

# THE SENTINEL

*"The Official Newsletter of the New York Guard"*

## EARLEY SAVES A LIFE



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# **S** THE NEW YORK GUARD **ENTINEL** Volume 1 Issue 1 Summer 2025

## **Chain of Command**

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**Major General Raymond Shields,**  
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Deputy Commander, New York Guard

**Colonel John Bivona**  
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## **About The Sentinel**

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## **Submissions**

Articles, photos and letters are welcomed and encouraged. Please provide article submissions via email saved in Microsoft Word or rich text format (rtf) along with high resolution digital (jpg) photos. Send your submissions to [thesentinel1917@gmail.com](mailto:thesentinel1917@gmail.com)

## **Cover Photo:**

Left to Right- Maria Acosta (Mother) LT PJ Acosta (Recipient), WO1 Theodore Earley (Donator) and Peter Acosta (Dad) celebrating a highly successful kidney transplant. On July 2nd, 2025, WO1 Ted Earley donated a kidney to save the life of FDNY EMS Lieutenant PJ Acosta."



# Editorial Comment

Welcome to the relaunch of “The Sentinel” the official newsletter of the New York Guard. This newsletter shall be published quarterly, with special editions published as needed. In this issue you will find stories relating to matters of human interest, training and operations, and various other subjects that we believe will be of interest to our readers.

But “The Sentinel” is not just about our staff pushing out content for our readers, we would like you to share the things that are important to you with the rest of our New York Guard community. Tell us about promotions at work, your wedding, christenings, graduations, the loss of a loved one, or any other significant life events that are important to you. Send your announcements to [thesentinel1917@gmail.com](mailto:thesentinel1917@gmail.com)

We invite our leaders to make use of this platform to help your Soldiers get squared away. We are looking for contributions for an “Advice” column that would answer the questions that some of our newer Soldiers may be hesitant to ask. Also, we would like input from the Staff Sections. What is your specialty, Personnel, Intelligence, Training and Operations, Logistics, Communications? Write a column to educate and edify our Soldiers. Our new Medical Officer, Colonel Jose Chavez-Cacho MD, provided us with content relating to our physical health, which shall prove to be of great value during Annual Training. The spiritual health of our Soldiers is of paramount importance as well, a column addressing this aspect of our lives would be most welcome from the Chaplaincy. As for Public Affairs matters, do you have a knack for writing and/or photography? Ask your chain of command for permission to perform additional duty and we will teach you to write in a military format.

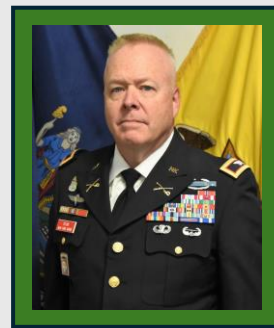
All things considered, we hope you enjoy this issue of “The Sentinel.” We will do our best to bring you the news and developments that will help you to be better informed and therefore a more effective member of the New York Guard.

*The Editors*



Photo by 1LT James Chin

## Message from the Deputy Commander Col. Stephen J. Ryan



Soldiers of the New York Guard, I want to take a moment to thank you for your tremendous dedication and devotion to the organization.

I know the recent re-organization starting in 2023-24 was not easy, however the NY Guard before BG Riley assumed command, had been directed by DMNA going back in 2019 to “right size” the force, largely due to the top-heavy rank structure that was in direct contravention to the current op-tempo starting with the pandemic and going immediately into the asylum mission and now the current DOCCs mission.

The re-org had been pushed to the right as we moved into 2020. For many years, including when I first enlisted in the NYG in 1987, the guard back then was strictly a strategic reserve to be used when and if the NY National Guard was mobilized for war in western Europe with the former Soviet Union, the NYG would then assume the role and mission it had in the two previous world wars by fulfilling the domestic civil support role here at home.

The NYG at that time was even more top heavy in rank with upwards of eight (8) General officers.

However times have changed, the first wakeup call was the attacks on September 11th, 2001, later reinforced with Hurricane Sandy in 2012 and finally kicking into overdrive during the Covid 19 response mission. These missions required soldiers primarily in the rank of Staff Sergeant and below to be available for State Active Duty (SAD). With some exceptions that required some of our junior officers and Warrant officers.

We in the NYG now have a seat at the table as a force provider and we fully intend to remain so and not go back to the days of the cold war. During the asylum seeker mission, we had upwards of one hundred and thirty-four service members (134) on State Active Duty (SAD), almost as many as the NY Air National Guard.

This past December, BG Riley and COL Diz ,visited with our soldiers that were on SAD throughout NYC.

The thing that struck them the most was how well our troops have integrated seamlessly with their counterparts in both the National Guard and Naval Militia. Many if not most of their fellow service members in the other service components either knew little to nothing about the NYG before we assumed a much more active role... resulting in our fellow service members from our sister services asking to transition when they either retire from the federally recognized guard or at the expiration of their national guard or reserve enlistments (Naval Militia).

