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Hundreds of Guardsmen fall through cracks of 9/11 programs:
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106th Rescue Wing

Long Island soldier who died in Syria did not die in vain

Newsday, October 16, 2019:

When John Raguso tells the story of his son's life and death, a particular day in 2004 when Chris did not die in combat in Iraq is as central to the tale as the day in 2018 when he did.

In 2004, Chris Raguso was a member of the New York Air National Guard serving his first tour in Baghdad when his base was attacked by insurgents. The two sides were engaged in combat when a mortar landed 10 feet from Chris.

"It should have exploded and killed him," John Raguso, of East Northport, said Monday. "That should have been the end. But instead, he lived and he went on to build this amazing life for 14 more years — meeting his wife, having two perfect daughters, becoming a lieutenant in the New York City Fire Department, helping people and saving people, and setting an example."
"I believe this whole thing is part of a cosmic plan, and I think I'm just a leaf in that plan."

I called Raguso to ask him about President Donald Trump's sudden withdrawal of U.S. troops from the Syrian battlegrounds where they'd been fighting alongside Kurdish forces to eliminate Islamic State terrorists. Master Sgt. Christopher Raguso, 39, of Commack, was killed last year along with Capt. Andreas O'Keefe, 37, of Center Moriches; Staff Sgt. Dashan Briggs, 39, of Port Jefferson Station; and four others when their helicopter crashed in western Iraq. The men were serving in Operation Inherent Resolve, fighting ISIS alongside the Kurds in pursuit of the same goals Trump's critics say he is now abandoning.

But John Raguso does not see what the president is doing as dishonoring his son's memory or abandoning the Kurds, though he thinks those fighters "are getting a raw deal." Raguso thinks Trump is living up to a campaign promise to stop endless wars and bring our troops home. And Raguso rightly sees the struggle of the Kurds in Turkey, Syria and Iraq for their own nation as a multi-century ordeal so complex that it's disingenuous to claim keeping U.S. troops there a bit longer would make the difference.

"We can't stay forever," Raguso said. "This is going to play out the way it is going to play out, no matter what. If one more American girl or boy does not have to die over there, it's a good thing."

Raguso believes his son made a difference by battling and killing ISIS terrorists, and Trump's pullback does not change that. And Raguso says he knows, thanks to calls and letters and conversations, that his son's death inspired 100 other people to pursue a life of service.

I was in Baghdad in 2004, too, working as an embedded journalist with elements of the Pennsylvania National Guard. Since I returned, I've argued that regions bedeviled by insurgency, ethnic battles and civil wars can reach stability only after outside forces leave, and that the United States needed to get out of Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan (once Osama bin Laden was killed) as soon as possible.

Chris Raguso did not die in vain. No one who dies fulfilling a commitment to duty and honor ever dies in vain. And having demanded our troops be taken out of harm's way for 15 years because staying longer won't help, I cannot condemn Trump for this withdrawal.

But I am angered by the president's lighthearted and sarcastic tweets about abandoning the Kurds, and the chaotic way the United States has pulled back. Trump could have given the allies more notice before withdrawing, and he could have given the mission and the lives it claimed a lot more respect.


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Today in history

News.com.au, October 16, 2019:

1999: A New York Air National Guard plane rescues Dr Jerri Nielsen from a South Pole research centre after she spent five months isolated by the Antarctic winter, forcing her to treat herself for breast cancer.


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Airmen and Soldiers

Pocono Service Corner

Pocono Record, Tuesday, Oct. 15, 2019:

Airman graduates basic military training U.S. Air Force Airman Savanna N. Rollar graduated from basic military training at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, San Antonio, Texas.

The airman completed an intensive, eight-week program that included training in military discipline and studies, Air Force core values, physical fitness, and basic warfare principles and skills.

Airmen who complete basic training also earn four credits toward an associate in applied science degree through the Community College of the Air Force.

Rollar is the daughter of George L. Rollar and sister of Zachary B. Rollar of Milford. She is a 2019 graduate of Delaware Valley High School, Milford.

National Guard soldier receives new rank Maj. Gen. Ray Shields, the Adjutant General for the State of New York, announces the recent promotion of members of the New York Army National Guard in recognition of their capability for additional responsibility and leadership.

Trey Jenkins from East Stroudsburg, assigned to the Battery C, 1-258th Field Artillery, received a promotion to the rank of Sergeant First Class.

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

Tap Into Greater Olean, October 13, 2019:

LATHAM, NY – Two residents of the Greater Olean area have received promotions in the New York Army National Guard.

Dustin Frederick of Olean has been promoted to the rank of private first class, and Anthony Wolf has been promoted to the rank of sergeant first class.

Frederick is assigned to the Company A, 642nd Support Battalion. Wolf is assigned to the Troop B, 2-101 Cavalry (Reconnaissance, Surveillance and Target Acquisition).

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

Maj. Gen. Ray Shields, the Adjutant General for the State of New York, announced the promotions.

The New York National Guard is the state's executive agency responsible to the governor for managing New York's Military Forces, which consist 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.

Notable names: National Guard promotes Macedon soldier

Wayne Post, Oct 17, 2019:

The New York Army National Guard recently promoted Michael Hoffmann, of Macedon, to the rank of master sergeant.

