Counter Drug Task Force

**Fentanyl distribution in Utica: 2 men Plead Guilty Face Years in Prison:**
WIBX, Dec. 10, 2022

Emergency Response

**City Hall 'anxious' over Title 42, Adams says ‘no one’ helping NYC migrant surge:**
NY :Post, Dec. 15, 2022

National Guard Birthday

**NY National Guard marks National Guard’s 386th birthday with Latham ceremony:**
Hudsonvalley. com, Dec. 15, 2022

**Guardsmen Celebrate National Guard’s 386th Birthday:**
MilitarySpot.com, Dec. 15, 2022

**Deployed Guardsmen Celebrate National Guard’s 386th Birthday:**
National Guard.mil, by Major Avery Schneider, Dec.13, 2022:

**New York National Guard celebrates 386th birthday:**
WRGB, Dec. 13, 2022:

New York Air National Guard

**NY’s top first sergeant on leadership: Be humble and care about the people you lead:**
Syracuse.com, Dec. 13, 2022:

**New York, Vermont Air Guard Train Together:**
National Guard.mil and ANG.AF.MIL,, By Master Sgt. Patrick Espeut and Airman 1st Class Rebekah Wilson, 105th Airlift Wing, Dec. 12, 2022:

**Volunteer. Saratoga National Cemetery Nat'l Cemetery Wreaths to Honor Local Veterans:**
104.5 FM, Dec. 15, 2022:

**Holiday wreaths to adorn Saratoga National Cemetery:**
WTEN, Dec. 12. 2022:

New York Army National Guard

**Fulton, Central Square Residents Receive Promotions In New York Air National Guard:**
Oswego County Today, Dec. 12, 2022:

**DUTY CALLS: N.Y. Army National Guard is tops at recruiting:**
Times Union, Dec. 12, 2022:
Halfmoon resident recognized for excellence in NY Army National Guard while serving in Germany:
Saratogian, Dec. 12, 2022:

New York Army National Guard Promotes Cuba Woman:
Tap Into Greater Olean, Dec. 14, 2022:

Beachcomber:
The Rockaway Wave, Dec. 16, 2022

New York Army National Guard announces promotions:
Troy Record.com, Dec. 15, 2022

State Partnership Program

New York Air Guardsman Completes Brazil Jungle Training:
Soldier Systems, Dec. 15. 2022

Brazilian army hosts initial planning conference for exercise Southern Vanguard 24:
Army.mil, Dec. 13, 2022

Ukraine

Pentagon Press Secretary Air Force Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder Holds an On-Camera Press Briefing (NYARNG Mention):
DOD.gov, Dec 15, 2022

Veterans

Man sentenced in stabbing death of Army vet in Harlem:
WPIX, Dec 13,2022:

WWII Veteran Shares Combat Stories With Guardsmen:
Military Spot.com, Dec. 9, 2022:

Daily Uploader

Counter Drug Task Force

Fentanyl distribution in Utica: 2 men Plead Guilty Face Years in Prison

WIBX, Dec. 10, 2022:
Dec 16, 2022

Two Utica men will each spend at least a decade in prison for distributing fentanyl, a deadly synthetic opioid, linked to many fatal and non-fatal drug overdoses.
The U.S. Attorney’s Office announced guilty pleas this week in two cases involving Utica residents - Eric Ares, 37, and Ivan Jose Rodriguez, 47.

Ares admitted that between May 2020 and October of 2021, he conspired with intent to possess and distribute fentanyl, and a similar count of possession with intent to distribute fentanyl, as part of the 'Rodriguez drug trafficking organization,' federal prosecutors said.

Meanwhile, Rodriguez has also pleaded guilty to conspiring with intent to possess and distribute fentanyl, distribution of fentanyl, along with one count of money laundering during that same 18-month timeframe of May 202 through October of 2021.

Both are due to be sentenced on April 6 of next year. Each faces a minimum of 10 years in prison and a maximum sentence of life behind bars, prosecutors say. Each also could faces fines totaling up to $10 million.

The investigation into fentanyl distribution in the case included numerous law enforcement agencies, including: Utica Police, Rome Police, the Oneida County Sheriff's Office, the IRS, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, New York State Police, the Oneida County District Attorney's Office, Syracuse Police, the United States Homeland Security Investigations, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Removal Operations, the Onondaga County Sheriff's Office and District Attorney's Office, the New York Army National Guard Counter Drug Program, the village of Yorkville Police and the Village of Whitesboro Police Department.


Emergency Response

City Hall ‘anxious’ over Title 42, Adams says ‘no one’ helping NYC migrant surge

NY :Post, Dec. 15, 2022 :

Mayor Eric Adams and his team are worried a steady flow of migrants to New York City will turn into a flood when a Trump-era immigration order ends next week — with the mayor also expressing growing anxiety that neither Gov. Kathy Hochul nor President Biden have offered a helping hand.

Top City Hall officials – including Office of Emergency Management Commissioner Zach Iscol, Department of Social Services Commissioner Gary Jenkins and City Hall
senior adviser Tiffany Raspberry – held a Zoom conference call where Title 42 came up repeatedly, several sources told The Post.

And even Adams admitted publicly Thursday that “no one” from the federal or state governments have come to the aid of the Big Apple with resources and services for the more than 30,000 migrants who have been bused here from the southern border since spring — let alone the thousands more expected after next week.

“Dec. 21 is a date we’re all anxious about,” one top official fearfully told the group of federal, state and city lawmakers and their staffers – referring to next week’s expiration of the pandemic-related immigration restriction known as Title 42. The order allowed border patrol to quickly expel migrants who entered the country illegally.

They expect people to be coming in from all over. It’s common sense that they should be worried – Title 42 is going to be up. … People internally are asking: Where is the help?” said another source on the call.

“And the governor has largely avoided the topic — and to think that’s why they recently asked Biden for a billion dollars.”

Even Adams publicly acknowledged he’s on edge about the looming deadline.

“We have a few days before the issue is back in front of us,” Adams told reporters during a City Hall press conference.

The Post exclusively revealed Wednesday that City Hall submitted a $1 billion funding request to the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which confirmed its Emergency Food and Shelter Programs National Board is presently “reviewing their application.”

But the price tag was calculated well before the city’s estimated migrant population grew to over 31,000, with upwards of 21,000 living in the city’s shelter system, as of the latest figures recorded by City Hall released Thursday.

Adams, who declared a state of emergency over the migrant crush in October, said during Thursday’s press conference that the city has spent hundreds of millions of dollars on the crisis.

“No one has helped us. No one. We have not gotten a dime from anyone. That has to stop. We need help,” a fiery Adams said as he pointed to fellow Democrats Hochul and Biden without naming them.

“We should not be paying for this. We need help from Washington, DC — and help from the state.”
The White House did not immediately respond to request for comment from The Post.

“Governor Hochul has held repeated calls with White House officials and the Department of Homeland Security, asking them to provide additional resources to the City and to consider additional flexibility in the work permit rules for asylum seekers,” said Hochul spokeswoman Hazel Crampton-Hayes.

“We have been coordinating closely with the City to help address the immediate needs of asylum seekers coming to our state, including by providing transportation and deploying the National Guard to support the City’s efforts, and we continue to support the City’s requests for federal assistance,” Crampton-Hayes said.

Republican Rep. Nicole Malliotakis said Adams needs to take Biden to task.

“Why won’t Mayor Adams tell President Biden to shut down our open border? And why won’t he challenge the ‘Right to Shelter’ law meant for citizens? The vast majority of those entering our country have done so illegally and don’t even qualify for asylum,” she told The Post.

“If our border is not secured, this problem will only continue to get worse. It’s simply unsustainable and unfair to expect our struggling taxpayers to continue paying for this.”

Another City Hall source said that frustration among Adams officials is growing because the city has “received no help from Washington or the state.”

“People internally are asking: where is the help? And the governor has largely avoided the topic and to think that’s why they recently asked Biden for a billion dollars,” the source added.

Meanwhile, the New York National Guard received orders this week to add more officers to help staff the Big Apple’s current 58 emergency shelters and four “mega-shelters,” or Humanitarian Emergency Relief Centers” by early January.

The new local plan dubbed “Operation Cluster,” details of which were obtained by The Post, shows the National Guard will add more guardsmen to staff the city’s shelters housing migrants from the southern border.

There was a pause during the elections,” said the source, adding the expansion is expected to be completed by Jan. 15.

“The goal … is to save money by adding additional hotels for lodging of service members close proximity of their [shelters].”
National Guard Birthday

NY National Guard marks National Guard’s 386th birthday with Latham ceremony

Hudsonvalley.com, Dec. 15, 2022:
Dec 16, 2022

LATHAM-- A 60-year-old Soldier who joined the military in 1981, and an 18-year-old Airman who just finished her training last week, marked the 386th birthday of the National Guard during a ceremony at New York National Guard headquarters in Latham on Tuesday, Dec. 13.

New York Army National Guard Master Sgt. Jerry Swain, from Mount Morris, joined New York Air National Guard Airman 1st Class Emma Davigon, a Cobleskill resident, in cutting a National Guard birthday cake during the ceremony....

THIS STORY IS BEHIND A PAYWALL


Guardsmen Celebrate National Guard’s 386th Birthday

MilitarySpot.com, Dec. 15, 2022:

DECEMBER 15, 2022 — New York National Guard Soldiers deployed to Germany to help train Ukrainian soldiers celebrated the National Guard’s 386th birthday on Dec. 13.

Sgt. 1st Class Raul Llopis, 54, a unit supply specialist, and Spc. Catherina Ma, 21, a combat medic — both assigned to Task Force Orion of the 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team — carried on the Army tradition of a unit’s oldest and youngest Soldiers cutting a birthday cake together with a ceremonial sword.
“The National Guard birthday is important because it’s the beginning,” said Col. William Murphy, commander of Task Force Orion. “It aligns with the beginning of our nation. It aligns with ordinary citizens standing up for what’s right and what’s just.”

