiences. The

band, comprised of both Black and Puerto Rican musicians, captivated French troops and civilians alike. Reports from the time, including one from the Kansas City Sun, noted that “all Lyons now declares that It’s the grandest band that ever visited here.”

The band’s influence extended beyond mere entertainment. They actively participated in the war effort, performing for troops and boosting morale, while simultaneously facing the same dangers as their fellow soldiers. They weren’t simply musicians in uniform. they were soldiers who happened to be exceptional musicians.

The 369th Infantry Regiment’s story is a powerful reminder of the sacrifices made by African American soldiers in the face of adversity. Their courage, resilience, and cultural contributions deserve to be celebrated not only during Black History Month but throughout the year. The legacy of the Harlem Hellfighters continues to inspire, reminding us of the importance of fighting for equality and recognizing the contributions of all who serve.

The regiment continued to serve after World War I, and was active until February 3, 1946, later becoming the 369th Sustainment Brigade, and remains active today. Their story is a testament to the enduring spirit and unwavering dedication of African American soldiers throughout American history.

<https://www.newsdirectory3.com/harlem-hell-fighters-black-wwi-heroes-jazz-pioneers/#gsc.tab=0>

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## **New York Air National Guard**

### **Schumer announces \$194 million secured for Skibird planes used by 109th Airlift Wing**

**Times Union, Feb. 5, 2026 ::**

GLENVILLE — U.S. Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer announced Wednesday that he and U.S. Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand had secured \$194 million to start building the next-generation LC-130H Skibird cargo planes used by the 109th Airlift Wing of the Air National Guard.

The money, included in the recent defense funding bill, will allow for the construction of the next-generation J-model Skibird, so that the 109th can update one of its most critical tools while serving in missions on ice and snow in the Arctic or in Antarctica, where the National Science Foundation has research operations.

The 109th Airlift Wing is based at the Stratton Air National Guard Base in Scotia.

“We just landed a major victory for Schenectady County, the NY National Guard, and America,” Schumer said in a statement. “It took a lot of work, but this nearly \$200 million investment to begin recapitalizing the aging LC-130H aircraft will ensure America maintains its leadership in the polar theaters.”

Schumer said the new J-models will improve safety on the refueling missions to places like the Arctic, which the federal government believes is key to keeping its “competitive edge” against China and Russia.

“The 109th Airlift Wing is the only U.S. military unit in the world that flies these aircraft, and this funding will ensure this essential work continues right here in the Capital Region for years to come,” Schumer said.

“This is a huge win for Schenectady County and the brave service members of the New York Air National Guard,” Gillibrand, a member of the Senate Armed Services and Appropriations committees, added.

Maj. Gen. Ray Shields, the adjutant general of the New York National Guard, said he was “ecstatic” to hear news of the funding.

“I recently returned from visiting our Airmen in Antarctica who are part of this extraordinary and one-of-a-kind mission, and the funding could not come at a better time. The 109th’s mission is paramount to our national defense, and new ski birds will continue to ensure we are mission ready,” Shields said in a statement.

The funding to start building the first plane comes after Schumer and Gillibrand got \$29 million in federal funding for engineering work. Lockheed Martin is the manufacturer.

<https://www.timesunion.com/business/article/schumer-secures-194-million-ski-bird-planes-air-21333070.php>

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## **\$194 million secured to upgrade 'ski-bird' fleet at Stratton air base**

Spectrum News, Feb. 4, 2026 ::

### **\$194 million secured to upgrade 'ski-bird' fleet at Stratton air base**

**Spectrum News, Feb. 4, 2026 :**

Nearly \$200 million is on the way to upgrade the aging "ski-bird" fleet at Stratton Air National Guard Base in Schenectady County.

The fleet is used to support the National Science Foundation's polar research mission and reach remote parts of Antarctica and the Arctic, which federal officials say keeps the U.S. competitive with Russia and China.

The funding will help replace the base's aging LC-130H fleet with the newer J-model aircraft, U.S. Sens. Chuck Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand said Wednesday in a joint statement.

The 109th Airlift Wing is the only U.S. military unit in the world that flies these aircraft, Schumer said.

Maj. Gen. Ray Shields, adjutant general of the New York National Guard, said he recently returned from visiting airmen in Antarctica and the funding could not have come at a better time.

"The 109th's mission is paramount to our national defense, and new ski birds will continue to ensure we are mission ready," Shields said.

<https://spectrumlocalnews.com/nys/capital-region/news/2026/02/04/194-million-secured-to-upgrade--ski-bird--fleet-at-stratton-air-base>

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## **Schumer, Gillibrand secure \$194 million for new ski-bird at Stratton**

Daily Gazette, February 4, 2026 ::

GLENVILLE — Funding to the tune of \$194 million is headed to the Stratton Air National Guard Base.

The funding is for the base's "Ski-Bird" fleet, the only aircraft in the United States capable of missions to Greenland, the Arctic and Antarctica. Schenectady County's base is the only one in the U.S. which hosts the planes.

The funding to replace the aging LC-130 'ski-birds' is a matter of national security and has major implications for the scientific community that relies on the massive planes to carry out research missions at the North and South poles, said U.S. Senate Majority Leader Charles Schumer.

