109th Airlift Wing

109th Airlift Wing holds major accident response exercise:
News 10, June 8, 2019

INTERVIEW: Preparing for an aircraft crash simulation (Video):
News 10, June 8, 2019

Air National Guard, local emergency responders holding plane crash response exercise (video):
News 10, June 8, 2019

42nd Combat Aviation Brigade

Long Island man arrested after pointing laser at Army National Guard helicopter: police:
WPix 11, JUNE 13, 2019

Mount Sinai man pointed laser at Army National Guard helicopter, police say:
Newsday, June 13, 2019

Police: 72-Year-Old Long Island Man Pointed A Laser At Military Chopper:
WCBS 880, June 13, 2019

New York man arrested for pointing laser at Army National Guard helicopter:
Task & Purpose, June 14, 2019

53rd Troop Command

New commander takes over Auburn-based military police battalion:
Auburn Pub, June 9, 2019

Airmen and Soldiers

A Newark Valley resident, wins two trophies at annual shooting competition:
Binghamton Homepage, June 7, 2019

Armed Forces:
Watertown Daily Times, JUNE 14 2019

Local soldiers re-enlist with National Guard:
MP Now, June 9, 2019

National Guard officer honored for academic excellence:
Army.mil, June 7, 2019

New York Soldier is honored for his academic work:
National Guard.mil, June 7, 2019

NY Army National Guard Sgt. Timothy Fay, A Carmel resident, headed to regional shooting match:
Carmel's Hamlet Hub, June 11, 2019
Armories

Returning armory to village awaits governor's approval:
Newsday, June 13, 2019

Eastern Air Defense Sector

Air National Guard announces promotions of five airmen:
Rome Sentinel, June 10, 2019

Emergency Response

Cuomo announces $300M for communities hit by Lake Ontario's high waters:
Lockport Union Sun & Journal, June 10, 2019

Lakeshore Flood Warning in Effect Tuesday:
Spectrum, Jun. 10, 2019

Free emergency preparedness training program to be offered in Livingston County:
Livingston County News, June 11, 2019

New York Air National Guard

Tupper Lake man named general: PROMOTION: Timothy LaBarge becomes major general in
New York Air National Guard:
Press - Republican, June 9, 2019

New York Army National Guard

New York Army National Guard celebrates Army's 244th birthday (Video)
WNYT, June 14, 2019

Soldiers Hone Combat Marksmanship Skills in Puerto Rico:
Citizen Soldier, June 10, 2019

A New App's on the Map:
Citizen Soldier, June 7, 2019

PFOA Issue

Local lawmakers call on EPA to set maximum contaminant levels for drinking water:
Newsday, June 7, 2019

Veterans

New York National Guard leaders honor World War II veterans on D-Day:
Army.mil, June 7, 2019
N.Y. National Guard leaders honor World War II vets on D-Day:
National Guard.mil, By Col. Richard Goldenberg | New York National Guard | June 7, 2019

Max Rose versus the world: With Donald Trump back on the ballot, the Staten Island Democrat will have to win over conservatives to keep his House seat.
City & State, June 10, 2019

War, depression, suicide: American veterans are finding help:
France 24.com, June 13, 2019

---

**109th Airlift Wing**

**109th Airlift Wing holds major accident response exercise**

News 10, June 8, 2019:

SCOTIA, N.Y. (NEWS10) - First responders geared up in Scotia to be a part of the 109th Airlift Wing’s major accident response exercise.

The event was designed to put officials to the test while responding to incidents like aircraft mishaps.

Some participating groups included the New York State Emergency Management Office, Schenectady County Fire, and even the Glenville Police Department. Local students also got involved, acting as mock victims.


**INTERVIEW: Preparing for an aircraft crash simulation (Video)**

News 10, June 8, 2019:

INTERVIEW: Preparing for an aircraft crash simulation (Video)

Air National Guard, local emergency responders holding plane crash response exercise (video)

News 10, June 8, 2019:

Air National Guard, local emergency responders holding plane crash response exercise (video)


Return to top

42nd Combat Aviation Brigade

Long Island man arrested after pointing laser at Army National Guard helicopter: police

WPIX 11, JUNE 13, 2019:

MOUNT SINAI, Long Island - A man was arrested Wednesday after he pointed a laser at an Army helicopter flying over Long Island, Suffolk County Police said.

The town of Islip notified 911 Wednesday night that a laser had been directed at an Army National Guard helicopter about 10 miles northeast of MacArthur Airport in Ronkonkoma about 9:45 p.m., authorities said.

A Police Aviation Section helicopter responded to the area and determined the exact address the laser had originated from, a residential home in Mount Sinai, police said.

Officers then headed to the home and arrested Robert Simione, 72, who is expected to be charged with reckless endangerment, according to police. Authorities said Simione will be arraigned at a later date.


Return to top

Mount Sinai man pointed laser at Army National Guard helicopter, police say
Suspected of pointing a laser at an Army National Guard helicopter on Wednesday night, Robert Simione, 72, of Mount Sinai, was arrested and charged with a misdemeanor for reckless endangerment, Suffolk County police said.

Wearing night goggles, which intensify light, the crew were on a routine training mission in their UH-60 helicopter, said Eric Durr, spokesman, New York Army National Guard, by telephone. The Army calls that model, made by Sikorsky, the Black Hawk.

Using their GPS system, "They basically just took a lock on where the beam was coming from and reported it to the police," he said.

The Town of Islip reported the crime around 9:45 p.m. while the helicopter was flying about 10 miles northeast of Long Island MacArthur Airport in Ronkonkoma, the police said in a statement early Thursday.

A police aviation section helicopter helped determine the laser beam came from a Shore Road residence, the police said, offering no further details.

Aiming a laser pointer at an aircraft has been a federal crime since 2012, according to the Federal Aviation Administration's website. This happened more than 5,600 times last year, it says.

The national guard requires its pilots to file a minimum number of hours every year with night goggles, Durr said.

That equipment can magnify the potential danger of a laser beam. The beams also can disrupt a pilot's focus.


Police: 72-Year-Old Long Island Man Pointed A Laser At Military Chopper

WCBS 880, June 13, 2019:

MOUNT SINAI, N.Y. (WCBS 880) - A quiet Long Island town was unsettled Wednesday night when police responded to reports of a man pointing a laser at a military helicopter.
As WCBS 880's Sophia Hall reported, Shore Road in Mount Sinai is typically a peaceful area, but was abuzz with activity late Wednesday when Robert Simione, 72, allegedly aimed a laser at a military helicopter flying over the area.

Police swarmed the area as it was believed there was an immediate threat to the Army National Guard aircraft.

"The Town of Islip notified 911 that a laser has been pointed at an Army National Guard helicopter at approximately 9:45 p.m. A police aviation helicopter responded and determined the laser originated from a residence," said Suffolk County Police spokeswoman Keri Palumbo.

It's unclear if there was any credible threat to the aircraft. No one was injured.

Simione was charged with a misdemeanor and it scheduled to be arraigned at a later date.

The 72-year-old could not be reached for comment.


New York man arrested for pointing laser at Army National Guard helicopter

Task & Purpose, June 14, 2019:

Suspected of pointing a laser at an Army National Guard helicopter on Wednesday night, Robert Simione, 72, of Mount Sinai, was arrested and charged with a misdemeanor for reckless endangerment, Suffolk County police said.

Wearing night goggles, which intensify light, the crew were on a routine training mission in their UH-60 helicopter, said Eric Durr, spokesman, New York Army National Guard, by telephone. The Army calls that model, made by Sikorsky, the Black Hawk.

Using their GPS system, "They basically just took a lock on where the beam was coming from and reported it to the police," he said.

The Town of Islip reported the crime around 9:45 p.m. while the helicopter was flying about 10 miles northeast of Long Island MacArthur Airport in Ronkonkoma, the police said in a statement early Thursday.

A police aviation section helicopter helped determine the laser beam came from a Shore Road residence, the police said, offering no further details.
Aiming a laser pointer at an aircraft has been a federal crime since 2012, according to the Federal Aviation Administration's website. This happened more than 5,600 times last year, it says.

The national guard requires its pilots to file a minimum number of hours every year with night goggles, Durr said.

That equipment can magnify the potential danger of a laser beam. The beams also can disrupt a pilot's focus.

"Laser light can be damaging to anybody's eyes," Durr said. "If you're flying, obviously anything that might distract you from what you are trying to do is a danger."

Laser beams can travel considerable distances; any dirt or even small flaws in an aircraft's windshield can worsen the glare, experts said.

Simione's arraignment has yet to be scheduled.


53rd Troop Command

New commander takes over Auburn-based military police battalion

Auburn Pub, June 9, 2019:

AUBURN - The latest commander of the 102nd Military Police Battalion in Auburn has followed the footsteps of the outgoing officer on different occasions.

New York Army National Guard Lt. Col. Monique Foster took the position from Lt. Col. Matthew Schaffer, who had been in the role for over two years, at a change of command ceremony at Seward Elementary School Saturday. Foster had previously taken command of units Schaffer had led in Kingston and Troy.

Schaffer is set to be the provost Marshall of the 42nd Infantry Division in Troy. Before the event began, he talked about having Foster take over for him again.

