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Daily Gazette, October 25, 2021

Civil Support Teams

New York Guard hosts biological, chemical dispersal drill

NEW YORK Guard, AF. NG.MIL, Army.mil, By Major Michael Hagan, New York National Guard, October 26, 2021:

NEW YORK – The New York National Guard's 24th Civil Support Team is hosting 124 counterparts from 19 other states in New York City this week to support a homeland security exercise focused on figuring out how biological and chemical weapons disperse in a city.

Officially known as the Urban Threat Dispersion Project, the exercise, which began Oct. 18, is a test by the Department of Homeland Security and New York's Metropolitan Transportation Authority to determine how to defend against chemical or biological attacks in a major city.
The National Guard civil support teams were recruited to help because they understand how chemical and biological agents act, said Capt. Sean Lucas, the 24th's operations officer.

Members of civil support teams (CST) detect and identify chemical, biological and radiological materials and weapons and let civilian first responders know what they are up against. The teams are equipped with state-of-the-art detection gear, protective suits and mobile labs and communications equipment.

Soldiers and Airmen from Alaska, Hawaii, Montana, California, Florida, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Connecticut and New Jersey are among those participating in the exercise.

"This the largest event they have ever done for this type of study," Lucas said. "They did the same thing in 2016, but it was only in Manhattan and there was probably only about 30 CST personnel."

The CST Soldiers and Airmen released nontoxic aerosols and particulates across New York City on five days over two weeks. Then they determined how far those materials traveled from the original location, where they wound up, and how long it took for those samples to get there, Lucas said.

These releases were designed to simulate biological and chemical agents. The data gathered is being used to analyze how far the materials travel and dispersion patterns to help plan a framework for a response, according to the New York City Emergency Operations website.

"Particulates can travel by many means: ventilation systems, outdoor wind, people's clothing and shoes as they travel throughout the city," explained Maj. Guy Casarella, the nuclear medical science officer for the 24th. "The subway systems also create what is called a piston effect from the inertia of a train going down the tunnel, both pushing and pulling the air as it travels."

The nontoxic particles and gas contained short strands of DNA inside a sugar molecule so they could be traced easily, Casarella explained.

"Ten grams of particulates are equal to about three packs of sugar, which is then aerosolized in key transportation locations throughout the city at given intervals throughout the day," Casarella said.

"The same process was used for gas that was released. Aerosolizers — devices that produce a vapor — were installed on tripods for some of the controlled releases. The other method used was a cylinder type of device which heats the materials to create a vapor that is then dispersed," Casarella said.
Devices to detect the gases and particulates were placed across the city. Some were large metal plates on the ground that were swiped clean. Then those wipes were collected to be analyzed along with filter pads removed throughout the day.

"There are samplers and sample teams distributed throughout the city and the boroughs that will be visiting sample sites on prescribed schedules to measure these tracer materials throughout the day," said Trina Vian, a staff member from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Lincoln Laboratory. "This will give us an idea of the dispersion from our different sites as well as the coupling between the above ground and below ground site due to the subways."

The materials released are distinct so each sample can be traced back to the release site it came from.

The Guard Soldiers and Airmen used the exercise to train on tactics, techniques and procedures and practice coordination between other CST teams and government partners.

Sgt. Elise Burby, a member of the 24th CST, said she enjoyed working with military and civilian people who are experts in their fields.

"They have all been kind enough to share their wealth of knowledge on science, emergency response planning, and life with me. I feel so fortunate to have met and worked with so many knowledgeable and talented people," she said.

Lt. Col. Dan Colomb, the commander of the 24th CST, said the exercise was a great opportunity.

"It allows team members from all over the country to come together and share ideas and best practices that inform relationships," Colomb said. "This is also true for the relationships that can be built between the CSTs and partner agencies that were represented. The best time to meet someone is not when emergency begins."

https://www.army.mil/article/251466/new_york_guard_hosts_biological_chemical_dispersal_drill

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COVID19
Army to build on lessons learned from pandemic response

Army.mil, October 28, 2021:

WASHINGTON – Many of the emergency medical facilities the Army built in support of COVID-19 response efforts remain in operation. Others stand ready for a future threat.

Should the nation suffer from a global crisis, natural disaster or another pandemic, Army leaders believe they will be better equipped to respond to another national emergency. And it can learn from the lessons during the service’s response to the pandemic.

The Army still has nine medical teams supporting health care workers at hospitals nationwide. In the past year and a half, the branch has mobilized about 50,000 Soldiers in support of the response efforts.

“It's just like 9/11. There is a day, maybe in our lives, something like this is going to happen again,” said now retired Lt. Gen. Todd Semonite, former Army Corps of Engineers commander. “All of the designs for all that we built are all in the states and cities. Some of the facilities are still there ... dormant. They've got [patient] beds that are waiting for something to happen.”

To date, the Army has delivered 485 million COVID-19 vaccines and administered more than 400 million.

Recent numbers show that the number of COVID-19 deaths and hospitalizations have been declining, however, the Army’s surgeon general, Lt. Gen. Scott Dingle, said the Army must remain diligent. The Army leaders, speaking during the Association of the U.S. Army Annual Meeting and Exposition on Oct. 13, said they can continue to strengthen relationships between the service and federal and state agencies, which improved response times.

“It's imperative that we continue to keep our foot on the pedal of force health protection of not just our Soldiers and our civilians, but our family members and the nation,” Dingle said.

During the onset of the pandemic then-New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo asked Semonite and a team of engineers to assist with the hospital bed shortage in the state. The Army learned that having more hospital workers and health care professionals could alleviate the need for more beds and larger hospitals. The ability to call upon National Guard and Army Reserve components also proved critical, said Maj. Gen. Bob Whittle, U.S. Army North deputy commander.
The Corps developed a plan with teams of engineers to build makeshift hospital facilities at college dorms, hotels, sports venues and convention centers across the nation. The Corps worked with the National Guard and Army Medical Command to set up makeshift hospitals.

Whittle said that the pandemic response allowed the service to reexamine how it mobilizes and integrates its forces.

The Army Reserve’s largest mobilization in history contributed to the vaccination efforts in underserved communities in 25 states, including locations in North Dakota and New Mexico.

“The big question that we had was, how fast could we do this?” said Maj. Gen. Joe Robinson, commander of the 3rd Medical Command, Deployment Support. “And could we be relevant with the speed that COVID was progressing? Can we actually get Reserve Soldiers out of their civilian occupations and into the front lines in a time that was actually going to make a difference?”


Whittle said in July 2019 the Army first labeled a list of “Black Swan” events that included responses to crises that included a pandemic. Whittle said the Army laid out plans but could not have predicted the scope and scale of the virus’ spread.