[https://www.dailygazette.com/news/government/schumer-gillibrand-secure-194-million-for-new-ski-bird-at-stratton/article\\_a8b5b01e-0908-483a-9b20-2165898780fd.html](https://www.dailygazette.com/news/government/schumer-gillibrand-secure-194-million-for-new-ski-bird-at-stratton/article_a8b5b01e-0908-483a-9b20-2165898780fd.html)

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## **NY Air Guard's 107th Attack Wing recruiters earn top recruiting award for 2025**

**Niagara Frontier Publications, Feb. 6, 2026 :**

The recruiters of the New York Air National Guard's 107th Attack Wing have earned the Air Guard's top recruiting award in the state.

The 10 recruiters earned the Patriot Team award for exceeding their annual recruiting goal for federal fiscal year 2025.

They brought in more new airmen than projected, while maintaining strong retention and expanding outreach across Western New York.

The wing's recruiting team recruited 105 new airmen against a goal of 102, finishing the year at 102.9% of its target. The wing also maintained a 90% retention rate, helping maintain a 2% increase in overall wing strength.

"I'm incredibly proud and humbled by the recognition my team received this year," said Master Sgt. Kenneth Chudoba, the 107th recruiting flight chief.

The recruiting team is also credited with generating 1,483 leads and conducting 441 recruiting events over 2025. This resulted in the second-highest number of new airmen credited to the wing since last year, with 108 recruits in 2024, according to Chudoba.

To support continued growth during periods of personnel turnover and extended parental leave, the recruiting team secured funding for three additional full-time recruiters, bringing the total recruiting and retention team to 10 airmen.

Staff Sgt. Danny Garrett, one of the recruiters, credited the team's success to a positive, supportive team mentality.

"We have a great team dynamic in the office, everyone prospers because of it," he said.

The team also received \$33,000 in additional funding, doubling its annual marketing budget and expanding its ability to conduct large-scale outreach events, according to Chudoba.

One of those efforts included a special operations-focused recruiting event supported by three Air National Guard wings across the state. That event cost \$29,000 in additional funding, to conduct, he said.

The event expanded the New York Air National Guard's recruiting reach to an estimated 257,000 social media users statewide, and exponential exposure across the state, Chudoba said.

The rigorous, mandatory physical fitness requirements and extensive technical training necessary to qualify for special operations is why it's one of the most difficult fields to recruit into, Chudoba explained. That is why events like this require so much funding and attention.

"These schools are purposefully challenging to ensure we end up with the best candidates to serve in these warfighting roles," Chudoba said.

New York's Air Guard recruiters have also acquired a mobile flight simulator recruiting display, like those used by the active Air Force, to help the recruiters.

The \$88,000 simulator was at the Erie County Fair for the first time in 2025, as well as two regional airshows, engaging more than 2 million attendees, Chuboda said.

Recruiters efforts also partnered with the New York State Department of Labor to establish a teacher ambassador program, Garret said.

The Air Guard successfully hosted a spring career fair, engaging 150 local high school students and teachers, he said.

"Organizing these community events are huge for us, because they really help get the wing's name image out there and reinforce relationships within our local communities," Garrett said.

Individual performance also played a key role in the wing's recruiting success, according to Chuboda.

One of the 107th's recruiters, Technical Sgt. Thomas Viau, was named the New York Air National Guard's top production recruiter in New York. He exceeded his annual recruiting goal by 71% and led several of the wing's highest-impact recruiting efforts.

He led the wing's recruiting presence at the Erie County Fair for the first time, engaging with approximately 1.2 million attendees over a 12-day period.

Viau recruited 29 new airmen against a goal of 17, including 14 referrals from current unit members, and generated 208 leads. His efforts alone increased the wing's overall strength by 3%.

Viau also managed \$52,000 in government purchasing funds to support recruiting events, marketing materials, and office equipment. Additionally, Viau is credited with helping bring in nine new officers to fill critical leadership positions and developing a training plan with the wings force support squadron to reduce administrative delays.



"I am humbled and honored by the recognition," Viau said. "This is really more of a reflection of the team's hard work, resilience and dedication."

Viau completed the National Guard bureau recruiter training course, becoming the wing's only recruiter qualified to train other recruiters. He mentored three new recruiters, who collectively recruited 18 airmen and met their annual goals.

Lt. Col. Kristen Gibson, recruiting and retention squadron commander for the New York Army National Guard, credited Viau's leadership and dedication to his and the 107th recruiting team's achievements.

"He has a tremendous ability to connect with our community members and is a proud ambassador of the 107th's mission," she said. "The impact he's made in just four years helped enable the team to exceed their mission for the second year in a row. Viau is the foundation of the recruiting team in Niagara."

The 107th Attack Wing, based at Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station, operates the MQ-9 Reaper remotely piloted aircraft. Other elements of the wing conduct space operations and coordinate air strikes with ground troops.

<https://www.wnypapers.com/news/article/current/2026/02/06/165249/ny-air-guards-107th-attack-wing-recruiters-earn-top-recruiting-award-for-2025>

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## **Sherrill resident among five New York Air Guard honorees**

**Rome Daily Sentinel, Feb. 9, 2026 :**

LATHAM — Five of the New York Air National Guard's 5,872 members have been named Outstanding Airmen of the Year for 2026, according to an announcement by state officials.

The New York Air National Guard, with five flying wings and the Eastern Air Defense Sector, is the largest Air Guard in the United States.

The New York Air National Guard has elements based in Niagara Falls, Syracuse, Rome, Schenectady, Newburgh and Westhampton Beach on Long Island.