Hoffmann serves with the Company A, 2-108th Infantry.
Army National Guard promotions are based on overall performance, attitude, leadership ability and development potential.

Wayne-Finger Lakes student receives state award Wayne-Finger Lakes BOCES student Robert Quinn Jr. received the 2019 Outstanding NYACCE Student of the Year Award from the New York Association for Continuing and Community Education.

Quinn experienced a grand mal seizure at age 1 that affected his speech, ability to make eye contact and recognition of those closest to him. He studied in specialized adaptive programs, earned an individual education diploma and enrolled in the adult basic education class at Happiness House in Canandaigua.

He started the National External Diploma program, ultimately receiving a state high school diploma. Quinn obtained his driver’s permit, and is seeking employment and independent living arrangements.

He was nominated for the award by high school equivalency and literacy instructor Mary Beth George and Gregory Maine, W-FL BOCES principal of special programs.

Local soldiers re-enlist with National Guard Master Sgts. Matthew Henry, of Ontario, and Victor Masser, of Sodus, recently re-enlisted to continue service with the New York Army National Guard.

Henry serves with the 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team. Masser is assigned to the Operations Company, 42nd Infantry Division.

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

https://www.waynepost.com/article/20191017/NEWS/191019768

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In the military: New York Army National Guard

Hudson Valley 360, October 17, 2019:

LATHAM — Major General Ray Shields, the Adjutant General, announces the recent reenlistment of members of the State National Guard in recognition of their continuing commitment to serve community, state and nation as part of the Army National Guard.

Specialist Morgan Moseley from Chatham reenlisted to continue service with the Division Signal Company, 42nd Infantry Division.
First Sergeant Fitzgerald Drummond from Stuyvesant reenlisted to continue service with the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3-142nd Aviation.

HUDSON — 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.

Matthew Leonard from Hudson and assigned to the 727th Military Police Detachment Law and Order received a promotion to the rank of Specialist.

ELIZAVILLE — Major General Ray Shields, the Adjutant General, announces the recent reenlistment of members of the State National Guard in recognition of their continuing commitment to serve community, state and nation as part of the Army National Guard.

Staff Sergeant Justin Lonecke from Elizaville reenlisted to continue service with the 1156th Engineer Company Verticle.

https://www.hudsonvalley360.com/article/military-24

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**Woodhull National Guardsman receives Faithful Service Medal**

*The Evening Tribune, October 15, 2019 :

LATHAM — Major General Raymond F. Shields, the Adjutant General for the State of New York, announced recent awards and individual recognitions for members of the New York Guard state defense force for their continuing commitment to serve community, state and nation as part of New York State’s Military Forces.

Sgt. 1st Class James Peck from Woodhull, serving with the 10th Area Command, received the 10 Year Long and Faithful Service Medal during recent unit training events.

The New York Guard is a force of 500 uniformed volunteers, organized as a military unit, who augment the New York National Guard during state emergencies. They provide administrative and logistics support to the National Guard. Members of the New York Guard have been involved in flood control efforts along the Lake Ontario shoreline this summer.

Unlike members of the New York National Guard, New York Guard members do not have a federal military role and do not deploy outside the state. New York Guard members usually train in a volunteer status and are only paid when they are placed on state duty during emergencies.
The New York Guard, which is one of 23 state defense forces around the country, is authorized to recruit just over 1,000 volunteers organized into units located across New York. Currently there are 600 New Nork Guard members.

About half of the New York Guard volunteers are former members of the active duty military or National Guard who bring a wealth of experience to the force while the other half have never served in the military. Previous military membership is not a requirement for New York Guard service.

People who have served in the military can serve in the New York Guard up until age 68. Those who have never served in the military must be between age 18 and age 55 to join.

The New York National Guard (New York State Division of Military and Naval Affairs) 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.


Willoughby National Guard Soldier Receives New Rank, New Responsibilities

The News Herald, October 15, 2019:

LATHAM, NY — 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.

Thomas Nichols from Willoughby, OH and assigned to the Company C, 2-108th Infantry received a promotion to the rank of Sergeant First Class.

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 The New York National Guard (New York State Division of Military and Naval Affairs) 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.


**New York National Guard Promotions**

NNY360, October 15, 2019:

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

Zachary Curinga from Brewerton and assigned to the Headquarters and Headquarters Combat Aviation Brigade, 42nd Infantry Division received a promotion to the rank of Sergeant.

Sawyer Mitchell from Central Square and assigned to the 206th Military Police Company received a promotion to the rank of Private.

Clark Sponable from Phoenix and assigned to the 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team received a promotion to the rank of Staff Sergeant.

Hunter Van Noy from Oswego, and assigned to the Company D, 2-108th Infantry received a promotion to the rank of Private.

Dyerin Gareau from Altmar and assigned to the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 102nd Military Police Battalion received a promotion to the rank of Private First Class.

Samantha Goucher from Cato and assigned to the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 102nd Military Police Battalion received a promotion to the rank of Private First Class.

Dylan Frederick from Mannsville and assigned to the Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 1-258th Field Artillery received a promotion to the rank of Specialist.

David Valencia from Pulaski and assigned to the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 102nd Military Police Battalion received a promotion to the rank of Private.