General Riley was particularly impressed in seeing so many of our NYG soldiers in key leadership and critical staff positions at the various hotels serving as NCOICs and supervising members of the Army and Air National Guard... including Sailors and Marines and Coast Guard members from the Naval Militia.

Thank you again to each and every one of you and your families for what you do each and every day, more to follow.

# EARLEY SAVES A LIFE

by 1LT Ed Shevlin

**Cortlandt Manor, NY** – New York Guard Warrant Officer 1, Theodore Earley, S1 of the 56th Company donated a kidney to save the life of FDNY EMS Lieutenant PJ Acosta.

Mr. Earley learned of the need while browsing the FDNY Family Assistance page on Facebook. LT Acosta is a 25-year veteran of the FDNY where he serves as a paramedic.

The first kidney transplant in the United States was performed on 17 June 1954 when Richard Lawler MD implanted a kidney in Ruth Tucker a 49-year-old woman suffering from kidney disease. The surgery took place at the Little Company of Mary Hospital in Evergreen Park, IL.

Ms. Tucker suffered an immunological rejection of the kidney 10 months after the surgery, but the unaffected kidney was relieved of stress during that period and returned to full function.

Earley and Acosta went in for their transplant surgery on July 2nd at Montefiore Hospital in The Bronx. While lying on operating tables in adjacent rooms, surgeons removed a kidney from Earley and placed it in Acosta.

Brigadier General Peter Riley, Commander of the New York Guard, praised Warrant Officer Earley for his outstanding act of human kindness, "The New York Guard is extremely proud of WO1 Earley and his selfless service and great someone is such dire need. He truly upholds the values of the New York Guard and is a shining example for others."

When asked why he donated a kidney to a total stranger, Earley had this to say, "This guy has given twenty-five years of selfless service to the department, and I saw this as my opportunity to do something for him."

Warrant Officer Earley recognized the selfless service of LT Acosta with some selfless service of his own by giving a piece of himself to save the life of a man who saves the lives of others every day while working as a paramedic.

"I am in awe of WO1 Earley not just for donating a kidney, but for doing it with such humility and strength. It takes a rare kind of bravery to give someone a second chance at life." Commented Colonel Stephen Ryan, Deputy Commander of the New York Guard.

Over the years since that first kidney transplant in 1955, the medical profession has become significantly more adept at the whole transplant process. Compatible donors are now easier to identify, surgeons are much more skilled, and facilities are now commonplace across the United States. In fact, kidney transplants are now the most common organ transplant in the country with over 440,000 taking place since 1955.

Despite the incredible success of the medical profession in performing this life-saving surgery, most people who step up to donate a kidney may do so with a certain amount of trepidation, not so with Ted Earley. Staff Sergeant Stanley Cohen, Signal NCO for the 56th Company referred to Ted Earley's kidney donation as "selfless and courageous."



Mr. Earley enlisted in the New York National Guard in 2007 during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. Deployed to Afghanistan from January 2012 to March 2013, he served as an Infantryman (11B) while in country. Among his many federal awards and decorations are the Army Achievement Medal with 4 Oak Leaf Clusters, the Combat Action Badge, and the Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal with 1 Bronze Service Star.

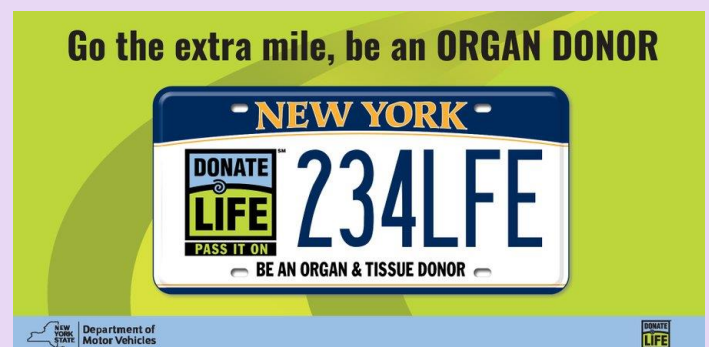
In terms of NYS and NYG Awards, Earley's accomplishments read like a catalog of what is possible for a NYG Soldier to achieve. One award that strongly speaks to the type of person that Warrant Officer Earley is, is the NYS Humanitarian Service Award, which he received for his service on Hurricane Irene Recovery. Early enlisted in the New York Guard in June of 2017.

As for Lieutenant PJ Acosta, this deeply committed public servant continues to enjoy a robust recovery with no indication of any immunological rejection. In fact, his kidney function has been steadily improving since the transplant. LT Acosta is looking forward to going back to work once he is medically cleared to do so.

Mr. Early returned to drill at Camp Smith just ten days after donating his kidney to Acosta on 12 July 2025. Speaking of Earley, Staff Sergeant Orlando Villa of the 56th Company said, "Warrant Officer Ted Early is the embodiment of the US Army's core values which are Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage. We wish him continued good health and a lifetime of happiness.