The Army also faced the challenge of educating the public about the safety and effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccines.

Retired Lt. Gen. Paul Ostrowski, former director of the Army Acquisition Corps, said the nation must revamp its approach toward strategic communications on social media platforms. While he applauded the service’s multi-command response to the pandemic he noted that the country failed to sway Americans who remained on the fence on whether to take the COVID-19 vaccine.

“The biggest lesson learned is the value of strategic communications,” said Ostrowski, who also served as deputy to retired Gen. Gustave Perna, the former commander of Army Materiel Command during Operation Warp Speed. “Social media has completely changed the landscape of this country. And until we get ahead of that, we are going to continue to be challenged in that particular arena. That is our biggest failure.”
The Army not only helped lead the battle against coronavirus, it also developed weapons against it. The service joined the scramble to develop viable vaccines as part of Operation Warp Speed, which combined the efforts of the Defense Department and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

U.S. Army Medical Research and Development Command spent 18 months supporting government agencies to help detect, treat and prevent the virus, said Command Sgt. Maj. Victor Laragione, the command’s senior enlisted leader. Laragione added that Telehealth assisted with treatments by using a network to connect critical care expertise to health care clinicians operating in limited resource environments.

“If COVID has taught us anything it is [knowing] the value of DOD investments in medical research and development, as well as the importance of collaboration among other government agencies,” Laragione said. “We must continue to build upon these relationships in the advancements we've made together to bring an end to COVID-19 and prepare for our future threats.”

Army scientists developed imaging techniques for the testing of COVID-19 vaccines and antibody treatments. Laragione said animal testing has enabled researchers to replicate the disease to develop its own vaccine, which has entered phase one of clinical trials.

The Army’s battle against the virus began with an impromptu meeting inside the Pentagon in March 2020.

Then-Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy and Chief of Staff Gen. James C. McConville called upon Army leaders to formulate a plan to protect more than 1 million Soldiers and civilians.

“It was our secretary and our chief that said, 'OK, it's time,'” Dingle said. “We had watched the pandemic start. We watched it hit our Soldiers and our forces in Europe and Korea. We saw this tsunami coming.”

The Army sent Urban Augmentation Medical Task Forces to New York City and then elsewhere. It rolled out safety measures and shifted to partial telework status for Soldiers for the first time while continuing to participate in scheduled joint exercises and trainings.

“It was amazing to me how adaptable our teammates were,” Laragione said.

New York hospital suspends nonemergency surgeries, cites staff shortage

Beckers Hospital Review, October 27, 2021:

Olean (N.Y.) General Hospital has suspended nonemergency surgeries because of staff shortages, The Bradford Era reported Oct. 26. Surgeries of "urgent and emergent cases" will still be performed. New York Gov. Kathy Hochul said in September that she would consider asking the National Guard for help during staffing shortages. The hospital had been offering higher compensation and signing bonuses to attract more staff, and had been using staffing agencies, the article said. An appeal for help is expected Oct. 27.
"This decision is not made lightly, but the current inpatient conditions warrant immediate action. This step is also essential to be eligible to ask the state for additional staffing assistance," said Jill Owens, MD, interim chief medical officer at Upper Allegheny Health System, the parent company of Olean General Hospital.
Dr. Owens told the newspaper the hospital has enough beds but not enough staff.
"We have requested staffing assistance for multiple areas from the state, but are not optimistic that help will be coming any time soon," Dr. Owens said. https://www.beckershospitalreview.com/patient-flow/new-york-hospital-suspends-nonemergency-surgeries-cites-staff-shortage.html

SHOT HURT 'ROUND THE WORLD: New York’s plan to use National Guard to replace unvaxxed nurses ignores important point

WND News Services, October 22, 2021::

(NATIONAL FILE) – As New York prepared to fire unvaccinated healthcare workers across the state that did not accept one of the controversial COVID-19 vaccines, Gov. Kathy Hochul discussed plans to replace unvaccinated New York healthcare workers with members of the New York National Guard. However, members of the National Guard are not required to be fully vaccinated until June 30, 2022.

National File contacted the New York National Guard to comment on the situation. Eric Durr, Director of Public Affairs for New York State Division of Military and Naval Affairs, told National File that “Gov. Hochul included National
Guard Soldiers and Airmen as potential staffers as one of several options which include allowing healthcare workers from outside New York to fill jobs.”

Durr noted that the New York National Guard had not been called into service. Presently, the vaccine mandate has been stalled by a judge, and Hochul has promised to fight for the controversial mandate.


Lawmakers benefited from priority COVID-19 tests

Times Union, October 23, 2021 ::

ALBANY — Multiple investigations into preferential COVID-19 testing that former Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo's administration had provided for the well-connected — including state lawmakers and their families — have stalled, and individuals with intimate knowledge of the practice said they were never interviewed in connection with any of the inquiries.

The agencies or panels that were alerted to the practice or had initiated investigations into it include the U.S. Attorney's office in Brooklyn, the state attorney general's office, the state Assembly's Judiciary Committee, and the Joint Commission on Public Ethics.

The crux of the allegations, first reported by the Times Union in March, are that relatives and others with connections to Cuomo were given VIP treatment that included dispatching nurses to their residences or other locations to test them for coronavirus. In many instances, the test kits were rushed by State Police cruisers to the state-run Wadsworth Laboratory in Albany, where they received priority treatment that may have violated state law.

State health Commissioner Howard Zucker was interviewed by the U.S. Attorney's office and FBI about a month ago, according to a person with knowledge of the matter, but it's unclear whether he was questioned about the VIP testing, in which he played a key role in directing many of those tests on behalf of Cuomo.

The state ethics panel, the U.S. Attorney's office and the attorney general's office would not comment on the status of their investigations. The Assembly's Judiciary Committee, which initially tasked itself with investigating the priority testing and other controversies involving Cuomo, has largely dropped its inquiry into the preferential treatment, according to a statement Assemblyman David Weprin made to The New York Times in September.

Earlier this month, Cuomo's attorney, Rita Glavin, sent a letter to the Judiciary Committee's chair, Assemblyman Charles D. Lavine, pointing out that "numerous state legislators — including members of the state Senate and
Assembly, and members of this committee —received preferential COVID-19 testing for themselves, various staff members and family members." Glavin called on Lavine to publicly identify those members.

It’s unclear whether the lawmakers’ access to priority coronavirus testing was a factor in the Assembly committee’s decision to back away from that portion of their investigation. Lavine on Friday declined to comment, or to say if he had received a priority test.