Conner Mckean from Oswego and assigned to the Intelligence and Sustainment Company, 42nd Infantry Division received a promotion to the rank of Specialist.
Daniel Smith from Mexico and assigned to the United States Army Cyber Team 173 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.

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.


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**Douglas Vagg of Le Roy reenlists in the NY Army National Guard**

*The Batavian, October 15, 2019:*

Major General Ray Shields, the adjutant general, announces the recent reenlistment of members of the State National Guard in recognition of their continuing commitment to serve community, state and nation as part of the Army National Guard.

Sergeant Douglas Vagg, from Le Roy, reenlisted to continue service with the 152nd Engineer Support Company.

"It's great to see Soldiers staying in the Army and continuing to serve their State and Nation in the New York Army National Guard," Shields said. "The most important Army asset we have is the individual Soldier. The dedication, skills, and leadership traits they bring to our community and their employers are invaluable."

"By choosing to stay in the Army National Guard they directly contribute to our nation's security and to the governor's ability to respond to disasters, all while building a bright future for their family through the Guard's retirement, education, and health insurance programs,” Shields said.


The New York National Guard (New York State Division of Military and Naval Affairs) 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.
National Guard promotes local soldiers

Monroe Post, October 16, 2019:

The New York Army National Guard recently promoted Rochester soldiers Keiron Adorno, Tyler Bentivegna, Justin Canale and Christopher Scott.

Adorno was promoted to second lieutenant and is assigned to the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 427th Brigade Support Battalion. Bentivegna, who serves with the Headquarters Service Company, 642nd Support Battalion, was promoted to private first class.

Canale was promoted to staff sergeant and serves with the Company A (Distribution), 427th Brigade Support Battalion. Scott, who is assigned to the Company B, 3-126th Aviation, was promoted to chief warrant officer 3.

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

Local soldiers re-enlist with National Guard

Spcs. Desmond Goolsby, of Rochester, and Zachery Millspaugh, of Hilton, recently re-enlisted to continue service with the New York Army National Guard.

Goolsby serves with the Headquarters Service Company, 642nd Support Battalion. Millspaugh is assigned to the Company D, 3-126th Aviation.

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

Area soldiers reenlist in National Guard

Rome Sentinel, October 16, 2019:
LATHAM — Maj. Gen. Ray Shields, the adjutant general, has announced the recent reenlistment of members of the State Army National Guard in recognition of their continuing commitment to serve community, state and nation as part of the Army National Guard.

The reenlisting soldiers include:

Sergeant Dana Tompkins, of Rome, with the Forward Support Company, 204th Engineer Battalion;

Specialist Jermar Hymes, of Utica, with the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2-108th Infantry; and

Specialist Kyle Hoffman, of Utica, with the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2-108th Infantry.

“It’s great to see Soldiers staying in the Army and continuing to serve their State and Nation in the New York Army National Guard,” Shields said. “The most important Army asset we have is the individual Soldier. The dedication, skills, and leadership traits they bring to our community and their employers are invaluable.”

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Learn what is needed to be prepared in an emergency at “Cultures of Preparedness: Strengthening Partnerships to Build a Stronger Community,” from 9 a.m. until 2 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 26, on the Niagara University campus.

This free conference, which is designed for all members of the community, will discuss topics including: first responder mental health; understanding access and functional needs; National Weather Service’s “Creating a Weather-Ready Nation”; FEMA’s 2018-22 strategic plan; companion animal sheltering; caring for children in shelters; “Stop the Bleed” and CPR skills practice.

Maj. Gen. Patrick A. Murphy, state commissioner of the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services, will give the keynote address. He served more than 41 years in the military, retiring as director of the National Guard Bureau Joint Staff at the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. Previous positions include principal staff officer to the Chief National Guard Bureau, adjutant general of the New York National Guard, deputy chief of staff for National Guard Affairs, U.S. Third Army in Kuwait, and director of Civil Support Plans, U.S. Northern Command.

Lunch and refreshments will be provided. Pre-registration is encouraged; email tmannarino@niagara.edu. For more information, contact Dr. David Taylor at 716-286-8049 or dtaylor@niagara.edu.

The conference is presented by Border Community SERVICE of Niagara University in conjunction with the Niagara County Office of Emergency Services, and offered in partnership with NU's first responders disability awareness training, Erie County SMART, and Niagara County Medical Reserve Corps. Graduate students in the NU criminal justice administration master’s degree program will facilitate the conference.


Funeral Honors

NY National Guard assists in final honors for WWII hero

Army.mil, October 16, 2019:

SELKIRK, N.Y. -- Members of the New York Army National Guard provided final honors for Francis S. Currey, New York’s last surviving Medal of Honor recipient of World War II, at his funeral Oct. 12.
Currey, 94, died Oct. 8 at his home in Selkirk.

Ten Soldiers from the New York Army National Guard Military Forces Honor Guard served as pallbearers for the former infantryman assigned to the 30th Infantry Division. Following full military honors at Currey's graveside, a flyover of two UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters from the 3rd Battalion, 142nd Aviation Regiment, gave Currey one final military salute.

According to the Congressional Medal of Honor Society, Currey was one of only three living World War II Medal of Honor recipients.

