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Citizens Preparedness

Griffo hosting free emergency preparedness training program

Utica Phoenix, April 13, 2026 :

New York State Sen. Joseph Griffo will be hosting a free emergency preparedness training program in conjunction with the New York State Citizen Preparedness Corps, New York National Guard, Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services and the City of Rome.

This training course will provide an introduction to responding to a natural or manmade disaster. Participants will be advised on how to properly prepare, including developing a family emergency plan and stocking up on emergency supplies.

WHEN: 6 p.m., Tuesday, April 14 (tomorrow).

WHERE: Common Council Chambers at Rome City Hall, 198 N. Washington St., Rome.

<https://uticaphoenix.net/griffo-hosting-free-emergency-preparedness-training-program/>

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Senator Griffo Hosts Emergency Preparedness Training Program

WKTW, April 14, 2026 :

ROME, N.Y. -- Senator Joe Griffo hosted an emergency preparedness training program on Tuesday night at Rome City Hall.

He partnered with the New York State Citizen Preparedness Corps, NYS National Guard, and the Department of Homeland Security to teach New Yorkers how to stay prepared for when disaster strikes.

"When we look at what has taken place... to have a public that has information and education as what they can and should be doing and how to prepare in the event that something like that happens I think is one of the better things that we can do," Griffo said.

On Tuesday, residents learned how staying prepared means staying safe.

The training was run by Sergeant Duane Morgan, who has been with the Air Force since 2011 and previously worked as an aircraft mechanic.

"Me being in the military... we're trained to know what to do in disasters and we train for it quite often," Morgan said. "But your average person who's walking around is not training for disasters every single day so when it happens they don't know exactly what it is they need to do."

Morgan said these classes provide the basic information that will give people a foundational understanding of what to do in an emergency.

He talked about the different disasters that can happen including natural disasters like flooding, tech disasters like power failures and biological disasters like the COVID-19 pandemic.

The training also talked about how staying prepared for natural disasters means making a plan, building a kit, staying informed and talking with your family about what to do in the event of an emergency.

Each person that attended with a preparedness kit and a handbook with emergency information.

New York State's All-Hazards Alert and Notification System is an online portal that provides alerts for different types of emergencies as well as road closures and weather events. It is free and subscription-based. To register, you can visit the NY-ALERT website here.

https://www.wktv.com/news/senator-griffo-hosts-emergency-preparedness-training-program/article_f727f596-0055-4aaa-8815-cfcc8818221e.html#google_vignette

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DOCCS Support

Prison overtime costs soared to \$708 million last year

Porcupine Soup.com, April 13, 2026 :

COXSACKIE?In 2016, the state Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) paid out around \$205 million in overtime. Last year, it topped \$708 million.

Those numbers come from a recently released report from the state Comptroller's Office on New York State agency overtime costs.

Between 2024 and 2025, the DOCCS workforce decreased by over 2,700 while overtime hours per employee grew 32.7% to reach an average of 432 hours?nearly triple what it was in 2020, the report found.

Unsurprisingly, those figures were influenced by the wildcat strike of some 12,000 corrections staff who walked off the job between February 17 and March 10 of 2025. DOCCS, already operating with staffing levels below target, fired approximately 2,000 officers who did not return to work when the strike ended. About 900 of them have since been rehired, according to DOCCS.

But there remains approximately 4,600 correction officer vacancies, according to DOCCS Commissioner Daniel Martuscello who testified to lawmakers during a February budget hearing.

Martuscello said the department has “made record financial investments in our recruitment process,” referring to DOCCS’ Recover, Recruit, and Rebuild Initiative launched in March of 2025.

“We have seen a considerable increase in people signing up and taking the exam. We have received over 60,000 interest forms and it translated to over 20,000 people taking the exam,” he said.

The efforts have resulted in about 550 new correction officers graduating the academy. The most recent class of 57 graduated on March 6.

“We still have a long way to go,” Martuscello told lawmakers.