A source with knowledge of the matter told the Times Union that lawmakers who received priority COVID-19 tests last year included Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and, locally, state Sens. Neil Breslin and Daphne Jordan, among others.

A spokesman for Stewart-Cousins acknowledged the majority leader had been tested at the state University at Albany, where she had an appointment. The source with knowledge of the matter said that test was given priority treatment, including expediting the lab work.

"To ensure the important work of the government continued, the majority leader got tested after a possible exposure or before a meeting with the governor, and this was always done at an existing testing site," said Mike Murphy, a spokesman for Stewart-Cousins.

Breslin said he was tested last year after he learned a member of a camera crew that visited his Senate office had tested positive for the infectious disease. The senator said he arranged for the testing through Senate staff and was unaware that his test received priority treatment.

Breslin added that he never asked Cuomo's office for assistance.

"I'm glad he's gone. I don't view what I did as (receiving) special treatment," Breslin said. "There's bells that go off when you do something wrong; I didn't hear any bells."

Jordan said she had contacted the governor's office last year for guidance before traveling to Florida to visit her mother. She said Saratoga County health officials gave her advice that contradicted the information she received from the governor's office, which was that she did not need to quarantine for 14 days upon returning from Florida because she was an "essential worker" and only needed to avoid large crowds.

Jordan's office said as a precaution she went to UAlbany to get a second test, "just to make sure she was still negative and would not have to quarantine."

"Sen. Jordan did not ask for any preferential treatment," her office said in a statement. "Given her role in the Senate, and her extensive interactions with the public, Sen. Jordan clearly understands the importance of public health protocols and she followed them every step of the way. Sen. Jordan followed the testing recommendations she was given, and certainly did not receive any of the types of door-to-door VIP service or State Police escorts of the type that have been reported in the press."
Richard Azzopardi, a spokesman for Cuomo, said the legislators and attorney general's office have been "operating with one set of rules for themselves and one for everyone else."

"The Legislature and the (attorney general's) office asked for and received help with testing for themselves, staff members and family only to express faux outrage when it was politically convenient and then stamped their feet over staff taking time off to volunteer on the book project when their staff does the same on their own re-election campaigns," Azzopardi said, referring to ongoing investigations into whether Executive Chamber staff helped produce Cuomo's COVID-19 memoir.

"The hypocrisy is thick even by Albany standards," he added.

Code words

Recent interviews with nurses and health department officials who worked at major COVID-19 testing sites downstate last year, including at Glen Island Park in New Rochelle and Jones Beach State Park on Long Island, have revealed new details of the practice, including the use of code words when Department of Health officials relayed VIP test results to members of the governor's Executive Chamber.

The department developed the system because officials concluded that by law only physicians or medical practitioners could inform someone if their test results were positive. But if they were negative, administrators and others were directed to reveal results to Cuomo's staffers using carefully worded code language.

"The chamber controlled the priority list," said a health department official involved with the VIP testing, who spoke on the condition of not being identified. "If somebody from chamber called ... and says, 'I want the test results for Abraham Lincoln,' you could say, 'Nothing to worry about,' and the chamber official would understand that meant the result was negative for COVID-19."

PHOTO CAPTION: Members of the National Guard guarding newly opened drive through COVID-19 mobile testing center organized by Northwell hospital at Glen Island Park New Rochelle, New York, U.S., in March 2020. Nurses and health department officials said many "VIP" testing missions were launched from this site last year. Lev Radin/Pacific Press/LightRocket/Getty Images

But health officials said the chamber's involvement in facilitating the delivery of test results for VIPs and others may have violated medical privacy laws. Even Cuomo, they said, at times would be informed of and announce someone's test result before the person may have been notified. Sources with knowledge of the matter said Cuomo also would personally inform his relatives, including his brother, CNN anchor Chris Cuomo, of their results.

The former administration's control and knowledge of the VIP testing program became more evident when a law enforcement official at a downstate testing site had classified his test as "priority" because he was going on vacation out of state and needed a negative test result to travel.
The official "tried to hijack the system and made himself a priority," the health department employee said. "But he didn't understand all this stuff that happened in background, so when this priority test came through and it didn't match the approved list of priority tests, because we had to get permission from chamber, the whole thing kind of blew up."

State troopers were deeply involved in facilitating the VIP testing, according to nurses and health department officials with knowledge of the secretive system. At some testing sites, people flagged as VIPs also would be allowed to drive to the front of lines so they could get tested quickly, and their specimen samples would receive a purple sticker indicating it should be given priority.

People who worked at those downstate sites said they were sometimes unaware of who a VIP was, but would learn through news reports that some of those individuals were elected officials, high-powered businesspeople or media moguls.

"The real VIPs had their specimens driven to Wadsworth," a health department official said.

'One and only'

New York Chief Judge Janet M. DiFiore and her relatives were among the individuals who received priority COVID-19 testing last year.

A public health nurse and several members of the New York National Guard were dispatched to DiFiore's private residence in Southampton on Long Island in August 2020 to conduct the testing, according to a person familiar with the matter. The test samples were transferred to a state trooper who rushed them to a state-run laboratory where they received expedited processing.

A spokesman for the state Office of Court Administration has confirmed that DiFiore and her family members had been tested at her Southampton residence last summer. He said it took place after a young member of the judge's family had tested positive.

"It was the one and only time," said Lucian Chalfen, a spokesman for the Office of Court Administration.

The medical officials enlisted to do the testing included Dr. Eleanor Adams, an epidemiologist who graduated from Harvard Medical School and served as a special adviser to Zucker. Adams conducted testing on Chris Cuomo at his residence on Long Island, according to two sources.

It may be a violation of state Public Officers Law for state officials to use government resources to benefit another individual, including a family member. No state officer, employee, legislator or legislative employee "should use or attempt to use his or her official position to secure unwarranted privileges or exemptions for himself or herself or others," according to Section 74 of the law.

Others who were given priority testing included Rick Cotton, executive director of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, and his wife, as well as Patrick J. Foye, head of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority.
Foye and Cotton both announced in March 2020 they had tested positive for coronavirus. Foye was tested after exhibiting symptoms, according to a spokesman for the MTA.

Cuomo has denied knowledge of the preferential testing for his relatives, but officials familiar with the matter said the governor not only was aware of the testing but had directed it be done when it involved members of his family.

Officials in the Cuomo administration said earlier this year the testing in those early days of the pandemic in March 2020 was not preferential, and they noted public nurses were being driven to private residences in New Rochelle — the site of the state’s first outbreak — to test people who were symptomatic or who had been exposed to the virus. During that period, State Police troopers were largely being tasked with driving those samples to the Wadsworth Center laboratory in Albany, which was initially the primary testing spot for coronavirus.