The National Guard’s history dates to Dec. 13, 1636, when the first militia regiments in North America formed in Massachusetts.

An order of the Massachusetts Bay Colony’s General Court organized three permanent regiments to defend the colony. The descendants of these first regiments — the 181st Infantry, the 182nd Infantry, the 101st Field Artillery and the 101st Engineer Battalion of the Massachusetts Army National Guard — share the distinction of being the oldest units in the U.S. military.

With more than three and a half centuries of history, the National Guard is the oldest component of the U.S. armed forces and one of the oldest active military organizations in the world still in operation.

“Serving in an organization that is 386 years old means to me that there is a lot of legacy that needs to be kept,” Llopis said. “We, as Soldiers, need to represent all those values that have been alive for so long.”

The 445,000 Citizen-Soldiers and Airmen serving in today’s National Guard in all 50 states, three territories and the District of Columbia bring a diversity of experience from all walks of life and civilian careers.

“Serving in my community means I have a greater sense of purpose, that there are people out there who support me, and I’m here supporting them, as well,” Ma said.

In just the last month in New York, 130 Guard Soldiers and Airmen deployed domestically to dig residents out of a historic snowstorm.

Seven hundred were deployed to New York City to help manage the inflow of migrants seeking asylum.

Seven hundred more were on duty as part of the state’s Joint Task Force Empire Shield, augmenting homeland security in the New York metropolitan area.

Air Guardsmen assigned to the Eastern Air Defense Sector worked around the clock, protecting the eastern United States.
In the past 20 years, the National Guard has shifted from being the nation’s strategic military reserve to an operational reserve and a critical part of deployed forces during the longest period of armed conflict in U.S. history.

Task Force Orion is one of the many Guard units currently serving overseas.

The unit’s more than 140 Soldiers deployed to Germany in early August to support the Joint Multinational Training Group – Ukraine mission to ensure the combat effectiveness of Ukrainian military personnel training on systems and equipment issued under the U.S. Presidential Drawdown Authority.

Almost 1,800 New York National Guard Soldiers are deployed to the Horn of Africa and the Middle East, and 430 Airmen are deployed in Antarctica and elsewhere.

The National Guard also maintains 87 relationships with 95 nations through its State Partnership Program, including New York’s partnerships with Brazil and South Africa.

“You’re adding a capability and a capacity that we on the active component simply can’t do. You’re building relationships and you’re touching people in a way that we simply can’t touch,” said Brig. Gen. Joseph Hilbert, commander of 7th Army Training Command, and Task Force Orion’s deployed higher headquarters.

In a speech to the task force’s Soldiers, Murphy thanked them and explained that the birthday is not just about a number and a cake.

“It’s reminding us that a community of people stood up, and they took all the skills and abilities they had within their communities and brought it forward to make the world a better place,” he said. “The same thing [they] did back then is the same thing that we’re doing today.”

By Maj. Avery Schneider, New York National Guard


Deployed Guardsmen Celebrate National Guard’s 386th Birthday

National Guard.mil, by Major Avery Schneider, Dec.13, 2022::

GRAFENWOEHR, Germany - New York National Guard Soldiers deployed to Germany to help train Ukrainian soldiers celebrated the National Guard’s 386th birthday Dec. 13.
Sgt. 1st Class Raul Llopis, 54, a unit supply specialist, and Spc. Catherina Ma, 21, a combat medic — both assigned to Task Force Orion of the 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team — carried on the Army tradition of a unit’s oldest and youngest Soldiers cutting a birthday cake together with a ceremonial sword.

“The National Guard birthday is important because it’s the beginning,” said Col. William Murphy, commander of Task Force Orion. “It aligns with the beginning of our nation. It aligns with ordinary citizens standing up for what’s right and what’s just.”

The National Guard’s history dates to Dec. 13, 1636, when the first militia regiments in North America formed in Massachusetts.

An order of the Massachusetts Bay Colony’s General Court organized three permanent regiments to defend the colony. The descendants of these first regiments – the 181st Infantry, the 182nd Infantry, the 101st Field Artillery, and the 101st Engineer Battalion of the Massachusetts Army National Guard – share the distinction of being the oldest units in the U.S. military.

With more than three and a half centuries of history, the National Guard is the oldest component of the U.S. armed forces and one of the oldest active military organizations in the world still in operation.

“Serving in an organization that is 386 years old means to me that there is a lot of legacy that needs to be kept,” Llopis said. “We, as Soldiers, need to represent all those values that have been alive for so long.”

The 445,000 Citizen-Soldiers and -Airmen serving in today’s National Guard in all 50 states, three territories, and the District of Columbia bring a diversity of experience from all walks of life and civilian careers.

“Serving in my community means I have a greater sense of purpose, that there are people out there who support me, and I’m here supporting them, as well,” Ma said.

In just the last month in New York, 130 Guard Soldiers and Airmen deployed domestically to dig residents out of a historic snowstorm.

Seven hundred were deployed to New York City to help manage the inflow of migrants seeking asylum.

Seven hundred more were on duty as part of the state’s Joint Task Force Empire Shield, augmenting homeland security in the New York metropolitan area.

And Air Guardsmen assigned to the Eastern Air Defense Sector worked around the clock, protecting the eastern United States.
In the past 20 years, the National Guard has shifted from being the nation’s strategic military reserve to an operational reserve and a critical part of deployed forces during the longest period of armed conflict in U.S. history.

Task Force Orion is one of the many Guard units currently serving overseas.

The unit’s more than 140 Soldiers deployed to Germany in early August to support the Joint Multinational Training Group – Ukraine mission to ensure the combat effectiveness of Ukrainian military personnel training on systems and equipment issued under the U.S. Presidential Drawdown Authority.

Almost 1,800 New York National Guard Soldiers are deployed to the Horn of Africa and the Middle East, and 430 Airmen are deployed in Antarctica and elsewhere.

The National Guard also maintains 87 relationships with 95 nations through its State Partnership Program, including New York's partnerships with Brazil and South Africa.

“You’re adding a capability and a capacity that we on the active component simply can’t do. You’re building relationships and you’re touching people in a way that we simply can’t touch,” said Brig. Gen. Joseph Hilbert, commander of 7th Army Training Command, and Task Force Orion’s deployed higher headquarters.

In a speech to the task force’s Soldiers, Murphy thanked them and explained that the birthday is not just about a number and a cake.

“It's reminding us that a community of people stood up, and they took all the skills and abilities they had within their communities and brought it forward to make the world a better place,” he said. “The same thing [they] did back then is the same thing that we’re doing today.”


Return to top

New York National Guard celebrates 386th birthday

WRGB, Dec. 13, 2022 :

CAPITAL REGION, NY (WRGB) — The New York National Guard celebrating its 386th birthday Tuesday.

In a ceremony the youngest service member present joins the oldest in cutting the birthday cake.
The National Guard is the oldest armed service in the United States, predating the American Revolution, and traces its lineage back to the legislation organizing the Massachusetts Bay Colony Militia, which was approved on Dec. 13, 1636.

“The family connections that is here and is part of the National Guard, that family connection is what has kept me going for so many years.”

Master Sgt. Jerry Swain is 60 years old, and he helped cut the cake as the oldest service member present.


Return to top

New York Air National Guard

NY’s top first sergeant on leadership: Be humble and care about the people you lead

Syracuse.com, Dec. 13, 2022 ::

Tricia Shivers of Canastota graduated in 2003 with an accounting degree from Herkimer County Community College and soon enlisted in the U.S. Air Force. After four deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan and the birth of her first child, she left the Air Force and in 2019 joined the 174th Attack Wing of the New York Air National Guard in Syracuse. She started as the noncommissioned officer in charge of training for an attack squadron.

She’s now Senior Master Sgt. Tricia Shivers and serves as First Sergeant for the 174th Attack Wing’s 138th Attack Squadron. The squadron operates the remotely piloted MQ-9 Reaper. The Wing’s airmen fly MQ-9s on missions around the world and teach other military personnel to fly or maintain the aircraft.

Shivers works closely with Lt. Col. Nathaniel Johnson and Col. Thomas Burke in the supervision, training, support, and care of the group’s 269 airmen, part of the 174th’s 1,143 airmen.

Her progression set the stage for Shivers to be honored in 2022 as First Sergeant of the Year in the 5,900-member New York Air National Guard. The winner is chosen by senior enlisted leaders from across the state’s Air National Guard.

Shivers deflects such recognition to her team: “It’s not about me. It’s about my team and the people that I’ve worked with and worked for. It’s about allowing me to take
care of our airmen and putting me in a position to make a difference and to continuously grow and develop the airmen in the unit.”

That sentiment underscores her advice: Effective leaders truly care about the people they lead.

Were you in leadership roles growing up?

Actually, I was not. I didn’t really seek them out either. I probably didn’t really understand what that was growing up. (Laughter) I was more into sports growing up. I played a lot of golf. I was on the Mohawk Valley Junior Golf Tour. I was in bowling leagues. In high school (Mount Markham, class of 2001), I was selected to be captain of my volleyball team. That was probably it to be honest.

My parents (Patricia and Edward Pierce) weren’t in leadership roles and didn’t go to college, but they worked really hard. So I think that was a quality instilled in me for leadership.

My mom worked at GE in Utica. The plant became Martin Marietta and then Lockheed Martin. She was chosen to join the Lockheed Martin Syracuse plant. That’s where she retired.

My dad worked at Special Metals in Oneida County. He retired when I was in middle school. My mom was like 17 years younger than my dad. I guess you could say he was an older gentleman raising a younger child. (Laughter) So I didn’t ask all the questions that I probably could have when you’re younger. He passed away in 2009.

I do remember my dad talking about his positive changes to make things more efficient at Special Metals. He didn’t necessarily want to be in the leadership role. That’s something important in a leader. You have to know yourself.