"I think our leadership styles are very much aligned, so I don't think it'll be a big change for the soldiers. I think they're going to get more of the same, probably a little bit better," he said.
Foster started her military career as an ensign in the U.S. Coast Guard after graduating from the U.S. Coast Guard Academy in Connecticut with a bachelor's degree in chemistry, according to a press release. Her background includes stints as a deputy sheriff in Portland, a military police platoon leader in the 105th Military Police Company in Buffalo - when she joined the National Guard - and as an executive officer of the 240th Military Police Company, when she was deployed to Iraq in 2006.

Schaffer had been commissioned as a second lieutenant in 2003 and was deployed to Iraq that same year as a platoon leader in the 501st Signal Battalion, release said. The release said he was sent to Iraq again in 2005 as a member of the 526th Brigade Support Battalion and later served with other units, the release said. He left active duty in 2007 and joined the National Guard's 104th Military Police Battalion. His other work includes assuming command of that battalion's headquarters detachment from 2010 to 2013 and being a current employee of the state police, where he holds the permanent rank of sergeant.

During the ceremony, Foster praised Schaffer's leadership.

"Matt, well done on leading, influencing and developing the soldiers and units in your command, and I hope to be able to continue the upward path that you have set this battalion on," she said.

Earlier in the ceremony, Schaffer reflected on his time with the battalion, saying the unit didn't accomplish everything he wanted them to, but said "That's on me, certainly not on any of you." He added that he was a proud of a lot they had done.

Schaffer told the battalion members to be proud to be a part of the unit. "When I took command here, I asked you all for two things: a fair shake and your best effort. And you absolutely did that and I appreciate it, I thank you," he said. "I'm going to ask for the same exact thing one last time."

Col. Michael Fowler, who presided over the ceremony, lauded Foster and Schaffer.

"The two officers we honor today are proven leaders. Their records demonstrate their commitment to Army values," he said.

https://auburnpub.com/news/local/new-commander-takes-over-auburn-based-military-police-battalion/article_a8a4be60-f8bf-5a72-a4c3-f4f35a6e6e70.html

Return to top

Airmen and Soldiers

A Newark Valley resident, wins two trophies at annual shooting competition
CAMP SMITH TRAINING SITE, N.Y. -- New York Army National Guard Pvt. Briana Tillotson, a Newark Valley resident, took home two first place awards at the 2019 Adjutant Generals' Marksmanship Match.

Known as the "TAG Match" - short for "The Adjutant General's Match" - the annual marksmanship competition tests the ability to New York National Guard Soldiers and Airmen to master the M-16 and M-4 rifles and the M-9 military pistol. Members of the New York Naval Militia and the New York Guard, the state's volunteer self-defense force, can also participate.

Tillotson is a member of Headquarters and Support Company of the 204th Engineer Battalion which is based in Binghamton.

She finished in first place in the Sgt. Henry Johnson Individual Combat Rifle Match and the Sgt. Timothy Murphy "Bullseye" competition.

Sgt. Henry Johnson was an African-American Soldier who was one of the first New York National Guard heroes of World War I. Timothy Murphy was a Revolutionary War militia Soldier from the Schoharie Valley who was famed as a marksman.

The Individual Combat Rifle Match tests a Soldier's ability to hit a variety of targets using the issue M-16 or M-4 rifle. The Timothy Murphy contest is a shoot-off designed to break ties.

Tillotson and another Soldier got the same score in the Henry Johnson competition and the Timothy Murphy results determined the winner in that competition.

The annual marksmanship competition is an important event for the New York National Guard, said Major General Ray Shields, the Adjutant General of New York.

"Our Soldiers and Airmen must be able to engage an enemy with accurate small arms fire under stressful combat conditions. Every opportunity our Soldiers and Airmen get to fire their individual weapons is critical to building combat effectiveness," Shields said.

Tillotson, who competed in the event in 2018, said she came out to have fun and was surprised to have won the event.

"I did not know that I had won until other soldiers told me," Tillotson said She grew up in Whitney Point shooting with her father, Tillotson said, and she's learned to be patient which is an important marksmanship skill.

Tillotson was also awarded an Army Achievement Medal by Brig. General Michel Natali, commander of the 53rd Troop Command, in recognition of her accomplishment.
Armed Forces

Watertown Daily Times, JUNE 14 2019:
Jun 14, 2019

Brian Arbuckle, Canton, Company B, 2-108th Infantry, Army National Guard, was promoted to staff sergeant.

Staff Sgt. Marla Carter, Fort Drum, recently reenlisted to continue service with the Intelligence and Sustainment Company, 42nd Infantry Division, Army National Guard.

Local soldiers re-enlist with National Guard

MP Now, June 9, 2019:

Sgt. 1st Class Michael Hoffmann, of Macedon, and Spc. Brian Ruscio, of Victor, recently re-enlisted to continue service with the New York Army National Guard.

Hoffmann serves with the 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team. Ruscio is continuing with the Company D, 3-126th Aviation.

"The most important Army asset we have is the individual soldier," said Maj. Gen. Ray Shields, the adjutant general. "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."

National Guard officer honored for academic excellence
ALBANY, N.Y. - For the past couple of years, when Maj. Keith Casserly wasn't on the job as unit commander of the New York Army National Guard's Medical Command, he's been in class, the library, or testing air quality in Albany.

The work paid off in May when Casserly earned a Masters of Public Health from the State University of New York School of Public Health.

Casserly was also recognized for unique research on air quality on bus routes he conducted to obtain his degree. He received the award for Excellence in Scholarship in the field of Environmental Health Science along with the degree.

He appreciated the recognition, Casserly said, because in masters programs you don't get recognized for just having a high-grade point. It's the ability to conduct and present research that matters, especially in the field of Public Health, he said.

"This is one of the awards that show you stand out from your peers and gets your work recognized," Casserly said.

Casserly stated working on his environmental science master's degree in 2012.

This was two years after he became a Medical Service Corps officer and joined the 24th Civil Support Team as the team nuclear science officer.

As an Allied Science Medical Service Corps officer, promotion is based on education and credentials. Earning the masters set him up for success in his military career and when he retires, Casserly explained.

As the nuclear medicine science officer for a civil support team, which specializes in identifying chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear hazards and weapons, Casserly was responsible for overseeing the high-tech mobile lab used to test the environment and samples.

Before that job shift, Casserly was an infantryman.

He joined the 1st Battalion, 105th Infantry Regiment in 2002 and was commissioned through National Guard Officer Candidate School. He served in the 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment and the 153rd Troop Command and earned the Air Assault Badge, the Ranger tab, and the Pathfinder Badge. He added the Combat Infantryman's Badge during a deployment to Afghanistan in 2007-2008.

But when the chance came to join the 24th Civil Support Team in Brooklyn he took it.

"You can only pound the ground for so long," he said. "It's fun to be an infantry officer, it's great. But as you get up in echelons you need something else."
Casserly served with the 24th CST at Fort Hamilton in Brooklyn for four years and then moved into the same position with the 2nd CST at Stratton Air National Guard Base in Scotia.

In 2017 he took over as the Medical Command Unit Commander and reenergized his quest for a masters of public health in environmental science.

He was able to use his CST-related military experience and training to check the block on some of the 61 credits he needed for the degree, Casserly explained.

That included checking the block on one of two internships required for the degree, he added.

For his other internship, Casserly decided to conduct the air quality study he was honored for.

Worldwide air pollution--especially in China and other places where coal is still a major power source--contributes to 4.7 million deaths annually, Casserly said. That is seven percent of all annual deaths.

He studied air quality along the two major bus routes that run through Albany.

His study looked at air quality for somebody driving in a car, somebody walking along the bus route, somebody riding a bike along bus routes, and somebody riding in the bus.

He spent nights and weekends this past winter and spring following buses or riding in buses with air monitoring equipment. Sometimes he'd bring his son and daughter--Ethan and Emma--along with him, Casserly added.

He was surprised to find that a bus passenger is exposed to more fine particulate matter --the kind that can cause cancer--than a driver, bike rider, or pedestrian. He and his advisor expected the greatest risk would be to the bike rider.

The culprit, Casserly explained, is what he called the "swoosh" when the bus door opens and closes

In the winter the change in temperature, causes the air to rush in and out when the doors open and then close.

That action draws the diesel exhaust and its particulate into the bus, he said. It also kicks up any particulate matter that was on the floors, or on the passengers themselves and allows it to be inhaled, he added.

So at the end of May, seven years and three schools after he started, Maj. Keith Casserly earned his master's degree. His very supportive wife Sylvie, he said, is very happy.

Casserly used Army and New York state education benefits to help finance his degree.
The New York State Veteran Tuition Aid program provides per-credit aid money veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan. He also accessed the Go Army Ed program which provides money to serving members of the Army Guard, Casserly said.

More Soldiers considering advanced degrees should use these benefits, Casserly said.

"The money is out there. I don't think enough Soldiers take advantage of it," he said.

https://www.army.mil/article/222880/national_guard_officer_honored_for_academic_excellence

New York Soldier is honored for his academic work

National Guard.mil, June 7, 2019:

ALBANY, N.Y. - For the past couple of years, when Maj. Keith Casserly wasn't on the job as unit commander of the New York Army National Guard's Medical Command, he's been in class, the library, or testing air quality in Albany.

The work paid off in May, when Casserly earned a Masters of Public Health from the State University of New York School of Public Health.

Casserly was also recognized for unique research on air quality on bus routes he conducted to obtain his degree. He received the award for Excellence in Scholarship in the field of Environmental Health Science along with the degree.

He appreciated the recognition, Casserly said, because in masters programs you don't get recognized for just having a high grade point. It's the ability to conduct and present research that matters, especially in the field of Public Health, he said.

