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Military Times, June 9, 2020:

NY National Guard repairs World War I Soldier’s grave marker:
Army.mil,By Sgt. Alexander Rector | New York National Guard, June 5, 2020 :

NY National Guard repairs World War I Soldier’s grave marker:
NationalGuard.mil, June 7, 2020: 

Airmen and Soldiers
East Chatham resident receives promotion

Hudson Valley 360, June 10, 2020:

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

Andrew Behrens from East Chatham and assigned to the Company A, 1st Battalion, 224th Aviation Support Battalion received a promotion to the rank of Chief Warrant Officer 3.

Army National Guard promotions are based on overall performance, attitude, leadership ability, and development potential.


Duty Calls: Colonel honored after final flight before retirement

Times Union, June 8, 2020:

New York Army National Guard Col. Mark Slusar of Altamont was honored as he celebrated his final military flight following 34 years of duty.

Taking a final flight is traditional for military pilots who are approaching retirement. The occasion provided an opportunity for the pilot's colleagues and family to salute and recognize him.

After a half-hour sortie over Columbia County, Slusar landed back at the New York Army National Guard aviation facility at Albany International Airport in Colonie, where his UH-60 helicopter passed under the cross-water jets of two airport firefighting trucks as a salute.

Slusar was greeted by his family and well-wishers as well as by Maj. Gen. Ray Shields, the state adjutant general.

His most recent duty was as the New York National Guard aviation officer, responsible for overseeing operations at flight facilities in Latham, Ronkonkoma and Rochester. He held that position from 2014 until last April.

During his career, Slusar commanded a detachment of the 3rd Battalion, 142nd Aviation Regiment during a deployment to Bosnia-Herzegovina in 2002-2003 and commanded a detachment of the 369th Sustainment Brigade in Kuwait in 2012. Slusar also served as the commander of the 3rd Battalion, 142nd Aviation, a UH-60 assault helicopter battalion with elements in Ronkonkoma, Latham, and Connecticut, from 2009 to 2012.
Slusar enlisted in the Army in 1985 and served as an enlisted soldier in Korea and in the 10th Mountain Division at Fort Drum. He joined the New York Army National Guard in 1988 and was assigned to the Headquarters Company of the 1st Brigade, 42nd Infantry Division in Troy. After he attended Officer Candidate School, he was commissioned as an intelligence officer in 1990.

In 1995 he attended flight school and completed the UH-60 qualification course.

Slusar became a full-time Army National Guard officer in 1998.

His other assignments were as an intelligence officer in the 2nd Battalion, 142nd Aviation and then intelligence officer, personnel officer, Headquarters Company commander, and ion operations officer for the 3rd Battalion, 142nd Aviation.

He served as the domestic operations plans officer at New York National Guard Headquarters, chief of operations for the joint operations section, deputy director of operations, and executive officer to the adjutant general. He is a graduate of the Army Commander and General Staff College and the Army War College and holds a master's degree in strategic studies.

Slusar has earned a Meritorious Service Medal, an Army Commendation Medal, an Army Achievement Medal, a NATO Medal, a Humanitarian Service Medal, and a Senior Army Aviator Badge.


Emergency Response

St. John’s ROTC Cadets Bravely Respond to Pandemic

St. John’s University News, June 8, 2020:

“Leadership excellence” is the motto of the US Army Cadet Command’s Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) program. The cadets who serve in the Red Storm Battalion, St. John’s University’s ROTC program, have proven themselves as leaders and role models for their peers as they quickly sprang into action when the COVID-19 pandemic struck New York State. Reflecting the University’s mission of service, a number of current cadets are frontline responders and work as emergency medical technicians, firefighters, police officers, and with the US Army National Guard.

Senior Conor Lynch, a Homeland Security major, works for Northwell Health as an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) for the New York City 911 system, and as an EMT for
the City of Glen Cove Emergency Medical Services. A three-year veteran of the latter, Conor plans to continue until he receives his commission as a US Army officer following graduation.

For Conor, who is an Eagle Scout, the lasting impact of this crisis will be how he rose to the challenge. “I use all of the tools at my disposal to help in the most productive way I can. I continue to try and make a positive impact in every encounter I have with my patients.”

Junior William J. Ridout, a Business Administration major, volunteers with the Wallkill Hook, Ladder, and Hose Company 64 volunteer fire department in his hometown of Wallkill, NY. “Initially I chose to do this because I live across from the firehouse; after years of seeing the trucks respond to calls, I knew I wanted to be involved,” he recalled.

When the pandemic first struck in early March, the fire department assisted the local ambulance service with more serious calls, as they were having difficulty fielding the increased volume. One of the happier tasks in which William participates are the “birthday parades,” where children celebrating a birthday are delighted to watch their friends and family drive by their home with signs and balloons, followed by a fire truck with lights and sirens heralding their special day.

William, also an Eagle Scout, is proud to be part of this mission. “I am just here to help people. A good Boy Scout does his good turn once a day, with a smile, and without seeking reward or fame.”