Left to Right- Maria Acosta (Mother) LT PJ Acosta (Recipient), WO1 Theodore Earley (Donator) and Peter Acosta (Dad) celebrating a highly successful kidney transplant. On July 2nd, 2025, WO1 Ted Earley donated a kidney to save the life of FDNY EMS Lieutenant PJ Acosta."



*While conducting research for my article on Warrant Officer Earley's donation of a kidney to help a man in renal failure, I reached out to the recipient, Lieutenant PJ Acosta, FDNY EMS. I asked PJ to tell me about his feelings on the matter, hoping to get a quote to put in my article. What I got was a very well written and poignant email that touched my heart to the point where I could not just pull a quote out, I had to leave it whole. So here is the story in PJ's own words, I'm sure you'll agree that no one could tell it better.*

*Ed Shevlin*

I am 43 years old, and I am currently a Lieutenant in the New York City Fire Department going on 25 years on the job. I have always been relatively healthy and worked out daily. All of a sudden on December 17th of 2024 I fell severely ill. I initially thought I might have had the flu. I went to the emergency room and my condition got worse overnight and I was listed in critical condition. That's when I was informed that both my kidneys had stopped functioning and I was diagnosed with end stage renal disease. I was informed that if I didn't get placed on dialysis immediately that I would not survive past a day or two.

I became a dialysis patient requiring dialysis treatment three days a week. I was not able to return to working the job that I had dedicated my life to, and my life changed drastically. In January of this year, I began my journey to getting on multiple kidney transplant lists on hospitals all across the tri state area and Florida . I was placed on these lists but told the wait time could be 7-10 years to receive a kidney transplant. Multiple friends and family went to get tested to donate even my father but unfortunately none of them met the requirements. One day in May I received a phone call from Montefiore hospital and the advised me that they had a hundred percent match and that the transplant would take place July 2nd. They would not tell me who the person was only that it was a complete stranger who had never met before who came forward to help save my life . I was shocked and filled with joy that a total stranger could do something like this for me .

On July 2nd I went into the hospital as a patient with end stage renal disease. Today I am a kidney disease survivor. Teddy's kidney is functioning perfectly and well above normal limits. My body has accepted the transplant without any complications, and I literally feel 20 years younger.

On July 4th I was discharged from the hospital because the doctor were amazed at how in good of condition I was, and they felt I could go home. When I walked out of the hospital not only were my brothers and sisters from the FDNY there to greet me, but Teddy was there waiting for me to greet me. He had just been discharged himself a day before and was still in pain from surgery, but he decided that he wanted to come be there when I got out. It shows what kind of person he is. Even though he was recovering and in pain he drove all the way back down to NYC to be there to hug me.





What I can tell you about Teddy is that even though he may disagree, I think he is a true definition of a hero in every sense of the word. He has served our country protecting us and our freedoms. He serves his community as a first responder. And is involved with helping many members of the FDNY as a member of many organizations within the department. There is no doubt that Teddy saved my life. He gave me a second chance to live and see my daughter graduate college and get married one day and gave me a chance to be a grandfather in the future. He gave me a chance to go back to the job that I love and wear the uniform again and retire my way not on a disability. Most importantly not only did I receive a new kidney I now have a brother for life. Teddy and I speak every single day, and we see each other often at least once a week. It's because of him that I am currently in the process of applying to enlist into the NY guard to continue to help serve the state and community. Together I think that our story can help so many people to never give up hope and bring attention to living organ donation. Moving forward we plan to help many other people in finding a match for a transplant because there are millions of more Americans out there currently going through what I went through and if we can help just one person it will be worth it.



# 107th Annual Aqueduct Defense Commemoration

*by 1LT Ed Shevlin*

**Sleepy Hollow, New York – The** 56th Company of the New York Guard hosted the 107th Annual Aqueduct Defense Memorial Service at the Aqueduct Defense Monument in Sleepy Hollow Cemetery on Sunday, 4 May 2025.

The current stewards of the New York City water supply, the NYC Department of Environmental Protection Police, and the Veteran Corps of Artillery, also participated in the memorial service along with local politicians and community leaders.

The memorial service commemorates the supreme sacrifice of forty New York Guard Soldiers of the First Provisional Regiment, who fell prey to the Spanish Flu while guarding the Catskill Aqueduct which brought water to New York City.

The New York Guard was constituted on 1 August 1917 after National Guard troops were federalized and sent to Europe to fight in World War I.

The primary mission of the New York Guard at that time was that of infrastructure protection. The attack on Black Tom Island by German saboteurs on 30 July 1916 which detonated over 40 tons of TNT and other explosives bound for the Allied Armies in Europe, punctuated the need for robust infrastructure protection.