According to the Comptroller’s report, DOCCS overtime hours totaled 8,702,912 in 2025 with the average pay per overtime hour averaging \$81.46.

Going back to 2016, the DOCCS total workforce decreased by 32.8 percent, from 29,959 to 22,866 in 2024 and down to 20,144 last year.

But when it comes to the number of correction officers, that number was at 11,278 in 2025, according to DOCCS. It represents a drop from 14,095 in 2024 and is down from 19,233 in 2016.

At the same time, the incarcerated population saw a slight increase from 33,677 in 2024 to 33,845 in 2025, down from 51,466 in 2016 and more than 70,000 in 1999. That extreme reduction has been driven by criminal justice reforms relating to parole revocations and supportive of diversion programs, as well as New York State largely dismantled the Rockefeller Drug Laws.

Currently, New York State currently has one of the lowest imprisonment rates of any large state in the nation, according to DOCCS that has closed 28 prisons since 2009. Forty-two facilities currently remain open, including medium-security Greene and maximum-security Coxsackie.

Throughout the state, some 7,000 New York National Guard troops were called in to stabilize prison operations during last year’s strike and an estimated 2,500 remain deployed to facilities across the state.

The troops have already cost New York State around \$700 million and Gov. Kathy Hochul’s FY 2027 executive budget includes another \$535 million to extend their deployment.

“But that is not the long-term sustainable solution,” Martuscello said.

In 2025, total state payroll costs for all agencies were \$22.4 billion, with overtime totaling \$1.6 billion, the report found. Overtime earnings as a share of total payroll grew from 4.3% in 2016 to 7.3% in 2025.

“Overtime hours and earnings have continued to surge at the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision... growing [since 2024] by 1.3 million hours and \$264 million in 2025, the most of any agency,” according to the report.

New York State Correctional Officers & Police Benevolent Association (NYSCOPBA) Director of Public Relations James Miller said the Comptroller’s report comes as no surprise given ongoing staffing challenges within the prisons.

“Since 2023, total staffing levels have decreased by over 4,500, leaving the dedicated men and women of NYSCOPBA to shoulder the burden of hundreds of overtime hours just to maintain operations across the state,” he said.

“We have repeatedly stressed that the current system is unsustainable. Our members are without a work-life balance due to mandated overtime, and many have opted to retire or resign as a result,” Miller said. “Meanwhile, recruitment efforts have been unsuccessful in addressing the staffing shortfall.”

<https://porcupinesoupnews.com/news-articles/prison-overtime-costs-soared-to-708-million-last-year>

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For Information

The Iran war took a toll on the Air Force’s Reaper fleet

Task and Purpose, April 13, 2026 :

Note: This item is provided for your information.

The MQ-9 Reaper, a staple for the U.S. since the turn of the 21st century, has remained a go-to asset for the military, even as recently as the war with Iran.

But over the last few years, the U.S. has lost at least 35 Reaper drones — at least 16 were downed over Iran, 7 were shot by the Houthis in Yemen in Spring 2025, and 12 from other aircraft accidents recorded by the Air Force.

Retired Air Force Brig. Gen. Houston Cantwell, who spent two years overseeing a unit of drone pilots out of Creech Air Force Base in Nevada, and two years training future drone pilots at Holloman Air Force Base in New Mexico, said the impact on the Air Force's Reaper fleet is "a big deal."

"That is a significant percentage of the fleet, and there is no other aircraft that is positioned and ready to assume the responsibilities that the MQ-9 has across multiple combatant commands," Cantwell said. "And right now, there's no plan to backfill all these aircraft being shot down."

The MQ-9 Reaper Keeps Getting Shot Down – And Still Gets Used

According to Air Force accident reports going back to 2021, 12 Reapers have been lost to non-combat accidents. Investigators have linked the causes of those accidents to mechanical failures — like one where an aircraft propeller came off mid-flight over the Mediterranean Sea in 2024 — and others to mistakes by pilots.