"This is one of the awards that show you stand out from your peers and gets your work recognized," Casserly said.

Casserly stated working on his environmental science master's degree in 2012.

This was two years after he became a Medical Service Corps officer and joined the 24th Civil Support Team as the team nuclear science officer.
As an Allied Science Medical Service Corps officer, promotion is based on education and credentials. Earning the masters set him up for success in his military career and when he retires, Casserly explained.

As the nuclear medicine science officer for a civil support team, which specializes in identifying chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear hazards and weapons, Casserly was responsible for overseeing the high-tech mobile lab used to test the environment and samples.

Before that job shift, Casserly was an infantryman.

He joined the 1st Battalion, 105th Infantry Regiment in 2002 and was commissioned through National Guard Officer Candidate School. He served in the 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment and the 153rd Troop Command and earned the Air Assault Badge, the Ranger tab, and the Pathfinder Badge. He added the Combat Infantryman's Badge during a deployment to Afghanistan in 2007-2008.

But when the chance came to join the 24th Civil Support Team in Brooklyn, he took it.

"You can only pound ground for so long," he said. "It's fun to be an infantry officer, it's great. But as you get up in echelons you need something else."

Casserly served with the 24th CST at Fort Hamilton in Brooklyn for four years and then moved into the same position with the 2nd CST at Stratton Air National Guard Base in Scotia.

In 2017 he took over as the Medical Command Unit Commander and reenergized his quest for a masters of public health in environmental science. He was able to use his CST-related military experience and training to check the block on some of the 61 credits he needed for the degree, Casserly explained.

That included checking the block on one of two internships required for the degree, he added. For his other internship, Casserly decided to conduct the air quality study he was honored for.

Worldwide air pollution—especially in China and other places where coal is still a major power source—contributes to 4.7 million deaths annually, Casserly said. That is seven percent of all annual deaths.

He studied air quality along the two major bus routes that run through Albany.

His study looked at air quality for somebody driving in a car, somebody walking along the bus route, somebody riding a bike along bus routes, and somebody riding in the bus.

He spent nights and weekends this past winter and spring following buses or riding in buses with air monitoring equipment. Sometimes he'd bring his son and daughter—Ethan and Emma—along with him, Casserly added.
He was surprised to find that a bus passenger is exposed to more fine particulate matter—the kind that can cause cancer—than a driver, bike rider, or pedestrian. He and his advisor expected the greatest risk would be to the bike rider.

The culprit, Casserly explained, is what he called the "swoosh" when the bus door opens and closes.

In the winter the change in temperature causes the air to rush in and out when the doors open and then close.

That action draws the diesel exhaust and its particulate into the bus, he said. It also kicks up any particulate matter that was on the floors, or on the passengers themselves and allows it to be inhaled, he added.

So at the end of May, seven years and three schools after he started, Maj. Keith Casserly earned his master's degree. His very supportive wife Sylvie, he said, is very happy.

Casserly used Army and New York state education benefits to help finance his degree.

The New York State Veteran Tuition Aid program provides per-credit aid money to veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan. He also accessed the Go Army Ed program which provides money to serving members of the Army Guard, Casserly said.

More Soldiers considering advanced degrees should use these benefits, Casserly said.

"The money is out there. I don't think enough Soldiers take advantage of it," he said.

https://www.nationalguard.mil/News/Article/1869968/new-york-soldier-is-honored-for-his-academic-work/

Return to top

---

NY Army National Guard Sgt. Timothy Fay, A Carmel resident, headed to regional shooting match

Carmel's Hamlet Hub, June 11, 2019:

New York Army National Guard Sgt. Timothy Fay, a Carmel resident, was one of four members of a team from the 107th Military Police Company who took first place in the pistol shooting competition at the New York National Guard's annual shooting competition.
Held May 30 to June 2, the annual Adjutant General's Marksmanship Competition encourages shooting excellence among New York Guardsmen on rifle and pistol skills and winners move on to national-level marksmanship competitions.

Fay and three other members of his pistol team will now compete against teams from across New England and New Jersey at Camp Ethan Allen Vermont, June 21-23.

The New York National Guard competition is held at the Camp Smith Training Site near Peekskill.

This year's event featured 89 competitors: 69 from New York Army National Guard, 4 from the New York Air National Guard and 16 New York Guard members.

The New York Guard is the state's volunteer self-defense force.

There are individual competitions in rifle and pistol marksmanship, along with the team competitions in rifle and pistol shooting.

Participants in the Lt. Col. William Donovan Combat Team Pistol Match use the military's NATO-standard nine millimeter M-9 pistol which is issued to all Soldiers authorized to carry the weapon.

The competition is named after Lt. Col. William "Wild Bill" Donovan, a commander of one of the 69th Infantry Regiment's battalions during World War I who earned the Medal of Honor for heroism and went on to found the Office of Strategic Services, the predecessor of the CIA, during World War II.

The 107th Military Police Company is headquartered in Brooklyn.

Other members of the team are: PFC Michael Abrahamsen from Bohemia; Sgt. Robert Marino from Franklin Square; and Corporal Alberto Suarez from Briarwood.


Armories

Returning armory to village awaits governor's approval

Newsday, June 13, 2019:
State legislation that would return the Freeport Armory back to village control now awaits the governor's signature after nearly a decade of struggling for control.

The New York State Assembly voted unanimously Tuesday on a bill sponsored by Rep. Taylor Raynor (D-Hempstead) to transfer the armory on state land back to the village of Freeport.

The vote follows a unanimous Senate vote last month on a companion bill by Sen. John Brooks (D-Seaford).

The armory property was decommissioned and vacated by the National Guard's Division of Military and Naval Affairs in 2011.

Freeport Mayor Robert Kennedy said, pending the governor's signature, the village will conduct an environmental review of the property that sits on Babylon Turnpike and review architectural plans to consider what can be done with the building or the property.

"After sitting vacant all these years, it belonged to Freeport at one time and the village was glad to surrender to the federal government," Kennedy said. "It should have been returned a long time ago. It needs to be maintained for the aesthetics of the community and think of the best options."

Former Assembly Deputy Speaker Earlene Hooper had repeatedly attempted to transfer control of the armory to Cedarmore Corp., a nonprofit that shares space with Zion Cathedral Church of God in Christ, across the street from the former armory, for $1. Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo vetoed the bill in 2013 and 2014, citing strong opposition in the community. The bill was pulled from an Assembly vote in 2015 and 2017.

Raynor (D-Hempstead) said settling the status of the armory issue was one of her top two priorities along with helping Hempstead schools when she arrived in Albany in January as a newly elected legislator.

She said the three-acre parcel "was not being utilized" for years, a situation she called "just wasteful."

"The property really wasn't being maintained and for the most part was abandoned," she said.

The property transfer, if approved by Cuomo, will "give the village an opportunity to work with the whole community" to determine how best to use it, Raynor said.

Cuomo's office did not respond to comment Wednesday on whether he planned to sign the bill.

https://www.newsday.com/long-island/nassau/freeport-armory-1.32331498
Eastern Air Defense Sector

Air National Guard announces promotions of five airmen

Rome Sentinel, June 10, 2019:

Five members of the New York Air National Guard’s 224th Air Defense Group (ADG) have been promoted, according to an announcement by ADG officials.

The 224th ADG includes the 224th Air Defense Squadron (ADS) and 224th Support Squadron, located in Rome, plus Detachment 1 and Detachment 2 that serve in the Washington, D.C. area.

The 224th ADG provides the forces to conduct the mission of the Eastern Air Defense Sector (EADS).

Among those receiving promotions are:

- Rachael Alcorta of Remsen, to Master Sergeant. Alcorta is a Mission Crew Commander Technician at the 224th ADS.

- Alicia Stuckey of Rome, to Technical Sergeant. Stuckey is a Tracking Technician at the 224th Air Defense Squadron.

- Amberly Sherman of Rome, to Staff Sergeant. Sherman is a Tracking Technician at the 224th ADS.

- Daniel Chesebro of Rome, to Senior Airman. Chesebro is a Cyber Transport Systems journeyman at the 224th Support Squadron.

- Logan Storms of Rome, to Senior Airman. Storms is a Security Forces apprentice at the 224th Support Squadron.


Return to top

Emergency Response

Cuomo announces $300M for communities hit by Lake Ontario's high waters
Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo says $300 million in funding will be available for communities impacted by Lake Ontario flooding.

Cuomo made the announcement after meeting with the newly created Lake Ontario Resiliency and Economic Development Initiative (REDI) and more than 250 state and local officials from communities along the Lake Ontario and St. Lawrence River shorelines in Rochester on Monday morning.

Local governments will match 15 percent for every dollar the state spends.

Cuomo has set up a website for those impacted to seek immediate help at ny.gov/programs/lake-ontario-flooding. Local government have a deadline of Labor Day to submit any projects to the REDI Commission for funding consideration.

Cuomo also deployed an additional 100 National Guard personnel for sandbagging missions in Lake Ontario communities.

At the Rochester meeting, Cuomo said the federal government needs to "pay attention and be responsive."

"The IJC is a fundamental federal creature. It is not a state creature. And this is a massive undertaking that we are about to embark on. And we need federal funding," Cuomo said. "They've been talking about an infrastructure plan in Washington since I was 17. There's been a number of infrastructure plans that have been floating around now, but we need—this is a critical infrastructure need. And we need federal funds. We're not going to wait for them because waiting for the federal government is not what New York State does."