Junior and Biology major Abdelmohsen Mossolem works at an urgent care facility in his community of Albertson, NY, and serves as a volunteer firefighter with the Albertson Hook & Ladder, Engine & Hose Co. No. 1, Inc. “The lessons I learn there overlap with those I learn at ROTC. I want to help as many people as I can, because giving back to the community you grew up in is very important to me. I saw the need for support and for hope during this very trying time and jumped at the opportunity.”

Junior Lenny Jaramillo, also a Biology major, was mobilized with the 719th Composite Truck Company of the New York Army National Guard to deliver medical supplies throughout New York. “At the beginning, the workload was pretty intense, and we drove around the clock from Buffalo to New York City,” he said. “I had the opportunity to help in a very practical way; it feels good to know your work makes a difference in people’s lives.”

Like every department within St. John’s, ROTC transitioned to online platforms for instruction, while students have maintained their commitment to physical and mental fitness while under quarantine. “Once we received notification of the transition to remote learning, we immediately turned to digital platforms to conduct classes,” said Eric P. Fekete, Lieutenant Colonel, Professor of Military Science, St. John’s University Army ROTC.

Labs were more of a challenge, Lt. Col. Fekete noted. “Since we were not able to conduct practical exercises, we utilized the Webex platform to keep cadets connected with the doctrinal knowledge required to perform tasks.” Once the campuses reopen, they will quickly translate the institutional knowledge they have gleaned to practical application.

MSIII cadets (students who have completed their junior year) normally attend Advanced Camp at Ft. Knox, KY, in the summer. While they await a decision, Lt. Col. Fekete said the
ROTC program has devised a strategy using an online gaming platform to replicate real-world exercises cadets would encounter at Advanced Camp.

“This will allow us to keep the class engaged and put their institutional learning to the test in a virtual setting. The tactics, techniques, and analytical skills they learn at Advanced Camp translate seamlessly to the gaming environment. If they are given the opportunity to attend camp, I have no doubt they will be successful,” Lt. Fekete observed, adding, “Nothing can replace the camaraderie of training together, and we’re all looking forward to the day we can resume that mission.


For National Guard troops, a lengthy COVID-19 mission brings job benefits into spotlight

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette Washington Bureau, June 7, 2020 ::

WASHINGTON — On March 6, as the magnitude of the COVID-19 pandemic was becoming more apparent by the day, Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf turned to the camouflage-clad reserve troops known for quick deployments amid myriad natural disasters and public emergencies.

For the Pennsylvania National Guard, the pandemic turned out to be unlike anything it had faced before — far different from snowstorms, floods, hurricanes and even deployments to Middle East war zones. The pandemic was an invisible, unpredictable threat that sickened tens of thousands of people statewide and had thrown millions into unemployment.

“COVID-19 is not, for multiple reasons, anywhere near standard call-up,” said Lt. Col. Keith Hickox, a state public affairs officer. “All those other scenarios that we’re called up [to respond to] never stretch the length of time of the COVID-19 operation.”

With the Guard’s COVID-19 mission reaching three months on Saturday, some in Washington have called into question the benefits available to troops who are on the front lines of a health war. The debate highlighted bureaucratic entanglements of the Guard’s state and federal activation orders at a time troops are responding to both the pandemic and, more recently, civil unrest over police brutality.

Pa. National Guard is ready for anything, anywhere

Last month, Rep. Conor Lamb, D-Mt. Lebanon, joined a bipartisan group of House lawmakers in demanding the Trump administration clarify if it would keep National Guard troops on federally funded deployments rather than state orders.

Mr. Lamb signed a pair of letters to the U.S. Department of Defense and introduced the National Guard COVID-19 Earned Benefits Guarantee Act to ensure troops receive full benefits including education, retirement, health care and paid leave. The bill is endorsed by
The Reserve Officers Association and the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States.

The move followed a Politico report that some Guard troops may see their federal deployment orders end after 89 days — one day short of the 90 days required to receive some benefits, like the GI Bill, Mr. Lamb said in a statement.

Mr. Trump has since announced he intends to extend the orders through mid-August. The U.S. Department of Defense did not return requests for comment.

The Pennsylvania National Guard includes about 15,000 reservists of the U.S. Army and U.S. Air Force, troops who usually are activated by governors and are directed by state officials. Guard troops have civilian jobs and often deploy for quick bursts, like a few days or a couple weeks, Lt. Col. Hickox said.

In the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, Guard members deployed in phases under state active duty orders managed by the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency, Lt. Col. Hickox said.

“With any state emergency, we usually do a quick initial draw to start getting ready, and then, as the emergency plays out, we bring people in,” he said.

The Guard deployment, which peaked at about 1,300 troops, has distributed food, produced cloth masks, transported three dozen quarantined cruise ship passengers and helped to clean and train staff at long-term care facilities. In May, 40 troops deployed to assist employees at the Brighton Rehabilitation and Wellness Center in Beaver County, one of the country’s largest nursing home outbreaks of COVID-19.