The Outstanding Airman of the Year Award recognizes four enlisted airmen and a junior officer who have distinguished themselves during the previous year.

Their nomination is a testament to their dedication, superior performance, and commitment to excellence, according to Major General Gary Charlton II. "Each of you

represents the highest caliber of airmen in our force, and we are honored to serve alongside you,” Charlton said.

The recognized airmen are:

- Senior Airman Austin Conaway, from Lancaster, Airman of the Year.

Conaway, a fuel distribution operator, is assigned to the 174th Attack Wing at Hancock Field Air National Guard Base in Syracuse. The 174th flies the MQ-9 Reaper remotely piloted aircraft.

Conway, who joined the Air National Guard in 2019, is assigned to the 174th Logistics Readiness Squadron. In 2025 he distinguished himself during deployments to the Middle East while demonstrating exceptional skill in safely fueling Air Force aircraft. officials said.

- Staff Sgt. Dylan Kimball, from Oswego, Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year.

Kimball is also assigned to the 174th Attack Wing. He is a security forces airman who joined the New York Air National Guard in 2018.

Kimball was honored for his leadership and operational excellence during security, investigative and emergency response roles in 2025. He played a critical role during an emergency response at Pituffik Space Base in Greenland while deployed there, officials said.

- Master Sgt. Brittany Carrier, from Sherrill, Senior Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year.

Carrier is assigned to the Eastern Air Defense Sector in Rome, which is a part of the North American Aerospace Defense Command and is responsible for the air defense of the United States east of the Mississippi.

Carrier, who enlisted in 2013, serves as section chief of network cyber defense operations. She was recognized for her leadership by taking charge of a unit drug demand reduction program, reallocating personnel to handle an information technology manning shortfall of 40% and corrected shortfalls in cyber operations during a key exercise, officials said.

She also oversaw the modernization of 202 workspaces while orchestrating computer network operations across three systems, the announcement added.

- Senior Master Sgt. John McGhee, from the Bronx, First Sergeant of the Year.

Senior Master Sgt. John McGhee, a member of the 106th Rescue Wing from the Bronx, was named the First Sergeant of the Year for 2025. In the Air Force a first

sergeant is a senior noncommissioned officer responsible for the health, morale, welfare, and discipline of enlisted personnel in a unit and advises the commander on unit readiness, manages discipline, and supports families.

McGhee was recognized for his role in leading a non-commissioned officer development program for over 100 senior sergeants across the New York Air Guard. He also fostered a culture of physical resiliency and team building across the 106th Rescue Wing through an inclusive fitness program. McGhee also led a successful initiative to encourage more airmen to use the mental health counseling services available to them, officials said.

- Capt. Anton Andriyanov, from Clifton Park, Company Grade Officer of the Year

Capt. Anton Andriyanov, is a member of the 109th Airlift Wing, based at Stratton Air National Guard base outside Schenectady. The 109th Airlift Wing is the only unit in the world which flies the ski-equipped LC-130 version of Hercules.

Andriyanov is civil engineer who was recognized for leadership, mission execution and resource management during operations while deployed and here in New York. During a deployment to Israel. Andriyanov led a \$31 million construction program at two forward operating bases while overseeing 15 infrastructure projects which enhanced combat readiness. He also worked with Israeli and defense officials to move \$10.5 million in projects forward.

Andriyanov authored the first installation development plan for a forward operating base in Israel, establishing standardized construction practices across the theater. Upon returning to New York, he secured funding for four construction projects and oversaw the selection of a firm to design the wing's first secure facility for communications.

Beyond his military duties, Andriyanov supported his local community by coordinating transportation and equipment for a homeschool sports team.

New York's winners will now compete against other Air Guardsmen from across the country for the Air Guard's Best Airman awards.

[https://www.romesentinel.com/news/sherrill-resident-among-five-new-york-air-guard-honorees/article\\_8777f814-7eac-4a14-a723-bea08f55ffa1.html](https://www.romesentinel.com/news/sherrill-resident-among-five-new-york-air-guard-honorees/article_8777f814-7eac-4a14-a723-bea08f55ffa1.html)

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**Company news: Two CNY Air National Guard Airmen earn statewide honors**

**Syracuse.com, February 12, 2026:**

Two Central New York members of the New York Air National Guard have been named Outstanding Airmen of the Year for 2026, part of a select group of five honored across the state's 5,872-member force.

Staff Sgt. Dylan Kimball, of Oswego, earned Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year. Assigned to the 174th Attack Wing at Hancock Field Air National Guard base in Syracuse, serves as a security forces airman.

The wing operates MQ-9 Reaper remotely piloted aircraft. He joined the New York Air National Guard in 2018 and earned recognition for his leadership and operational excellence in security, investigative and emergency response roles throughout 2025. His achievements included playing a critical role during an emergency response while deployed to Pituffik Space Base in Greenland.

Master Sgt. Brittany Carrier, of Sherrill, received Senior Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year. The award recognizes airmen who distinguished themselves during the previous year.

Carrier joined the guard in 2013 and serves as section chief of network cyber defense operations at the Eastern Air Defense Sector in Rome. The sector, part of the North American Aerospace Defense Command, handles air defense for the United States east of the Mississippi River.

She earned her award for taking charge of a unit drug demand reduction program, reallocating personnel to address a 40 percent information technology manning shortfall, and correcting cyber operations shortfalls during a key exercise. She also oversaw the modernization of 202 workspaces while managing computer network operations across three systems.