Cuomo criticized the IJC for Plan 2014 and said their plan in 1958 was better.

"This did not happen before. And when you read the history of the IJC that goes back to the 1900s, not only were they supposed to balance, they were responsible for the mitigation of the water and potential damage," Cuomo said.

He mentioned a conversation he had with State Sen. Rob Ortt, R—North Tonawanda, about how they both believe the IJC has legal liability for the flooding damage.

Two weeks ago, Lake Ontario broke the 2017 record for the highest recorded lake levels, which used to be 248.95 feet.

The National Weather Service has also issued a flood watch from Monday night through Tuesday afternoon along the Lake Ontario shoreline in Niagara and Orleans counties.

Officials say the combination of record-high lake levels and moderately strong west to northwest winds will result in greater wave action and an increase in lakeshore flooding along
the shoreline. The threat is especially elevated in bays, inlets and other low lying areas along the shoreline.

The International Lake Ontario – St. Lawrence River Board announced this past weekend that it will continue to increase outflows to provide relief to shoreline interests on Lake Ontario.

The board has agreed to raise flows above the regulation plan’s maximum L-Limit, considered to be the safe threshold for commercial navigation.

Outflows will be increased in increments through Thursday until it reaches the maximum flow that was attained in 2017 and the maximum sustained flow on record.


Return to top

Lakeshore Flood Warning in Effect Tuesday

Spectrum, Jun. 10, 2019:

Lakeshore flooding and high lake levels are stirring along Manitou Road in Hilton in light of a Lakeshore Flood Warning for Western New York.

Some Braddock Bay's water is coming in the area from flooding of Lake Ontario's shoreline.

While pumping water from his flooded basement, 71-year-old Antonio Ieracitano says his property of almost two decades has seen a whole lot worse.

“2017 was very bad, worse than this year,” says Ieracitano. He also mentions issues with flooding in his basement saying, “I had to pump the water out every two hours; 24/7.”

He says he’s thankful for members of the National Guard for stacking the sandbags along his property, but wants state leaders to come up with a more concrete solution.

“Every year, every two years, we have to go through this, I’m like everybody else: I don’t want to spend my summertime pumping water from my basement,” said Ieracitano.

“It wasn’t my goal this summer.”

Free emergency preparedness training program to be offered in Livingston County

Livingston County News, June 11, 2019:

MOUNT MORRIS - New York National Guard troops, in cooperation with the New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services, will present a free disaster preparedness class at the Livingston County Conference Center in Mount Morris on June 17.

The two-hour program begins at 6:30 p.m. The conference center is at 1 Murray Hill Drive on the Livingston County Government Campus.

The event is part of Gov. Andrew Cuomo's continuing Citizen Preparedness Corps Training Program, which provides citizens with the knowledge and tools to prepare for emergencies and disasters, respond accordingly, and recover as quickly as possible to pre-disaster conditions.

Working with the New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services and local emergency management personnel, troops are conducting these training events across the state.

Citizens should register for the event at http://www.nyprepare.gov/aware-prepare/nysprepare/

Since the program's launch in early February 2014, troops have held more than 3,196 events statewide, and taught over 175,000 citizens how to be better prepared for emergencies and disasters.

The program, designed by DHSES, covers a broad range of emergency-preparedness topics, like developing a family emergency plan, stocking up on emergency supplies, man-made emergencies such as active shooter and active violence, and registering for NY-Alert, the free statewide emergency alert system.

The Citizen Preparedness Corps has equipped tens of thousands of New Yorkers to respond better to emergencies and disasters, he stressed.

Emergency preparedness is part and parcel of the New York National Guard's mission and experience, according to New York State Adjutant General, Maj. Gen. Ray Shields.
"The men and women of the New York Army and Air National Guard, who have responded to help their fellow New Yorkers during floods, hurricanes, and snow storms, know first-hand the value of being prepared for emergencies," Shields said.

Participants will receive a training certificate, a wallet-sized "Z-Card" with emergency preparedness information, and a free Citizen Preparedness Starter Kit (one per family).

The kit includes a first-aid kit, face mask, pocket radio with batteries, food bars, emergency blanket and other key items to help citizens in the immediate aftermath of a disaster. The classes include information about what other supplies and items citizens should add to their kits.

For more information on the program and emergency preparedness, visit: www.nyprepare.gov.

https://thelcn.com/lcn01/free-emergency-preparedness-training-program-to-be-offered-in-livingston-county-20190611

New York Air National Guard

Tupper Lake man named general: PROMOTION: Timothy LaBarge becomes major general in New York Air National Guard

Press - Republican, June 9, 2019 :

TUPPER LAKE - Tupper Lake resident Timothy LaBarge, a member of the Air Force and the New York Air National Guard since 1983, was promoted to Major General (two-star) during a June 1 ceremony at New York National Guard headquarters in Latham.

LaBarge, who has served as the commander of the 5,800-member New York Air National Guard since 2018, was promoted by Major General Ray Shields, the Adjutant General of New York.

The New York Air National Guard is the largest Air National Guard in the country with five flying wings operating 42 aircraft and the Eastern Air Defense Sector which is responsible for the air defense of the United States east of the Mississippi.

The ceremony included the promotion of both LaBarge and Tom Owens, currently serving as the Air National Guard assistant to the commander of the U.S. Air Force Global Strike Command.
"I can't say enough about working with both Tom and Tim," Shields said before inviting the families of both general officers to present the new stars.

"With the number of two-star general officers with ties to New York, we now have a small fire team of senior leaders if we need them," Shields joked.

LaBarge also serves as the assistant adjutant general for air for the New York National Guard. He is the primary advisor to Maj. Gen. Shields on all Air National Guard matters.

"I get to work with Tim every day," Shields said.

"It's been a great relationship. I rely on him a lot and I couldn't ask for a better partner in leading our New York National Guard."

LaBarge was humbled.

"Sir, thank you, and while I work for you, I know that I work directly for the men and women who serve in our New York Army National Guard, Air National Guard, New York Guard and New York Naval Militia," he said.

"My career, and this promotion, is the end result of the foresight of key Air Guard leaders back in 2002, selecting key officers from across the state for command positions. It was the source code for generating today's wing commanders and senior leaders across the New York Air National Guard, and it has done a terrific job of it."

LaBarge said his goal now is to inspire and groom the next set of leaders, and the next set after that.

"Our job now is to man, train and equip this New York National Guard for whatever comes next."

LaBarge graduated from St. Lawrence University in Canton, N.Y. in 1983 and received his Air Force Commission from the Officer Training School in 1984. He served eight years in the active Air Force and joined the New York Air National Guard in 1991.

He has served in a number of leadership positions, to include command of the 109th Airlift Wing at Stratton Air National Guard Base in Scotia from 2010 to 2012 and command of the 105th Airlift Wing at Stewart Air National Guard Base in Newburgh from 2012 to 2016.

LaBarge was promoted to Brigadier General in 2016.

He served as chief of staff of the New York Air National Guard from 2016 to 2018 and as director of joint staff for the New York National Guard in 2018 before assuming his current role.
He served at United States Air Force Headquarters from 2006 to 2007 as a staff officer in the Air Force Directorate of Total Force Integration. LaBarge is a command pilot with over 5,800 hours in the T-37, T-38, C-5, C-130, and LC-130 and C-17 aircraft.

He has flown combat missions and combat support missions in support of Operations Desert Shield, Desert Storm, Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom. He has also flown missions in Antarctic in support of the National Science Foundation.

LaBarge is a graduate of the Air Force Squadron Officers School, Air Force Command and General Staff School, the Air War College, the Joint Forces Staff College and received a Master of Arts in Military Studies/Strategic Leadership from the American Military University.

LaBarge’s awards include the Legion of Merit, Meritorious Service Medal, the Air Medal, Aerial Achievement Medal the Air Force Commendation Medal, the Combat Readiness Medal the National Defense Service Medal, the Southwest Asia Service Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Air Force Expeditionary Service Ribbon, the Antarctic Service Medal, the Humanitarian Service Medal, the Kuwait Liberation Medal Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Kuwait Liberation Medal Government of Kuwait.

LaBarge and his wife Petra, live in Tupper Lake, and have two daughters Lyndsay and Emily, a grand-daughter Tayler and a grandson TJ.


Return to top

New York Army National Guard

New York Army National Guard celebrates Army's 244th birthday (Video)

WNYT, June 14 2019

LATHAM- Friday is the 244th birthday of the United States Army. The New York Army National Guard will celebrate with a cake, in Latham. 59-year-old Sergeant First Class Frank Dethomas of Rensselaer will join 19-year-old Private 1st Class Amanda Coleman of Stillwater, in the cutting of the cake.

Soldiers Hone Combat Marksmanship Skills in Puerto Rico

Citizen Soldier, June 10, 2019:

More than 80 New York Army National Guard Soldiers from Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment, traveled to the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico to conduct marksmanship training this past April.

The Soldiers, who stayed in Puerto Rico for four days, were flown to the island by a pair of C-130 Hercules military transport aircraft operated by the New York Air National Guard’s 109th Airlift Wing from Stratton Air National Guard Base in Schenectady, New York.

Upon arriving in Puerto Rico, the Soldiers, who are based at the Lexington Avenue Armory in New York City, traveled to Camp Santiago and set to work honing their warfighting skills.

Camp Santiago, known as Campamento Santiago in Spanish, is the primary training site for the Puerto Rico National Guard. The camp has state-of-the-art ranges and other training areas. The camp is named after SPC Héctor Santiago Colón from Salinas, Puerto Rico, who received the Medal of Honor posthumously during the Vietnam War after shielding other Soldiers from a grenade explosion with his body.