In late March, Mr. Trump began allowing some states’ National Guard troops to operate under federal orders.

Under that federal designation, National Guard troops remain under state control but the federal government pays the cost, which can run as much as $9 million per month per 1,000 troops mobilized, according to the National Guard Bureau.

New York, California and Washington State were the first three states granted federal status on March 22. Pennsylvania was authorized for federalized troops effective April 13. That federal order, which lasted an initial 30 days, was extended twice before Mr. Trump extended it through mid-August.

Mr. Wolf’s office did not return a request for comment for this story.

Federal vs. state benefits

Federalized troops receive all the federal benefits that come with active duty military — including access to Tricare health insurance, higher housing payments, points toward retirement and accrual of GI Bill education benefits.
Guard troops on state active duty orders are “basically working minimum wage with zero benefits,” said Steve Beynon, a sergeant in the Maryland Army National Guard and veteran of the war in Afghanistan, in an interview.

Mr. Beynon, who also writes for the military publication Stars and Stripes, penned a story last month that argued the Trump administration “totally bungled” the National Guard deployment by not federalizing the Guard immediately.

In Maryland, Mr. Beynon’s state stipend was about $700 for the month, a third of the federal active-duty stipend, Mr. Beynon said. If state-activated troops are injured or fall ill, they would have to apply for state workers’ compensation instead of seeking care at a U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs hospital.

“Troops went weeks without proper pay and critical benefits,” Mr. Beynon wrote. “It is a confusing, bureaucratic mess of different types of activations, meaning different things for pay and benefits few seem to understand or care about.”

Capt. David Boyles, a spokesman for the Guard's mission at Brighton Rehabilitation and Wellness Center, said he thinks state benefits in Pennsylvania stack up well with the federal ones. But the COVID-19 deployment “is all new to all us, as it continues to change and unfold.”

“This is new territory,” Capt. Boyles said. “A lot of assumptions are we are the same as active duty and we’re not.”

The COVID-19 deployment has eased slightly from its peak and now stands at just under 1,000 troops statewide, Lt. Col. Hickox said. (Another 2,000 troops have been deployed to George Floyd protests, he said.)

But the Guard’s COVID-19 mission likely will continue for the foreseeable future. On May 29, the Guard announced a new statewide COVID-19 testing task force to assist nursing homes and long-term care facilities in testing residents and staff.


De Blasio Admits He Instituted Curfew to Keep National Guard Out of NYC

New York City instituted a curfew last week to prevent a National Guard deployment, Mayor Bill de Blasio confirmed to NY1 on Monday evening.

In his weekly “Mondays with the Mayor” interview, de Blasio told Inside City Hall Host Errol Louis he feared the risk of accidental violence or death if militarized law enforcement was used to prevent looting and unrest following protests over the death of George Floyd.
De Blasio said he was concerned when he heard talk in Washington D.C. and in Albany about activating the National Guard.

Just hours before de Blasio and Governor Cuomo imposed the curfew last week, Cuomo told reporters he was putting the National Guard on standby in case the NYPD couldn't handle the unrest. That same day, President Donald Trump went a step further, threatening to deploy the United States military unless states quickly put an end to violence and looting.

For his part, de Blasio said he thought the NYPD's own enforcement, along with the curfew, was sufficient in curbing the looting and violence that took place in the days after Floyd's death. The unarmed black man was killed on May 25 after a white Minneapolis police officer pressed his knee to Floyd's neck for nearly nine minutes.

The curfew went into effect the following week on June 1. It was initially set for 11 p.m. to 5 a.m. But after violence did not abate, the mayor moved it earlier, from 8 p.m. to 5 a.m., and extended it for the entire week. The mayor cancelled the curfew a day earlier than planned after protests remained relatively calm Friday and Saturday nights.

But many activists and elected officials lambasted the mayor for ordering the curfew, contending that NYPD enforcement of it led to unnecessary arrests and confrontations with peaceful protesters. Police were oftentimes seen following marchers after the curfew went into effect, telling them to go home, and then arresting those who did not leave after a grace period.

According to the NYPD, no protesters were arrested Sunday, the first day in nearly a week without a curfew.

In his interview with NY1 on Monday, de Blasio also discussed the protests and renewed his pledge to shift spending from the police budget to youth services amid calls to defund the NYPD.

He also addressed criticism over his handling of the protests by former and current staffers and rumors about Police Commissioner Shea resigning or quitting.

And he discussed the first day coronavirus restrictions were partially eased, 100 days after the first positive case in the city.


New York Guard delivers 22.7 million meals

National Guard.mil.June 11,2020::
LATHAM, N.Y. – Over 22.7 million meals delivered, 311,321 COVID-19 tests collected, 270,686 phone calls answered and 25,554 pallets of medical supplies warehoused and 6,394 distributed.