Both airmen will now compete against other Air National Guard members nationwide for the Air Guard's Best Airman awards.

The New York Air National Guard operates five flying wings and the Eastern Air Defense Sector, making it the largest Air Guard in the country. It maintains bases in Niagara Falls, Syracuse, Rome, Schenectady, Newburgh and Westhampton Beach on Long Island.

If you'd like to submit an item about People in Motion at your organization, send a press release including photo, to [business@syracuse.com](mailto:business@syracuse.com) with Company News in the subject field. We publish news about people with ties to Onondaga, Cayuga, Madison and Oswego counties. See all recent Company News items.

<https://www.syracuse.com/business/2026/02/company-news-two-cny-air-national-guard-airmen-earn-statewide-honors.html>

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## **105th Airlift Wing honors 2025 Outstanding Airmen**

**Mid-Hudson News.com, Feb. 1, 2026 ::**

NEWBURGH- The New York Air National Guard's 105th Airlift Wing at Stewart Air National Guard Base has named its 2025 Outstanding Airmen of the Year. Five Airmen were recognized for exceptional performance, leadership, and dedication to the wing's mission.

The honorees are:

Airman of the Year: Airman 1st Class Tinatin Sadzaglishvili, Spring Valley, 105th Base Defense Squadron.

Noncommissioned Officer of the Year: Tech. Sgt. Ada Torres, Bronx, 137th Airlift Squadron.

Senior NCO of the Year: Master Sgt. Justin Murphy, Bergenfield, N.J., 105th Base Defense Group.

First Sergeant of the Year: Master Sgt. Luis Murria, Lindenhurst, 105th Maintenance Squadron.

Company Grade Officer of the Year: Capt. Albert Romano, New York City, 205th Base Defense Squadron.

Chief Master Sgt. Joseph Cohan, 105th Airlift Wing command chief, praised the winners for setting the standard in professionalism and readiness. The award selection process evaluates Airmen on mission execution, leadership, resource management, and unit improvement.

The wing-level winners will now compete at the New York Air National Guard level, with some moving on to regional competition.

<https://midhudsonnews.com/2026/02/01/105th-airlift-wing-honors-2025-outstanding-airmen/>

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## **Duty Calls: Four airmen selected as best of 109th Airlift Wing**

**Times Union, February 2, 2026 ::**

Four airmen have been selected as the best of the 1,100-member New York Air National Guard's 109th Airlift Wing at the Stratton Air National Guard Base, Scotia.

Senior Airman Nicole Scipione of Albany was named the Outstanding Airman of the Year. She was recognized for her deployment achievements, including moving 8,500 tons of cargo and mentoring 35 airmen.

Tech. Sgt. Derek Rivers of Wynantskill has earned the Noncommissioned Officer of the Year Award. Rivers was honored for his recognition of his exceptional leadership, operational excellence and community involvement.

Master Sgt. Jeff Hayes of Saratoga Springs earned the 109th Airlift Wing First Sergeant of the Year Award. Hayes earned the honor for his exceptional leadership and dedication to airmen and their families, according to Eric Durr, New York National Guard spokesman.

Captain Anton Andriyanov of Clifton Park, a civil engineer, earned the wing's Company Grade Officer of the Year Award for exceptional leadership, mission execution and resource management while supporting operations at home and abroad.

Scipione, an air transportation specialist, earned recognition for her performance while deployed in support of joint and coalition operations in Southwest Asia.

While deployed, Scipione worked alongside coalition partners in a complex international environment, Jaclyn Lyons, 109th Airlift Wing spokeswoman said. Her efforts enabled the movement of more than 8,500 short tons of cargo across four areas of responsibility and supported more than 1,000 airlift missions. She also conducted strategic forecasting for mission-critical equipment, ensuring efficient and uninterrupted operations.

Scipione played a key role in special handling operations, assisting with joint inspections that expedited the movement of 13,000 tons of Army cargo.

Her efforts earned her a personal coin from the Army's 3rd Security Force Brigade commander.

Beyond mission execution, Scipione demonstrated exceptional leadership and service. While deployed, she volunteered for more than 80 hours supporting community and base organizations, assisted with two dignified transfers of remains operations, and mentored 35 airmen.

Rivers, an aero maintenance technician, earned his honor following an 88-day deployment supporting Operation Deep Freeze, where he played a key role in

sustaining polar airlift operations in one of the world's most austere environments, Lyons said. During the deployment, he helped enable the movement of more than 2.2 million pounds of cargo and 1.2 million pounds of fuel, directly contributing to mission success in Antarctica.

Tech. Sgt. Derek Rivers

During the operation, Rivers decisively responded to an in-flight emergency involving an LC-130 aircraft. He rapidly identified and sourced a replacement engine-driven hydraulic pump and led repairs that restored full mission capability within six hours. This prevented significant mission delays and preserved strategic polar airlift operations, according to Eric Durr, New York National Guard spokesman.

Rivers also spearheaded logistical planning for the first continental U.S.-based LC-130 depot, streamlining maintenance operations for 12 contractors.

"His efforts resulted in a \$2.2 million cost savings for the wing," said Durr.

He also demonstrated exceptional leadership during a New York State Department of Corrections strike, where he assisted joint forces in restoring order and coordinating critical supply runs, Durr added.

Rivers also strengthened community ties through volunteer leadership. He organized a rally and wreath-laying ceremony at Saratoga National Cemetery to honor fallen service members and, as president of the Down Range Veterans Motorcycle Club, helped raise more than \$15,000 to support veterans' programs and preserve military heritage.