“We started at first light and confirmed that the whole company’s rifles were zeroed,” said 1LT Matthew Canavan, one of the company’s platoon leaders. After the zeros were confirmed, the real training began, consisting of a reflexive fire shoot and a stress shoot.

For the reflexive fire, the Soldiers were tasked with identifying and engaging targets at ranges from 5 to 25 meters while stationary and then while turning and walking.

“For the reflexive fire, the Soldiers use facing movements and controlled shots. Instead of taking single shots, they are shooting, moving and communicating,” 1LT Canavan explained. “We kept the squads and the fire teams organic with everyone who will be present at annual training, and we had them moving as a team.”

The reflexive fire exercise, which reinforces the fundamentals of short-range marksmanship, was followed by the stress shoot, which is demanding both mentally and physically, 1LT Canavan said.

“The stress shoot involves getting a Soldier’s heart rate up as it would be in combat,” 1LT Canavan continued. “We took each squad and had them run a quarter mile and then had them conduct push-ups, flutter kicks and burpees so we could tire out their muscles.”
Once the Soldiers were tired and fatigued, the shooting began. “We took them onto the range and started giving them commands from the tower,” 1LT Canavan said. “So not only are they fatigued, now they need to pay attention to commands.”

During the stress shoot, the Soldiers engaged a variety of targets in quick succession from the standing, kneeling and prone positions.

“It’s designed to mimic the stress of combat,” 1LT Canavan explained. “It boils down to what will happen in a fight. They need to listen to the team leader.”

Traveling over 1,600 miles to a different climate and working in an unfamiliar training environment wasn’t without its challenges, and Alpha Company worked tirelessly to make sure all the moving pieces fit together.

Even though the training conducted could have been accomplished closer to home, there were many benefits for both the unit and the Soldiers to training at Camp Santiago.

“Soldiers going to Fort Drum day in and day out doing the same exercises – it kills retention,” 1LT Canavan said. “A second benefit is getting Soldiers used to a different type of climate.”

Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry, have deployed to both Iraq and Afghanistan since Sept. 11, 2001.

By SGT Alexander Rector, New York Army National Guard


A New App's on the Map

Citizen Soldier, June 7, 2019:

When 1LT James Pistell was unsatisfied with the mapping app available to Soldiers during his last deployment, he sought to create a solution.

A Soldier with New York Army National Guard's Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 2nd Squadron, 101st Cavalry Regiment, 1LT Pistell created the Military Grid Reference System (MGRS)-Mapper App-a free computer program that allows Soldiers to more efficiently create Concepts of Operations (CONOPS).
"It's a tool developed for junior leaders to rapidly create what we call CONOPS," 1LT Pistell explained. "It's a simple tool that interfaces with Google Maps and a program that allows you to search and select for U.S military map symbols."

1LT Pistell was inspired to independently create the application after a deployment to the Ukraine in 2018. After using a similar, yet out-of-date, application, 1LT Pistell believed he could improve the app's functionality to make a better version.

"I got the idea in my head that when I got back home from Ukraine, I was going to [create an app]," 1LT Pistell said. "After my deployment, I had a couple of weeks to myself. I locked myself in my apartment and worked on [the app] for about a month."

With MGRS-Mapper, users can select their operations area on Google Maps and overlie the region with a standard MGRS overlay. MGRS is the geocoordinate standard used by NATO militaries for locating points on earth. The app allows users to select the proper NATO standard graphic symbol, label it and then place it on the map. Users can place command and control, fire support, maneuver and other graphics on the overlay. The overlay can then be downloaded and emailed to another user, printed out as a handout or embedded in a slideshow.

1LT Pistell designed the application to be as user-friendly as possible.

"If you're looking for infantry you can choose an infantry symbol, then choose the size and click and drag it on the map," explained 1LT Pistell. "You can update the map, you can put the overlay on, you can take it off and you can have terrain view or satellite. I've made the application as intuitive as possible."

While 1LT Pistell is pleased with his work, he said it did not come without challenges.

"I'm pretty sure I went bald just from the stress," 1LT Pistell said jokingly. "It was very challenging. I would solve one problem, then come up against three or four other [problems] that I didn't even know existed. I thought about giving up many times."

Thankfully, 1LT Pistell did not give up, but instead stuck to his guns and put out a successful application. MGRS-Mapper is now available to assist Soldiers with improved CONOPS.

"It has made the development of CONOPS a lot quicker," 1LT Pistell said.

"And if you need to learn what a military map symbol looks like, you can use [MGRS-Mapper] to pull up a symbol and research how it looks."

While 1LT Pistell is a cavalry scout in the Guard, it was his civilian background as a technical marketing manager that gave him the know-how to build the MGRS-Mapper. In the four years he's been building and programming websites, 1LT Pistell has created several web applications. None, however, have garnered the attention and praise of MGRS-Mapper. After sharing the application online, 1LT Pistell gained exposure from some unexpected sources.
"I shared it [with the Army group] on Reddit and it got a couple hundred upvotes there," he said. "It didn't get too much traffic at first, but then I started getting emails from people saying 'Hey, I saw this on Facebook,' and I don't recall ever posting it on Facebook. So, it was Reddit that got the ball rolling and then it all kind of snowballed. I've been getting emails from a bunch of people, which is really nice."

1LT Pistell reports having received positive reviews of the app from fellow Soldiers and some have even offered suggestions on how to improve it. "I've received emails from Soldiers saying they use the app and they gave me tips or asked questions about the app and new features I could implement," said 1LT Pistell. "A lot of people are actually using it, even people I never thought would use it. A search and rescue team in California is using the app. That's pretty cool. I had no idea they would find any utility in it at all. There's an entire [Basic Officer Leader Course] class using it and that's like 80 people that are using it every day. It's so awesome."

MGRS-Mapper can be accessed for free at MGRS-Mapper.com. 1LT Pistell said he looks forward to implementing improvements to the app soon, including better functionality for mobile devices and various browsers.

"It's pretty fulfilling," 1LT Pistell said. "After all those weeks I spent pulling my hair out, it feels really good to create something that people actually use. It feels good to help people."

https://citizen-soldiermagazine.com/a-new-apps-on-the-map/

Return to top

PFOA Issue

Local lawmakers call on EPA to set maximum contaminant levels for drinking water

Newsday, June 7, 2019 :

Members of Long Island's congressional delegation are urging the Environmental Protection Agency to immediately set maximum contaminant levels for Nassau and Suffolk counties' drinking water, which a watchdog group found to be the most contaminated in the state.

"The quality of water being supplied to Long Island homes has been seriously compromised by a unique combination of contaminants and pollutants, necessitating immediate intervention from the Environmental Protection Agency," wrote Reps. Lee Zeldin (R-Shirley), Peter King (R-Seaford), Tom Suozzi (D-Glen Cove) and Kathleen Rice (D-Garden City), in a letter Friday to EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler.
The move comes on the heels of a study issued last week by the Albany-based New York Public Interest Research Group, which found that 19 "distinct emerging contaminants" were detected in Long Island's drinking water between 2013 and 2016. According to the group's study, Long Island has the most contaminated drinking water in New York State.

Nassau has the highest number of water systems in the state with detected emerging contaminants, the report found. They include 1,4 dioxane, a solvent used to keep machinery greased that is also a byproduct of certain personal-care products. The EPA has said 1,4 dioxane probably is a carcinogen.

The report also found high levels of perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) and perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) in Long Island's water supplies. The chemicals, used for decades to manufacture cleaning products, carpeting, Teflon cookware and industrial-strength firefighting foam, have been linked to testicular and kidney cancers, liver damage, and developmental effects in fetuses and breast-fed infants.

The group's study noted the use of the firefighting foam during training exercises, "such as those undertaken at the Naval Weapons Industrial Reserve Plant in Calverton and Gabreski Air National Guard Base, have been known to introduce chemicals, such as PFAS, into the surrounding ground water potentially contaminating drinking supplies."

At the standard recommended by the state, an estimated 23 percent of public water wells in New York would need treatment - at a cost of $855 million in capital costs and $45 million a year for annual maintenance and operations, according to state officials, who also noted that a carbon filtration treatment system, alone, costs approximately $1 million per impacted well.

"The combination of all these challenges presents a serious threat to drinking water and public health for all Long Islanders, and I therefore urge you to develop a maximum contaminant level for PFOA, PFOS, and 1,4 dioxane as soon as possible," the lawmakers wrote in the letter, which also seeks federal funding and technical support for Long Island water providers and regulators.

The EPA did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Upon release of the study, the NYPIRG, included a few recommendations, which are in line with the lawmakers' request. They were: implement testing of the emerging contaminants for every water system maintained by the public, strengthen standards for potentially unsafe chemicals, mandate testing of private household wells and bar the use of certain chemicals until proved safe.

Emerging contaminants are those that previously were not known, were not detectable with available science or were not present in the supply, according to Christopher Gobler, marine sciences professor at Stony Brook University.

https://www.newsday.com/long-island/politics/epa-water-long-island-1.32103602
New York National Guard leaders honor World War II veterans on D-Day

Army.mil, June 7, 2019:

ALBANY, N.Y. - New York National Guard leaders honored World War II veterans of the allied landings of Normandy on the 75th anniversary of the D-Day invasion with presentations of state medals at five veterans homes across New York State on June 6.