General Atomics built 575 Reapers for the U.S. over the program's lifetime, according to the company. The MQ-9A is flown by the Air Force, Marine Corps, Air National Guard, and the Department of Homeland Security. As of September 2024, the Air Force had 230 Reapers, the lion's share of the U.S. military's Reaper fleet.

Air Force officials referred Task & Purpose questions about Reaper combat losses over Iran to U.S. Central Command, which declined to comment.

"Each mission provides an opportunity to learn, and we incorporate that feedback continuously," according to Mark Brinkley, a General Atomics spokesman. "All aircraft are vulnerable, such is the nature of flight, but Reaper opens up a series of options unlike anything else in the arsenal."

A boom operator on an Air Force tanker earned two DFCs for combat flights

The dollar value of each Reaper is hard to pin down. A Congressional Research Service report estimated each aircraft at \$28 million. An Air Force press release from 2020 announcing a contract with General Atomics estimated that each Reaper costs around \$16 million, a price the company confirmed to Task & Purpose. Air Force accident reports cited Reaper losses costing between \$13 million to \$26 million, but many aircraft were valued at around \$16 million.

Based on those ranges, Reaper losses in recent combat have cost the U.S. anywhere from \$300 million to just under \$600 million.

Risking drones rather than manned aircraft

The MQ-9's ability to fly continuously for over 24 hours and carry multiple payloads is unmatched by any other single system — two major capabilities that have kept the

relatively large drones relevant amid the exploding market of small drones, Air Force reconnaissance experts told Task & Purpose.

During operations against Iran, Reapers appeared to film U.S. strikes on Iranian aircraft, drones and missile launchers and may have even been tasked overhead during the recovery of a downed F-15E pilot. The Air Force has also signaled a continued interest in the platform, reactivating dedicated Reaper units in the U.S. and overseas.

The U.S. still finds occasion to turn to the MQ-9s over human pilots because of the safety and cost considerations, said Cantwell, who noted that flying fighter jets costs between \$5,000 to \$40,000 an hour and is a “logistical nightmare” with air tankers and coordination.

Members assigned to the new 25th Attack Wing render their first salute during a wing redesignation ceremony at Shaw Air Force Base, South Carolina, Sept. 18, 2025. The 25th ATKW, previously the 25th Attack Group, operates globally 24/7/365, supporting four different combatant commands with the MQ-9 Reaper, a Remotely Piloted Aircraft capable of intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance as well as precision strike. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Kylie Barrow)

Members assigned to the new 25th Attack Wing render their first salute during a wing redesignation ceremony at Shaw Air Force Base, South Carolina, Sept. 18, 2025. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Kylie Barrow.

As the U.S. learned in early April after two F-15 fighter jets were shot down over Iran, rescue missions can also be incredibly risky and involve a lot of moving parts. President Donald Trump told reporters that the daring mission involved 68 fighters, 48 aerial tankers, 13 rescue aircraft, and four bombers. During the rescue operation, the U.S. lost two U.S. Special Operations MC-130J aircraft, each totaling over \$100 million. The downed F-15E cost more than \$31 million (based on 1998 prices).

“Have these robot planes get shot down. I’d much rather have that than having, according to the president, 100 aircraft take off to go rescue one pilot. We can’t do that every day,” said Cantwell, now a senior fellow at the Mitchell Institute for Aerospace Studies. “Send in the MQ-9s every day, twice on Sunday.”

Future of the fleet

The aircraft lost in combat and accidents in recent years come after the Air Force ended production of the MQ-9A in 2020. Air Force officials cited shifting priorities for combatting near-peer adversaries, like Russia and China, which took General Atomics officials by surprise.

The company has since developed a new version, the MQ-9Bs, nicknamed “SkyGuardians,” which cost roughly \$30 million apiece and have upgrades for flying

in all types of weather, detection and avoidance capabilities, anti-collision warnings, and can carry bigger payloads.

MQ-9Bs have been purchased by Air Force Special Operations Command and the Department of Homeland Security, but “no individual military service has announced any production contracts for MQ-9Bs,” General Atomics officials said.