I went to Herkimer County Community College, played golf in college, and got my associate’s degree in accounting.

From there, I joined the Air Force and that’s when I think I started to develop in leadership. My leaders were selecting me and putting me into different leadership roles to develop me. My 18 years in the Air Force really helped me to become the leader I am today.

Tell me about your Air Force career, especially how you developed insights in leadership or saw leaders to emulate.

I was a maintainer, taking care of aircraft, and was stationed in North Carolina. That’s also where I met my husband (Steven). He was a little bit older than me and had a little bit more rank as well. People sought him out for questions and guidance
and mentorship, and I realized that’s a quality of an outstanding leader. He would also explain to me the mistakes that he had made and help guide me to where I am.

In 2008, my husband and I went to Nellis Air Force Base near Las Vegas, which is where I became an MQ-9 sensor operator.

After I had the rank of senior airman, my supervisors started giving me responsibility of other airmen. My supervisors through my career have been outstanding. Of course there have been a few that you might call bad eggs, but you learn from them, too. I guess you could say take the negative things you see in them and turn them positive for the future.

What’s your advice to be an effective leader?

I think the most important way to be an effective leader is to really know and truly care about the people that you are leading. It sounds easy, but in reality if you really truly care and you really truly want to get to know people, it’s going to take a lot of time and commitment.

A leader is honest, has integrity, and builds trust. You build relationships to build trust. Then, when you are talking with individuals, they want to hear what you have to say and they’re willing to listen to you. You need to be willing to listen to what they say – it should be a two-way street.

Honest and effective communication is so important. It might sound easy, too, but to be an effective communicator you really need to be honest with an individual about their performance. It can be easy to give the positive aspects of performance. You need to give constructive criticism as well. I don’t want to call it negative feedback; it’s constructive. It’s helping individuals improve in their job and in their careers.

Don’t do constructive criticism in front of anyone else. Go behind closed doors and do it as soon as possible so you’re able to recall details. You also want the person to be able to recall the situation. Give the actual data and then give a way to improve.

You could say praise in public and criticize in private.

When you criticize, you want to do it in a very careful and respectful manner. You don’t need to put someone down. Put it in a positive way so it’s clear that you care about them and want to help them improve.

Say you give somebody a task. Basically, you give the end result to achieve. You empower them to make it their own and adapt the way to achieve it. If you’re a micromanager, you’re going to tell them every single step of the way how you want it to be done. You want to let them have the vision of how they complete the task.
If they are going down the wrong path, you might need to give corrective measures. You might also see that you need to improve your own communication on what you’re expecting. It’s not necessarily always the other person. Back-and-forth feedback is essential.

What qualities do you see in admirable leaders?

They are approachable and accessible. They have good situational awareness of what’s going on around them and the climate that they are in. They ask for help from other leaders or the people they are leading. Humility is important.

Good leaders should embrace change. Change is happening all the time. If we don’t change we’re probably going to be left behind, especially in our fields and today in the military. But that’s true in any environment. If you want to have a successful business, you have to be able to change to your environment. You have to change to the needs of your customers.

You need to be able to change, not for the sake of change, but for the necessary changes to succeed.

And let’s be honest – not everybody likes change. We’ll never know what’s going to actually happen – we never know when something like a pandemic is going to happen. So leaders try to be proactive rather than reactive in situations like that. If we build a team that’s resilient and accepting of change, it will make it easier when those times come and it happens.

Poor leaders? What attributes do you see in them?

You can tell they’re in it for themselves. They take the easy road versus the road that needs to be taken. They don’t stand up for what is right.

When you have a leader that’s more in it for themselves, they’re not focused on what’s going on in the organization. They’re focused on what’s going to benefit them. They don’t have that situational awareness – they don’t work to see the climate they are in and they don’t know the people they’re leading. All they focus on is themselves and where they’re going to be tomorrow.

With that they’re making poor decisions – and that’s even if they’re making decisions. They’re not taking the team as a whole to help guide them on a decision-making process. They don’t bring the team together to generate new ideas. They don’t help to develop upcoming leaders in the organization.

No matter what position any individual has in an organization, they should be heard because they may bring the next, best idea. It’s not just the leaders that are going to do that. I wouldn’t even call them leaders if that’s what they’re thinking.
The next, best idea anticipates my question: What’s your advice for a leader to spark innovation?

Be humble. Be able to listen to the entire team – the entire team and not just a select few folks.

Create an environment where smart risks are acceptable and encouraged. Expect continuous improvement, and provide the training for improvement.

Have a diverse workforce. When you have many different minds and diverse experiences and backgrounds, that’s going to generate innovation in a broad way. Capitalize on what others can bring to the table and learn from their ideas and thoughts.

Then give them the credit. Don’t be that leader who says, oh, great idea, and then walks out of the room and says it was their own. Give the credit where it’s deserved.

The humility part is very important so you can say that you were wrong. The people that you’re leading need to understand that we all make mistakes. They should never feel they have to hide a mistake.

The weekly “Conversation on Leadership” features Q&A interviews about leadership, success, and innovation. The conversations are condensed and edited. Last week featured Michael Birnkrant, associate director for indoor air quality engineering at Carrier and coordinator of the company’s global development of indoor air quality products.


Return to top

New York, Vermont Air Guard Train Together

National Guard.mil and ANG.AF.MIL,, By Master Sgt. Patrick Espeut and Airman 1st Class Rebekah Wilson, 105th Airlift Wing, Dec. 12, 2022 ::

NEWBURGH, N.Y. - Members of the 105th Airlift Wing took to the sky in a simulated high-threat environment exercise Dec. 6-9 at Stewart Air National Guard Base.

The flight initiated a four-day training, which included a variety of simulations to replicate flying through contested airspace. During the exercise, pilots and aircrew of the 105th were able to strengthen their technical and tactical competency for future missions.
“[We] will hone [our] tactics, techniques and procedures to make best use of [our] current force,” said Gen. Mike Minihan, commander of Air Mobility Command. “Victory will be delivered on the shoulders of mobility Airmen, and victory starts now.”

The exercise integrated different assets across multiple units within the Air National Guard. These assets included a C-17 Globemaster from the 105th and multiple F-35A Lightning II flown by pilots from the 158th Fighter Wing, based at Burlington Air National Guard Base in Vermont.

In the training scenarios, the C-17 crew flew simulated cargo missions. The fighters from the 158th split into two groups, with one acting as enemy combatants attempting simulated attacks on the cargo plane while the other provided air defense for the C-17.

The 105th aircrew worked together to respond to these threats using accurate communication and evasive maneuvers, including tactical penetration descent and low-level flying over mountainous terrain. The final day included the C-17 landing and taxiing to provide a ground exercise for the crew while the F-35s defended the cargo plane from the air.

Capt. Jonathan Guagenti, a pilot assigned to the 105th Airlift Wing, acted as aircraft commander during the exercise.

“We are doing an integrated mission sortie with our friends up at the 158th Fighter Wing, where the scenario is that we are attempting to ingress a field and there are enemy air forces out to prevent us from getting to that field,” said Guagenti. “So their training was on how they were going to protect us while we fly in to get them supplies they would need in a real-world situation.”

Maj. Benjamin Buxton, a pilot assigned to the 105th Airlift Wing, explained the thought process behind having multiple units participate in the exercise.

“When we integrate in small exercises like this, we are strengthening those relationships with local Guard units while learning lessons on employment and survivability for the C-17 in future conflicts,” said Buxton.

The 105th, in conjunction with other local units, has been trying to make trainings such as these more realistic. As conveyed in Minihan’s “The Mobility Manifesto,” speed and technology will not win the day; critical thinking and adaptive, innovative execution will. The 105th Airlift Wing developed this training exercise to better react to changes and overcome challenges through the teamwork of diverse air platforms across multiple units.

In February, the 105th conducted similar training with the 174th Attack Wing based out of Hancock Field Air National Guard Base in Syracuse, New York. The 105th C-17 crew flew a simulated cargo mission through enemy-controlled territory.
Meanwhile, an MQ9 Reaper drone from Hancock Field flew overhead, providing surveillance so the cargo plane could avoid attacks from notional enemy ground forces.

“We have been operating in theaters where we own the sky,” explained Lt. Col. Emile Sendral, commander, 105th Operations Support Squadron. “We are preparing for a future war where that may not be the case. To be successful, we will need to be able to coordinate with various units.”


**Volunteer. Saratoga National Cemetery Nat'l Cemetery Wreaths to Honor Local Veterans**

104.5 FM, Dec. 15, 2022 ::

This Saturday, December 17th, thousands of holiday wreaths will be placed on local veterans' gravestones at the Gerald B.H. Solomon Saratoga National Cemetery. They need more volunteers and you can help.

This will be the seventh year for National Wreaths Across America Day at the Saratoga National Cemetery. Through community donations, fifteen thousand wreaths have been ordered. Because all fifteen thousand wreaths were ordered it will ensure that every grave at Saratoga National Cemetery will don a holiday remembrance wreath.

This Saturday, December 17th, hundreds of volunteers will be on hand to lay the wreaths on the veterans' graves. More volunteers are needed. If you would like to be part of this beautiful ceremony, click here.

The wreath laying will start at 10:30 am and there will be the National Wreath Day Ceremony starting at 12 pm. The cemetery is broken down into sections with a team leader at each section to guide the volunteers.

Even if you don't volunteer to do wreath laying, you are welcome to attend the ceremony at noon on Saturday. Air Force, Brigadier General Denise Donnell, Commander of the New York National Guard at the Stratton Air National Guard Base in Scotia will be the keynote speaker.
Holiday wreaths to adorn Saratoga National Cemetery

WTEN, Dec. 12. 2022 ::

SARATOGA SPRINGS, N.Y. (NEWS10) — The Gerald B.H. Solomon Saratoga National Cemetery has announced its plans for National Wreaths Across America Day. Wreath laying is slated for Saturday, December 17, starting at 10:30 a.m. The cemetery will then host its National Wreath Day Ceremony at noon.