The visits to New York State Veteran Homes marked Governor Andrew M. Cuomo's statewide "Salute to World War II Military Service Day."

"On the 75th Anniversary of D-Day I want to offer a sincere thank you to all our veterans and their families for their sacrifice and service to protect our freedoms," Governor Cuomo said.

"For those we lost and the veterans who made it home, thank you. We owe you a debt of gratitude that can never be repaid,' the governor added.

The National Guard leaders were present at five locations, partnering with the New York State Division of Veterans’ Services, New York State Department of Health, and the State University of New York.

The New York State Veterans Homes are located in Oxford, St. Albans, Batavia, Montrose, and the State University of New York, Stony Brook. The Long Island State Veterans Home at Stony Brook is run by the State University of New York, while the other four are the responsibility of the New York State Department of Health.

Key veterans who were present at the Normandy landings or went on to participate in the Battle of the Bulge later in 1944 received the New York State Medal for Merit.

Presenting the state medals were:

. New York Air National Guard Col. Michael Bank of the 106th Rescue Wing at the Long Island State Veterans Home at Stony Brook.

Army National Guard Col. Isabel Smith of the 53rd Troop Command at the Montrose State Veterans Home in the Hudson Valley.


Lt. Col. Ernest Minichello assigned to the 153rd Troop Command at the Batavia State Veterans Home.

"This Medal for Merit recognizes your honorable service as part of America's greatest generation in direct support of combat operations while serving in the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Army Air Forces and Coast Guard of the United States during the Second World War," said Noah Davis, the Administrator for the New York State Veterans Home in Oxford.

"Today is about the Soldiers on the ground, the ones on the beaches or in the skies over Normandy," said Benjamin Pomerance, the Deputy Director of the New York State Division of Veterans Services.

The ceremonies included the presentation of 28 state medals for those veterans of D-Day.

"The ceremony was very nice, very impressive," said Louis Pompeii, an Army veteran of D-Day and former prisoner of war at the Oxford ceremony. "I'm was just glad [D-Day] is over."

It is important to recognize these WWII veterans and their families while we still can, Davis said.

"It was a beautiful ceremony, a really great tribute to these heroes," said Pompeii's niece, Judi Dean.

"The men and women of the New York National Guard who serve our state and nation are always inspired by the memory of the Soldiers who stormed ashore on Omaha and Utah beaches 75 years ago," said New York Adjutant General, Major General Ray Shields. "Those of us who serve today are proud to follow in their footsteps."

The ceremonies also honored the service of all World War II veterans and their families in attendance.

More than 900,000 New Yorkers served during World War II. Over 43,000 New Yorkers made the ultimate sacrifice in service over the course of the war.

Every World War II Veteran at each of the State Veterans' Homes received a Governor's Proclamation commemorating D-Day and thanking them for their wartime service.

"We honor a day that changed the course of civilization and salute our World War II veterans across the state," said Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul, who spoke today at the New York State Veterans Home at Montrose.
Hochul also honored World War II veterans in a similar commemoration at the Purple Heart Museum in New Windsor later in the day.

"I'm privileged to be a part of this day," said Thornton Young, a veteran of the WWII Pacific Theater after receiving his proclamation in Oxford. "There were a lot of people that were there (in Normandy) that day, but I wasn't able to be there. But my brother was with me the whole time in World War II.

We were together all the way through the South Pacific."

New York State Veterans Homes provide skilled nursing care and short-term rehabilitation to eligible veterans and their dependents.

The care is resident-centered and individualized, with a full spectrum of support programs including memory care, social services, recreational activities, physical and occupational therapy and other rehabilitative services. The State Veterans Homes are in Stony Brook, Batavia, Oxford, Montrose, and St. Albans.

"Today's 75th anniversary of D-Day commemorative events are extremely important to our surviving World War II veterans and their families," said New York State Division of Veterans' Services Director Jim McDonough. "I'm glad New York continues to recognize and honor our greatest generation as we are today."

https://www.army.mil/article/222878/new_york_national_guard_leaders_honor_world_war_ii_veterans_on_d_day

Return to top

N.Y. National Guard leaders honor World War II vets on D-Day

National Guard.mil, By Col. Richard Goldenberg | New York National Guard | June 7, 2019:

ALBANY, N.Y. - New York National Guard leaders honored World War II veterans of the allied landings of Normandy on the 75th anniversary of the D-Day invasion with presentations of state medals at five veterans homes across New York State on June 6.

The visits to New York State Veteran Homes marked Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo's statewide "Salute to World War II Military Service Day."

"On the 75th Anniversary of D-Day I want to offer a sincere thank you to all our veterans and their families for their sacrifice and service to protect our freedoms," Cuomo said.
"For those we lost and the veterans who made it home, thank you. We owe you a debt of gratitude that can never be repaid,' the governor added.

The National Guard leaders were present at five locations, partnering with the New York State Division of Veterans' Services, New York State Department of Health, and the State University of New York.

The New York State Veterans Homes are located in Oxford, St. Albans, Batavia, Montrose, and the State University of New York, Stony Brook. The Long Island State Veterans Home at Stony Brook is run by the State University of New York, while the other four are the responsibility of the

New York State Department of Health.

Key veterans who were present at the Normandy landings or went on to participate in the Battle of the Bulge later in 1944 received the New York State Medal for Merit.

Presenting the state medals were:

. New York Air National Guard Col. Michael Bank of the 106th Rescue Wing at the Long Island State Veterans Home at Stony Brook.


. Army National Guard Col. Isabel Smith of the 53rd Troop Command at the Montrose State Veterans Home in the Hudson Valley.


"This Medal for Merit recognizes your honorable service as part of America's greatest generation in direct support of combat operations while serving in the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Army Air Forces and Coast Guard of the United States during the Second World War," said Noah Davis, the administrator for

the New York State Veterans Home in Oxford.

"Today is about the Soldiers on the ground, the ones on the beaches or in the skies over Normandy," said Benjamin Pomerance, the deputy director of the New York State Division of Veterans Services.

The ceremonies included the presentation of 28 state medals for those veterans of D-Day.
"The ceremony was very nice, very impressive," said Louis Pompeii, an Army veteran of D-Day and former prisoner of war. "I'm just glad [D-Day] is over." He was at the Oxford ceremony.

It is important to recognize these WWII veterans and their families while we still can, Davis said.

"It was a beautiful ceremony, a really great tribute to these heroes," said Pompeii's niece, Judi Dean.

"The men and women of the New York National Guard who serve our state and nation are always inspired by the memory of the Soldiers who stormed ashore on Omaha and Utah beaches 75 years ago," said Maj. Gen. Ray Shields, New York's adjutant general. "Those of us who serve today are proud to follow in their footsteps."

The ceremonies also honored the service of all the World War II veterans and their families in attendance.

More than 900,000 New Yorkers served during World War II. Over 43,000 New Yorkers made the ultimate sacrifice in service over the course of the war.

Every World War II veteran at each of the State Veterans' Homes received a Governor's Proclamation commemorating D-Day and thanking them for their wartime service.

"We honor a day that changed the course of civilization and salute our World War II veterans across the state," said Lt. Gov. Kathy Hochul, who spoke at the New York State Veterans Home at Montrose.

Hochul also honored World War II veterans in a similar commemoration at the Purple Heart Museum in New Windsor later in the day.

"I'm real privileged to be a part of this day," said Thornton Young, a veteran of the WWII Pacific Theater after receiving his proclamation in Oxford. "There were a lot of people that were there (in Normandy) that day, but I wasn't able to be there. But my brother was with me the whole time in World War II. We were together all the way through the South Pacific."

New York State Veterans Homes provide skilled nursing care and short-term rehabilitation to eligible veterans and their dependents.

The care is resident-centered and individualized, with a spectrum of support programs including memory care, social services, recreational activities, physical and occupational therapy and other rehabilitative services.

"Today's 75th anniversary of D-Day commemorative events are extremely important to our surviving World War II veterans and their families," said New York State Division of
Veterans’ Services Director Jim McDonough. "I'm glad New York continues to recognize and honor our greatest generation as we are today."

https://www.nationalguard.mil/News/Article/1869165/ny-national-guard-leaders-honor-world-war-ii-vets-on-d-day/

Max Rose versus the world: With Donald Trump back on the ballot, the Staten Island Democrat will have to win over conservatives to keep his House seat.

City & State, June 10, 2019:

In a sweat-soaked gym on Staten Island, Max Rose squatted on a wrestling mat, speaking to a crowd of fellow little guys. Staten Island’s first-term congressman was giving a 90-second motivational speech to a group of young grapplers in the Beat the Streets wrestling program, contrasting his own time as a high school wrestler to his current position.

“When you’re out there on the mat, you can’t blame anyone else. … I exist in a world, professionally speaking, right now, where it’s the exact opposite,” he said. “There’s no integrity.”

Then, it was time for the congressman to pick on somebody his own size. Who weighs 125 pounds, Rose asked, searching for a volunteer. 133? 145? Finally one of the kids raised his hand. Rose, wearing athletic shorts, a T-shirt and borrowed wrestling shoes, waved him up. Rose bent his 32-year-old knees into attack position, then grasped the kid’s shoulders. “The duck under was my go-to,” Rose said. “Push the guy, push him.” In a matter of seconds, Rose dropped into a deep squat, lifted the kid up on his shoulder, then slammed him to the floor on his back, pinning him down.

Rose jumped up immediately, not waiting for any two count. “That's it, I'm done!” he said with a huge smile on his face. The kids laughed with approval. The congressman had earned their respect. And if only they were 18, probably their votes.