Those are some of the numbers that describe the New York National Guard response to the COVID-19 crisis from March to June.

Along the way, troops established four alternate care facilities – including one at the Jacob Javits Convention Center where 1,095 COVID-19 patients were treated – and helped New York City’s medical examiner conduct the dignified recovery of 2,882 New Yorkers who died during the crisis.

What started as the deployment of several hundred troops to a “containment zone” placed around an outbreak in New Rochelle March 10 grew to over 3,620 troops on duty by May.

There were 2,994 New York Army National Guard Soldiers and 470 New York Air National Guard Airmen on the mission May 5, organized into six regional task forces and two mission-specific teams.

There were 81 New York Guard and 84 New York Naval Militia members responding as well.

The National Guard, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo said, played a key role in the state’s pandemic response.

“You showed up when other people played it safe. You had the courage to show up,” Cuomo told members of the New York National Guard at the Jacob Javits Center March 27. “You had the skill and the professionalism to make a difference and save lives.”

The response, Cuomo added, is historic.

“Ten years from now, you’ll be talking about today to your children or your grandchildren and you will shed a tear because you will remember the lives lost. You’ll remember the faces and you’ll remember the names and you’ll remember how hard we worked and that we still lost loved ones,” he said.

Initially, Soldiers and Airmen provided food to New Rochelle families who missed school meals, cleaned facilities, delivered hand sanitizer and established the first state-run COVID-19 drive-thru test site.

One unusual mission was staffing a call center established to answer questions from the public and schedule COVID-19 tests.

An executive order put New York on pause March 22, and the mission grew. Testing sites were established on Long Island and New York City. Food distribution began in the city, too.

Guard Soldiers turned the Javits Convention Center into the Javits New York Medical Station, staffed by active military medical personnel. The South Beach Psychiatric Center on Staten Island became another alternate care facility with Guard support.
Guard personnel assisted in controlling access to care facilities at Westchester Convention Center, SUNY Old Westbury and Stony Brook.

Soldiers and Airmen worked at warehousing the tons of medical supplies pouring in. They worked in four established sites, such as the Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Services warehouse in Oriskany. Temporary warehouses were set up at Stewart Air National Guard Base and at the Javits Center.

A critical mission was assembling COVID-19 tests for the state Department of Health. Teams of 30 to 50 Airmen and Soldiers combined items into 1.6 million test kits.

The toughest mission, according to Maj. Gen. Ray Shields, the adjutant general of New York, was assisting the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner of New York City with the dignified recovery of people who died in their homes.

Normally, 25 people die at home in New York City each day. On some days, the 250 Soldiers and Airmen on the mission dealt with over 200 deaths.

“Your work makes a difference for families at a very critical time of need when their loss is most personal,” Shields told members during an April 2 visit.

At Elmhurst Medical Center, a public city hospital The New York Times called the epicenter of the virus, 14 pararescue Airmen from the 106th Rescue Wing helped overwhelmed staff for four weeks.

The Airmen managed ventilators and helped turn over patients to help them breathe better. They were “force multipliers,” said Lt. Col. Stephen “Doc” Rush, the 106th Rescue Wing’s medical group commander.

By June, Soldiers and Airmen were staffing 15 drive-up test sites and five coronavirus antibody testing sites.

While over 22 million meals were delivered in New York City, Soldiers also provided meals to Chenango County senior citizens and supported food drives in the Mohawk Valley.

“Everyone should be proud of the work being done and the efforts of our total force to ease the suffering of our fellow New Yorkers,” Shields said in a May 14 email to troops and leaders.


Call to Service: Helping New Yorkers overcome disasters drives NCO

Army.mil, June 10, 2020: :
ROCHESTER, N.Y. -- Since he was 9 years old and a major winter storm hit western New York, Sgt. 1st Class Joseph Maloney has known he wanted to be involved in public service.

Electric power was out in their community for more than a week after the winter storm. So young Joe pitched in with his siblings to keep the fireplace going round the clock and helped bail out the flooding basement with the sump pump down.

“We had to stay on top of it 24 hours, bailing water,” he recalled.

Afterward, he joined other families to help clear tree limbs and debris from the county park down the road. That’s what piqued his interest in public service, he said.

During another winter storm when he was 16, he watched the National Guard help motorists on television and heard how they brought supplies to stranded residents.

“They kind of caught my eye then,” he said, adding that motivated him to join the Guard.

“That was really a big [factor in the] decision on why I joined, to help the citizens of New York state during trying times like this,” he said.

“I liked how the Guard had the dual mission of stateside helping out citizens and also overseas serving the country.”

He has since helped with recovery operations following three major disasters in New York City, along with several others around the state.

Beginning with 9/11, then Hurricane Sandy and now the COVID-19 pandemic, he has been to New York City with the Guard for every major activation.

After the twin towers went down, Maloney volunteered to help at ground zero. He and several other members of his unit spent 12-hour night shifts hosing contaminants off debris being trucked from the site to a landfill. They prevented contaminants such as asbestos dust flying off the trucks into the city streets.