Each cemetery section has been assigned section leaders. At 10:30 a.m., wreath-laying instructions will be given by the leaders, after which family members of loved ones interred at the cemetery will be asked to lay their wreaths first. Once families have been given their wreaths, section leaders will hand out wreaths to all volunteers.

No sticks or toboggans are allowed. These are used for wreath retirement in March, only. “Take your time, teach your children,” a spokesperson for the cemetery said in a press release. “Honor our Veterans by saying their names out loud so they are remembered at this time of year. Many no longer have a visitor that can come, you are their visitor, and we thank you for that!”

Lawmakers push for funding to upgrade military bases

The keynote speaker for the ceremony at noon is Air Force, Brigadier General Denise Donnell, Commander, New York Air National Guard, Stratton Air National Guard Base, Scotia. “It is our hope everyone will attend,” the spokesperson said, adding, “it’s the perfect ending to a time-honored day.”

For the seventh straight year, the community donated 15,000 wreaths, ensuring every Veteran resting on the cemetery’s grounds will be honored with a remembrance wreath. “You are thanked beyond words,” concluded the spokesperson.

There will be a general parking area for the public, and cemetery staff will direct traffic at the site. Parking in the cemetery is reserved for the elderly and handicapped only. An event organizer said heavy traffic is expected, and visitors are asked to plan accordingly.
New York Army National Guard

Fulton, Central Square Residents Receive Promotions In New York Air National Guard

Oswego County Today, Dec. 12, 2022 ::

SYRACUSE, NY – Major General Ray Shields, the Adjutant General for the State of New York, announces the promotion of members of the New York Air National Guard in recognition of their capability for additional responsibility and leadership.

Kurtis Mills from Fulton (zip code 13069), N.Y., and assigned to the wing’s 174th Security Forces Squadron received a promotion November 2, 2022 to the rank of senior Airman.

Andrew Ammann from Central Square (zip code 13036), N.Y., and assigned to the wing’s 174th Civil Engineering Squadron received a promotion October 19, 2022 to the rank of senior Airman.

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

These promotions additionally recognize the best qualified Airmen and attract and retain the highest caliber Citizen Airmen for careers in the New York Air National Guard and the 174th Attack Wing.

The 174th Attack Wing, located in Syracuse, N.Y., operates and supports the MQ-9 Reaper Remotely Piloted Aircraft both locally and globally.

The wing provides qualified Airmen and weapon systems for joint global air, space and cyberspace operations, in support of homeland defense, and to aid civil authorities at the direction of the Governor of New York State.


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.


Return to top

DUTY CALLS: N.Y. Army National Guard is tops at recruiting

Times Union, Dec. 12, 2022 ::

New York Army National Guard recruiters and retention personnel are tops in the nation.

The New York Army National Guard was the only state Army National Guard to exceed its recruiting goals for the federal fiscal year, which ended Sept.

The National Guard Bureau, which oversees the National Guards of 54 states, territories, and the District of Columbia, had assigned New York the goal of recruiting 1,175 soldiers during the year, according to Lt. Col. Josh Heimroth, commander of the New York Army National Guard's Recruiting and Retention battalion.

State recruiters exceeded that goal. They enlisted 1,210 new enlisted soldiers. That’s 103 percent of their recruiting goal.

New York Army National Guard also gained 159 new officers during the fiscal year. That exceeds the state’s target of 138 set by National Guard Bureau.

Nevada was the state with the next most successful recruiting effort in fiscal year 2022, recruiting 95.1 percent of the goal set by the National Guard Bureau, according to data compiled by Army National Guard recruiting officials.

By Oct. 1, the New York Army National Guard’s assigned strength was 10,707 soldiers, 105 percent of its authorized strength of 10,194. Authorized strength is the number of soldiers needed to fill all necessary positions.

This is the fourth year in a row the New York Army National Guard has met or exceeded its recruiting goals, said Heimroth.

The New York Army National Guard has also has achieved high score for retention.

The National Guard Bureau set a goal of retaining 1,300 soldiers. New York retained 1,406 soldiers, or 108 percent of the targeted goal, according to Heimroth.
The New York Army Guard succeeded at enlisting new soldiers because recruiting is important, according to Maj. Gen. Ray Shields, the adjutant general of New York. “Other than soldier safety, we have no higher priority than unit assigned strength. We placed attention on recruiting and retention, and the results have been remarkable,” he said.

Recruiting enough soldiers means more than just bragging rights, Shields said.

“We cannot be successful and do what the nation and state ask of us without soldiers in our ranks,” Shields said.

Since 2020, the New York National Guard has deployed more than 7,000 troops to assist with the state’s COVID-19 response while sending almost 2,000 soldiers to the Horn of Africa for security duties, to Kuwait for support efforts to missions across the Middle East, and to Europe to train Ukrainian soldiers.

The Army National Guard also fought wildfires, responded to windstorms and snowstorms, and most recently sent two helicopters to Florida to assist in the recovery from Hurricane Ian, Shields added.

Heimroth credited New York’s well-trained and motivated full-time recruiting force of 207 soldiers for the success of the recruiting effort.

Nationally, the Army National Guard has a strength of 329,700 soldiers, according to the National Guard Bureau. But the Guard was 6,000 members short of its national recruiting goal for the fiscal year.

The active Army, overall, also faced a shortfall of soldiers. The Army achieved only 75 percent of its 2022 recruiting goal, according to Army Chief of Staff Gen. James McConville. The Army was 20,000 short of its recruiting goal. That shortfall equals more than a division of soldiers.

Military personnel experts attribute some of this to a thriving job market. Others point to the limitations of in-person engagement due to COVID restrictions. But according to Army fitness experts, only 23 percent of men and women in the prime age to join the Army can meet the physical fitness, education and other requirements needed to join.

Trees for troops

More than 15 volunteers from the New York Army and Air National Guard joined Capital Region veterans at Ellms Tree Farm in Ballston Spa on Nov. 28 to help load about 125 Christmas trees being donated and sent to military bases around the country to support troops and military families this holiday season.
This marks the 18th year of military members volunteering their time to assist with the loading of trees destined for fellow service members and their families around the country and around the world.

Supporting elements included the Association of the United States Army and the Jewish War Veterans.

Fresh-cut Christmas trees are gathered at farm and retail lots before being picked up by Trees for Troops’ partner, FedEx Freight, and routed through distribution centers for delivery to bases. Once trees arrive at a base and are unloaded, each base determines how and when to distribute the trees to their personnel.

News of troops and units can be sent to Duty Calls, Terry Brown, Times Union, Box 15000, Albany, NY 12212 or email brownt@timesunion.com

Halfmoon resident recognized for excellence in NY Army National Guard while serving in Germany

Saratogian, Dec. 12, 2022 ::

GRAFENWOEHR, GERMANY — New York Army National Guard Staff Sgt. and Halfmoon resident Jeffery A. Tajon was recently recognized for outstanding performance while deployed to Europe.

Tajon, a combat engineer currently deployed to Germany with Task Force Orion, 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 42nd Infantry Division, received the 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team Command Team Award for Excellence challenge coin on Nov. 23 in recognition of his contributions to the Joint Multinational Training Group – Ukraine mission.

“Our support to the Armed Forces of Ukraine would not be a success without the tireless efforts of Jeffery and Soldiers like him serving on this mission,” said Col. William Murphy, commander of Task Force Orion, in a press release. “Jeffery is a great reflection of the character and ability we look for in the New York National Guard at home and on deployment overseas.”

Task Force Orion has been deployed in support of the Joint Multinational Training Group-Ukraine mission since early August 2022. The unit ensures the combat effectiveness of Ukrainian military personnel training on systems and equipment issued under the United States’ Presidential Drawdown Authority.
By some accounts, the tradition of recognizing soldiers with challenge coins is said to date back as far as World War I, when a lieutenant in the Army Air Service recognized members of his unit with a coin-sized bronze medallion. The medallion later saved the lieutenant’s life when he was shot down behind enemy lines, and used it to identify himself to friendly forces. Today, challenge coins are used as unique symbols of military units, and presented to soldiers who perform above and beyond the call of duty.

The New York Army National Guard awards soldiers for outstanding service, to encourage continued exceptional performance, positive attitude and development of leadership ability. These awards also aim to attract and retain the highest caliber citizen soldiers for careers in the New York Army National Guard.

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


New York Army National Guard Promotes Cuba Woman

Tap Into Greater Olean, Dec. 14, 2022 ::

LATHAM, NY — A member of the New York Army National Guard, who is from the Greater Olean area, has received a promotion in recognition of her capabilities for additional responsibility and leadership.

Elysa Tylor of Cuba, who is assigned to the 827th Engineer Company, received a promotion to the rank of specialist on Oct. 30.

The promotion was announced by Adjutant General for the State of New York Maj. Gen. Ray Shields on Wednesday.

According to a New York Army National Guard news release, promotions are based on overall performance, attitude, leadership ability and development potential.


Return to top
Yes, Sergeant!

Major General Ray Shields, the adjutant general for the state of New York, has announced the recent promotion of Taysia Brooks of the New York Army National Guard in recognition of her capability for additional responsibility and leadership. Brooks, from Far Rockaway, assigned to the 133rd Support Company, received a promotion to the rank of staff sergeant. Congrats!

https://www.rockawaywave.com/articles/beachcomber-1050/

New York Army National Guard announces promotions

Troy Record.com, Dec. 15, 2022:

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

John Sandefur from Gansevoort and assigned to the Joint Force Headquarters, received a promotion on Nov. 4, 2022, to the rank of colonel.

Cade Obrien from Gansevoort and assigned to the Intelligence and Sustainment Company, 42nd Division Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, received a promotion on Nov. 4, 2022, to the rank of sergeant.

Army National Guard promotions are based on a Soldier’s overall performance, demonstrated leadership abilities, professionalism and future development potential.