"Francis S. Currey was a true American hero who made great personal sacrifices to serve his country during World War II," New York Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo said in his announcement of the lowering of state flags to half-staff Oct. 11.

"His significant contributions during the Battle of the Bulge and beyond helped to defeat fascism during the war, and he continued to serve his country after returning home to New York through his work with veterans," Cuomo said.

For members of the New York Military Forces Honor Guard, funeral honors each year approach 10,000 ceremonies across the state. But rendering honors to a Medal of Honor recipient is very different emotionally, said 1st Lt. Lasheri Mayes, the officer in charge of the honor guard detachment.

"It is a privilege that our Honor Guard had the opportunity to render honors to Sgt. Frances Currey," Mayes said. "Reading about his courageous and decisive action made it very clear to me the reasons he is regarded as a hero."

"Although we perform military funeral honors each day, this service was truly special. It was amazing to see so many people here to celebrate a humble man who led such an honorable life," she said.

Francis Currey joined the Army at age 17, just one week after graduating Hurleyville High School.

He landed at Omaha Beach in July 1944, a few weeks after D-Day and his 19th birthday, as a replacement for the tremendous losses within the ranks of infantry divisions.

He was assigned to 3rd Platoon, K Company, 120th Infantry Regiment, 30th Infantry Division, and joined his unit for the breakout from Normandy, pursuing German forces through France, Belgium and Holland.

By Dec. 21, Currey was an automatic rifleman in a rifle squad guarding a bridge crossing and strongpoint near Malmedy, Belgium. Currey and his division were fighting to hold off the final German counteroffensive of the war, the Battle of the Bulge.
During the action, he continuously exposed himself to the enemy, employing a bazooka, antitank grenades, his automatic rifle and two machine guns, causing four enemy tank crews to abandon their tanks and enabling him to rescue five Soldiers pinned down by the enemy fire.

His medal citation reads, "Realizing that they could not escape until the enemy tank and infantry guns had been silenced, Sgt. Currey crossed the street to a vehicle, where he procured an armful of antitank grenades. These he launched while under heavy enemy fire, driving the tankmen from the vehicles into the house. He then climbed onto a half-track in full view of the Germans and fired a machinegun at the house. Once again changing his position, he manned another machinegun whose crew had been killed; under his covering fire the five Soldiers were able to retire to safety. Deprived of tanks and with heavy infantry casualties, the enemy was forced to withdraw."

His lesson for Soldiers today, he said in his oral history for the World War II Museum, is to take all the training you can and make sure you know how to operate every weapon. You may find yourself needing them, Currey said.

In early 1945, after the battle, Currey became a squad leader, then platoon sergeant and received a promotion to technical sergeant.

Maj. Gen. Leland Hobbs, 30th Infantry Division commander, presented Currey with the Medal of Honor on July 27, 1945, near Reims, France. He was just 20 years old.

Currey also received the Belgian Order of Leopold, a Silver Star, Bronze Star and three Purple Hearts.

Returning home to upstate New York, Currey worked as a counselor at the Stratton VA Medical Center in Albany for some 30 years.

In addition to his military honors, Currey received special recognition from the Hasbro Toy Company.

Hasbro, the maker of the G.I. Joe action figure modeled a special figure in 1998 after Currey as part of the action figure Classic Collection Medal of Honor Series. The figure depicts the 19-year-old Currey, with toy replicas of the M1 rifle, Browning Automatic Rifle and bazooka that Currey used in battle. Some 100,000 figures were produced.

"My wife says it's a pretty good likeness," Currey told a reporter in 1998.

The New York State Senate inducted Currey into the state Veterans' Hall of Fame in 2006 and Albany County honored him as a living veteran in 2013.

Also in 2013, an outside mural of the Sullivan Country Museum in Hurleyville depicts Currey as a living Medal of Honor recipient.
In November 2013, Currey's photo was one of 12 Medal of Honor recipients on the cover sheet of a U.S. Postal Service "World War II Medal of Honor Forever Stamp."

"On behalf of all New Yorkers, I extend our sympathy to his friends and family and express our sincerest gratitude for his service, bravery and accomplishments," Cuomo said.


NY National Guard assists in final honors for WWII hero


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State Partnership Program

NY Guard Soldier going to Brazilian Jungle Warfare School

Nationalguard.mil, October 11, 2019:

LATHAM, N.Y – New York Army National Guard Staff Sgt. Thomas Carpenter, an infantry Soldier assigned to Headquarters Company of the 2nd Battalion, 108th Infantry, is headed to Brazil for six weeks of jungle warfare training.

Carpenter, from Prospect, N.Y., will train at the Brazil Army Jungle Warfare Training Center in Manaus Oct. 20 to Nov. 30.
The physically demanding Jungle Operations International Course, which Brazil offers to Soldiers from around the world, involves learning to survive in a jungle environment.

Before he gets to that training, Carpenter will be expected to demonstrate proficiency with a map and compass, run six miles in 60 minutes, disarm an opponent in hand-to-hand combat, and swim 400 meters in uniform.

He will also have to demonstrate basic knowledge about helicopter operations, river crossings, intelligence collection, tracking techniques and combat first aid.