Another person familiar with the matter said the "sampling missions" had unsettled some of the high-level health department officials tasked with collecting the samples at private residences — including Adams, who had previously worked in the health department's New York City regional office for the Healthcare Epidemiology & Infection Control Program.

Much of the VIP testing took place in the early stages of the pandemic, at a time when many members of the public struggled to obtain coronavirus tests.


Fact check: False claim unvaccinated FEMA workers can replace fired health care staff

USA Today, October 25, 2021:

The claim: Unvaccinated FEMA employees can replace health care workers fired for refusing the COVID-19 vaccine

When COVID-19 vaccines were made available in the U.S., front-line health care workers were first in line for the shot. Since then, most nurses and doctors have been fully vaccinated, but some have been fired for refusing to comply with mandates.

Some social media users are claiming noncompliant medical professionals are being replaced by unvaccinated Federal Emergency Management Agency employees.

“BREAKING: The FEMA healthcare workers replacing the noncompliant nurses and doctors are NOT required to get vaccinated via CDC,” reads a screenshot
of a tweet that was shared to Instagram on Oct. 18. The original Oct. 16 tweet generated more than 5,000 retweets in less than a week.

Other versions of the claim have made their way to Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and blogs. The posts echo false claims about unvaccinated National Guard members replacing nurses in New York, which USA TODAY debunked.

These posts are inaccurate, too. They have been debunked by independent fact-checking organizations.

USA TODAY reached out to social media users who shared the claim for comment.

FEMA employees required to be vaccinated

This claim is wrong on multiple counts.

In early September, President Joe Biden issued an executive order requiring federal employees to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 no later than Nov. 22. The order applies to FEMA workers.

The agency is also not sending its employees to replace unvaccinated health care workers, according to FEMA spokeswoman Jaclyn Rothenberg.

"FEMA employees are required to be vaccinated as determined by the president," Rothenberg told USA TODAY. "The social media posts that claim FEMA workers are replacing unvaccinated health care workers are unequivocally false."

She added that, in partnership with other federal agencies, FEMA has deployed medical staff at the request of states to relieve pressure on local health care systems.

This isn't the first time social media users have falsely claimed replacement workers for terminated medical professionals do not have to follow vaccine requirements.

When New York Gov. Kathy Hochul announced she would call on medically trained members of the National Guard to address staffing shortages, some asserted nurses fired for refusing a COVID-19 shot could be replaced by unvaccinated Guard members. USA TODAY rated that claim false.

Our rating: False
Based on our research, we rate FALSE the claim that unvaccinated FEMA employees can replace health care workers fired for refusing the COVID-19 vaccine. FEMA says its workers are not being deployed to replace noncompliant nurses and doctors. Additionally, employees with the agency are required to get fully vaccinated against COVID-19 under Biden’s executive order.

Our fact-check sources:

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- The White House, Sept. 9, Executive Order on Requiring Coronavirus Disease 2019 Vaccination for Federal Employees
- Gov. Kathy Hochul, Sept. 25, In Preparation for Monday Vaccination Deadline, Governor Hochul Releases Comprehensive Plan to Address Preventable Health Care Staffing Shortage
- USA TODAY, Oct. 20, Fact check: National Guard members would need vaccination to help with New York health care
- Associated Press, Oct. 20, Unvaccinated FEMA employees aren’t replacing noncompliant health care workers
- PolitiFact, Oct. 18, Fact-checking false claims about FEMA workers, vaccine mandates and fired employees

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Our fact-check work is supported in part by a grant from Facebook.


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Emergency Response

“People are relying on us” National Guard evolves to fight wars, secure homefront
In late August, as Hurricane Ida barreled toward Louisiana, nearly half of the Louisiana National Guard’s 256th Infantry Brigade Combat Team was deployed overseas, working in Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, and Syria. They’d been there nearly a year, having mobilized the previous fall — not long after responding to Hurricane Laura, which had tied a 144-year-old record for the strongest hurricane to make landfall in the state. Now, almost a year to the day later, Ida was expected to at least tie the record again.

The rest of the Louisiana National Guard had been mobilized ahead of the storm, along with guardsmen from 15 other states. Across the state, and from halfway around the world, soldiers waited for Ida to make landfall — not only to respond, but to see how their own communities would fare.

“I had two battalions’ worth of people, and many others in the state, that while they’re on duty, they’re also having to check on their own family and their own homes,” says Col. Larry Benton, the rear brigade commander for the 256th and the director of personnel and manpower for the Louisiana National Guard. Ultimately, he had to relieve more than 50 people from active duty — both in Louisiana and abroad — because of damage to their houses. “Their own homes were unlivable,” he says.

This is the new normal for the National Guard: The last two years have seen a rash of domestic crises — from the Covid-19 pandemic, to historic fires and flooding, to widespread protests — and guardsmen are often the first line of defense. Meanwhile, as the primary combat reserve of the Army and the Air Force, the guard regularly trains and deploys for overseas missions.

Dennis McCarthy, assistant secretary of defense, and Maj. Larry Benton of the Louisiana National Guard enjoy a light moment during McCarthy’s visit to the troops in Haiti in 2011. The joint humanitarian exercise fell under the command of the Louisiana National Guard. Photo by Sgt. Aaron LeBlanc, courtesy of U.S. Army.

Two decades in Afghanistan and Iraq have proven the military’s essential reliance on its reserve forces. As the security landscape shifts from counterinsurgency and counterterrorism in Iraq and Afghanistan to competition with Russia and China, and as climate change wreaks havoc at home, and as the active forces face a potential drawdown, the guard and the reserves’ jack-of-all-trades skill set means they will be increasingly in demand, balancing new conflicts abroad and greater visibility at home.

“We’re moving from focusing on the conflict at this moment to thinking about how we shape or are ready for the conflicts that may occur in the future,” says Jacquelyn Schneider, a Hoover Fellow at Stanford’s Hoover Institute. “How do we build a reserve that’s more flexible, that can be ready when we need it?”

‘That becomes everybody’s business’
For most of its history, the National Guard’s mission was focused primarily on the homefront — so much so that during the Vietnam War, joining the guard was considered a pretty safe strategy to avoid deployment. While the ploy didn’t always work — thousands of guard and reserve troops served in Vietnam — President Lyndon Johnson resisted pressure to mobilize the guard on a larger scale, worried that doing so would stir up even more anti-war sentiment and make political problems for him.