These promotions recognize the best-qualified Soldiers for a career in the New York Army National Guard.

Army National Guard Citizen-Soldiers who serve our state and nation are eligible for monthly pay, educational benefits (from the state and federal government), travel across the globe, technical and leadership training, health and dental insurance, and contributions towards retirement programs similar to a 401(k).
For more information about the New York Army National Guard, visit
www.dmna.ny.gov 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.


State Partnership Program

New York Air Guardsman Completes Brazil Jungle Training

Soldier Systems, Dec. 15. 2022:

MANAS, Brazil – For New York Air National Guard Tech Sgt. Jeremy Miter, adapting to the heat and humidity of the Amazon basin was the toughest part of the six weeks he spent at Brazil’s jungle warfare school from the end of September until mid-November.

“Once we got into the jungle, it was a whole other level of heat,” Miter said. “The triple canopy rain forest keeps the heat in and all around you. It creates a pressure cooker.”

Despite the heat, Miter became the fifth New York National Guard member to graduate from the course. CIGS — the acronym for the school’s name in Portuguese, Centro de Instrução de Guerra na Selva — conducts the course for foreign military personnel in Manas, the capital of Brazil’s Amazonas state.

The Brazilians run a 10-week course for their own Soldiers.

New York Soldiers and Airmen have been attending the school since 2019 as part of the State Partnership Program relationship between Brazil’s military and the New York National Guard.

Army National Guard Sgt. William Dunn, a member of the 101st Expeditionary Signal Battalion, was to attend with Mitre but could not because of a medical issue.
To operate in the heat and humidity, the students from India, France, Spain, Portugal, Paraguay, Uruguay and Argentina, and two other Americans from the 7th Special Forces Group learned how to stay hydrated.

Miter said students begin the course with physical fitness tests and swimming in uniform with combat gear.

The next step is surviving in the jungle. The students learn what to eat and not eat and how to find drinkable water and shelter.

“They put us out in the woods for 48 hours on our own to survive without food and only the water that you bring with you,” he said.

“I don’t think anybody ate for the entirety of the survival event,” Miter recalled. “Luckily, it rained at the end.”

As a joint tactical air controller assigned to the 274th Air Support Operations Squadron, part of the 107th Attack Wing, Miter supports ground troops by calling air strikes.

Miter, 33, joined the New York Air National Guard in 2006 and served as a firefighter at the 109th Airlift Wing until becoming a JTAC in 2010.

He deployed to Syria in 2019 and to the Horn of Africa in 2021.

In civilian life, Miter is assigned to the Syracuse Fire Department’s Engine 3.

Miter was picked to attend the course because “he has the mental focus and physical strength” to succeed, said New York Air National Guard Command Chief Master Sgt. Denny Richardson.

Swimming is central to the training, Miter said. The students learned to use the rivers to move around. Using makeshift rafts, they would swim with their rucksacks full of equipment. They also learned how to use boats to infiltrate an area.

The round-the-clock training kept the 25 class members so tired that nobody had the energy to worry about the caiman — Brazil’s version of the alligator — or piranhas in the river, he said.

Students also learned how to navigate in the dense jungle using terrain association and practiced rappelling from helicopters.

Since most of the students were from special forces units, that was simply refresher training, Miter said.

Working with 25 soldiers from different countries who didn’t speak the same language was challenging, but they managed to find ways to communicate.
“The exchange of knowledge between us and Brazil was great. Plus working with soldiers from other countries you don’t normally work with was valuable,” Miter said.

https://soldiersystems.net/2022/12/16/new-york-air-guardsman-completes-brazil-jungle-training/

Return to top

Brazilian army hosts initial planning conference for exercise Southern Vanguard 24

Army.mil, Dec. 13, 2022:

MACAPA, Brazil — Brazilian and U.S. Army Soldiers and civilian planners from U.S. Army South and the New York Army National Guard concluded the initial planning conference for exercise Southern Vanguard 24 held Dec 5-8, 2022.

The four-day planning conference, held in the northern region of Brazil, was aimed at identifying and refining training scenarios, logistical requirements and training objectives for the forthcoming bilateral event that will take place in the fall of 2023. Based on the complexity and scale of this exercise, planning began years in advance of the execution.

“Jungle terrain is the most ferocious terrain on the face of the earth,” said Master Sgt. Rob Mitchell, Army South G-7 Training and Exercises noncommissioned officer in charge. “When we come down here and train face-to-face, we create lifelong relationships with each other, and we learn how they apply tactics in a different terrain than what U.S. Soldiers are used to.”

Mitchell emphasized the importance of building interoperability with our partner nations around the globe, referencing the coalition forces from across the world that fought in Iraq and Afghanistan.

“When we weren’t engaged in combat in Afghanistan or Iraq we would do training together,” said Mitchell. “That training reinforced our comradery. It reinforced our relationships, so when we did go overseas and work together in real combat operations, we already knew how we were going to function together as a unit.”

Army South, the executive planning agent of Southern Vanguard 24, and the New York National Guard, Brazil’s state partner, brought several planners from various war fighting functions to work alongside their Brazilian army counterparts during the IPC.
“Combatant Commands across the board are realizing (the state partnership program) is an untapped resource that is available to them to enhance relationships on the diplomatic side,” said Maj. Melanie Padilla, New York Army National Guard state planner.

Brazil and the New York Army National Guard established a state partnership program in 2019. The purpose of the program is to enhance knowledge and training opportunities for both forces. Since its inception, the both organizations have completed over 20 exchanges, with the upcoming exercise Southern Vanguard 24 being the largest to date.

Expounding on the Guard’s expertise, Padilla explained on the Guard’s mission set is geared towards building proficiency for disaster response and catastrophic events in cities like New York City which mirror cities like Rio in Brazil. Because the Guard units inherently focus on domestic operations like the homeland response force, its personnel are able to provide a unique capability not only to our U.S. active-duty components but also to our partner nation armies.

Brazilian army Maj. Rafael Penteado, G3 North Military Command explained why this type of planning is important.

“It’s essential to plan together and discuss the issues between the two armies,” said Penteado. “We can face each other and determine what works for both armies. For me, it’s a very great opportunity to get a shared experience with a friendly country and develop my view of the U.S. Army and its processes.”

He went on to say that the planning conference was a success because planners were able to perform reconnaissance of several operational and administrative sites across the region. These site surveys covered urban, jungle, and waterway terrains.

Southern Vanguard is a U.S. Southern Command-sponsored, U.S. Army South-conducted exercise at the operational and tactical levels designed to increase interoperability between U.S. and Western Hemisphere forces. Southern Vanguard 24, which will occur in the Fall of 2023, is aimed at improving combined readiness between U.S. Army and Brazilian army forces.

In December 2021, over 900 Brazilian and U.S. Army Soldiers conducted Southern Vanguard 22 in Lorena, São Paulo, Brazil, which was the largest U.S. element to conduct combined training with Brazil since World War II.

https://www.army.mil/article/262717/brazilian_army_hosts_initial_planning_conference_for_exercise_southern_vanguard_24

Return to top
BRIGADIER GENERAL PAT RYDER: Good afternoon, everyone. Thanks for your patience. Just a few things at the top and then we’ll get to your questions.

So today, the Department of Defense is announcing that we will expand U.S.-led training for the Ukrainian Armed Forces, to include joint maneuver and combined arms operations training, while building upon the specialized equipment training that we’re already providing to the Ukrainians. Combined arms maneuver training is a logical next step in our ongoing training efforts, which began in 2014, to build the Ukrainian Armed Forces’ capacity.

While there’s an understandable focus on the equipment being provided to Ukraine, training is and has been essential to ensuring Ukraine has the skilled forces necessary to better defend themselves. Importantly, U.S.-led training compliments the separate, specialized, individual, and collective training for Ukraine’s Armed Forces already being conducted by our allies and partners, including United Kingdom, the European Union, and others.

This joint maneuver and combined arms training will be conducted by U.S. Army Europe and Africa Command’s 7th Army Training Command at U.S. ranges in Germany. Moving forward, the department may adjust the training program further as Ukraine’s training needs evolve or allied contributions develop.

Since 2014, the United States has committed approximately $22.1 billion in security assistance to Ukraine and more than $19.3 billion since the beginning of Russia’s unprovoked and brutal full scale invasion on February 24th.

To meet Ukraine’s evolving battlefield requirements, the U.S. will continue to work closely with our allies and partners to provide Ukraine with key capabilities and assistance, to include training.

Separately, Secretary Austin hosted Lithuania’s Minister of National Defense today here in the Pentagon. The two discussed security cooperation efforts within the region and our mutual support for Ukraine. We’ll post a readout to defense.gov later this afternoon.

In other news, the Department of Defense released the 2023 basic allowance for housing rates yesterday. Basic allowance for housing rates will increase an average of 12.1 percent when the new rates take effect on January 1st, 2023.
The second -- significant increase in average BAH rates is reflective of the unique market conditions experienced across many locations nationwide over the past year. The department is committed to the preservation of a compensation benefit structure that provides members with an adequate standard of living to sustain a trained, experienced, and ready force now and into the future.

Also this week, in Hawaii, the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command is honoring its 75th anniversary. Established in 1947, INDOPACOM is the oldest and largest U.S. geographic combatant command. We continue to honor the courage and selfless service of U.S. military personnel, civilians, allies and partners who gave the ultimate sacrifice in this region.

As Secretary Austin said earlier this month at the Reagan National Defense Forum, our nation's network of alliances and partnerships is a core strategic strength. INDOPACOM leads a strong and visible U.S. presence in the Indo-Pacific, operating in concert with our partners and allies to promote peace, security, and stability in the region, and to preserve a free and open Indo-Pacific.

On behalf of the entire department, we extend our thanks and congratulations to the soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, Guardians, and Coast Guardsmen of U.S. INDOPACOM, both past and present.