As New York Guard recruits received their basic training, the Soldiers of the Veteran Corps of Artillery manned their posts along the Catskill Aqueduct until such time as the New York Guard was ready to be deployed. The New York Times praised the New York Guard in an editorial on October 7th 1917, “Protection of the aqueducts and bridges, armories and public building and effective cooperation with the Federal Government in its military preparations are essential.” Immediately upon completion of their Initial Entry Training (IET), the newly trained Soldiers were deployed to their posts along the aqueduct from New Paltz to New York City.

1st Lieutenant Frank Marcigliano, Commanding Officer of the 56th Company commented on the importance of commemoration, “It is imperative that we continue to honor the service and sacrifice of those New York Guard Soldiers who came before us. There may come a time when we are called upon to step up and take risks to protect our state. The memory of the fallen of the First Provisional Regiment serves as a source of strength for us.”

The ceremonies began with The Presentation of the Colors by the DEP Police and the VCA Combined Color Guard. The Commanding General of the New York Guard, Brigadier General Peter Riley and CPT Joseph Miceli then laid a wreath at the monument. A second wreath was laid by Sergeant Major David Rogers and Colonel Ray Mechmann, Commandant of the VCA.

As the event continued, Commanding General of the New York Guard, Brigadier General Peter Riley addressed the gathering and was followed by, CPT Joseph Miceli DEP Police, Philip Zegarelli Board President Sleepy Hollow Cemetery, COL Ray Mechmann, and others.

# 107<sup>th</sup> Annual Aqueduct Defense Memorial Service Sleepy Hollow N.Y. May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2025

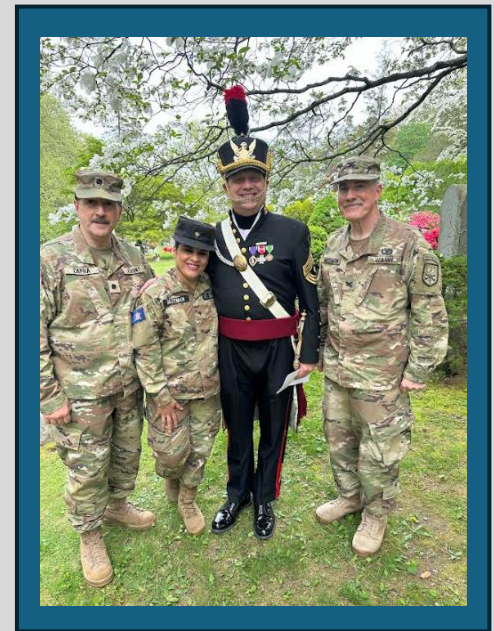
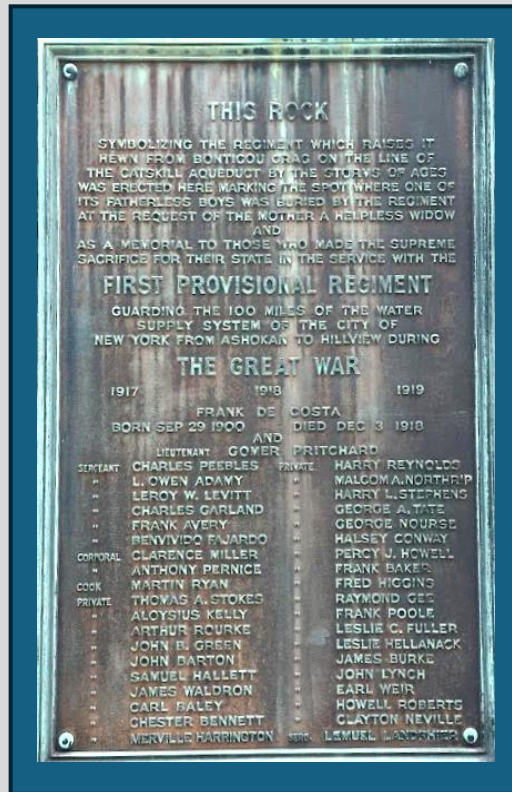


## Remembering our Fallen

1917



1919



# **The Nurse Who Gave Her Life for the Guard**

*The comments of COL John Mechmann, Veterans Corp of Artillery on May 4<sup>th</sup> , 2025*

Good morning, it is a privilege to be here with you today to honor the fallen of the 1st Provisional RGT NY Guard. What was life on the line like for them?

The health and welfare of the 1st while on duty bears closely to the reason we are here today, to honor those who passed in service on this line from 1917 to 1919. The general health of the command was excellent except during the Influenza epidemic of 1918. Due to lack of prior firearms instruction, there were twenty cases of accidental shooting, though only one fatality occurred. Only one case of typhoid fever was reported, and inoculations were routinely given to men who came on duty.