The New York Army National Guard was invited to participate in the jungle school's international course, offered once each year, because of a recent partnership agreement with the Brazilian military.

Maj. Gen. Ray Shields, the adjutant general of New York, signed the agreement in May with Brazilian Rear Adm. Guilherme Da Silva Costa, formalizing the relationship through the National Guard's State Partnership Program.

The program links a state's National Guard with the armed forces or equivalent of a partner country in a cooperative, mutually beneficial relationship.

New York Army National Guard Command Sgt. Maj. David Piwowarski selected Carpenter to attend the course based on the military schools he's attended and his performance in the field.

"I asked for candidates that were physically strong, smart, and could shoot," Piwowarski said.

Carpenter was selected "because he is a consummate professional that has always been willing to accept challenges throughout his military career," Piwowarski said.

Carpenter has deployed to combat zones twice. He is a graduate of the Army Ranger School and Army Airborne School and competed in the Army's demanding Army Best Ranger Competition in 2015.

Carpenter, 38, is the company training sergeant. He enlisted in 2006 and has served as a full-time National Guard Soldier since 2014. He said he is looking forward to the jungle survival part of the course.

"It is something that I have never really done and it will be another tool in my tool box," he said, adding that it is important to pass what he learns on to members of his unit.

"What good is it if somebody goes to a school if they are just going to use it for a shiny thing on their uniform," he said.

Carpenter acknowledged that at 38, he might be older than many of those attending the school, but he doesn't intend to let that slow him down.
"Age is a number. It is what you do with those amount of years that make you that number. I can still run with the young dogs," Carpenter said.

He is a bit concerned about the swimming requirements for the class.

"I am trying hard to grow some gills," he joked.

As part of the SPP, New York National Guard Airmen of the 109th Airlift Wing in Scotia, N.Y., also visited their counterparts in Rio de Janerio, and Lt. Gen. Achilles Furlan Neto, the Brazilian Army's operations officer, visited New York.


Brazilian three-star general visits New York National Guard

Nationalguard.mil, October 15, 2019:

NEW YORK, N.Y – Brazilian Lt. Gen. Achilles Furlan Neto, the operations officer for the Brazilian Army, visited New York National Guard senior leaders, Soldiers and Airmen and facilities in Latham, Scotia, Camp Smith and New York City Oct. 6-11.

Furlan's visit was part of the training and exchange partnership between the New York National Guard and the Brazilian military under the National Guard's State Partnership Program.

Furlan checked out Army National Guard aircraft and military vehicles and took part in briefings outlining the capabilities of the New York National Guard's Civil Support Teams, Counterdrug Task Force and individual units to include the 501st Explosive Ordnance Disposal Battalion, the 204th Engineer Battalion, The 1st Battalion, 258th Field Artillery and the 369th Sustainment Brigade.

He capped his visit with a look at Joint Task Force Empire Shield's security operations in New York City.

"My experience this week in New York has been great. Everyone has been kind and very generous to provide thorough briefings of their capabilities," Furlan said. "Everyone has been treating me like I am one of them but also provided a very organized professional trip that has met all my expectations."

Furlan toured the state and New York City emergency management centers to learn how the New York National Guard interacts with those agencies.
The general also discussed future exchange opportunities between Brazil and the New York National Guard.

"We have incredible opportunities ahead to work together with the Brazilian military to achieve a great partnership," said Col. Robert Mitchell, director of operations for the New York National Guard. "We can capitalize on our different capabilities in the future and continue to work together to make great changes and new developments."

The week-long event focused on disaster and emergency response; aviation operations, maintenance, and safety; military medical and engineer activities. There was also a meeting with brigade and battalion leaders at Camp Smith Training Site in Cortlandt Manor.

Lt. Col. Roberto Santamaria, a military attaché with the U.S. Embassy in Brazil who traveled with Furlan, said he was impressed with the New York Guard.

"It's really incredible, the different capabilities of the Guard and all the diverse entities that work so well together within the organization," he said.

In New York City, Furlan met with New York National Guard leaders at the Lexington Avenue Armory to discuss civilian and military interactions and visited Soldiers and Airmen assigned to Joint Task Force Empire Shield at their duty locations.

He also saw the memorials to the Sept.11, 2001, terrorist attacks at the World Trade Center and the Brooklyn Bridge.

"The lieutenant general had a great trip," Santamaria said. "Everyone was incredibly professional and helpful. He is impressed by all the military members he has met and the many great opportunities in the future for both New York and Brazil."

Since initiating the partnership with Brazil, the New York National Guard has sent Airmen from the 109th Airlift Wing, which specializes in Arctic and Antarctic flying, to meet with Brazilian aviators and is also sending a Soldier to the Brazilian Jungle Warfare Training School.

In addition to the Brazilian partnership, the New York Guard has had a relationship under the State Partnership Program with the South African National Defence Force since 2003.

Ten New York Army National Guard Soldiers and Airmen are heading to South Africa Oct. 20 to participate in a military skills competition.


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Trumansburg native traveling to South Africa for skills competition

My Twin Tiers, Oct 14, 2019:

LATHAM, N.Y. (WETM) – Ten New York Army National Guard Soldiers and Airmen will travel to South Africa later this month to participate in the South African Military Skills Competition being held Oct. 21 to 26.