And finally, as the holiday season approaches, the U.S. Marine Corps Toys For Tots Program is also celebrating 75 years of working with local communities across the nation to bring comfort, happiness, and inspiration to children and families in need during the holiday season.

This inspiring and charitable program has delivered hope and the magic of Christmas to over 281 million less fortunate children since its establishment. We're thankful to the countless Reserve Marines and volunteers who have made this program possible.

And with that, I will take your questions. We'll go ahead and start with AP, Tara Copp.

Q: Thanks for doing this. I have a couple of questions for you. In describing the expanded training, you mentioned that you may adjust the training further. What's -- you know, at full capacity, how many Ukrainians are you anticipating you'll be able to train? And will that also require an increase in U.S. troops?

GEN. RYDER: Thanks, Tara. So this -- this program, this expanded training, will provide training to approximately 500 Ukrainians per month. It's essentially focused at battalion level. And so as we move forward, we will stay flexible and adaptable, based on the needs of our Ukrainian partners and the evolving situation in Ukraine.
Q: And to -- just a follow-up on that, what about U.S. troops? Does -- this going to require an increased presence of U.S. troops? You're anticipating National Guard might rotate in? And how will you provide this training?

GEN. RYDER: I'm not aware at this point that we'll require any additional personnel. As you know, we have forces in place that have been conducting training. So to -- so to my knowledge, no significant increase in support.

Q: And then just last -- Russia today warned of unpredictable consequences if the U.S. does indeed provide Ukraine the Patriot missile defense system. What's the status of deliberations on whether or not to provide Ukraine the Patriot? And does Russia's reaction influence the U.S. decision-making process at all on this?

GEN. RYDER: So just to clarify, you're -- you're referring to Russian officials have -- who have said that if we provide Patriots, that would be provocative?

Q: Yes.

GEN. RYDER: OK. So -- so first of all, I don't -- don't have any announcements to make today regarding any new security assistance packages. As always, we will continue to remain committed to providing Ukraine with the key capabilities that it needs to defend its -- its nation.

On the -- the latter part there about the comments, I would just say that I find it ironic and very telling that officials from a country that brutally attacked its neighbor in an illegal and unprovoked invasion, through a campaign that is deliberately targeting and killing innocent civilians and destroying civilian infrastructure, that they would choose to use words like "provocative" to describe defensive systems that are meant to save lives and -- and protect civilians.

And so despite Russia's propaganda to portray themselves as victims, it's important to remember that Russia is the aggressor here. And when it comes to escalation, they could de-escalate this situation today by withdrawing their forces and saving countless innocent lives, but clearly they've chosen to double down.

And the last thing I would say is the U.S. is not at war with Russia and we do not seek conflict. Our focus is on providing Ukraine with the security assistance that it needs to defend itself, and that's something we said we would do well before Russia chose to invade and something we will continue to do for as long as it takes.

Q: So their reactions today are not going to weigh on the calculation of whether to send a Patriot or not?

GEN. RYDER: Again, we are -- we're not going to allow comments from Russia to dictate the security assistance that we provide to Ukraine. Thank you.
Let me go in the room here. Liz?

Q: Thank you, sir. Have U.S. troops in Europe trained Ukrainians on any systems that aren't necessarily in Ukraine yet?

GEN. RYDER: What do you mean?

Q: So say, if there is a system that the U.S. plans on sending that takes a significant amount of training, is that something that the U.S. would train Ukrainians on in advance?

GEN. RYDER: So our -- our focus has been on training them on the systems that we've committed to providing them. So in other words to my knowledge we're not training them on things that we aren't providing to them, right? I mean it's important to remember that they're engaged in a serious conflict right now. And it -- and it's a significant lift to take forces out of Ukraine to come to Germany or elsewhere to conduct that training because any trooper that's not on the ground in Ukraine is a trooper that's not in the middle of the fight. So -- so they're not going to send people just to train on things that might be.

Again, so our focus is on that. Now the -- this training -- this expanded training program, it's important to put in the context that we were conducting this kind of training for Ukrainians prior to Russia's invasion. As I mentioned, we started training in -- in 2014. When Russia invaded, we withdrew our trainers from Ukraine. And so this is a continuation now of the training that we had previously provided. And, again, importantly, alongside the other training efforts that are being conducted by our allies and partners.

Q: Thank you. And I have a question on a completely different topic. There is a former Afghan commando, served alongside U.S. troops in Afghanistan. He's a SIV holder. He did not make it out during the initial withdrawal last year. And so he entered the country illegally through the U.S. southern border in September. And now he has been held in custody since. There's a few other examples just like him, unfortunately. Is the Pentagon, is the State Department working to help people like this person because back during the initial withdrawal the U.S. said that it would not leave its allies in Afghanistan behind?

GEN. RYDER: Yes. Thanks, Alyssa. So I don't have any specifics on this individual case. I would refer you to the State Department, you know, since we're -- we're talking about the border and -- and entry into the country. Broadly speaking, again, we -- we are very thankful to our Afghan allies and partners who helped us in that -- in that campaign, in that war. And so I'm confident that we will remain committed to helping as many people as we can and to keep our word in that regard. Thank you. Oren?
Q: Two quick questions. On the training, when will the extended training begin? And then can you just give a sense of what -- what combined arms maneuver training would look like beyond the -- the individual systems? Can you just sort of fill that in a bit for us?

GEN. RYDER: Sure. Thanks, Oren. So I won't get into specific dates other than to say we expect the training the starting in the January timeframe. What you can expect to see is that we will, as mentioned, bring in battalion-sized units. And it will begin with things like live fire exercises followed by squad-, platoon-, and company-level training that will then culminate in battalion-level maneuver training.

Importantly, it will also include battalion headquarters staff training. So the way to think about this is as you show up for your training, first you're doing the -- the classroom exercises to -- to better understand what it is that you're going to learn, right? It's going to be crawl-walk-run. And then you're going to shift to the practical application, starting from the -- from the squad-platoon to the battalion level of applying these concepts, culminating in a field exercise where you're getting into more advanced training scenarios, how to respond to situations.

So again, you -- you've heard Secretary Austin talk about that the equipment is important but it's how to take that equipment and apply it in the field in a way that's going to enable you to do combined arms and achieve decisive effects on the battlefield. And so this training will -- will contribute to that. Thanks.

Janne?

Q: Thank you, sir. On the National Defense Authorization Act, is there any change in maintaining 28,500 U.S. troops in South Korea, according to the National Defense Authorization Act of the U.S. Congress in Fiscal Year 2023?

GEN. RYDER: Thanks, Janne. So I'm -- I'm not aware of any changes to force levels that are being considered through the NDAA. And so again, I don't want to get ahead of that. As you know, it's still pending legislation.

To my knowledge, we will continue to keep our force present in Korea, as it currently stands, at 28,500. We'll continue to work closely with our Republic of Korea partners to ensure that we're working together to provide the -- the security for not only Korea but also the -- the broader region.

Q: A follow-up -- another one -- is the U.S. forces in South Korea expected to increase due to this establishment of the U.S. Space Force in South Korea?

GEN. RYDER: I -- I'm sorry, just -- I want to make sure I understand -- so will this -- will the U.S. Space Force component stand-up increase the number?
Q: Yes.

GEN. RYDER: So I -- I would refer you to U.S. Forces Korea for specifics. Certainly, I -- I would imagine perhaps small numbers, in terms of standing up this component. We talked about the capabilities that that unit will provide previously, when we talked about Space Force writ large, but I don't anticipate that it would be a large number. But certainly they could give you additional details.

Q: Thank you.

GEN. RYDER: Thank you. Fadi

Q: Thank you -- thank you, general. I want to go back to this expanded training just to (inaudible) understand the -- maybe the -- the timing and -- and also potentially the impact. So as -- as you said, this is basically a resumption of what -- what the U.S. National Guard has been doing since 2014, was disrupted by the Russian war.

So is the timing, decision to resume it now, because of -- you anticipate some slow -- slowing down and -- and -- in the war because of winter or because of maybe what the Ukrainian troops were able to achieve so far, so they can have more -- afford more troops to go to Germany and train?

And the second part of it is what are you hoping to achieve by -- by expanding this type of training and what do you hope to see as -- as an impact in the field in the future?

GEN. RYDER: Sure. So what I would say is, from the beginning -- so first of all, going all the way back to 2014, in our security cooperation relationship with Ukraine.

This is something that you highlight, that we've been doing for a while. With Russia's invasion of Ukraine, certainly the focus has been on providing those immediate battlefield needs that they need to be able to -- to check Russian aggression and defend their country. And so that conversation continues to evolve, in terms of the kinds of assistance that we need to provide.

And so in the immediate aftermath of the invasion, our focus has been on providing specialized equipment training -- HIMARS, NASAMS, those kinds of things -- to enable them to operate those systems in the field.

Now, as we continue to see Ukraine make progress in terms of pushing Russia back and receiving this new equipment, like I said earlier, the idea here is to be able to give them this advanced level of collective training that enables them to conduct effective combined arms operations and maneuver on the battlefield.

And then I'm sorry, your second question?
Q: And this -- oh, I guess you -- you started answering my second question -- like, what do you hope to achieve, I mean, in terms of impact on -- on the battlefield? I mean, do you think this will help the Ukrainian forces even achieve more -- more results, in terms of fighting Russian forces inside of Ukraine?


Let me go to the phone here real quick. We've got Heather from USNI.

Q: Hi. Two quick questions.

So first, there was a plane crash outside of -- of Fort Worth, Texas today. I was wondering if there's any additional information. I understand that Lockheed was taking lead on it but wanted to see if there's a DOD response.

And then second, the Council for American-Islamic Relations had put out a statement cautioning against naming USS Fallujah after the battles of Fallujah, and I wanted to see if the DOD had any comment on that?