US Air National Guard Aircrew from the 163d Attack Wing operate an MQ-9 Reaper aircraft in support of Steel Knight 24 from a Ground Control Station at March Air Reserve Base, Calif., Dec. 11, 2024. Steel Knight is an annual exercise that takes place in multiple locations across the Southwest that allows I Marine Expeditionary Force to train as a full Marine Air-Ground Task Force and better integrate with joint and naval forces. (U.S. Air National Guard Photograph by Tech. Sgt. Joseph Pagan)

Air National Guard Aircrew from the 163d Attack Wing operate an MQ-9 Reaper aircraft. Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Joseph Pagan.

General Atomics sells self-protection pods for the MQ-9, which the company purports can mitigate against surface-to-air threats and infrared and radio frequency threats. Cantwell said these options include flares to decoy infrared missiles, chaff or pieces of aluminum that deflect radar tracking, and electronic emitters to jam and deceive enemy radars.

“Until now, no one has ever felt that it was worth the investment, so we’ll see if that changes after this conflict,” Cantwell said.

CORRECTION: 4/13/2026; An earlier version of this article inaccurately stated that 70 Reapers fly 500,000 miles around the world each year. That number applies to all General Atomics aircraft, not just the MQ-9 Reaper.

<https://taskandpurpose.com/tech-tactics/air-force-reaper-drone-fleet/>

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Hegseth orders termination of union contracts

Government Executive, APRIL 16, 2026:

Though some unions within the Defense Department are protected from the action by federal court orders, the American Federation of Government Employees’ locals remain vulnerable.

Note: This item is included for your information.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth last week instructed leaders to terminate most of the department's collective bargaining agreements, more than a year after President Trump signed an executive order banning federal employee unions from many agencies on national security grounds.

In an April 9 memo obtained by Government Executive, Hegseth gave his deputies 24 hours to take action to cancel their union contracts, with some exceptions. In April 2025, Hegseth exempted bargaining units made up of Federal Wage System workers at four installations—the Letterkenny Munition Center in Pennsylvania, the Air Force Test Center in California, the Air Force Sustainment Center in Oklahoma, and the Fleet Readiness Center Southeast in Florida.

"I hereby direct the termination of all collective bargaining agreements to which the department is a party, not subject to a court order enjoining implementation to which the department is a party, not subject to a court order enjoining implementation of Executive Order 14251, 'Exclusions from Federal Labor-Management Relations Programs,' within 24 hours of the date of this memorandum, except as applied to the population covered by the [April 2025] secretary of defense certification . . . and the local employing offices of any agency police officers, security guards or firefighters, pursuant to EO 14251," Hegseth wrote. "This action is required to align agency operations with national security requirements as outlined in EO 14251."

Spared from this memo are unions like the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers and the Federal Education Association, who both secured preliminary injunctions blocking implementation of the executive order, which cites a seldom-used provision of the 1978 Civil Service Reform Act to strip two-thirds of the federal workforce of their collective bargaining rights on national security grounds, last fall.

Not so for the nation's largest federal employee union. In a statement Wednesday, American Federation of Government Employees National President Everett Kelley decried Hegseth's decision as "cowardly."

"For 50 years, these employees have exercised their union rights; under several administrations, during a global pandemic and throughout peacetime and wartime, including our most recent conflict with Iran," he said. "To rip up the union contracts of civilian employees after touting a successful ceasefire in the Middle East is not only a slap in the face to the employees who supported those efforts, but again proves that this action has nothing to do with national security and everything to do with silencing workers' voices."

<https://www.govexec.com/workforce/2026/04/hegseth-orders-termination-union-contracts/412899/>

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Naval Militia

A New York corrections officer admits she used forged military papers to steal \$80,000 in leave pay

Syracuse.com, April 10, 2026 :

A New York City corrections officer admitted in federal court Thursday to using forged military documents to fraudulently collect more than \$80,000 in leave pay she did not earn.