They wore respirator masks at the wash rack to protect them from the contaminants.

“We didn’t have much sleep when we were down there,” he said. They worked a 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. shift, then made an hour-long subway commute back to Fort Hamilton. Twenty-two of them slept in an unfurnished two-room apartment at Hamilton.

“There wasn’t much time for rest,” he added, before they had to get on the subway and head back to the site.

“There was a lot of dust everywhere,” he said, adding it smelt of burnt metal and possibly asbestos.

“It was extremely surreal…” he said. “It’s a smell you’ll never forget.”
To this day, when he sees a large construction site lit up at night, he immediately remembers the duty at ground zero.

“It will stick with you forever,” he said.

He deployed to Iraq in 2005 and spent a year at Camp Anaconda near Balad, serving as a wheeled vehicle mechanic with Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment of the 1st Battalion, 142nd Aviation Regiment.

Following Hurricane Sandy in 2012, his unit was activated. The 642nd Aviation Support Battalion in Rochester convoyed down to Camp Smith to help authorities in Westchester County. He served as a “battle staff NCO” for about 150 Soldiers who provided perimeter security around downed electric lines while utility workers restored power.

Lake Ontario flooded in 2016 and his unit served as an initial response force. Teams went out to municipalities to place sandbags along the lake and around the perimeter of properties. Last year the lake flooded again and Maloney was one of the volunteers.

Last month, when New York City needed help again, Maloney was there. When the Javits Convention Center in Manhattan was stood up as a temporary hospital, he was first tasked to help in-process a number of retired medical officers back into the force. That mission ended up going to a medical unit. But Maloney said, “wait a minute, we’re here,” so he volunteered for other duties.

He became a safety NCO for the hospital center, working mostly on the fourth floor. He helped put together a hazardous communications plan for the facility. He made daily checks of the ICU and other wards on the first floor to ensure oxygen lines were working, fire extinguishers were available and everything else was up to safety standards.

He was there for 30 days. During that time, more than 1,000 COVID-19 patients were treated at the Javits Center, he said.

“It was a pretty good joint operation” between the military and civilian teams, he said.

“I give those health care workers and everyone down there on that floor a ton of credit,” Maloney said.

“I would maybe only spend an hour down there at a time in full PPE [personal protective equipment], but they were down there 12 hours a day in that gear.

“Everyone was focused and very professional, doing everything they could.”

Maloney worked at the Javits Center until after the last patient left. He said that he would volunteer again in a heartbeat.

[Link to the article](https://www.army.mil/article/236357)
**Funeral Honors**

**Honor Guard soldiers continue final salutes during COVID-19**

*Connecting Vets, June 6, 2020: By Capt. Avery Scheider New York Army National Guard:*

On a warm and cloudy morning, Army Sgt. Nikole Clark and Army Spc. Austin Dycha stepped out of their cars at Holy Cross Cemetery in Lackawanna, New York, to conduct a funeral ceremony in honor of former Army Air Force Cpl. Raymond Kegler, who served during World War II.

Despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the New York Army National Guard's Military Funeral Honors Program continues to provide final salutes to Army veterans.

The two-member honor guard team surveyed the cemetery's granite-walled mausoleum and began final preparations for Kegler’s May 14 funeral.

They donned jackets and service caps, brushed off lint, and pulled on their white gloves.

Then they added the newest part of their uniforms: a black cloth mask. These masks are the primary protection against the spread of COVID-19 and are now required during funeral honors.

Before the pandemic, the New York Army National Guard's Military Funeral Honors Program was performing an average of 850 services per month, statewide. Now, the average is down to 350.

"Although veterans are passing, some cemeteries are not allowing honors to be performed at the moment," explained Army 1st Lt. Melisa Rosario, the officer in charge of the program.

Two types of ceremonies would normally be available. The first is modified full honors for retirees with 20 or more years of service, or those who died while on active duty. The second is modified honors for Army veterans with an honorable discharge. Nine soldiers, including a firing party, perform the modified full honors, and only two soldiers perform the modified honors.

Based on National Guard Bureau guidelines, a maximum of three soldiers are currently allowed at a funeral, so New York’s program is offering only modified honors. Where they are permitted, each individual ceremony is directed by a detail leader like Clark, who has the duty of presenting the burial flag to the veteran's family.

"The detail leader will determine how safe they feel at the service and has the option to place the flag 6 feet from the next of kin, or on the casket," Rosario said.

New COVID-19 protection guidelines are causing a lot of uncertainty in the way the time-honored traditions of the final salute are performed. Small details such as which way a funeral procession arrives at the cemetery are normally the same each time, but with gate
restrictions and casket arrival times affecting when and how the service takes place, honor guard members have to adjust quickly to each situation.

"We're trained to manage it and think on our feet," Clark said. "We make it work, whatever we've got to do."