GEN. RYDER: Yeah, thanks, Heather. In terms of the -- the crash, so we are aware of reporting of an F-35B crash on the shared runway at Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base in Forth Worth, Texas. As we understand it, the pilot ejected safely. The aircraft had not been transferred to the U.S. government yet. However, it was being operated by a U.S. government pilot. And so since it was a -- a Lockheed aircraft, I would refer you to Lockheed Martin for any further questions.

As far as the naming of Navy vessels, I'd refer you to the Navy on that, as -- as that is something that would be within their purview. Thank you.

Let me go to Ryo Nakamura, Nikkei.

Q: Hi. Thank you for taking my question. I want to ask you about AUKUS. The -- last week, Australian Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Richard Marles said that Australia is open to the idea of AUKUS working together with Japan to deploy advanced defense capabilities other than the nuclear-powered submarine. Does the Pentagon support Japan's involvement in AUKUS in the long term? Is this something the Secretary discussed with his UK and Australian counterpart last week? Thank you very much.

GEN. RYDER: Yeah, thanks, Ryo. So as -- as you highlighted, Secretary Austin discussed at the AUSMIN last week there are increasingly more opportunities for trilateral engagement and defense cooperation with Japan and Australia.

And so with AUKUS, our initial focus is on finalizing a trilateral program of work between the U.S., Australia, and the UK, but as that work progresses, we will
certainly seek opportunities to engage allies and close partners as mutually beneficial, to include Japan. Thank you.

Let me go back in the room here. Sir?

Q: Shifting to the Middle East a bit -- yesterday, in an interview with Al Arabiya English, Israel's Prime Minister-designate said that Israel would carry out a military option -- or military operation against the -- Iran to prevent them from acquiring a nuclear weapon, with or without an agreement with the U.S., and he claimed or alleged that the U.S. would disapprove this military operation or a -- a -- a media leak to U.S. outlets could -- could foil. Is this something that you agree with and you -- is there any response to that?

GEN. RYDER: Yeah -- no, I appreciate the -- the question. So on -- I don't want to get into hypotheticals and I certainly don't want to get into Israeli foreign policy or -- or operational discussions. I'd -- I'd refer you to them.

You know, more broadly speaking, we very much appreciate the partnership that we have with Israel on working on regional security issues but I -- I'm just not going to get into that.

Q: Can I just ask you is there ongoing -- I mean, supposed -- there should be ongoing cooperation or talks about a potential military option to prevent Iran that -- seeing that both the U.S. and Israel committed to not allowing that to happen?

GEN. RYDER: We -- we certainly have an ongoing and robust dialogue with Israel and a -- and a defense relationship to talk about a variety of issues, to include potential Iranian aggression in the region. And so, you know, as you know, we -- we continue to work closely with Israel and other countries in the -- in the Middle East and Central Asia on that topic. Thank you.

Sir?

Q: Thank you. I'm Hiroshi Tajima with Yomiuri Shimbun Japanese newspaper. The Japanese government is about to announce its new National Security Strategy, including investment in counterattack capability. It's a longer range missile capability. Japan is also going to drastically increase it -- its defense spending. They will set target of two percent of GDP in 2027. Could I have your comment on this policy? Thank you.

GEN. RYDER: Sure, thank you. Well, we have been very clear that we broadly support the efforts of our allies and our partners to bolster their self defense, to include Japan's efforts, but I would refer you to Japan to comment on any future systems or strategies that they intend to release. Thank you.

Let -- let me go to Will and then I'll go to the phone. Yes, sir?
Q: Thank you. So you mentioned that, under the new training, there'll be 500 roughly Ukrainian personnel per month. What is it -- what's the existing number?

And then is it accurate to say that the training previously was kind of focused on systems, and now, it would be on larger scale, you know, operations of -- of (inaudible) incorporating those systems across various units?

GEN. RYDER: So kind of breaking it in a -- to do two different parts -- so what we've been doing on the U.S. side is providing specialized training on equipment. So far, since April, we've trained approximately 3,100 Ukrainians on those systems. It -- additionally, beyond the U.S., our allies and partners have trained approximately 12,000 Ukrainians.

So this training will focus again on bringing together battalions. Certainly, there could be an element of combining the equipment, training, with the battalion training to be able to employ those capabilities in a combined arms approach on the battlefield. Does that help?

Q: Yep.

GEN. RYDER: OK.

Q: And one -- one quick follow-up on that -- so the 3,100, is that roughly an even number per month or -- or is that -- do you have a monthly figure on -- on that?

GEN. RYDER: It's more based on the systems. You can -- if you contact EUCOM, they may be able to -- they may be able to provide you with some additional insight, but it's -- it's based on the systems, less so on coming into a classroom setting, for example, to learn how to operate together as a unit. Thanks.

Q: And if -- if I could get one -- one more question -- several Ukrainian officials have said there's a new Russian offensive that could come in January or February. What's the DOD's assessment of that?

GEN. RYDER: Certainly, I'd -- I don't want to get into speculating on potential future ops. I will say that, with past as precedent, we know that Russia continues to try to take offensive action, as evidenced by their invasion earlier this year, but in terms of what the future may portend, the battlefield is dynamic and our focus is going to continue to be on supporting Ukraine to be able to stop any potential future Russian aggression and to defend their homeland. Thanks.

Let me go to the phone here. Jeff Schogol, Task & Purpose?

Q: Thank you. Earlier, a senior defense official had said the Russians may have to start using 40-year-old munitions next year because they're burning through their stockpile so quickly. I just want to get some clarity, is -- are the -- are the problems
the Russians facing that their defense industry cannot keep pace with operations in Ukraine, so they're not able to make shells and rockets quickly enough? Or is it that the Russian military is simply not managing their munition stockpiles efficiently?

GEN. RYDER: Yes, thanks, Jeff. So, kind of an element of both. Production is a challenge. The burn rates that they've been employing artillery at have been -- has been extremely high. And so, going through the -- the ammunition that would be considered newer ammunition has put them in a situation where they're rapidly running out of that type of ammunition that would be -- that would give them high confidence that it would work.

So this is, as you -- as you highlight, forcing them to use, in some cases, degraded ammunition and from older stockpiles. It is important to point out that we do access that Russia does have a deep inventory of degraded ammunition, artillery from which they can draw. But again, the challenge here is by using older ammunition you do run into the potential of effectiveness, dud rates, and confidence in whether or not it's going to explode as expected.

Q: Is unreliable -

GEN. RYDER: All right, let me go to George Castle.

Q: Thank you, General, for doing this. I have three questions. The first question is, the Russian long-range missile system onboard the Su-35S and China uses for the J20 fighter jet, it is said that Ukraine shot down a Su-35S and turn it over as a joint inspection to the U.S. and U.K. By having this aircraft will this aid NATO Air Forces to jam the capabilities of the onboard system.

GEN. RYDER: Yes, thanks for the question, George. I don't have any information to provide on that. Thank you. Let me -

Q: OK, the second question is, so what are your thoughts on the B21 Raider without giving arsenal specifics?

GEN. RYDER: The B21 Raider, I think it's going to be an awesome aircraft.

Q: Thank you, sir.

GEN. RYDER: Record. You know, and I -- and I think if you had the opportunity to watch the unveiling and listen to Secretary Austin's remarks the B21 will provide the United States an unparalleled capability, strategic capability, both conventional and nuclear, which will serve as a very strong deterrent, but also provide our nation with options should we need to go to war. And so, this will be a game-changer for the United States military, for our allies and our partners. And take us into the next generation when it comes to strategic bomber aircraft. Thank you, George.
All right, let me go to the room. Yes, ma’am. And then I’ll come to you.

Q: (Inaudible) Since Japan last increased its defense budget and about these counterstrike capability, from the viewpoint of U.S. integrated deterrence, how will such Japan’s effort align these U.S. efforts to deter China and other countries?

GEN. RYDER: Sure. Well again, without talking about, you know, internal domestic Japanese decisions, I will say more broadly speaking, as I highlighted earlier one of our core strategic advantages as a nation, but also as international community is the alliances and partnerships that we share.

Critical and important allies like Japan investing in their defense capabilities, just like all of our other allies and partners in the region sends a clear message that we are committed to preserving a free and open Indo-Pacific, to deter aggression and hopefully ensure and maintain regional security and stability. Thank you.

Ma’am?

Q: Yes, Erin with Kyoto News. President Xi -- or actually Secretary Austin said how important it was that China kept an open-door communication with (inaudible) President Xi. Have they spoken lately?

GEN. RYDER: Has Secretary Austin?

Q: Yes, spoken with General Wei.

GEN. RYDER: So, they did speak in Cambodia. That was their last conversation.

Q: Is there any reason why? Have they -- has Secretary Austin tried to speak or reach out with General Wei, or General Wei reach out to -

GEN. RYDER: So, it seems like a long time ago, but that was only couple of weeks ago. And so, at this -- at this point, as we highlighted in our readout from that engagement, both leaders were committed to keeping the lines of communication open and to working to have subordinate levels of command to be able to communicate with one another. And so, with -- I don’t have any details to provide specifically today, but that is an area that we continue to focus on. It is increasing those channels and providing those opportunities for U.S. personnel to engage with their counterparts on the PRC side.

And so, I think going forward Secretary Austin is certainly open to continuing the dialogue with Mr. Wei. And so, when there’s an opportunity or when we have something to announce we’ll certainly do that. Thank you.
Q: Two things. On the training in Germany, did you say that there's going to be an increase in the number of National Guard Forces that will be conducting this training? Or is it going to be the same New York National Guard unit that's doing it right now?

GEN. RYDER: I would refer you to U.S. Army Europe and Africa Command. They may be able to provide you some additional details. The Security Assistance Group Ukraine will be overseeing that. I don't -- I don't have specifics on which units, per se, will be conducting that training.

Q: And shifting to another question from Liz, there's -- Congress is currently discussing the Afghan Adjustment Act. I know you referred her question to the State Department, but in the past has the Pentagon been advocating for any changes or any adjustments in the status of SIV applicants who, you know, were evacuated in August of 2021? And has the secretary himself been personally involved in this given the significance that these are individuals who work with U.S. military personnel in the past?