Leah Mathieu, 34, of Freeport (Long Island), pleaded guilty to wire fraud before U.S. District Judge Naomi Reice Buchwald. The scheme ran from December 2022 through March 2024, according to court documents.

Mathieu works as a corrections officer for the New York City Department of Correction and serves in both the U.S. Navy Reserve and New York Naval Militia. She repeatedly submitted fake military orders to her employer, claiming she was on state active duty with the Naval Militia, entitling her to paid leave from her corrections officer position.

The false documentation allowed her to collect approximately \$80,297.90 in military leave pay from the Department of Correction during the 15-month period.

“As admitted, Leah Mathieu used forged documents to collect tens of thousands of dollars in military leave pay she had not earned,” said U.S. Attorney Jay Clayton. “That money came from New Yorkers’ pockets.”

Christopher Ryan, acting commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation, said the scheme undermines service members who legitimately earn military leave benefits.

“This correction officer betrayed the trust granted in her by the City and the New York State Naval Militia,” Ryan said.

Mathieu faces a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison on the wire fraud charge, though her actual sentence will be determined by the judge. Sentencing is scheduled for Aug. 27.

<https://www.syracuse.com/crime/2026/04/a-new-york-corrections-officer-admits-she-used-forged-military-papers-to-steal-80000-in-leave-pay.html>

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New York Army National Guard

Duty Calls: Army general from Delmar is among top NATO leaders

Times Union, April 13, 2026 ::

Army Maj. Gen. Sean Flynn, of Delmar, a veteran of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars who has led many New York Army National Guard units, is now the top-ranking American officer in one of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's three Allied Joint Force Commands.

Flynn serves as the deputy chief of staff for operations at Allied Joint Force Command Brunssum in the Netherlands.

He said his command focuses on joint operations in Central Europe, with a special focus on Poland and the Baltic countries next to Russia.

"The command is structured to control up to 250,000 troops from multiple countries," Flynn said. His job is to coordinate the operations of headquarters and synchronize those forces.

Flynn said his National Guard background has helped him in his current duty.

"There are so many parallels between our work in the National Guard and working with a 32-nation alliance," he said.

Guardsmen are used to working with different state Guard units, which all do things a little bit differently, Flynn explained. Guard leaders get used to making all those different units mesh and work with local police, fire departments and political leaders.

"Just as the states and territories in the United States have their own interests and priorities and operational approaches, so do the nations here in NATO have their own interests and priorities," Flynn said.

His National Guard experience began just before two hijacked planes slammed into the Twin Towers in New York City on Sept. 11, 2001. Flynn led his company of 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment soldiers to the aftermath of the attack — dealing with dust and death — at home and in the streets of Baghdad. He served as executive officer of a battalion in combat in Afghanistan.

Flynn wasn't always a soldier. His military career began as an airman. He served as an Air Force public affairs officer in Alaska from 1994 to 1997. Then, in 2000 — after a break in the inactive reserves — he became 1st Lt. Flynn in the New York Army National Guard's "Fighting 69th," the 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment.

He left his career in corporate communications and became a full-time Guardsman, serving as a battalion and brigade commander and a division chief of staff in Kuwait.

Flynn said his civilian background as a New York City-based consultant in strategic communications for large multinational corporations has also helped him work more effectively in the NATO environment.

His family tree is filled with relatives who served in the New York Army National Guard, including His father, Col. Walter M. Flynn, and his uncle, Maj. Gen. Lawrence P. Flynn, who was the adjutant general of New York.

A great-great-grandfather of his served in the Irish Legion in the Civil War, and that ancestor's brother, Capt. Edward K. Butler served in the 69th New York Infantry at Bull Run in 1861 and then died in action at the Battle of Cold Harbor in 1864. Other ancestors and relatives of Flynn served in the Fighting 69th during the Spanish-American War, World War I and World War II, he said.