Within his unit, Rivers enhanced readiness and accountability by serving as squadron physical training leader and vehicle control officer, improving fitness compliance, vehicle availability, and on-base safety, according to his award citation. Rivers' achievements highlight the vital role citizen-airmen play in defending the nation while serving their local communities.

Hayes is honored following his service as the sole first sergeant supporting Operation Deep Freeze, a multinational mission in Antarctica. He improved morale and living conditions for 260 service members, recognized top performers, and supported more than 30 missions, Lyons said. His efforts were recognized by joint task force leadership and earned him a personal coin from a Navy Seabee commander.

Master Sgt. Jeff Hayes

In the Air Force, a first sergeant serves as the senior enlisted leader of a unit, responsible for the health, morale, welfare and readiness of the enlisted members.

They act as a liaison between commanders and airmen, help resolve personal and professional issues, and ensure the unit is mission-ready.

Hayes' role as the 109th Airlift Wing's sole full-time first sergeant involves overseeing nearly 800 airmen across seven squadrons.

At the wing in Scotia, he organizes retirements and promotions, responds to on-call events, and leads community and volunteer initiatives, including programs with the City Mission of Schenectady and the wing's first Maintenance Family Day, which hosted hundreds of airmen and family members.

Andriyanov earned recognition for leading a \$31 million construction program across two operating bases, overseeing 15 simultaneous infrastructure projects that enhanced United States and allied combat readiness during an Israeli deployment, according to Lyons. He resolved 10 critical construction permit delays by negotiating with Israeli defense officials and senior leaders, enabling \$10.5 million in stalled projects to move forward. He also oversaw the vetting and selection of an architect and engineering firm to redesign the wing's Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility, securing communications.

Andriyanov ensured mission success for 30 Army and Air Force personnel by providing short-notice support services and coordination that resulted in strengthened U.S.-Israel cooperation. He also represented the United States during 24 embassy engagements with senior military leaders.

He helps coordinate transportation and equipment for a homeschool sports team.

#### Veterans' breakfasts

The Lois Wilson Memorial Breakfast Club will meet at two locations. Wilson of Schodack, a veterans advocate, founded the club.

The club will meet from 8 to 10 a.m. Thursdays at the Melvin Roads American Legion Post at 200 Columbia Turnpike, East Greenbush.

The club will also meet from 8 to 11 a.m. Fridays at the Gateway Diner, 899 Central Ave., Albany.

World War II, Korean War, Vietnam War, Persian Gulf War, Afghanistan War, Iraq War, Cold War and other veterans as well as their spouses and friends are welcome.

#### Veterans' coffee

The Schenectady County Veterans Peer to Peer Program will hold a free coffee session from 9:30 to 11 a.m. Feb. 12 and every second Thursday of the month at



The Legacy House, Capital Region Veterans Memorial Legacy Park, 338 Ballston Road, Glenville.

Free coffee and pastries will be provided during conversations with veterans.

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](mailto:brownt@timesunion.com).

<https://www.timesunion.com/news/article/duty-calls-four-airmen-selected-best-109th-21326123.php>

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## **New York Air National Guard flies MQ-9 Reaper in civilian airspace using FAA-approved surveillance network**

Defense Industry Europe, Feb. 2, 2026 ::

The 174th Attack Wing of the New York Air National Guard reached a milestone in U.S. airspace protection by flying an MQ-9 Reaper using a Federal Aviation Administration-approved civilian surveillance network operated by the Northeast UAS Airspace Integration Research Alliance. The flight marked the first time the wing operated the aircraft in the National Airspace System using a privately operated civilian network.

The mission was conducted from Hancock Field Air National Guard Base and demonstrated that military aircraft and civilian air traffic can safely share the same airspace with modern technology and close coordination. Officials said the effort supports national initiatives to strengthen airspace security and modernize aircraft management.

“The 174th has a long-standing history in the Central New York region and is proud to be a part of the innovation legacy here,” said Brig. Gen. John O’Connor, commander of the 174th Attack Wing. “We look forward to working together with NUAIR to keep Syracuse’s airspace safe.”

By using an FAA-accepted surveillance network, the wing demonstrated new operational capabilities without relying solely on traditional military systems. During the flight, the NUAIR network provided real-time awareness of nearby aircraft, including those both broadcasting and not broadcasting tracking signals.

“NUAIR provides an essential next evolutionary step forward for the detect and avoid capability,” said Lt. Col. Drew Larned, commander of the 108th Attack Squadron. He said the system helped ensure safe separation throughout the mission.

Planning for the operation emphasized safety, with close coordination between the 174th Attack Wing, NUAIR and Syracuse air traffic controllers. “Both organizations prioritize safety as the number one objective,” said Scott Brenton, NUAIR chief of safety. “So when I kicked off the first meeting, that was the first bullet point on the slides.”

Leaders involved said the flight could serve as a model for other locations where military and civilian aviation operate side by side. They added that Central New York’s aviation history, local partnerships and established airspace structure position the region to continue leading efforts in unmanned aircraft integration and airspace awareness.

<https://defence-industry.eu/new-york-air-national-guard-flies-mq-9-reaper-in-civilian-airspace-using-faa-approved-surveillance-network/>

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## **New York Army National Guard**

### **People on the Move : New York Army National Guard**

The Times-Tribune, Feb. 1, 2026 ::

Major General Ray Shields, the adjutant general for the state of New York, announces the recent promotion of members of the Army National Guard in recognition of their capability for additional responsibility and leadership.