GEN. RYDER: Yes, thanks Luis. Well, let me take that question and then we'll come back to you. Thank you.

Q: Thanks. Yes, does the fact that you're doing this maneuver, this battalion-level maneuver training at this moment indicates that there is the chance for greater offensive operate -- large-scale offensive operations when -- in the coming weeks when the ground starts to freeze up in Ukraine?

GEN. RYDER: So, I'll let the Ukrainians talk about their operations and what they plan to do with their forces. Again, as it has been since the beginning of this invasion and since we've been providing security assistance, our focus is on providing them the capabilities they need to be successful on the battlefield. And so, certainly, this training will enhance the skills and capabilities of Ukrainian Armed Forces on the ground, but they need to be the ones to talk about what they plan to do.

Thank you. Let me go to the phone here. Patrick Tucker, Defense One.

Q: Hey, thank you for doing this. So this entire debate around patriot missile batteries to Ukraine speaks to Ukraine's ongoing sophisticated air defense needs. The U.S. has spent hundreds of millions of dollars on research and development into directed energy weapons to specifically take on drones and have even deployed some with success against other Iranian drone systems.

So given that the U.S. has developed and deployed directed energy weapons, specifically for a counter UAS operations, are you talking with the Ukrainians about the role that directed energy weapons might play in their air defense needs?
GEN. RYDER: Yes, thanks, Pat. So--so again, we maintain a robust dialogue with our Ukrainian partners alongside our allies and our international partners about what Ukraine's security assistance needs are.

As a matter of policy, we're not going to get into previewing things that we may or may not be considering or providing. But again, going forward we're going to stay flexible and adaptable based on the situation on the ground.

So nothing new to announce or preview in that regard but again, we're going to continue to--to discuss and listen when it comes to Ukraine security assistance needs.

OK. Let me go to Phil Stewart, Reuters.

Q: Hey there. Thanks. I think Pat--Patrick Tucker might have had a follow-up. But real quick, just to clarify on the--on the main announcement. Is there going to be any air component to the--to the training. And I just want to be crystal clear on the level--skill level of the Ukrainian forces that you're bringing in.

I mean are these people that have already been trained on the individual systems and now you're helping them do the combined arms and then joint maneuver stuff or are these people that are kind of new recruits.

And also, are there any countries--I think at one point you said U.S. led training so--or is this just strictly U.S. training? Thanks.

GEN. RYDER: Yes, thanks, Phil. So--so I'll defer to Ukraine to talk about who they plan to send to this training. And this is joint operations, joint maneuver operations training and so primarily ground focused but with an eye towards combined arms. So certainly an aspect of combined arms is working with air capabilities. Although, this particular training is, again, focused on ground units per se.

In terms of--and I'm sorry, what was your second part of your question?

Q: So I had also asked--so I asked the skill level, I asked whether there was going to be an air component and then you had mentioned the fact that this was--at one point you spoke about U.S. led training. So that led me to believe maybe there were other countries that might be assisting the U.S. with this new round of, you know, churning out 500 trained Ukrainians per month.
GEN. RYDER: Yes. This will be -- so this will be the U.S. Army, Europe and Africa Command's effort. I would -- I would refer you to Security Assistance Group Ukraine in terms of whether or not there's any allied or -- or partner representation on the training program. You know whether those are liaisons.

Certainly across the international community, as I highlighted earlier, there are other countries that are training Ukrainians as part of this broader international effort. But as it applies to the training ranges in Germany, the U.S. training ranges, this will be a U.S. led effort but the Army may be able -- may be able to provide you some additional insight into the on the ground cadre.

All right. And Pat Tucker, I'm sorry, did you have a follow up?

Q: I'm good. Thanks.

GEN. RYDER: All right. Let's go to Tony Capaccio, Bloomberg. All right, nothing heard. Lara Seligman, Politico.

Q: Hey, Pat. Thanks for doing this. Just a follow-up on a couple things. First of all, for this training are additional U.S. troops going to be deployed to Germany to do this training and how many and when. And then second, I wanted to ask about the F35 crash. Can you talk about the damage to the plane? Is it going to be flyable?

GEN. RYDER: Yes, thanks, Lara. On your -- on your second question I'd refer you to Lockheed Martin since that is -- that is their aircraft. It was -- had not been transferred to the U.S. government yet. In terms of U.S. forces that will be supporting this training, again, the security assistance group Ukraine will be overseeing the training or -- excuse me -- the seventh Army -- let me find in my notes here -- U.S. Army, Europe and Africa Command's Seventh Army Training Command will be leading the training.

So I'd refer you to them. But no significant addition of U.S. forces beyond what we've already got in country -- in the theater. Thank you.

All right, we'll go with the last question. Yes, ma'am?

Q: Using the USAFRICOM forces in part to help with this training, does that imply that some of their current operations might be diminished, sort of the ST operations for instance?

GEN. RYDER: No. So and -- so thanks for the opportunity to -- to highlight that. So as part of the command structure in Europe, U.S. Army Europe and Africa Command
overseas operations. It's the component command to U.S./European Command. So overseeing U.S. Army operations in both the European area of responsibility and the Africa of responsibility, very similar to U.S. Air Forces in Europe and Africa.

And so -- so that's the designation with command but certainly being able to build into the command structure how best to -- to operate this. So while this -- this has no impact on our efforts in Africa. It's just the name of the unit. Thank you.

Thanks very much everybody. Appreciate your time.


Veterans

Man sentenced in stabbing death of Army vet in Harlem

WPIX, Dec 13,2022 ::
Dec 16, 2022

MANHATTAN (PIX11) — A man was sentenced Tuesday to 20 years to life in prison for his role in the 2019 stabbing death of an Army veteran in Harlem, officials said.

Christopher Saunders was convicted of two counts of gang assault in the first degree in connection with the death of 35-year-old Hason Correa, authorities said. Several others were charged in the deadly stabbing.

Mary Saunders, who pleaded guilty to assault in the first degree, was sentenced to a year in jail, officials said. She was initially charged with murder and gang assault. Travis Stewart, who pleaded guilty to attempted gang assault in the first degree, was sentenced to seven years in prison.

James Saunders, who pleaded guilty to murder in the second degree and gang assault in the first degree, was promised a sentence for 20 years to life. His formal sentencing is expected in January.

Correa, who lived in the Bronx, had three children, family previously told PIX11. He served in the New York Army National Guard for two years followed by active duty service for seven years, according to a spokesperson for the US Army. He also served a six-month tour in Afghanistan.

His then 56-year-old father was wounded in the attack that killed Correa.
DECEMBER 9, 2022 – A World War II veteran of the 42nd Infantry Division shared his combat stories with 300 New York Army National Guard Soldiers serving in the division’s headquarters for the unit’s annual dining out.

Lockered “Bud” Gahs, from Perry Hall, Maryland, who served as a private in the division’s 222nd Infantry Regiment, shared his memories on Dec. 2, 2022, at a hotel in Albany.

Gahs, 98, is a member of the Rainbow Division Veterans Foundation, which co-hosted the event.

Hosting Gahs is an integral part of passing on the legacy of the Rainbow Division to its newest Soldiers, said Maj. Gen. Thomas Spencer, the 42nd Division commander.

The history and accomplishments of the division bind our Soldiers from every era, he said.

Initially created from National Guard units in World War I, the 42nd Infantry Division reactivated for World War II and fought in Southern France and Germany, capturing the cities of Wurzburg, Schweinfurt, and Munich while liberating the Dachau Concentration Camp alongside the 45th Infantry and 12th Armored Divisions.

In 1947, the Division became part of the New York Army National Guard and served as a combat headquarters in Iraq in 2004-05 and Kuwait in 2020.

Gahs, drafted into service in 1943, served in the anti-tank company of the 222nd Infantry. As a truck driver, it was his job to maneuver the guns into position.

Gahs told the audience what it was like to serve with the division during the war.

Without artillery and supporting units, the three infantry regiments of the 42nd were rushed to France in November 1944.
Gahs and his fellow infantry members faced down the German counteroffensive near Strausburg, France, called Operation Nordwind, launched in conjunction with the Battle of the Bulge further north in the Ardennes.

Gahs and his unit defended a town called Schweghausen. During the fight Jan. 25, 1945, Gahs remained at his post for hours, fending off repeated German attacks with his M3 submachine gun.

“We lost two Soldiers from our squad that day,” Gahs said. “As soon as they (the Germans) left, we were grateful they didn’t set the house on fire while we were still hiding out on the second floor.”

The Army credited Gahs with killing 10 enemy troops, wounding eight, and capturing eight in his defense of the position. For his actions, he received the Bronze Star.

Just 90 days later, Gahs found himself advancing with the 222nd Infantry through Dachau and the infamous concentration camp.

He rode into Dachau on the date of its liberation, April 29, 1945, providing security in the woods near the camp and expecting to find SS prison guards.

While clearing the woods, they heard rustling, and a man crawled up to Gahs.

“Dachau was a surprise to all of us,” he said of the camp’s liberation. “We didn’t know it was that bad.”

“We were ready to shoot if needed,” Gahs explained before the group of American GIs realized the man was a prisoner.

“To this day, the most moving moment of my life was when that prisoner came up to me and kissed my boot. It brought a tear to my eye and still does.”

The regiment continued its advance, and by the next day, Gahs and the 42nd Division entered Munich, the birthplace of Nazism.

The realization of his accomplishment that afternoon in late April 1945 didn’t set in for a while, Gahs said. He never wandered through the front gates of the concentration camp until 1972.

“Thank you, Bud, for sharing the story of your exemplary heroism,” Spencer said as Gahs finished to a standing ovation from the modern-era Soldiers. “You know the price of freedom better than anyone, and we are all grateful for you.”

By Maj. Jean Kratzer, Headquarters, 42nd Infantry Division