“Johnson, of course, wanted to fight this war on the quiet and on the cheap,” says Andrew Wiest, a professor of history at the University of Southern Mississippi and the founding director of the Dale Center for the Study of War and Society. “And if you mobilize the National Guard, then that suddenly becomes everybody’s business.”

But as the war wound down, and the end of the draft meant a drawdown in active troops, much of the support and logistics responsibilities for the Army shifted to the reserves. This trend was codified in 1973 as “Total Force Policy.” The policy officially designated the guard and the reserves as “the initial and primary augmentation of the active forces,” meaning that the Army’s full capabilities are spread between the active duty troops, and the reserves and the guard, which would train and surge as necessary — a cheaper alternative to maintaining a fully capable standing army. It also effectively ensured that any future major overseas engagements would require calling up the reserves.

Under the new policy, the reserves improved their training and readiness. But in the years after Vietnam, the concept of the reserves as an essential part of the United States’ warfighting capabilities remained more theory than practice.

New York Air National Guard 1st Lt. Harry W. Roberts Jr. was the youngest pilot in the 136th Tactical Fighter Squadron during the unit’s deployment to Vietnam in 1968. The squadron, part of the 107th Tactical Fighter Group, served in Vietnam from May 1968 to April 1969. About 350 Air Guard members deployed to Vietnam with 20 F-100s Super Sabres to fly close air support missions. He ejected from his battle-damaged F-100 and was rescued at sea outside of Da Nang, South Vietnam, Dec. 18, 1968. Photo courtesy of New York National Guard.

“Here you have this guard that’s changed in idea and arguably changed in training somewhat, but hadn’t really faced the rubber meets the road,” Wiest says.

While National Guard units did serve in Desert Storm in 1991, it wasn’t until 9/11 — and the subsequent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan — that the military’s reliance on the reserves was put to the test. In the 20 years since 9/11, more than a million reservists have mobilized in support of global war on terror operations. Hundreds of thousands of reservists have served in Iraq and Afghanistan.

“All through the wars, they used reservists extensively,” says Mark Cancian, a senior adviser in the International Security Program at the Center for Strategic
and International Studies. A retired Marine Corps reservist, he deployed twice to Iraq. “They’ve now become a standard part of our war-fighting capability.”

As the United States withdraws from Afghanistan, and the military’s attention turns to China and Russia, Cancian sees this reliance on the reserves continuing. In the Congressional Budget Office’s new report describing potential ways to operate with a smaller defense budget, all three proposed options “reduced only the full-time, active-duty force, leaving the reserve component untouched.” Why? Because the reserve component’s cheaper to operate and flexible enough to back up active-duty forces, if needed.

“You’re going to be using a lot of reservists”

In the National Guard’s 2022 posture statement, Gen. Daniel Hokanson, the chief of the National Guard Bureau, highlighted the importance of training for war. “Given the uncertain future and budget priorities, we expect the Department of Defense to rely on the National Guard more, not less. Therefore, we must be ready to execute our three core missions: fighting America’s wars; securing the homeland; and building enduring partnerships that support our nation’s strategic objectives,” he wrote.

The last National Defense Strategy Summary specifically emphasized the importance of preparing for war with a high-tech, well-equipped adversary, as opposed to fighting insurgents. Cancian points to a need here for traditional warfighting skills — “tanks, planes, and ships,” as he puts it.

“Ninety-nine percent of what [the guard and the reserves] do are these traditional kinds of capabilities,” Cancian says. “If there were conflict in Europe against Russia, or conflict in the Western Pacific against China, or North Korea — pick your crisis spot, you’re going to be using a lot of reservists.”

But other skills, like cyber expertise, will come into play as well in the new security landscape. Nearly 4,000 Army and Air National Guard members in 40 states serve in cyber units, which have forged strong partnerships with state and local authorities who rely on their capabilities. In the last two years, for example, the Louisiana National Guard has helped respond to 90 cyber attacks in the state.

The guard has also advocated for the creation of a Space National Guard to align with Space Force, which would provide funding and resources, including for work the Air National Guard already does. Nearly 2,000 guardsmen work in specialized space units, according to the National Guard Association, and the guard provides 60 percent of Space Force’s offensive electronic warfare capability, as well as a third of the country’s strategic missile warning systems.

“The National Guard brings skills to play that will be incredibly valuable in this Swiss army knife kind of military atmosphere,” Wiest says.

‘The guard has had a tough two years’

Over the last two years, the National Guard’s “Swiss army knife” capabilities were on display somewhere else: back home.
“I think, for many years, we just ignored a lot of the domestic roles of the guard,” says Stanford’s Schneider. “We’re like, ‘Oh, there’s a hurricane. We’ll throw them in.’” But the layers of crises in 2020 and 2021 have highlighted just how much the nation relies on the National Guard to respond to domestic emergencies.

When the pandemic hit last year, and state guards mobilized, they were tasked with a wide array of missions: staffing testing sites, building field hospitals, ferrying supplies around states, manning foodbanks, and later assisting with vaccine efforts.

There were also more unusual missions. Army North’s Task Force 46, which is primarily staffed by members of the Michigan National Guard, is responsible for responding to chemical, biological, and nuclear threats in the United States, which requires close training and cooperation with state and local authorities, as well as federal agencies like FEMA. When COVID-19 arrived, the task force canceled its annual exercise and instead deployed across the nation, working with FEMA to coordinate the military’s response to the pandemic. More recently, Massachusetts Gov. Charlie Baker announced in September he was mobilizing the guard to help fill a shortage of school bus drivers caused by the pandemic and the resulting economic turmoil. New York Gov. Kathy Hochul floated a similar idea to fill potential healthcare worker shortages in the face of a vaccine mandate.

The pandemic was just the beginning. Wildfires in the west, flooding in the east, and extreme cold in the south mean that states’ guards are mobilizing regularly, either at home or in support of other states. Guardsmen have also deployed to the southern border, helped resettle Afghan refugees, even served as poll workers in last year’s election. Moreover, the protests over racial injustice that spread across the country in the summer of 2020 meant even more guardsmen were activated for crowd control and civil disturbances. In June of that year, at the height of the protests, more than 120,000 National Guard troops were mobilized, either at home or abroad. That’s more than at any point since World War II.

“The guard has had a tough two years,” Schneider says.

‘What we have to do is be prepared’

The guard’s dual mission at home and abroad means that equipment and training that can pull double-duty is particularly important. Federal missions — which often mean war, or training for it — come first, but the logistics, skills, and structure needed in domestic emergency response can mirror those on the battlefield, or in an overseas humanitarian response. Things like setting up a security perimeter, clearing a route, or moving into an area quickly and setting up shop have some basic similarities, whether troops are fighting insurgents in Afghanistan, responding to an earthquake in Haiti, or preparing for a hurricane in New Orleans, Benton says.