Harold Quezada from Great Bend, assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 101st Expeditionary Battalion, received a promotion Dec. 15 to the rank of master sergeant.

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 Army National Guard.

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## **Staten Island resident takes command of the New York Army National Guard Field Feeding Company**

**Army.mil, by By Sgt. Richelle Cruickshank and Sgt. 1st Class Sebastian Rothwyn, February 9, 2026:**

CAMP SMITH TRAINING SITE, Cortlandt Manor, New York - New York  
Army National Guard Capt. David Martin, a Staten Island resident, assumed command of the 1501st Quartermaster Company (Field Feeding) during a Feb. 7, 2026 ceremony at Camp Smith Training Site near Peekskill .

Martin, who serves as a full-time deputy logistics officer with the 53rd Troop Command, replaced Capt. Jowayne Meadows who served as the 1501st's commander since it was activated on January 20, 2024.

The 1501st is the first field feeding company in the New York Army National Guard and is part of the 369th Division Special Troops Battalion, which is commanded by Lt. Col. David Myones.

Myones, who presided over the ceremony, said, "In a very short period of time, the 1501st Field Feeding Company has become a statewide asset for the New York Army National Guard."

The company started with only 47 Soldiers and has grown to 201, including mechanics and supporting staff.

According to Meadows, the company has served over 15,000 Soldiers, 100,000 plates and saved the state 35% on feeding costs in their first operational year alone. This ceremony marks the beginning of the company's third year.

They've also won the New York State Philip A. Connely Competition, which recognizes excellence in Army food service.

Myones said, "To Capt. Meadows, you were the first commander of this unit and you have set a standard of excellence that will be hard to match."

“We are not just changing commanders, we are marking the end of its first chapter, and the beginning of its next,” Myones said.

Martin, a Staten Island native, began his service in the New York Army National Guard as a second lieutenant, earning his commission through the Reserve Officers’ Training Corps program at Hofstra University in 2020.

He holds a bachelor’s degree in Criminology with minors in Sociology and Civic Engagement, and a Master’s in Business Administration with a focus in finance from Wagner College.

During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021, he was called to active-duty to serve as a battle captain in support of Joint Task Force Javits located at the Jacob J. Javits Center in New York City, which was the largest COVID-19 vaccination site in the country, at that time.

One year later, he was called back to active-duty to serve as the lead logistics officer, supporting the New York City Officer of the Chief Medical Examiner to manage daily operations during the tail-end of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Later that year, he deployed to Kuwait in support of Operation Enduring Freedom (Spartan Shield) as the executive officer of the headquarters company 369th Sustainment Brigade.

Martin continued his full-time service upon his return in 2023, as the assistant brigade operations officer, supporting the brigade’s Warfighter 25-3 exercise for the 42nd Infantry Division, until his selection as the deputy logistics officer with the 53rd.

Myones said, “I’ve had the distinct pleasure of working with you in the past, and I know firsthand the quality of your character and the depth of your leadership abilities.”

In response, Martin said, "Sir, I can assure you, the winning culture of the 1501st will not skip a beat, and we will continue to answer our state and nation when called upon."

Martin is a graduate of the Logistics Basic Officer Leader Course, Logistics Captain Career Course and the Support Operations Course.

His military awards and decorations include four Army Commendation Medals, an Army Achievement Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Armed Forces Service Medal, Humanitarian Service Medal, and the Army Service Medal.

"While what lies ahead of us may be uncertain, I do know one thing for sure - we will be ready to accomplish our mission whenever, wherever," Martin said, "Let's roll!"

[https://www.army.mil/article/290432/staten\\_island\\_resident\\_takes\\_command\\_of\\_the\\_new\\_york\\_army\\_national\\_guard\\_field\\_feeding\\_company](https://www.army.mil/article/290432/staten_island_resident_takes_command_of_the_new_york_army_national_guard_field_feeding_company)  
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## **Duty Calls: Niskayuna resident takes command of 5,100 soldiers**

**Times Union, February 9, 2026 :**

New York Army National Guard Col. Jason Lefton of Niskayuna, an Iraq War veteran, took command of 5,100 soldiers of the 53rd Troop Command during a ceremony at Camp Smith Training Site, Cortlandt Manor.

Lefton replaced Brig. Gen. Isabel Smith, who retired after 37 years of military service.

Major Gen. Raymond Shield, state adjutant general, presided over the change-of-command ceremony.

Lefton is the right person to replace a proven leader like Smith, according to Shields.

"As the new commander of the 53rd Troop Command, Jason is a proven leader with tremendous experience leading complex organizations," Shields added.

Lefton addressed the officers and noncommissioned officers in the audience and told them they were critical for the success of the unit.

"Thank you for your leadership skills and unwavering advocacy for our lives and soldiers," Lefton said. "Your experience and guidance is critical to our success, and I look forward to working with you as well."