The personnel restrictions don't just affect the honor guard. They also affect the number of family members allowed to attend.

"We've done services where it's hundreds of people there, and now it's a handful of people," Clark explained. "And once in a while you get them live-streaming, too. It's not really something you saw before."

Clark has performed more than 700 funeral honors. The steps become near-muscle memory, she said. What took the most getting used to was not kneeling in front of the next of kin to present the burial flag, she said.

"Kneeling in front of someone and looking into their eyes, and presenting them a flag is kind of a worth-a-thousand-words kind of thing, a big gesture, a more powerful gesture," Clark explained.

Clark and Dycha say that what they offer families during funerals while the COVID-19 pandemic continues is a sense of normalcy in a far-from-normal time.

"It's definitely less intimate," Clark said. "You just have to make do with it and still know that the family understands."


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**New York Air National Guard**

**Senators Endorse Space Force Reserve But Question Guard**

*Air Force Magazine, June 11, 2020 ::*

The Senate Armed Services Committee endorsed the creation of a reserve component for the Space Force in new legislation but want more evidence that a Space National Guard is necessary as well.

The committee this week approved its version of the fiscal 2021 defense policy bill 25-2, and the legislation could head to the Senate floor for a vote by the full chamber as early as next week.

When Congress approved the new Space Force in the fiscal 2020 National Defense Authorization Act, it stopped short of adding a Reserve and National Guard like those that
accompany the Air Force. Reservists and Guardsmen already regularly handle space missions as part of the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, and service leaders are **pushing for those roles to continue**.

“We wanted to make sure that [the Pentagon] knew why they wanted to do a Guard, and where they want to do a Guard, and what the Guard was going to do, and that report was not received at the time that we started this markup, so we weren’t able to address those things adequately,” a Senate staffer told reporters June 11. “I’m sure they will be addressed, but whether there’s a Guard or not, we’d like to first see that report and the recommendations, so we can present that to members so that they can make the decision.”

Lt. Gen. Scott Rice, director of the Air National Guard, said during a June 10 Mitchell Institute for Aerospace Studies virtual event that military officials are preparing to present Defense Secretary Mark Esper with a framework for a Space Force with Reservists and Guardsmen “soon.” That proposal was left out of an organizational plan drawn up for Congress earlier this year.

Rice argued the cost of switching space personnel into a new space Guard would be reasonable. A recent [Congressional Budget Office report](https://www.cbo.gov/publication/55207) estimated the military’s idea to transfer those Guardsmen without creating new units would cost about $100 million a year, plus another $20 million or so for one-time construction costs. A more extensive Space National Guard design could cost up to $490 million a year, plus as much as $900 million in one-time expenses.

More than 1,500 Air Force Reservists supplement active duty space operations today. About 1,500 space personnel serve in the Air and Army National Guards as well, including around 1,100 Airmen.

Eight states—Alaska, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Hawaii, New York, and Ohio—and Guam have National Guard space units. Some have jobs like flying the Milstar constellation from California, and others are part of expeditionary units who deploy to support combat operations overseas. Those locations would form the basis of the Space National Guard, which proponents say doesn’t need to grow to every U.S. state, territory, and the District of Columbia.

“That just doesn’t make sense … based on requirements and it doesn’t make sense on dollars and cents, if you will,” said Air Force Maj. Gen. Greg White, the National Guard Bureau’s director of space operations.

While some argue that states don’t need to rely on military space operations like they do air and land forces, Guardsmen point to the value of space-focused electronic warfare as well as their ability to provide space experts to U.S. Central Command and other organizations, operate the Air Force’s legacy satellites, and help identify and track wildfires in coordination with state agencies.

“I don’t know what the governors will use for space. I do know in Colorado, when the fire’s burning and the trees are coming down, they do look to space to say, ‘Give me a picture, show me what’s there,’” Rice added.
To prepare for the eventual possibility of a Space National Guard, the National Guard Bureau created a space operations directorate as a bridge to the Office of the Chief of Space Operations. White told Air Force Magazine his top priority is ensuring National Guard space units are ready for their missions on a daily basis, followed by building connections within the Space Force.

“Myself and my staff at the appropriate levels are included in [Chief of Space Operations Gen. Jay] Raymond’s staff meetings,” White said. “We’re active participants in working groups that are looking to craft new organizations, new policies for how the Space Force will operate. … We’re actively involved with helping plan what this new reserve component is going to look like.”

DOD hasn’t come up with a plan B in case a Space National Guard falls through, White said. But Air Force officials are confident their vision will eventually come to fruition.

“It is weekly meetings at all different levels to work through the analysis of what will be the best reserve component for this new service, and I’m very pleased with the progress we’re making,” White said.


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**New York Army National Guard**

NYC elected officials push to strip names of Confederate generals from Fort Hamilton streets

**Politico, June 11, 2020:**

NEW YORK — City elected officials are pushing for the names of Confederate generals Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson to be removed from streets at a Brooklyn military base.