“The template that says, ‘Build the tents, bring the shower, and have the portalets,’ can be a mobile hospital, or it can be an engineer village for a levee
breach, or it could be any security mission," Benton says. “Those templates don’t change. Those become muscle memory.”

The same thing goes for equipment. Both the guard and the reserves prize gear that can be used at war or in a domestic emergency — everything from aircraft and cargo trucks to things like bulk water tank racks. The Army’s modernization priorities focus on air and land combat equipment and soldier lethality. According to a recent DOD report, the Army Guard’s air and weapons capabilities are generally more modern, in keeping with these priorities. Areas like engineering, logistics, and transportation, which are critical for responding to natural disasters, have more older equipment or shortages of this dual-use gear, the report says. But as Covid continues to surge, and climate change brings more extreme weather, the guard’s domestic missions, and its reliance on gear like this, are unlikely to abate.

At a briefing at the Pentagon last June, Hokanson acknowledged the historic year for the guard.

“Whatever the mission — combat deployments, Covid, wildfires, civil disturbances, or severe storms — the National Guard answered every call in 2020 and 2021, as we have for the past 384 years,” he said. “When we look at the future, however, we're not really sure what it's going to look like, but what we have to do is be prepared to meet whatever that demand signal is.”

‘Our demand signal is much, much higher’

One challenge the National Guard faces is that the demand signal — and the strain of service — isn’t borne equally. Coastal states are more likely to flood; wildfires are more likely in western states. Some states have strong traditions of guard service, while in others the footprint is much smaller. California, for instance, where the National Guard has helped battle wildfire after historic wildfire, has one of the lowest ratios per capita of guardsmen in the country.

“So we have to manage our mission sets very carefully,” Major General David Baldwin, the adjutant general of the California National Guard, told reporters in January.

“And we’re in a state that is constantly in a state of emergency,” he said. “So our demand signal is much, much higher.”

The National Guard tries to offset this issue with mutual assistance compacts and by planning ahead. For years, the guard has met annually to review training and deployment schedules and develop contingency plans for hurricane season. This year, for the first time, they did the same thing with wildfires. In states with high operational tempos, commanders have worked to help soldiers balance military service with family obligations and civilian careers. Some guard leaders have said the demands of the last two years, and the difficulty of maintaining this balance, shows that the service could be bigger.

“People are relying on us for more and more mission sets,” Baldwin told reporters. “To that end, the guard is not big enough and we need to grow.” Additionally, Hokanson is pushing for free health care for guard members,
telling legislators last spring that it was his top legislative priority. A bill to that effect, the Healthcare for Our Troops Act, has been introduced in Congress.

And while balancing military service with a civilian career can be difficult, it’s also an area where the reserves see a potential benefit. Particularly in high-skill areas, like space and cyber, reservists can bring expertise from their civilian jobs to their military experience.

Schneider sees an even greater role for this sort of crossover between the civilian and military sides of reservist life.

“I think the focus should be on how do we build this talent pool?” Schneider says. “We didn’t expect the pandemic to happen, but wouldn’t it be nice if we had invested in our active-standby list, so that we had a better understanding of who are our epidemiologists, who are our nurses. In the future, there’s going to be skills that we just didn’t even anticipate.”

If there’s anything the last two years have shown, it’s that anticipating the future is both critical and incredibly tough. After recounting months of overseas deployments, mobilizations at home, and four hurricanes hitting the state, the Louisiana National Guard’s Benton described both a challenge and a chance.

“For the last year, this has probably been the most difficult opportunity for us,” he says.

Future years are likely to hold even more difficult opportunities, particularly as climate change continues. Domestic emergencies may mean communities become more aware of the National Guard and the breadth of the challenges they respond to—as well as the tension that can come with fighting conflicts abroad while under siege at home.

But Benton says tough times only increase his troops’ commitment.

“Our mantra is ‘Protect what matters,’” he says. “Our desire to protect what matters is what keeps us going.”

This War Horse feature was reported by Sonner Kehrt, edited by Kelly Kennedy, fact-checked by Ben Kalin, and copy-edited by Mitchell Hansen-Dewar.

Sonner Kehrt is a journalist in California. Her work has appeared in The New York Times, Wired Magazine, The Verge, and other publications. She studied government at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy and served for five years as a Coast Guard officer before earning a master’s in democracy studies from Georgetown University and a master’s of journalism degree from UC Berkeley.


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New York Air National Guard
Capt. Nancy Peterson receives Air Force Commendation Medal

NNY360.com, October 28, 2021:


A traditional, part-time Airman, Peterson spearheaded the mission analysis for EADS Cyber Mission Defense team and helped develop a 365-hour training plan. Peterson also led a radar issue investigation that improved network security for EADS and its federal partners.

The 224th ADG is composed of the 224th Air Defense Squadron and 224th Support Squadron, located in Rome, and Detachment 1 and Detachment 2 that serve in the Washington, D.C. area. The 224th ADG provides the forces to conduct the Eastern Air Defense Sector's mission. Part of the North American Aerospace Defense Command, the Sector is responsible for the air defense of the eastern U.S.


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Clinton man receives Meritorious Service Medal

Rome Sentinel, October 27, 2021:

LATHAM — The 224th Air Defense Group at the Eastern Air Defense Sector recently recognized Lt. Col. Rex Vernales, of Clinton, who received the Meritorious Service Medal. A member of the 224th Support Squadron, Vernales successfully led a remote cyber survey of all North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) battle control centers. Other accomplishments included integrating new technologies and sensors into Eastern Air Defense Sector battle control system
and leading a first-of-its-kind mobile radar integration project with the Canadian air defense forces.

The New York National Guard is the state’s executive agency responsible to the governor for managing New York’s military forces, which consists of nearly 20,000 members of the New York Army National Guard, the New York Air National Guard, the New York Naval Militia and the New York Guard.


Tripp promoted

The Altamont Enterprise, October 27, 2021:

NEW SCOTLAND — Colleen Tripp from Voorheesville, a member of the New York Air National Guard, was promoted to the rank of senior master sergeant on July 29. She is assigned to the 174th Attack Wing.