During the months of September, October and November 1918, however, the worldwide epidemic of influenza resulted in 913 cases, 30 of these being fatal. The civilian auxiliaries of the Women's Motor Corps worked all hours transporting men from the line to the various hospitals. St Luke's Hospital in Newburgh was the main location for soldiers to be treated in the 1st RGT initially, until the City of Newburgh provided the use of a City School Board building. The Commander of the RGT, Colonel Rose, was authorized by headquarters to establish this as Field Hospital #1, to hire nurses, and purchase necessary supplies. The Red Cross also established a hospital (Field Hospital #2) at the Regimental HQ (the Holbrook Military Academy in Ossining), and the Red Cross equipped this building and provided some nurses for both Field Hospital #s 1 and 2.

Now, that while I do not begrudge at all the recognition that we express for all the good done, and the sacrifices made, by the men of the 1st, there is at least one woman who deserves a share of that recognition. Anyone who wears the camo for a living, or is in the police or fire service, knows that the goodbye they make to their families upon deployment, or starting a tour, may be their last. After COVID, we know better, better than we have in 100 years, that the health professions face the same challenge in a pandemic. Nurse May Craig of Newburgh was born in 1889, the youngest child of Irish immigrants. Her father, Samuel was widowed sometime before 1910, by which time May was a registered nurse. And so it was in October 1918 that she and 30 others with the Red Cross began service in Field Hospitals # 1 and #2, as Nurses or Nurse's Aids. May was an experienced Nurse, indeed a damn good one, and was employed at Field Hospital # 1 with some of the worst flu cases. Weeks into the epidemic, she contracted the flu herself, and was treated in the same ward at #1 where she herself had given care. She died there of pneumonia on October 21, 1918, at the height of the infection of the RGT, at age 29, the sole nurse to die of the flu while treating soldiers of the RGT.

The following words were written mere months later by CPT TR Hutton, the former Adjutant of the RGT, in Halitt-Whazaa, the history of the RGT, of May Craig and women like her:

No mere printed words can express the appreciation of the regiment to those women who toiled by beds of fever, labored breath, pain, and death in the long days and the longer nights of the last four months of the regiment's service. There is no reward that could repay that debt, unless it is the satisfaction of the scores and scores of boys who, because of tender nursing and good care pulled through the valley of the shadow of death and came out on the bright slope to go to the world again, their hearts full of gratitude to those women who wore the Red Cross.

Every year we remember the service of those 40 men listed on this memorial stone, who died in the service of their state and nation, and of course the service of those who survived. This year, let us heed CPT Hutton's words, and recall too the service to death of their previously anonymous nurse, May Craig, and the tender care she and those 30 others gave, nurses who like her toiled in danger of infection and death in those hospital wards. We are indeed indebted to their sacrifice too.

## TAG MATCH 2025 CAMP SMITH

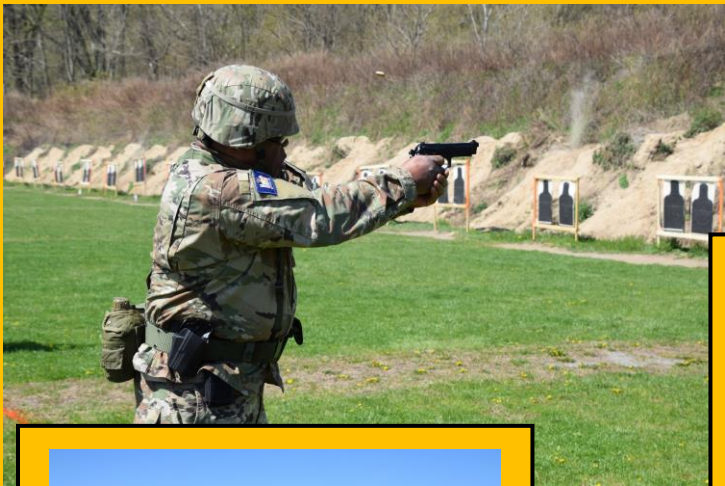
Members of the New York Guard Combat Pistol Team enjoying some friendly banter with former member PFC Joe Baldwin at the 2025 TAG Match. Baldwin enlisted in the New York National Guard and now competes on a National Guard pistol team.



2LT Julien Wolfe engaging his target from the 25-yard line. The New York Guard Combat Pistol Team competed against service members from the NY National Guard and NY Air National Guard in the 47th Annual TAG Match.



CW3 Arthur Brown Taking his target under fire from 30 yds out. The 47th Annual TAG Match was held at Camp Smith Training Site from 23 – 26 April 2025



COL John Mechmann scoring his opponent's target at the 2025 TAG Match. Mechmann has led the pistol team for many years and we wish him all the best as he moves on to the next chapter of his life.



Col John Mechmann OIC NYG Combat Pistol Team, and MSG Steve Melito NCOIC, discussing strategy at the 2025 TAG Match. These two service members competed in their last match due to their impending retirements from the NYG.