The wrestling match was over in the blink of an eye, but Rose is in the middle of a much longer match: running for reelection. He represents a district that President Donald Trump won by 10 percentage points in 2016, and may be the most vulnerable House Democrat in the state of New York. He’s just the second Democrat since 1981 to represent the congressional district, which covers Staten Island and a swath of southern Brooklyn. The previous one, current Richmond County District Attorney Michael McMahon, lasted just a single term. Like Rose, McMahon was elected during a “blue wave” year. He took office in 2009, and by 2011, he was gone.
Yet Rose is guaranteeing a double-digit victory in 2020, which would exceed his 53%-47% win over then-Rep. Dan Donovan last fall. In that race, Rose appealed to Staten Islanders’ “forgotten borough” frame of mind, railing against the do-nothing elites in Congress and at home. A compact 5’6”, Rose contrasted with the tall Donovan in more than just height. He was the metaphorical little guy, vowing to fight for other little guys. Now, in New York City’s lone district that voted for Trump, Rose is doing all he can to win over even more voters.

While Trump won the district, it’s not deep red. Registered Democrats outnumber Republicans in the district 206,617 to 121,810, and according to political consultant Jerry Skurnik of Prime New York, past results show that many of the independents in the district lean Democratic.

In the 2014 midterm election, then-Rep. Michael Grimm, a Republican, ran away with the race despite being under indictment for tax fraud. Four years later, Rose capitalized on higher turnout in the district, and a greater share of unaffiliated voters. Nearly 111,000 voters came out in 2014, 11% of them independents, according to Skurnik. In 2018, 195,000 went to the polls, and 16% of them were independents.

Even greater turnout is all but guaranteed in the 2020 election since it’s a presidential year. During the last presidential year, 2016, Donovan faced token Democratic opposition from Richard Reichard, a retired civil servant, and won in a rout. Next year, any Republican candidate on the ballot will be hoping that the borough’s support for Trump can lead to a similar victory.

With Trump leading the ticket, Rose’s reelection chances hinge on conservatives who aren’t die-hard Trump supporters. “He has to win over the Republicans who have been against Trump,” Skurnik said. “And he has to win over some of the people who voted for Trump but they did it because they hated Hillary (Clinton).”

And despite massive pro-Trump art installations filling front yards in the district, there are lots of persuadable voters. Take Staten Island’s previous five presidential results: Gore, Bush, McCain, Obama, Trump. And though Trump won 53% of the district in 2016, the president’s support is fading. A month after he took office 57% of Staten Islanders approved of him, according to a Quinnipiac University poll. Two years later, just 47% approved.

“Staten Island is Trump country compared to the rest of New York City,” Skurnik said, “but it’s not Trump country compared to Wyoming.”

How to win those voters who are up for grabs? Rose’s not-so-secret weapon is his military service. He was awarded a Bronze Star and a Purple Heart for his service as an Army platoon leader in Afghanistan. He was on active duty from 2010 to 2014, and still serves in the New York Army National Guard. His campaign put his military service front and center, designing his logo in olive drab with a military star, and he used it to counter critiques that he was a carpetbagger, only moving to the district to run for Congress. “I would have moved here sooner, but I was too busy serving my country in Afghanistan,” he said in a debate.
“It’s not a conservative district,” Jonas Edward-Jenks, Rose’s congressional and campaign spokesman, told City & State. “It’s a patriotic district.”

But winning reelection depends on delivering for his constituents.

“Regardless of what level of elected official you are on Staten Island, it is all about the local issues,” Staten Island Borough President Jimmy Oddo told City & State. Oddo is a Republican, but he and the congressman have already formed a cross-party partnership that Oddo admits is closer than the

one he had with Donovan, Rose’s Republican predecessor. Sure enough, Rose has made a show of getting involved in the local minutiae, with no issue being too small. He held a press conference last month calling for a new highway guardrail and fought against the proposed siting of a homeless shelter in the district. The federal government shutdown last winter threatened an on-time start to the Staten Island youth soccer league that plays on the federally managed Miller Field in New Dorp. One of Rose’s proudest achievements is starting the soccer season on schedule.

Even more than voting against Rep. Nancy Pelosi for speaker, or calling the “Green New Deal” “socialist,” this local focus is how Rose demonstrates he’s standing up for the “forgotten borough.” Because on Staten Island, most seats aren’t safe just because of the “D” or the “R” next to the candidate’s name. Voters choose candidates on a different metric.

“A bulk of the people on Staten Island see it: It’s Staten Island versus the world,” Oddo said. “Which man or woman, regardless of their party, is going to give me the best shot of fighting the world?”

Rose had just spent an hour or so greeting voters at the Taste of Forest Avenue street festival and now was kicking back at Jody’s Club Forest in West Brighton, eating chicken wings and sharing a pitcher of Bud Light. The Yankees were on, and the room was full of men and women around Rose’s age.

At 32, he’s the youngest man in Congress, even if he trails his New York colleague Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, 29. Rose was arguing that, even though he grew up in Park Slope and studied at Wesleyan University and earned a master’s degree from the London School of Economics and exclusively wears bespoke suits with his monogrammed shirt cuffs, he’s just a regular guy. “I don’t worship at the feet of the elite, pseudo-intellectual, professional class,” he said. Those people, he explained, are “a little full of shit.”

As if on cue, a constituent approaches his table with a request. It’s Kim Zarrilli, an NYPD detective, who is based at Floyd Bennett Field in Brooklyn, a former airfield run by the federal government, and the National Park Service wants them out. Here it is, those Washington bureaucrats making life hell for the hard-working men and women of the NYPD, many of them his constituents. But the NYPD’s not leaving on Rose’s watch. “Over my fucking dead body. It’s not going to happen,” Rose pledges to Zarrilli. “They’ve been pieces
of shit for a long time,” Rose said of the National Park Service. “But we’re going to figure it out.”

It may seem odd that the New York City Police Department, the biggest, richest, most powerful police force the country has ever seen, can be framed as the little guy in this situation, getting bullied by Smokey the Bear. Similarly, it may seem odd that President Donald Trump, a New York City millionaire by the time he was 8 years old, could tap into the white working class and win over West Virginia coal miners. But sticking up for the little guy and slamming the elites has typically been more about style than substance.

That’s not to say Rose doesn’t practice what he preaches. He declined to accept money from corporate political action committees or federal lobbyists. He pointedly didn’t take a paycheck during the government shutdown. Just two months into his term, Rose passed his first bill, which was to provide the land for a seawall on Staten Island’s eastern shore, doing what Donovan failed to do in the six years since Superstorm Sandy. He claims to have led the ongoing effort to increase funding for substance abuse treatment in the upcoming federal budget, a major issue on Staten Island, which has one of the state’s highest rates of opioid abuse. Rose sticks up for the little guy in small ways too. His campaign finance reports show he tips the driver every time he takes a Lyft.

Still, much as Rose rails against the “failures of the political class,” he’s not some burn-it-all-down iconoclast. He’s partnering with colleagues, and already had Reps. Jerrold Nadler and Nydia Velázquez down to Fort Wadsworth for a joint press conference on changing the Verrazzano-Narrows Bridge to two-way tolling. After all, Rose may have never been a member of a political club before running for office, but he held jobs in the political establishment. While in college, he interned for then-Newark Mayor Cory Booker, now a U.S. senator from New Jersey and candidate for president.

After leaving the Army, Rose worked for then-Brooklyn District Attorney Ken Thompson for about a year, in 2015. In between, Rosebriefly interned for then-Assemblyman Hakeem Jeffries, now a fellow Brooklyn congressman and the fifth-ranking Democrat in the House of Representatives. A former colleague, political consultant Lupe Todd-Medina, told City & State she wasn’t surprised Rose made it to Congress: “He is a product of Team Jeffries.”

The relationship with Jeffries has gotten Rose accused of siding with the establishment. In 2018, Adem Bunkeddeko, a young community organizer and economic development professional, came within 6 percentage points of beating six-term Brooklyn Rep. Yvette Clarke in the Democratic primary. A source told City & State that Rose called Bunkeddeko recently and suggested that he pass on challenging Clarke again, even dangling a job in his office if Bunkeddeko wouldn’t run. Bunkeddeko wouldn’t comment to City & State about the conversation. Rose confirmed that the pair talked on the phone, but said the framing was all wrong.
“Yeah, I called Adem to check in with him and see where his head’s at,” Rose said. “I’m not in the business of incumbency protection at all. … Democracy is a beautiful thing, and I would never pressure someone not to run. God bless you if you think about running. I’ll support you.”

Rose has not been afraid to attack other politicians, whether they’re in his party or not. He called Donovan a “spineless coward” for publishing attack ads on Facebook while he was away training with the National Guard. Rose released an ad during the campaign saying New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio is “doing a lousy job,” and his take has only gotten sharper since. When asked about his thoughts on de Blasio’s presidential chances, Rose said he sees a lane to victory for the mayor: “Every other presidential candidate gets on a plane, and the plane crashes.” He has criticized Trump on occasion, but he has also steered clear of antagonizing the president.

Rose now has new targets: the Republicans who are jockeying for the chance to take him on in November 2020. Other House Democrats are fretting over primary challenges, but Rose isn’t likely to have a serious intraparty opponent. He is, however, the only New York City representative who has to worry about a credible Republican challenge. The election is 17 months away, but it already feels like campaign season.