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

https://altamontenterprise.com/10272021/tripp-promoted

New York Army National Guard

Election 2021: Town Justices, Assessors

Suffolk Times, October 27, 2021:

TOWN ASSESSOR

FOUR-YEAR TERM, UNCONTESTED | SALARY: $82,215

Charles Sanders
CHARLES SANDERS
Hamlet: Greenport

Occupation: Southold Town assessor, real estate associate broker, National Guard officer

Party lines: Republican, Conservative

About him: Mr. Sanders, 53, lives in Greenport with his wife, Alina. He received his real estate license in 1999 and was active in real estate until becoming a commissioned officer in the New York Army National Guard in 2008. Shortly after his initial training, he deployed to Afghanistan in 2010 and 2012 and to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, in 2015. Between deployments he continued to work in real estate and successfully ran for a four-year term as a Town Trustee in 2013. At the completion of his term as Trustee in 2017, he ran for and won a seat on the Board of Assessors.

His pitch: Mr. Sanders has been Town Assessor for four years with over 20 years of experience in real estate. He has completed all Department of Taxation and Finance Office of Real Property Tax Services educational requirements to include ethics, fundamentals of assessment administration, data collection, mass appraisal and farm appraisal. While serving Southold Town as Assessor he also serves the local community as commander of American Legion Post 803 in Southold.

In his words: “Service to others is my ethos and my time serving in the National Guard has resulted in two tours to Afghanistan, one to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and recently to NYC in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.”

https://suffolktimes.timesreview.com/2021/10/election-2021-town-justices-assessors/

Youngstown’s Best Warrior Competition kicks off (video)

WIVB, October 23, 2021 ::

YOUNGSTOWN, N.Y. (WIVB) — Friday kicked off the annual Best Warrior Competition in Youngstown.
15 national guard soldiers from across the state are competing in a three-day test of knowledge, strength and endurance.

Some of the activities they’ll compete in include a stress shoot, hitting multiple targets with different weapons. A 12-mile march, carrying 35 pounds of equipment. A quiz about military history and much more.

“It’s a huge point of pride just to get to this level, takes months of training before they even get here and months of training to continue to compete,” said U.S. Army Major Avery Schneider.

The winners of this competition have the chance to go on and represent the state on a national level.


Hammond always puts Waddington first (Letter to the editor)

Watertown Daily Times, October 23, 2021 ::

I am writing today to show my support for Alex Hammond’s re-election as Waddington town supervisor. I have known Alex for many years, and I have continued to be impressed by his skills and abilities as well as his deep love for his home — the north country.

He has been involved in the Waddington community in many ways over the years, from his numerous volunteer activities as a high school and college student to his role as our town supervisor. He has always put community and country over party, as evidenced by his willingness to serve in the New York National Guard, as well as his track record of working effectively with elected officials no matter their party. I have watched him navigate the challenges of the novel coronavirus pandemic and advocate tirelessly for the residents in our village and town.

Simply put, Alex is the sort of person that we need to represent us. He will continue to get things done for us as he has over these past three and a half years. He is a proven leader who has the best interests of the entire community at heart.

I know him, I trust him and I’m voting for him. I encourage you to do the same.

Arlene Stillwell

Waddington

https://www.nny360.com/opinion/letters/hammond-always-puts-waddington-first/article_f1e976b6-41ea-5b8a-96e4-bd6a70d9e0ee.html
NEW YORK NATIONAL GUARD PROMOTIONS:

Brooklyn Eagle, October 29, 2021 :

NEW YORK NATIONAL GUARD PROMOTIONS: Several Brooklynites serving in the New York Army National Guard have received promotions in recognition of their capability for additional responsibility and leadership, according to Major General Ray Shields, the Adjutant General for the State of New York. They are: Ashley Castillo from Bushwick (11206), N.Y., and assigned to the Division Signal Company, 42nd Infantry Division Headquarters is promoted to the rank of private. Catherine Liz, also from Bushwick (11206) and assigned to the 107th Military Police Company, has been promoted to the rank of specialist. Tyler Coles from the Ft. Greene/Brooklyn Navy Yard area (11205) who is assigned to the Battery C, 1st Battalion, 258th Field Artillery has been promoted to the rank of specialist.

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


National Guard Promotions For Residents of Conesus, Lima, Livonia and Springwater

Geneseesun.com, October 29, 2021 :

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.

Cole Carpenter from Lima (14485), N.Y., and assigned to the 152nd Engineer Company received a promotion to the rank of private on September 3, 2021.
Rosemary Engert from Conesus (14435), N.Y., and assigned to the 152nd Engineer Company received a promotion to the rank of private 1st class on August 31, 2021.

Douglas Lippens from Springwater (14560), N.Y., and assigned to the 827th Engineer Company received a promotion to the rank of specialist on September 12, 2021.

Jonathan Mohnkern from Livonia (14487), N.Y., and assigned to the Company C, 427th Brigade Support Battalion received a promotion to the rank of sergeant on September 2, 2021.

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

These promotions additionally recognize the best qualified Soldiers and attract and retain the highest caliber Citizen Soldiers for a career in the New York Army National Guard.

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


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**Veterans Day events include talk by National Guard general**

Cornell Chronicle, October 28, 2021:


Biehler will speak on the military’s role in supporting the government’s response to natural disasters and to the pandemic. The talk will be held in auditorium 230 of Anabel Taylor Hall, and also will be livestreamed.
The day’s program will begin at 9:15 a.m. with a Cornell Chimes concert, followed at 9:30 by a guided walking tour of Cornell’s veterans memorials. Debra Howell, chair of the Cornell Veterans Colleague Network, will introduce Biehler at 11 a.m.; the Cornell Chimes will ring 21 times at 11:11 to honor the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Biehler’s talk will begin at approximately 11:15.

A Rochester native and 1987 graduate of the Rochester Institute of Technology, Biehler currently serves as commanding general of the New York Army National Guard 53rd Troop Command. Previously, he served as the deputy commander for operations for the U.S. Army National Guard 42nd Infantry Division. And as a member of the U.S. Army’s 2nd Battalion, 108th Infantry, he was deployed to Iraq in 2004 and Afghanistan in 2012.

In honor of Veterans Day, McGraw Tower will be lit green through the weekend.

https://news.cornell.edu/stories/2021/10/veterans-day-events-include-talk-national-guard-general

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Fort Indiantown Gap the busiest Guard training center again

Army.mil, October 28, 2021 :

FORT INDIANTOWN GAP, Pa. – For the second year in a row and fifth time in the past seven years, Fort Indiantown Gap was the busiest National Guard training center in the country.

During the 2021 fiscal year ended Sept. 30, FTIG hosted 113,075 personnel for 727,878 “man-days” of training. Man-days are a computation of the number of personnel multiplied by the number of days they trained on post.

FTIG was also the busiest training center in 2015, 2016, 2018 and 2020.