*Photos by 1LT Ed Shevlin*

# The 46<sup>th</sup> Annual Tag Match, 2025

*by 1LT Ed Shevlin*

**Camp Smith Cortlandt Manor, NY** -The 53rd Troop Command of the New York National Guard hosted the 46th Annual TAG Match (The Adjutant General's Match) at Camp Smith Training Site from 23 April – 26 April 2025. This annual marksmanship event tests the shooting skills of New York National Guard, New York Air National Guard, New York Naval Militia and New York Guard service members through a variety of competitions.

The New York Guard Combat Pistol Team attended this year's TAG Match participating in three of the four competitions. "Once again, the 53rd Troop Command did a fabulous job of hosting this event. It is always enjoyable and a great way to sharpen out marksmanship skills.", said New York Guard team NCOIC Steve Milito.

Unlike their counterparts in the National Guard and the Naval Militia, the New York Guard Combat Pistol Team is self-supported. That is to say that team members compete with their personally owned pistols, pay for their practice range time, and also pay for their targets and ammo used at practice. Additionally, the team competes in the TAG Match as volunteers and are unpaid for their time on the range.

One of the many aspects that all of the New York Military Forces share in common is that of State Active Duty. Due to the fact that so many service members are serving on the current Department of Corrections and Community Service (DOCCS) mission across the State of New York, the TAG Match was limited to pistol competitions. The somewhat scaled-down challenge lost nothing in terms of competitive spirit, with shooters from across the state vying for top honors.

This year's match took place under ideal conditions; a light breeze and abundant sunshine combined with 70–80-degree temperatures on both days of the competition.

"Administratively, everything ran very smoothly, which was in part due to the fact that the rifle and machine-gun competitions were eliminated for this year. Those Soldiers who were running the pistol competitions did not have to wait for competitors to complete events on other ranges before beginning the pistol comps." Said COL John Mechmann, OIC of the New York Guard Combat Pistol Team. The members of the New York Guard team fared well at the TAG Match, generally placing in the top third of the field. One of the team's alums, PFC Joe Baldwin of the NY National Guard's Recruiting and Retention Battalion was a CPL in the 14th DET of the 88th Company, of the New York Guard. Baldwin brought his considerable marksmanship skills to bear at the TAG Match securing a third-place finish overall, a second-place team position overall, and a first-place win in the General Patton Pistol Match. PFC Baldwin shared his thoughts on shooting in the TAG Match, "The match always helps me identify the areas where I need to improve. Be it shooting from the standing, prone or kneeling position, nothing brings out your weak spots like competition." If New York Guard Soldiers are interested in joining the Combat Pistol Team, there is a place for you. Start the process by getting your New York State Pistol License. In particular, the team needs novice marksmen and women. All four-man teams in the competition must have at least one member who has never shot the TAG Match in the past. All things considered, the members of the New York Guard Combat Pistol Team enjoyed the competition and gained valuable experience over the course of the match.

# New York Guard Welcomes New Chief of Staff

Story by 1LT Ed Shevlin

**Cortlandt Manor, New York** - The Headquarters Detachment of the New York Guard welcomed Colonel John Bivona to their ranks on Saturday, 5 April 2025. Bivona was given the Oath of Office by New York Guard Commanding General BG Peter Riley in a ceremony which took place in Building 84 at Camp Smith Training Site.

Colonel Bivona will serve as the Chief of Staff effective immediately. The Chief of Staff is the principal staff officer who assists the commander in directing and coordinating staff activities. He acts as the NY Guard's information manager and ensures that all activities align with the commander's intent and is prepared to assume command in the absence of the deputy commander if necessary.

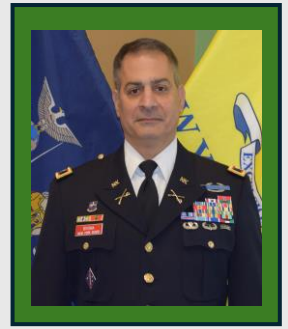
Many people might wonder why someone who has given so much of themselves to the country would want to continue their service in the New York Guard, Bivona explains, "After a career dedicated to public service in both the military and federal law enforcement, returning to uniform allows me to continue serving with purpose, share my experience, and support the next generation of leaders. I believe in contributing where I can still make a difference, especially in times of need.

"The New York Guard has benefitted greatly from the experience of prior service individuals over the years. Many New York Guard service members, both enlisted and officers, have brought their considerable talents to bear upon the training and operations of the New York Guard. Colonel John Bivona will no doubt be among the ranks of those who enrich our organization on a daily basis. Welcome Sir.

*"I've dedicated my life to service—first in the military and then as an FBI Agent. Returning to uniform in the New York Guard is a way to continue giving back, share my experience, and support the next generation of leaders"*.