He now leads the 53rd Troop Command and has command and control over units across the state. Those units include 138th Chaplain Support Team, 138th Public Affairs Detachment, 53rd Support Detachment of Digital Liaison Detachment, 1156th Engineer Company, B Transportation Company, Cyber Protection Team, and 727th Military Police Detachment, all at Camp Smith. Also, 2nd Civil Support Team (Weapons of Mass Destruction), Scotia; 206th Military Police Company, Latham; Detachment 1, 1156th Engineer Company, Kingston; 501st Explosives Ordnance Demolition Battalion, Glenville; 1108th Explosive Ordnance Disposal Company, Glenville; 1427 Medium Truck Company, Queensbury; 466th Area Medical Company, Queensbury; 1501st Quartermaster Company, Troy; 1569 Transpiration Company, New Windsor Company A of 101st Signal Battalion, Peekskill; 104th Military Police Battalion, Kingston.

Lefton previously commanded the New York Army Guard's 42nd Combat Aviation Brigade.

Lefton has served in other leadership and staff positions during his 25-year career as an officer in the Army National Guard since earning his commission from the Marion Military Institute in 1996.

He will now serve as a traditional part-time Guard officer as he works full-time for the state Office of General Services.

Lefton enlisted in Army aviation in November of 2000 and became a UH-60 pilot with the 3rd Battalion, 142nd Assault Helicopter Regiment in January of 2001.

He deployed to Bosnia and Herzegovina in support of the Stabilization Force 12 as a liaison officer for Multinational Division Southeast and the Task Force Battle Captain and deployed as a staff officer to Iraq.

Lefton has served as a company commander, battalion executive officer, brigade executive officer and battalion commander. Lefton led the 3rd Battalion, 142nd Assault Helicopter Regiment to Puerto Rico in response to Hurricanes Irma and Maria.

He earned a bachelor's degree in rhetoric and communications at the State University of New York. He also earned a master's degree in strategic studies from the Army War College and a Master of Business Administration from the University of Phoenix.

Lefton has civilian work experience as a fully registered representative in the financial services industry. He holds a commercial helicopter pilot license and single-engine airplane license.

He has earned a Legion of Merit, two Bronze Star Medals, three Meritorious Service Medals, an Army Commendation Medal, three Army Achievement Medals, a Combat Action Badge, a Master Army Aviator Badge, and Air Assault Wings.

Bricks aid veterans

One gift can meet several wants and needs of veterans.

Malta Veteran Appreciation Program volunteers are selling a variety of bricks.

Each brick purchase can commemorate a veteran, help build a veterans memorial park, and help finance an emergency fund that provides food, clothing, furniture, household goods, handicap ramps, transportation, and homes for needy Malta-area veterans, according to Renee Farley, Malta Veterans Appreciation Program president.

"The Malta Veterans Appreciation Program provides charitable support services to veterans," Farley says. "It's committed to enabling our veterans to function in a safe, comfortable environment where they will not be hindered but instead, will be able to thrive and lead a full life."

Also, the organization teams up with Malta Mobile Acres Park to provide homes for needy veterans' families.

Profits from the brick sale will help the group meet future veterans' needs, she adds. The group has an objective of selling 100 bricks on time for a spring installation.

A brick with 20 characters on each of three lines costs \$100.

A brick with a military branch logo and 12 characters per each of three lines costs \$150.

An 8-by-8-inch gray or red cornerstone with 12 characters on each of four lines or six characters per each of six lines with logo costs \$300.

Each brick with the name of a veteran etched on it will be installed as part of a Veterans Memorial Walkway in the Capt. Dave Wallingford Park in Malta on June 7. Those bricks will be dedicated during a ceremony at 1 p.m. June 7.

Farley's group helps veterans in many ways, including home repairs and transportation to medical appointments. Whenever a veteran expresses a need, the group puts out a call for help to hundreds through its social media network to help with those needs. Also, Farley has medical equipment, including walkers and motorized wheelchairs, food and building supplies stored in her garage and shed to meet possible future needs.

To help replenish the emergency fund, purchase a brick online at [maltavets.com](http://maltavets.com). You can download a form and or mail a donation payable to MVAP or Malta Veterans Appreciation Program at MVAP, 4158A Silverbeach Road, Malta, NY 12020.

Volunteers are often needed for home repairs and renovations. If interested, contact Renee Farley at 518-577-8863. If you are a veteran with a need or want to volunteer, contact Farley.

News of troops and unit can be sent to Times Union, Duty Calls, Terry Brown, Box 15000, Albany, NY 12212 or [brownt@timesunion.com](mailto:brownt@timesunion.com).

<https://www.timesunion.com/news/article/duty-calls-niskayuna-resident-takes-command-21338120.php>

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## **New York Army National Guard announces local promotions**

Shawangunk Journal, Feb. :

Albany- Majort Genersal Ray Shields, the Adjutant General for the State of New York has officially annouced the promotion of seceral local.... *This item is behind a paywall.,'*

<https://shawangunkjournal.com/news/2026/02/08/new-york-army-national-guard-announces-local-promotions/454Uld>

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## **New York National Guard**

### **Local News in Brief**



**Daily Gazette, February 3, 2026 ::**

## New York Air National Guard Promotions

LATHAM — Air Force Major General Gary Charlton, the commander of the New York Air National Guard, announced the recent promotion of members of the New York Air National Guard in recognition of their capability for additional responsibility and leadership.

Quentin Hallenbeck from Fultonville, and assigned to the 109th Airlift Wing, received a promotion December 1, 2025 to the rank of staff sergeant.

Edward Korona from Sprakers, and assigned to the 109th Airlift Wing, received a promotion December 1, 2025 to the rank of master sergeant.

Stephen Russo from Johnstown, and assigned to the 109th Airlift Wing, received a promotion December 9, 2025 to the rank of airman first class.