Col. Lane Marshall, Fort Indiantown Gap's garrison commander, said it shouldn’t come as any surprise that FTIG was once again the busiest National Guard training center in the country.
“In addition to the numerous ranges and state-of-the-art training facilities we offer, our customer service is second to none,” Marshall said. “And that is a direct result of the men and women that make up our team. Each one works tirelessly to ensure that our customers have the resources and support they need to meet their training objectives.”

Camp Shelby, Mississippi, was the next closest training center in 2021, with 618,643 man-days. Fort Pickett, Virginia, was third with 430,915 man-days, and Camp Atterbury, Indiana, was fourth with 410,086 man-days.

FTIG covers over 17,000 acres in northern Lebanon and Dauphin counties. It is home to numerous ranges, training facilities and simulators and regularly hosts personnel from all branches of the military, both active-duty and reserve component, as well as foreign militaries, first responders, law enforcement and state and federal agencies.

It is also home to several schools, including the Eastern Army National Guard Aviation Training Site, the 166th Regiment Regional Training Institute, the Regional Equipment Operators Training Site, the Lightning Force Academy and the Northeast Counter Drug Training Center.

Lt. Col. Andrew O'Connor, FTIG’s director of plans, operations, training and security, said the installation’s location and its ability to host Warfighter exercises also play a role in its popularity for training.

“There’s a lot of reserve-component units in the Northeast, and that helps,” he said. “The New York National Guard is pretty big, the Virginia National Guard is pretty big, and there are a lot of Army Reserve units around.”

FTIG began hosting Warfighter exercises in 2016 and usually hosts one a year, O’Connor said. FTIG and Camp Atterbury are the only two National Guard training centers that host Warfighters.
“In those years that we host a Warfighter, we’ll get around 3,000 Soldiers for maybe 20 days,” O’Connor said. “That’s a pretty good number.”

FTIG is the only Level II National Guard training center in the Northeast United States, meaning it has billeting for a brigade, maneuver acreage for a company-plus, individual and crew-served weapons ranges, and squad and team collective ranges.

Additionally, a new 63,000-square-foot Training Support Center opened at FTIG in 2021, consolidating operations previously located in six World War II-era buildings into one state-of-the-art facility.

O’Connor said other training centers have similar ranges and facilities, and some have more. What sets FTIG apart is its customer service and location, he said.

“A lot of people come here and they don’t know much about us and then they say, ‘You guys are great. I never knew this place existed,’” he said. “Units come here, like what they find, and they want to come back.”

https://www.army.mil/article/251552/fort_indiantown_gap_the_busiest_guard_training_center_again

Veterans

Schenectady police mourn loss of decorated patrolman, veteran

WRGB, October 25, 2021:

SCHENECTADY, NY (WRGB) — Chief Eric S. Clifford announced Monday the sudden passing of Patrolman Corey Shields, a veteran officer of the Schenectady Police Department.

Patrolman Shields has served the City of Schenectady since July, 2011. A 2001 graduate of Guilderland High School, Ptl. Shields grew up in the Capital Region
and attended Hudson Valley Community College, SUNY Empire State College, and The State University of New York at Brockport.

Patrolman Shields was a decorated officer, receiving numerous awards over the years. One of the most notable was a Departmental Citation for Bravery that he earned for running into a burning building on State Street, clearing out residents and saving a man with a heart condition, who was trapped by the fire.

Prior to becoming a police officer, Patrolman Shields served honorably in the New York State National Guard with the 139th Airlift Squadron as loadmaster aboard a C-130 aircraft. During that time, Patrolman Shields flew over 200 operational missions around the world, including in support of Arctic and Antarctic scientific research programs. He also flew over 75 combat hours in Afghanistan during Operation Enduring Freedom. During his military career, Patrolman Shields earned numerous medals and commendations: the Air Medal, Aerial Achievement Medal, the Airforce Commendation Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, the Antarctica Service Medal, and the Afghanistan Campaign Medal, amongst several others.

While with the Schenectady Police Department, Patrolman Shields spent time working throughout the city, most recently on the day shift. The department reported that during this time, he formed many friendships with fellow officers and members of the community. "Patrolman Shields' experience and dedication made him a valuable member of the department's training unit. He was selected to become one of the department's Procedural Justice instructors and spent time instructing at the Zone 5 Regional Law Enforcement Police Academy."

"The loss of Patrolman Shields has affected every member of the department. On behalf of the Schenectady Police Department, we would like to thank the public for their thoughts, prayers, and support during these difficult times. We would also like to thank our public safety brothers and sisters (police, fire, communications, EMS) for being there for us, helping to keep the city safe while we process this loss."

Shields' cause of death was not given.


Schenectady Police mourn passing of officer; 10-year veteran served with state National Guard, in Afghanistan
SCHENECTADY – City police Monday announced the sudden passing of a 10-year department veteran officer.

Patrolman Corey Shields joined the department in July 2011 and won numerous awards during his time, including one where he ran into a burning building and saved a man with a heart condition, the department said.

The cause of Shields’ passing was not released.

“The loss of Patrolman Shields has affected every member of the department,” officials said in a release. “On behalf of the Schenectady Police Department, we would like to thank the public for their thoughts, prayers, and support during these difficult times.”

Shields was a 2001 graduate of Guilderland High School and he later attended Hudson Valley Community College, SUNY Empire State College and the State University of New York at Brockport.

He then served with the New York State National Guard with the 139th Airlift Squadron as a loadmaster aboard a C-130 aircraft.

He flew more than 200 operational missions around the world, including in support of Arctic and Antarctic scientific research programs, the department recounted.

He also flew 75 combat hours in Afghanistan during Operation Enduring Freedom. He earned numerous medals and commendations, the department said.

With the Schenectady Police Department, Shields worked throughout the city, most recently on the day shift.

“During this time, he formed many friendships with fellow officers and members of the community,” the department wrote. “Patrolman Shields’ experience and dedication made him a valuable member of the department’s training unit.”

He was selected to become one of the department’s Procedural Justice instructors and spent time instructing at the Zone 5 Regional Law Enforcement Police Academy.

He received numerous awards as an officer, including a Departmental Citation for Bravery for rescuing the man from the burning State Street building.

In that April 2012 incident, Shields and another officer cleared out a number of residents, one of them the man with the heart condition that would doom him in the fire, officials said at the time of the 2013 citation.

At the 2013 ceremony, then-Police Chief Brian Kilcullen addressed the actions of Shields and the other officer during the fire. “The actions of these officers bring great credit upon themselves and the Schenectady Police Department,” Kilcullen said then.
The department Monday also thanked others for their support.

“We would like to thank our public safety brothers and sisters (police, fire, communications, EMS) for being there for us, helping to keep the city safe while we process this loss.”


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