## “Meet Colonel John Bivona”



John A. Bivona was born in Brooklyn, NY. After completing Fordham University's ROTC Program in 1989, he was commissioned a second lieutenant in the infantry. COL Bivona served in the Active, Reserve and National Guard Components of the Army. He retired in December 2019 from the United States Army Reserve. COL Bivona received a Master of Strategic Studies from the U.S. Army War College in 2018, a Master of Business Administration in International Business from Pace University in 1996 and a Bachelor of Science in Marketing and Management from Fordham University in 1989 and graduated the U.S Army Command & General Staff College Intermediate Level Education Program. He completed Ranger, Airborne, and Air Assault Schools.

COL Bivona's first assignment was to the U.S. Army Berlin Brigade as an infantry platoon leader serving alongside British, French and Russian Soldiers. He continued to serve in leadership, staff and joint assignments at various levels in the U.S. Army. Some career highlights include deploying to Southwest Asia as a part of a multi-national task force during the first Persian Gulf Conflict; U.N. Peacekeeper in the Former Yugoslavia; the Executive Officer of a Joint Advisory Team responsible for advising more than 2,700 Iraqi Soldiers while conducting Combat Operations in Fallujah, IQ; the Director of the Reserve Component National Security Course responsible for preparing senior leaders from all services for strategic military positions; and the Senior Watch Officer in the European Command (EUCOM) Joint Operations Center responsible for maintaining situational awareness of all activities in the EUCOM area of responsibility. In addition to serving in the Army, COL Bivona served as a Special Agent with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) from 1996 to 2022. Supervisory Special Agent (SSA) (Retired) Bivona served in the New York Office from 1996 through 2016, where he conducted and supervised international Narcotics, Counterterrorism and Transnational Organized Crime Investigations. SSA Bivona was selected to lead an interagency organized crime task force in New York. He served as one of the founding members of the Joint FBI and Hungarian National Police Organized Crime Task Force in Budapest, Hungary. He deployed to Mosul, Iraq and served on a Joint Interagency Task Force (JIATF). He served as the Acting Assistant Legal Attaché (ALAT) in Tirana, Albania. From 2016 to March 2019, he served as the Senior FBI representative (Legal Attaché) in Sarajevo, Bosnia & Herzegovina promoting the FBI's efforts in Bosnia, Serbia, and Montenegro. From 2019 to 2022, he served as the FBI Legal Attaché in Riga, Latvia leading a team representing the FBI to Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. He retired from the FBI in September 2022. Throughout his career COL Bivona has received numerous recognitions for his service and performance.

His military awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal, the Defense Meritorious Service Medal with 1 OLC, Army Commendation Medal, Army Achievement Medal, NATO Medal, United Nations Medal, Kuwaiti Liberation Medal (Government of Kuwait), Iraqi General Service Medal (Iraqi Government), the Combat Infantryman's Badge, the Expert Infantryman's Badge, Ranger Tab, Basic Parachutist Badge, and Air Assault Badge. As an FBI Agent, SSA Bivona has received commendations from the FBI, DEA, The Federal Executive Board, Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association (FLEOA) as well as the governments of Bosnia & Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. COL Bivona currently serves as the President & CEO of a consultancy firm, Gardisto Group, which collaborates with private, government and international clients guiding innovative security operations, investigations, training, and strategies designed to address current threats and issues. In his careers, COL Bivona represented the United States internationally and domestically. His life of service was only made possible by the support of his family, friends, co-workers, and international partners.

# Advice from the NYG Medical Officer Col José Chávez-Cacho MD FACS



## Heat Exhaustion Treatment

- *Loosen*/remove clothing
- *Move* to a cool place
- *Lay down*, elevate feet
- *Cool* body temperature with water or ice
- If conscious, give fluids to *drink*
- *Seek medical care* as soon as possible

## Heat Stroke Treatment

- *Loosen*/remove clothing
- *Move* to a cool place
- *Elevate head* & shoulders
- *Cool* body temperature as quickly as possible
- ***DO NOT DRINK*** fluids
- ***Call 911 - seek immediate medical care***

**HYDRATE - HYDRATE - HYDRATE** Prevention is the first and best treatment. Fluid replacement is essential. Keep plenty of non-alcoholic, caffeine free fluids available at all times. Increase salt intake. Drink enough fluid to make you urinate regularly. Urine should be light yellow or clear in color. Muscle cramps, moist skin, and profuse sweating can be early signs of heat-related illness. Increase fluid and salt intake and seek medical care as soon as possible.

Remember  
Soldiers

**“HYDRATE”**  
**“HYDRATE”**  
**“HYDRATE”**

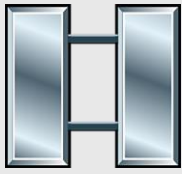
## HEAT EXHAUSTION

- Moist and clammy skin, usually pale
- Pupils dilated
- Normal or subnormal temperature
- Weak, dizzy or faint
- Headache
- No appetite, nausea



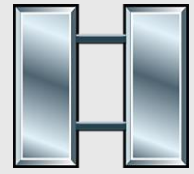
## HEAT STROKE

- Dry hot skin, usually red
- Pupils constricted
- Very high body temperature
- Coma or near coma
- Pulse strong and rapid



# “Four New Captains Pinned”

by 1LT Ed Shevlin



**Cortlandt Manor, NY** – The New York Guard promoted four First Lieutenants to Captain in Building 84 at Camp Smith Training Site on July 12th, 2025.