The five Soldiers and five Airmen will participate alongside representatives of European and African nations. They come from Army and Air Guard units located across the state.

The competition involves rifle and pistol shooting, negotiating land and water obstacles, hand grenade throwing and a 4.8 mile run in military uniform. The Americans will be firing the South African R4 rifle and Z88 pistol instead of the weapons they normally use.

Each team consists of four members and a coach.

The New York National Guard has had a training and exchange partnership with the South African National Defence Force since 2003.

The relationship is part of the National Guard’s State Partnership Program which pairs state National Guards with the military forces of other nations. The program is designed to build useful military relationships.

In 2018 the New York National Guard sent a contingent of Army National Guard Military Police Soldiers and Air National Guard Security Force Airmen to South Africa. Other exchanges have involved firefighters, general officer visits, and participation in the South African Airshow held every two years.

New York National Guard soldiers last competed in the South African Department of Defence Military Skills competition in 2010.

The New York National Guard participants are:

• Command Sergeant Major Mark Maynard, the Army National Guard team coach, who is a Spencerport resident and is assigned to the 106th Regional Training Institute at Camp Smith Training Site near Peekskill;

• Master Sgt. Cole Shebat, the Air National Guard coach, who is a Cicero resident and a member of the 274th Air Support Operations Squadron at Hancock Field Air National Guard Base in Syracuse;

• Army National Guard Sgt. 1st Class Martin Cozens, a Rochester resident assigned to Alpha Company, 2nd Battalion, 108th Infantry in Geneseo;
• Army National Guard Sgt. 1st Class Brendon Mavra, a Mohegan Lake resident, who serves with Delta Company, 1st Battalion, 29th Infantry in Farmingdale;

• Army National Guard Sgt. Jonathan Patton, a New York City resident who serves in Headquarters Company of the 1st Battalion, 29th Infantry which drills at the Lexington Avenue Armory in Manhattan;

• Army National Guard Sgt. Zachary Rodak, a Peekskill resident, who is assigned to Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry based at Camp Smith Training Site in Cortlandt Manor;

• Air National Guard Technical Sgt. Thomas Perry, a Trumansburg resident, assigned to the 274th Air Support Operations Squadron at Hancock Field Air National Guard Base in Syracuse;

• Air National Guard Technical Sgt. Martin Allen, a Middle Grove resident, assigned to the 109th Security Forces Squadron at Stratton Air National Guard Base in Scotia;

• Air National Guard Staff Sgt. Joshua Kueritzky, a Kingston resident who serves in the 105th Base Defense Squadron, at Stewart Air National Guard Base in Newburgh;

• Air National Guard Staff Sgt. Justin Murphy, a Bergenfield, New Jersey resident who is assigned to the 105th Base Defense Squadron, at Stewart Air National Guard Base in Newburgh.

The Soldiers and Airmen were selected to participate in the South African event based on their accomplishments and training.


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**Brazilian three-star general visits New York National Guard**

Army.mil, By Capt. Jean Marie Kratzer | New York National Guard October 15, 2019: Oct 16, 2019:

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Since initiating the partnership with Brazil, the New York National Guard has sent Airmen from the 109th Airlift Wing, which specializes in the Arctic and Antarctic flying, to meet with Brazilian aviators and is also sending a Soldier to the Brazilian Jungle Warfare Training School.

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Ten New York Army National Guard Soldiers and Airmen are heading to South Africa Oct. 20 to participate in a military skills competition.


Area soldier heading for Brazilian Jungle Warfare Training School

Rome Sentinel, October 15, 2019 :

New York Army National Guard Staff Sgt. Thomas Carpenter, a Prospect resident, is heading to Brazil for six weeks of training at the Brazil Army Jungle Warfare Training Center in Manaus, Brazil.

Carpenter, a member of Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 108th Infantry, will take part in the 2019 Jungle Operations International Course.

The course, which Brazil offers to Soldiers from around the world, begins on October 20 and wraps up on November 30.

The physically demanding course involves learning to survive in a jungle environment, learning the combat skills Soldiers need to operate in the jungle, and then putting it all together in realistic exercises.

It is a shortened version of the 12-week course the Centro de Instrucao de Guerra na Selva-Portuguese for Jungle Warfare Training School-teaches its own Soldiers twice a year.

Before he gets to that training, Carpenter will be expected to tread water while wearing their uniform, demonstrate their proficiency with a map and compass, run six miles in 60 minutes, disarm an opponent in hand-to-hand combat, and swim 400 meters while in uniform.
He will also have to demonstrate basic knowledge about helicopter operations, river crossings, intelligence collection, tracking techniques and combat first aid.

The New York Army National Guard was invited to participate in jungle school’s international course, which is offered once each year, because of a recently approved partnership agreement with the Brazilian military.

In March, 2019, Major General Ray Shields, the Adjutant General of New York, inked an agreement with Brazilian Rear Admiral Guilherme Da Silva Costa, formalizing the relationship through the National Guard’s State Partnership Program.

Under this program state National Guard’s train with militaries around the world.

New York Army National Guard Command Sergeant Major David Piwowarski selected Carpenter to attend the course based on the military schools he’s attended and his performance in the field.