Mayor Bill de Blasio and Deputy Mayor Phil Thompson backed the push at a press conference Thursday — with Thompson revealing that his own family was enslaved by Lee’s family.

“My father’s family, the Thompsons, on both sides were enslaved on the plantation of Robert E. Lee’s father, Henry Lee,” he said. “This issue is an emotional issue for many people like me. And it’s really hard for us to really feel fully a part of this country that celebrates our enslavement with names like that on military bases.”

At Fort Hamilton, an Army base in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, the military has rejected past calls to change the names of Stonewall Jackson Drive and General Lee Avenue.

In a letter sent Thursday, Reps. Max Rose (D-N.Y.) and Yvette Clarke (D-N.Y.) asked Defense Secretary Mark Esper to strip the Confederate generals’ names from the base.
“U.S. military bases and property should be named after men and women who’ve served our nation with honor and distinction, not sought to tear it apart to uphold white supremacy,” they wrote.

The Army said this week it is open to renaming installations honoring Confederate generals. But President Donald Trump denounced the idea.

“These Monumental and very Powerful Bases have become part of a Great American Heritage, and a......history of Winning, Victory, and Freedom,” he said in a tweet Wednesday. “The United States of America trained and deployed our HEROES on these Hallowed Grounds, and won two World Wars. Therefore, my Administration will not even consider the renaming of these Magnificent and Fabled Military Installations.”

Rose, a U.S. Army veteran who won a Purple Heart and Bronze Star for his service in Afghanistan, still serves in the National Guard. He and Clarke wrote that honoring Confederate generals was an affront to Union soldiers who died in the Civil War to end slavery.

"While we were encouraged by news this week that the Army might consider renaming military installations named after Confederate generals, men who violated that oath to our country, we are similarly disturbed by recent social media posts suggesting that these names are part of a ‘Great American Heritage’ and are ‘Hallowed Ground,’” Clarke and Rose wrote. “Shiloh, Antietam, and Gettysburg are hallowed ground, places where Americans gave their lives to end the practice of slavery in our country; bases named after men who sought to keep their fellow men and women in bondage are not.”

De Blasio he would contact military leaders Thursday to push for the name to be changed.

“Nothing should be named after Robert E. Lee at this point in history,” de Blasio said. “He’s someone who was supposed to follow his oath to the United States of America and the United States military and didn’t - on top of his many other sins, and on top of the racism that he stood for.”

A spokesperson for Fort Hamilton did not immediately respond to a request for comment.


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SECDEF and Army secretary open to renaming posts named for Confederate generals

Military Times, June 9, 2020::
Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy and Defense Secretary Mark Esper are open to the possibility of renaming the service’s installations currently named after Confederate leaders.

“The secretary of defense and secretary of the Army are open to a bi-partisan discussion on the topic,” said Army spokesperson Col. Sunset R. Belinsky in a statement Monday afternoon, which was first reported by Politico.

The two leaders’ openness to renaming installations comes after a week of protests across the United States, including in the nation’s capital, following the death of George Floyd, a black man who prosecutors say was murdered by a white Minneapolis police officer who had his knee on Floyd’s throat.

Army National Guard personnel were brought into the Washington, D.C., area, and elsewhere in the country, in response to those protests. Active duty forces from Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and Fort Drum, New York, were also briefly flown into the National Capital Region, though they were never used in D.C. and were ordered home late last week.

The issue of racial injustice was front and center during the tense first week of June, and as Confederate monuments were spotlighted by activists as symbols that should be removed, the Army’s own history of naming installations after Confederate leaders gradually came under scrutiny once again.

Army officials previously told Army Times in February that there were “no plans to rename any street or installation, including those named for Confederate generals.”

Those officials said in a statement that the naming of those sites was “done in a spirit of reconciliation, not to demonstrate support for any particular cause or ideology.”

The possibility of renaming the installations also comes after the Marine Corps commandant instructed his subordinates to remove Confederate-related paraphernalia from bases across the world.

The decision by the Marine Corps is likely much easier than the one the Army faces. Marines did not have the same sort of Civil War presence that could be used to justify honoring Confederate leaders.

Confederate Army commander Gen. Robert E. Lee, for instance, has a barracks named after him at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, an institution he graduated from in 1829. However, Lee Barracks only opened in the early 1960s, a time when the civil rights movement was gaining momentum.

The Army has 10 military installations named after Confederate military commanders, including Fort Lee in Virginia, Fort Hood in Texas, and Fort Bragg in North Carolina. There are no such installations for the other military departments, according to the Congressional Research Service.

One popular idea sometimes suggested is for the Army to rename its military installations after Medal of Honor recipients. That was an option favored by Mike Jason, a retired Army colonel who spoke with Army Times in February.
“It’s not about negating the past,” Jason added. “We’re an evolved and inclusive military now and we have a lot of new heroes who deserve to have their names emboldened in history.”