Cruz Maldonado from Amsterdam, and assigned to the 109th Airlift Wing, received a promotion December 15, 2025 to the rank of technical sergeant.

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

These promotions recognize the best qualified Airmen for a career in the New York Air National Guard, according to Charlton.

Air National Guard Citizen Airmen who serve our state and nation are eligible for monthly pay, educational benefits (from the state and federal government), travel across the globe, technical and leadership training, health and dental insurance and contributions towards retirement programs similar to a 401(k).

For more information about the New York Air National Guard or contact a recruiter, visit <https://dmna.ny.gov/ang/>.

## New York Air National Guard Promotions

LATHAM — Air Force Major General Michael Bank, the commander of the New York Air National Guard, announces the recent promotion of members of the New York Air National Guard in recognition of their capability for additional responsibility and leadership.

Gutierrez Pellegrin from Broadalbin, and assigned to the 109th Airlift Wing, received a promotion November 7, 2025 to the rank of second lieutenant.

Zachary Barker from Gloversville, and assigned to the 109th Airlift Wing, received a promotion November 15, 2025 to the rank of staff sergeant.

Alexander Rivera from Gloversville, and assigned to the 109th Airlift Wing, received a promotion November 15, 2025 to the rank of technical sergeant.

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

"The New York Air National Guard is built on a foundation of talented and motivated Airmen, and this month's promotions are a shining example of that excellence," Bank said. "I am honored to recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of our Airmen, and I look forward to seeing their continued growth and contributions to our organization."

These promotions recognize the best qualified Airmen for a career in the New York Air National Guard.

Air National Guard Citizen Airmen who serve our state and nation are eligible for monthly pay, educational benefits (from the state and federal government), travel across the globe, technical and leadership training, health and dental insurance and contributions towards retirement programs similar to a 401(k).

For more information about the New York Air National Guard or contact a recruiter, visit <https://dmna.ny.gov/ang/>.

#### New York Army National Guard Promotions

LATHAM — Major General Ray Shields, the Adjutant General for the State of New York, announces the promotion of members of the New York Army National Guard in recognition of their capability for additional responsibility and leadership.

Emma Morrison of Johnstown, and assigned to Bravo Company, NY Recruiting and Retention Battalion, received a promotion December 10, 2025 to the rank of private.

Devon Wilson of Amsterdam, and assigned to 1427th Transportation Company, received a promotion December 14, 2025 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.

Army National Guard Citizen Soldiers who serve our state and nation are eligible for monthly pay, educational benefits (from the state and federal government), travel

across the globe, technical and leadership training, health and dental insurance and contributions towards retirement programs similar to a 401(k).

For more information about the New York Army National Guard, visit [www.dmna.ny.gov](http://www.dmna.ny.gov) or [www.1800goguard.com](http://www.1800goguard.com)

[https://www.dailygazette.com/ar-local-news-in-brief/article\\_0bc66c82-573e-40f7-a74b-be19e8e18f1f.html](https://www.dailygazette.com/ar-local-news-in-brief/article_0bc66c82-573e-40f7-a74b-be19e8e18f1f.html)

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## **Affordable college for military members expanding across SUNY campuses**

**WTEN, February 12, 2026:**

SARATOGA SPRINGS, N.Y. (NEWS10) — A program designed to make college affordable for military members is expanding across all SUNY campuses. SUNY's Military Tuition Rate Program will be available statewide this fall.

The program began at select SUNY campuses in the Spring 2026 semester. It's open to active-duty service members, members of the National Guard, and members of the Reserves. The program aims to provide an affordable undergraduate degree or microcredential program to military members.

According to SUNY, its program addresses a challenge faced by active-duty service members whose federal tuition assistance can fall short of full tuition at public universities. The SUNY Military Tuition Rate program offers undergraduate tuition at or below the Federal Military Tuition Assistance cap, currently set at \$250 per credit.

Empire State University in Saratoga Springs was one of the first SUNY campuses to implement the program. This year, it saw military-connected enrollment increase 4.7%, and veteran enrollment has increased 5%, compared to the previous year. Overall, military-connected enrollment at Empire State University has seen an 8.4% increase, and the university is at a 5-year high with more than 1,000 military-connected students enrolled so far this year.

"Empire State University was founded to meet students where they are — and for 55 years, that has included the men and women who serve our country," Empire State University President Lisa Vollendorf said. "Removing financial barriers for service members has long been part of that commitment. With military-connected enrollment at a five-year high, we know this work matters."

SUNY seeing enrollment growth in recent years

The other schools that started the program in Spring 2026 include: State University of New York at Albany, State University of New York at Buffalo, Alfred State College, SUNY Brockport, SUNY Canton, Clinton Community College, Columbia-Greene Community College, Dutchess Community College, SUNY Erie, SUNY Farmingdale State College, SUNY Geneseo, Monroe Community College, Nassau Community College, SUNY New Paltz, SUNY Old Westbury, SUNY Oneonta, SUNY Orange, SUNY Oswego, SUNY Plattsburgh, State University of New York at Stony Brook, Suffolk County Community College, Tompkins Cortland Community College, and SUNY Ulster.

Degrees can be earned either online or in-person. Learn more about the work SUNY does with veterans and active-duty military on its website.

<https://www.news10.com/news/ny-news/affordable-college-for-military-members-expanding-across-suny-campuses/>

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