“What I did is reach out to all the units in the New York Army National Guard through the brigade sergeants major and I asked for candidates that were physically strong, smart, and could shoot,” Piwowarski said.

“In my opinion we needed tough, strong Soldiers who could endure,” he said.

Carpenter was selected “because he is a consummate professional that has always been willing to accept challenges throughout his military career,” Piwowarski said.

Carpenter has deployed to combat zones twice; he is a graduate of the Army Ranger School and Army Airborne School and competed in the Army’s tough and demanding Army Best Ranger Competition in 2015.

“He brings the right attitude to every task that he is assigned too. Failure for him is never an option,” Piwowarski said.

Carpenter, age 38, is a full-time Guard Soldier who serves as the company training sergeant.

Carpenter, who enlisted in 2006, has served as a full-time National Guard Soldier since 2014.

He’s looking forward to the jungle survival part of the course, Carpenter said.

“It is something that I have never really done and it will be another tool in my tool box,” he explained.

When Soldiers attend these kinds of special schools, it’s vital that they be able to come back to their units and pass those skills on, Carpenter said.
“What good is it if somebody goes to a school if they are just going to use it for a shiny thing on their uniform,” he added.

Carpenter acknowledged that at 38, he might be older than many of those attending the school, but he doesn’t intend to let that slow him down.

“Age is a number. It is what you do with those amount of years that make you that number. I can still run with the young dogs,” Carpenter said.

He is a bit concerned about the swimming requirements for the class, Carpenter said. He can swim, but it is not one of his strengths.

“I am trying hard to grow some gills,” he joked.


Veterans

Hundreds of Guardsmen fall through cracks of 9/11 programs

Cortland Standard, October 12, 2019:

Cortland City Deputy Police Chief Paul Sandy and City Community Police Officer Jesse Abbott install plaques at the 9/11 Memorial in Courthouse Park. File photo from July 2019.

Patrick Kelley sat back on the black bench, the words “Never Forget” cut into the metal, one hand resting on his cane. His eyes occasionally drifted to the two metal towers of Cortland’s Sept. 11 Memorial.

Kelley was one of hundreds of National Guard soldiers called to help with recovery efforts after the attacks on the World Trade Center caused thousands of deaths and left the site dozens of feet deep in rubble.

Kelley arrived a couple of days after the attack, with Company B of 204th Engineering Battalion, where he worked security for the site, ensuring other first responders could recover bodies without issues.

He said at times it feels as if the contribution of the National Guard has been forgotten.
Many of them face health issues years later, including Kelley. The 54-year-old, who now lives in Homer but is originally from Cortland, uses a cane to get around. He has a best friend, Terry Villanova, who helps him with things like paperwork and getting places.

“I’m also limited financially,” he said, noting he cannot work due to his various ailments.

Some of them, like Kelley, have doctors who said those illnesses are related to spending weeks in the dust and debris.

A variety of programs help the first responders cope. However, guidance to access those programs has been limited for veterans of the Guard, veterans like Kelley say, more so than other responders, including the U.S. Marine Corps and Navy, which also deployed.

But not all National Guard members know they need to get checked, what programs are available or how to go about getting access to health benefits or compensation. When they do know, the process isn’t easy.

Retired Sgt. Ann Marie Pearson was part of the 342nd Forward Support Battalion, Company C, a medical unit, sent to help with recovery efforts.

She agreed with Kelley — the National Guard in many ways has been forgotten. Now, she and Louise Schoene, whose husband was also called down to serve, are fighting to get increased support for National Guard soldiers.

A war zone

After the attack on the buildings, nothing was left but rubble. The site and weeks that followed were filled with smoke, flashing lights from emergency responders and the sounds of crews looking for bodies.

It became known as “Ground Zero” or “the Pile.”

More than 8,000 National Guard soldiers were called by then-Gov. George Pataki to serve under state active duty, otherwise known as Article 32, which activated Kelley’s and Pearson’s units.

For them, the site was a war zone. Schoene said she has about 130 registered with programs and 200 following the issue on a social media page she has set up.

But she said there are hundreds of others who may not even know the programs exist.

Kelley pointed from the bench to the Cortland monument: “I was right there. I could stand on the pile.”
Patrick Kelley is 54. He walks with a cane. He has Parkinson’s disease and a host of other health problems he attributes to his time at Ground Zero after Sept. 11, 2001, as a National Guardsman. While programs exist to aid him both medically and financially, they require time and lots of paperwork and even if he does all the paperwork, he still has to get accepted.

Pearson said she would walk up and down roads seeing if people needed medical attention. Her medical unit was stationed in a bank near Ground Zero where the work by first responders digging through the rubble could be heard.

“Immediately when we got there we started working,” Pearson said, noting her medical unit helped with everything from recovery to security. “We worked around the clock.”

By the end of the day she, like Kelley and many others, was covered head to toe in dust.

They didn’t have a change of clothes and were only give “little paper masks” to protect them.

“We didn’t have any protection,” she said.

**State vs. federal deployment**

But not every soldier had been deployed by the state. Then-President George W. Bush activated some units under Article 10.

The difference between the federal Article 10 activation and the state’s Article 32 is the difference in what compensation and benefits people were likely to get, but Kelley, Schoene and Pearson said the soldiers all faced the same risk at Ground Zero — the dust — and should all be covered under federal active duty programs.