1LT Angelica Cafone, 1LT James Chin, 1LT Alexander Cisneros, and 1LT John Olszewski, all traded in their silver bars for the double silver bars of a Captain. The promotion ceremony was conducted by Lieutenant Colonel David Ryan, G1, New York Guard. Colonel Stephen Ryan pinned CPT John Olszewski.

When asked how he viewed his new rank and potential new responsibilities, CPT James Chin said, “I am honored to have been promoted to Captain and I look forward to my new supervisory responsibilities. I will work hard to fulfil the expectations of my superiors and as always to help the Soldiers in any way that I can.”

Cafone, Chin, and Cisneros recently completed the Captains Career Course, a week-long residency at Camp Smith Training Site held from June 9th – June 13th in Building 84. The course was presented by LTC David Ryan G1, NYG, and leveraged the experience of the students as they taught classes they were assigned, and broke new ground through classes taught by Ryan.

Captain John Olszewski completed his required Professional Military Education (PME) by attending the Company Grade Officer’s Course (CGOC) in the past.

The newly minted Captains will go on to fill vital roles in the New York Guard across a range of different positions.



# Asylum Seeker Resource Support



**Bellrose, New York-** Commanding General of the New York Guard, BG Peter Riley, visiting with New York Guard troops assigned to the Asylum Seeker Mission in Bellerose, New York. New York Guard Soldiers were assigned to locations across the state in support of the Asylum Seeker Mission.



# 88th Company Officers Recognized for Asylum Seeker Service

by 1LT Ed Shevlin

**Staten Island, NY** – Two officers from the 88th Company, 1st Lieutenant James Chin and 2nd Lieutenant Michael Rogers were recognized for their service on the Asylum Seeker mission. 1LT Chin was presented with the New York State Medal for Meritorious Service and 2LT Rogers received a Certificate of Appreciation. Both awards were presented by New York National Guard Colonel Aaron Lefton at the Staten Island Armory on July 29th, 2024.

The New York State Asylum Seeker Mission focused on providing shelter, resources, and support, to a large influx of asylum seekers arriving in the state, particularly in New York City.

1LT Chin received the NYS Medal for Meritorious Service based on his service as the Office of the Command Judge Advocate Inquiry Officer providing legal support across the Joint Task Force of over 2,000 Service Members. Chin conducted over 60 Commander's Inquiries and delivered legal counsel to more than 20 individual Service members.

1LT Chin commented, "I was incredibly honored to receive the New York State Medal for Meritorious Service during my time assigned to the Office of the Command Judge Advocate (OCJA) of Operation Asylum Seeker Resource Support (ASRS). Serving as an Inquiry and Legal Support Officer throughout this historic mission was one of the most rewarding—and humbling—experiences of my career. The recognition of receiving the Medal for Meritorious Service, however, was earned by being part of an incredible team that made it all possible.



2LT Rogers received a Certificate of Appreciation for Officer of the Asylum Seeker mission. In the course of his duties, Rogers supervised 730 service members from all four components of the DMNA on a daily basis, while coordinating the activities of the S1, S3, and S4 sections.

Rogers was grateful for the recognition, "It was an honor being recognized for my performance as Executive Officer for CP (Command Post) Queens.

The achievement was made possible by the hard work and dedication of the Soldiers assigned to the staff sections under my supervision."

Once again, the hard work and dedication of New York Guard service members has Cast the organization in a most favorable light.

Congratulations to 1LT Chin and 2LT Rogers.

**Staten Island, New York-** 2nd Lieutenant Michael Rogers and 1st Lieutenant James Chin, both of the 88th Company, displaying their awards received for their exemplary service on the Asylum Seeker Mission. Both awards were presented by Colonel Aaron Lefton.



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# THE ENEMY IS LISTENING

THE ENEMY IS LISTENING

# OPSEC

**DO NOT POST SHIP DATES,  
COUNTDOWNS, FAMILY DAY OR  
GRADUATION DATES OR TROOP  
MOVEMENTS ON SOCIAL MEDIA  
OR PUBLIC SITES**



The Safety of our troops and their families is of the utmost importance to our state, and our country. As you know, our enemies are here, and they are always listening. They make no distinction between a New York Guard uniform and that of a US Army Soldier.

Operational Security or OPSEC, must therefore be maintained at all times. Small bits of information that may seem insignificant to you may serve as pieces of a puzzle that when assembled provide the enemy with a view of our operations that could prove disastrous.

Be careful about what you share on social media. This is an internal newsletter and should not be shared with others who are not members of the New York Guard. Remember, the life you save may be your own.

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