There’s the front-runner, Nicole Malliotakis, an assemblywoman who represents a seat entirely within the congressional district, on both sides of the Verrazzano. She was the Republican nominee for mayor against de Blasio in 2017, but to Rose, “she’s a total joke,” adding she’s “an absolute joke who’s never accomplished anything.”

There’s the long shot, Joseph Saladino, a 25-year-old YouTube personality who goes by “Joey Salads” and made a splash by bragging about how he’s had sex “thousands of times” and sending a tweet calling Brooklyn activist Linda Sarsour “Linda Mouthsores.” “If he wasn’t such a blatant xenophobe, I would think about hiring him. He’s a good marketer!” Rose told City & State, breaking out into laughter. “Unfortunately, we have that whole don’t hire racists policy.” It was unclear whether Rose was referring to Saladino’s “social experiment” where he wore a swastika armband to a Trump rally, the staged video of black men attacking a car covered in Trump stickers, or his 2012 tweet casually using the N-word.

Saladino campaign spokesman Adam Korzeniewski responded in an email to City & State, saying Rose’s “childish insults” show his “xenophilic tokenism and lack of seriousness.”

There’s the former felon, Grimm, who represented the district in Congress from 2011 until 2015, when he resigned after pleading guilty to felony tax fraud. The Republican served seven months in prison, then tried to regain his seat in 2018, but lost to Donovan in the Republican primary. In March, he told Politico that he’s “90% of the way there” to running again. Rose said he respected Grimm’s service in the Marine Corps, and that “he’ll certainly make the primary interesting.”
Finally, there’s the pro-Trump pundit, New York City Councilman Joseph Borelli, who is currently running a long-shot campaign for New York City public advocate. He’s known to be interested in the seat and could mount a campaign after his likely loss in the November public advocate election.

That could be too late, since the Republican primary started essentially the moment Rose was elected. But the way Malliotakis puts it, she’s running against the Democratic Party.

“Nancy Pelosi and the Democrats have a very organized effort that’s pumping millions of dollars into the campaigns of (Minnesota Rep.) Ilhan Omar, Ocasio-Cortez, Max Rose,” she told City & State in an interview. “And I need to compete with that.”

It’s early – 12 months early – but Malliotakis seems to be in the best position to win the Republican nomination next June. She already is getting backing from the GOP establishment, meeting with House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy and hosting fundraisers featuring Texas Rep. Dan Crenshaw and Wyoming Rep. Liz Cheney. She raised a respectable $300,000 in the first quarter of this year, though it was just half of Rose’s $600,000 haul.

Malliotakis dominated de Blasio in the 2017 mayoral race on Staten Island, winning more than 70% of the vote in the borough. The five-term assemblywoman said that Rose’s politics don’t match the district. “During the campaign, he tried to be ‘Middle of the Road Max’ and a centrist, but now he’s got a voting record that shows otherwise,” she said. But her message is really about who has deeper ties to the district. After finishing an interview with City & State, she called back to hammer her point home.

“It’s not just that I grew up on Staten Island, I went to our public schools, I worked at our local stores on Staten Island,” she said, contrasting herself with Rose, who moved to the island in 2015. “It’s also the nine years’ worth of constituent work, in which we’ve affected hundreds and hundreds of individuals.”

Seventeen months before the election, Rose is already knocking on doors and has five staffers on the campaign payroll, a sign of how much work is going into the reelection effort. But voter by voter, Rose’s focus on sticking up for the little guy is paying off.

On a Sunday in May, Rose and Malliotakis were already in campaign mode.

Malliotakis was at the Taste of Forest Avenue festival, which Rose would be coming to later. And Rose was at the Richmond Road Block Party in Dongan Hills, accompanied by three staffers. Rose approached a constituent, 62-year-old Alan Prato, who thanked the congressman profusely. Rose had finally secured federal funding to fix a Prince’s Bay marina, which was damaged by Superstorm Sandy. Prato and other boaters had been asking politicians for help for years with no results. Then Rose got involved.

“It’s the most we’ve ever been listened to,” Prato told City & State. “We had Grimm come down and Grimm made a lot of promises if he got in, and he didn’t do nothing.”
Prato is a former police officer who voted for Trump in 2016 and still thinks the president is doing a great job. But in 2020, Prato thinks he’ll be splitting the ticket, along with the rest of his fellow boatmen on the deep red South Shore.

“I never voted Democrat. I voted Republican,” Prato said. “Now, honestly, after seeing that (Rose) could pull that off? Yeah, he’s got my vote. And probably he’s got everybody else’s vote down there too.”


War, depression, suicide: American veterans are finding help

France 24.com, June 13, 2019:
Jun 14, 2019

Roger King was 19 when he enlisted in the US Marine Corps in 2005. He left four years later after two deployments in Iraq, where a sniper's bullet nearly cost him his life.

Once home, he faced a new set of problems in his return to civilian life on New York's Long Island, including a suffocating sense of anxiety and difficulty being in group situations.

King was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and a traumatic brain injury (TBI) -- two afflictions sadly common among veterans of the largest army in the world, bogged down in seemingly endless conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Increasingly depressed by the challenges of his new life, King began drinking.

This solidly built 33-year-old man quietly confides that he attempted suicide -- twice.

Russell Keyzer -- another New Yorker -- joined the National Guard shortly after the September 11, 2001 terror attacks.

Now 42, he suffers from flashbacks, insomnia, panic attacks and other PTSD symptoms following two years with NATO's multinational force in Kosovo,

where periods of relative stability alternated with violent outbursts.

After returning home in 2008, Keyzer sank into a life of drinking and depression. His marriage came crashing down and he found himself homeless.

On no fewer than seven occasions, he says, he attempted to kill himself.
Today, King and Keyzer say they are doing much better, thanks in large part to an aid group for veterans, the Joseph P. Dwyer Veterans Peer Support Project, a non-profit organization created in 2012 in tribute to an army medic who killed himself in 2008 after returning home from Iraq.

- 'More needs to be done' -

King and Keyzer spoke about their darker times at a recent "Wellness Day" organized by the association at a park in the coastal village of Center Moriches.

Veterans enjoyed a picnic, a salute to the US flag, yoga, meditation and kayaking -- all activities intended to foster a sense of security and camaraderie.

Some 20 organizations also set up stands to offer assistance.

"More needs to be done," King said. Groups like the Dwyer Project "should have been done in World War I, World War II, Vietnam."

He now leads a group of a dozen veterans for the project. They meet weekly.

"We thought of AA, NA," he said, referring to Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous, but "it's like you never really thought maybe this might help for veterans."

Now, King added, "the compassion and the caring is getting there."

Keyzer agreed, "the compassion and the caring is getting there."

"If the proper resources were there when we came home, we would not be in this position ... We would not have turned to drugs, we would not have turned to alcoholism," he said.

But he added: "Things are slowly changing for the better every day. There are more and more veterans' programs out there."

- Peer support -

Psychological support groups like the Dwyer Project have indeed been multiplying across the United States, as the world's leading superpower struggles to help its 20 million veterans -- nearly 10 percent of the adult population -- overcome their challenges and thoughts of suicide.

Many recent veterans are at the opposite end of the spectrum from the proud and smiling men and women who assembled in Normandy last week to mark the 75th anniversary of the D-Day invasion during World War II.

More than 6,000 veterans -- many of them gun owners -- killed themselves each year from 2008 to 2016, according to a report published late last year by the US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).
By comparison, a total of 6,951 American troops died in major war zones between 2001 and 2018, according to an analysis from Brown University.

Faced with those sobering statistics, the VA -- which administers some 1,200 hospitals and clinics -- has made suicide prevention a priority, establishing a hotline for troubled veterans that is among the most heavily used in the world.

- Increasing awareness -

The Veterans Crisis Line was launched in 2007 with a staff of 14; it now has more than 900 employees, with three call centers across the country including one in upstate New York, director Matt Miller told AFP.

The number of incoming calls has grown steadily, now totaling some 650,000 a year, he said.

"We are all increasing in our awareness" of suicide, he said, not just among veterans but among all civilians, where the rate -- while lower than among veterans -- has been climbing.

Fifty years after the hell of Vietnam and more than 17 years after US troops first intervened in Afghanistan, "there is a lot more awareness" about veterans' needs, said Marcelle Leis, who heads the Dwyer Project after 20 years in the Air National Guard.

But she quickly adds: "We have a lot of work to do."

Unlike the norm during the Korean and Vietnam wars, she said, troops sent to Iraq or Afghanistan often serve "multiple tours" and struggle while "going back and forth in this constant state of hyper-vigilance."

As they cope with the difficult return to civilian life, veterans have an added handicap: in their former military culture, asking for help could be seen as showing weakness.

"A lot of what we do is education to ask for help and garner support -- and learn that that's a sign of strength," Leis said.

She is cheered by the fact that many Vietnam veterans, even as they battle their own demons, have been quick to join support groups to help younger veterans.

"It is giving them a new sense of purpose, and helping them heal," Leis said.

- 'My blood is pumping' -

King credits a Vietnam veteran as the first person to encourage him to seek psychotherapy, a crucial step on the road to healing.
While he admits to still having difficult moments, the former Marine, now married and the father of a three-month-old, has plans for the future: with a newly earned history degree, he hopes to work as a high school teacher.

And while he still misses the adrenaline rushes of combat, his weekend job as a firefighter helps make up for it.

"The alarm goes off, my blood is pumping (and) I'm going out to save somebody," King says with a smile.


Return to top