Kelley can still taste and smell the dust that covered the collapsed and crumbling buildings.

He said he has health issues related to being in the dust for more than a month, including sinusitis, rhinosinusitis, severe sleep apnea and anxiety.

He gets monitoring and some health care through the World Trade Health Program. However, the program will cover costs associated with care only when a person:

- Uses health care providers and pharmacies affiliated with the program.
- Gets care for a condition certified as related to 9/11.
- Has the treatment authorized before it is administered.
While many of the conditions Kelley has are covered by the program, one is not — Parkinson’s disease. Kelley said a doctor has told him that his Parkinson’s disease could be the result of serving on the Pile.

**Little publicity**

And while there is a health program, Schoene and Pearson said many National Guard members may not know of it, or that they should get checked for cancer or other Ground Zero-related ailments.

If they do know, the paperwork takes an hour to complete and requires proving both one’s presence at the site and that the illnesses could be related to being there.

Also, Veterans Affair coverage isn’t guaranteed for every National Guard soldier. — only those who serve 20 years or served in a combat zone.

Kelley served in a combat zone, and Pearson served 32 years between the Marine Corps and National Guard. Pearson deals with post-traumatic stress disorder, thyroid problems, high blood pressure, breathing issues and sleep apnea.

“I was a healthy person when I went down there and then over the years things started falling apart with my health,” she said.

Other National Guard members received Veterans Affairs retirement credit, Schoene said, but that is because Congress passed legislation in 2005 that re-designated Guard members from areas in and around New York as under federal active duty.

However, Schoene said the bill left out all the other New York counties — counties like Broome, where the 204th is headquartered, or Cortland.

**Paperwork, time and hope**

Kelley is unable to work because of his illnesses. However, getting compensation hasn’t been easy, he said. It comes down to paperwork, it comes down to eligibility status and it comes down to time.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo’s spokesmen told the Cortland Standard his office stands behind current and former National Guard members.

“Guardsmen who believe they are suffering from a 9/11-related condition can apply to the NYS (New York state) Division of Military and Naval Affairs for disability compensation, which can include disability-related medical coverage,” Cuomo’s office said. “In order to obtain compensation, the individual must be medically evaluated and their condition must be related to their service in the period following the Sept. 11 attacks.”
However, Schoene, Pearson and Kelley said the process should be streamlined, so people don’t need to apply to multiple programs, fill out a reams of paperwork, just for the hope of getting approved.

They often feel frustrated and forgotten.

**Feeling forgotten**

“I feel betrayed,” Kelley said about lack of information about the programs. “I think the National Guard could have done a much better job of telling soldiers, period. All of us that were there — and there were many of us — we were at risk and that we needed to join the programs and all that, if we so desired.”

He said he’s written to the governor’s office to get more assistance, but never hears back. He also said he was talking to Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand’s office until the person he was talking to no longer worked there and the conversations ceased.

“There was some frustration and anger there, so I can understand why people might not be happy to hear from me all the time,” he said. “I’m ill, I don’t feel well and I have a lot of issues that are keeping me from working at this point and at one point I was so ill we weren’t sure I was going to make it.”

Pearson is also angry at the governor’s office and other departments involved with the process, especially for not trying to better communicate to National Guard members.

“My concern is there are people that live in remote areas,” she said. They won’t know to get checked or sign up for the programs. “I’m very sad because I don’t know how to fix that.”

They are also upset that some Guard soldiers are treated differently from others because of how they were activated — state vs. federal.

**Finding help**

Kelley got help from Schoene and Pearson, who have worked to notify Guard members and to help them through the paperwork.

The Schoene Foundation For 9/11 NYARNG Family Support, a nonprofit, was created to help soldiers and family members navigate the programs and paperwork, and find coverage through other avenues if they don’t qualify for any at veteran organizations.

“I’m trying to lay the groundwork because you cannot get the health care or compensation unless you can show you served,” she said.

She’s doing it with the help of Pearson, who is spreading the word.
Schoene is also working with a law firm, Barasch & McGarry, to get people sign up with the Victim’s Compensation Fund and other programs.

Schoene said she is also in contact with the office of Rep. Brian Higgins (D-Buffalo) about what could be done to benefit soldiers. Higgins’ office could not be reached for comment.

Kelley said he has talked to Rep. Anthony Brindisi (DUtica).

“The heroes who helped cleanup after 9/11 deserve access to benefits,” Brindisi said in a statement. “Whether that’s the firefighters, policemen and women, Guardsmen and women, and other emergency personnel, we need to get them the care they earned. I am working to find a solution that can garner support from Democrats and Republicans and fix this problem.”

“I hope that any other National Guard soldiers that are reading this will consider whether they’re sick or not joining the health program,” Kelley said. “I’m also hopeful that our government will see it through to do the right thing by a group of people that had no fear and came to their country’s call and our country’s greatest need.”

Kelley stood up from the bench, took a few steps, looked at the 9/11 monument, and stood silently, learning on his cane.

He wants America to never forget.

https://cortlandstandard.net/2019/10/12/hundreds-of-guardsmen-fall-through-cracks-of-9-11-programs/