When the 69th Infantry deployed to Iraq in 2004-2005, Flynn was part of the battalion's fight to secure Route Irish, the road from Baghdad Airport to the Green Zone. Flynn wrote about that mission in his 2008 book, "The Fighting 69th: From Ground Zero to Baghdad."

In 2012, he deployed to Shindand, Afghanistan, with the 108th Infantry, where the soldiers conducted 577 security missions.

He went on to command the 69th, serve as chief of staff of the 42nd Infantry Division and then command the 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team.

In July 2023, Flynn made the leap to general officer, pinning on the one star of a brigadier general and deploying to Europe as the deputy United States military representative to NATO's Military Committee in Brussels. Sponsored By Sling TV

The U.S. military representative serves as the direct representative for the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to NATO, Flynn said. For half his time in Brussels, Flynn served as the acting military representative, from July to December 2023 and again from April to November 2025.

Flynn earned his officer commission in 1994 after completing an Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps program and graduating from the University of Maryland at College Park with a Bachelor of Arts in journalism. He also earned a master's degree in strategic studies from the Army War College. He is also a graduate of the Army Command and General Staff College.

Flynn has earned two Legion of Merit Medals, two Bronze Star Medals, three Meritorious Service Medals, two Army Commendation Medals, an Air Force Commendation Medal, an Army Reserve Components Achievement Medal, Army

Meritorious Unit Commendation, New York State Conspicuous Service Medal, Human Service to New York State Medal, New York State Aid to Civil Authority Medal, New York State Defense of Liberty Medal, and a Combat Infantryman's Badge.

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

<https://www.timesunion.com/news/article/duty-calls-army-general-delmar-nato-leader-22199296.php>

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Robert Army Obituary

The Auburn Citizen, April 14, 2026 :

Robert Schnurr, Jr. Colonel, U.S. Army (Retired), 76 of Auburn, N.Y., passed away peacefully after a long battle with cancer, on March 20, 2026. He was born in Syracuse and is a graduate of North Syracuse High School and Lemoyne eye rolls was the son of the late Robert and Esther Schnurr.

"The Colonel" as he was lovingly called by family and friends, long before he earned the rank, served 38 years in the New York State Army National Guard, following in his father's footsteps. Among his many roles, he served as the Commander of the 27th Infantry Brigade. Throughout Bob's life, both in his career and with his family and friends, he was always there when help was needed, albeit with numerous sighs, eye rolls, and, if you were really lucky, some choice words about your character and general decision making. Despite this, Bob always showed up out of love and a call to serve. From monumental national events, countless natural disasters, many DIY projects, a few flat tires, and saving a stray cat or "two" he showed up every single time. Among his many professional accomplishments, he heroically responded to Ground Zero in the days after the 9/11 Terror Attacks, then worked tirelessly in the following months keeping New York's bridges, tunnels, and other infrastructure safe. However, his most heroic act was the unparalleled care of his wife, Jeannine, during her struggles with dementia, all while undergoing chemotherapy himself. While he had cancer, Bob ultimately died of a broken heart after losing his wife of nearly 53 years, last Spring.

Bob is survived by his children, a daughter, Britton Schnurr and her husband, Jon Malm; a son, Robert "Bert" Schnurr III; two beloved granddaughters, Francesca "Frankie" Schnurr and Bristol Malm; his brother-in-law and sister-in-law, John and Sue Rossi; his stepsister, Sheila Quinell, several nieces, nephews, cousins, and friends.

There will be no calling hours. Bob's Mass of Christian Burial will be April 18, 2026, at 11 a.m., at St. Mary's, immediately followed by interment at St. Joseph's Cemetery. The family will receive guests at the church beginning at 10:30 a.m. the day of the funeral.

Contributions in Bob's memory may be made to Finger Lakes SPCA of Central New York, 41 York Street Auburn, New York or to Cayuga County Veteran Support Fund, 95 Genesee Street 3rd Flr, Auburn NY 13021

Arrangements by Pettigrass Funeral Home.

<https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/auburnpub/name/robert-army-obituary?id=61245075>

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