NY National Guard repairs World War I Soldier’s grave marker

Army.mil, By Sgt. Alexander Rector | New York National Guard, June 5, 2020 ::

ONEIDA, N.Y – The gravestone of a New York National Guard Soldier who died while storming the Hindenburg Line more than 100 years ago was set right the day after Memorial Day 2020 by present-day members of the regiment he served with during World War I.

Ten members of Headquarters Company of the New York Army National Guard’s 2nd Battalion, 108th Infantry, took time away from their families May 26 to restore the headstone marking the resting place of Pvt. Laurence Uebelacker in a small cemetery near Oneida.

According to historical records, Uebelacker was living in Oneida when he enlisted in Company F of the 3rd Regiment, New York National Guard, on June 27, 1917. On Oct. 1, 1917, the regiment was federalized and renamed the 108th Infantry, a part of the 27th Division.

The 27th Division was one of two American divisions that served with the British Army in Flanders during World War I. In the closing days of the war, the 27th was assigned the mission of cracking the line of German fortifications named after General Hindenburg, the German Army’s commander.

The 20-year old Uebelacker was killed in the assault on Sept. 29, 1918.

According to Craig Burleigh, a retired infantryman and former member of the 108th, 27th Division records indicate Uebelacker was buried near Bellicourt, Belgium, following his death. The family apparently had his remains returned to the United States in 1921.

It was Burleigh who discovered the grave.

“I was at the cemetery visiting my mother’s grave and I saw this gravestone about 10 meters behind it,” Burleigh said. The ground around the grave had settled unevenly and the two pieces had separated and the headstone had tipped over.

But he could tell it was the grave of a Soldier who had served in the 108th Infantry.

“I tried to move it, but it must have weighed 200 to 300 pounds,” Burleigh recalled.

So he posted a photo of the stone on Facebook and noted that it was too heavy for him to move by himself.
The Facebook post was forgotten until it was seen by Command Sgt. Maj. Daniel Markle, the 2-108 Infantry’s senior enlisted Soldier.

“I was browsing Facebook and I stumbled onto the 108th Infantry Regiment Facebook page,” Markle said. “And as I was scrolling through the pages, I found a picture of this gravestone that was tipped over and it said Company F, 108th Infantry, Laurence Uebelacker. One of the fellows who found it said he had tried to upright it, but it was too heavy.”

Markle said he knew he had to act.

“When I saw it, I was like, I’m going to have to rally some of my guys and some of the Soldiers and head out there and fix that,” Markle said.

“I went to Lowe’s, picked up 30 bucks worth of stuff I would have needed. The guys gathered some tools together and, using the tools and some muscle, we were able to upgrade it and put it right back where it needed to be,” he added.

The Soldiers leveled the ground, remounted the headstone to its base and scoured the stone clean with a wire brush.

Many hands make light work, and fixing the gravestone only took a few hours, Markle said.

Everyone was excited to be a part of the restoration project, he said.

“They recognized all of the sacrifices this kid made, and when I showed them the pictures of the gravestone toppled over, they were like ‘Oh, we got to fix it,’” Markle said.

“They wanted to be able to take care of it. And afterward, to be able to sit back and look at it, there was this great amount of satisfaction in all of them,” he added.

Now Pvt. Uebelacker’s headstone once again proudly sits between those of his father and sister.

“This guy was a past veteran of our unit, he was killed in combat, and there appeared to be nobody that was able to take care of the grave,” Markle said.

“It’s really important, I feel, to honor what he did to make sure that this monument is always there and that it’s upright and to carry on that heritage and the history of the unit,” the sergeant major said.

Even though the work on Uebelacker’s gravestone is finished, the battalion is just getting started, as the Soldiers work toward honoring their veterans and preserving their legacy, Markle said.

“That day just kind of lead into another project that we want to look into, and that’s building a database of our fallen veterans that are buried here stateside so we can find them,” Markle said.
"It’s more of a historical project we’re going to put some people on, because we know where they’re buried overseas,” he said.

The 108th Infantry has 147 Soldiers buried in the Somme battlefield cemetery who died during World War I and another 74 Soldiers from World War II interred in Manila who were killed while fighting in the Philippines.

“We have over 300 that are buried here in the states somewhere, and we would like to be able to build a database that identifies where they are and locate them,” Markle said. “It’s really important to make sure that those monuments stay preserved so people can see them and recognize what they’ve done.”

One of his duties is to educate new Soldiers on the history of the regiment, Markle explained. Fixing Uebelacker’s gravestone helped to connect the Soldiers to their unit’s past.

“One thing that has always bothered me is when you talk to Soldiers about what our unit has done in the past and they had no idea,” Markle said.

“We’re a National Guard unit, but we took part in some incredibly magnificent yet horrible events in American history. And it’s something that we shouldn’t forget about,” he said.

https://www.army.mil/article/236215/ny_national_guard_repairs_world_war_i_soldiers_grave_marker

NY National Guard repairs World War I Soldier’s grave marker

NationalGuard.mil, June 7, 2020:

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