

# NEW YORK NAVAL MILITIA

NEWSLETTER — SUMMER 2025





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#### NEW YORK NAVAL MILITIA

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An entity of the  
**New York State Division of Military & Naval Affairs**



#### Front Cover photo:

*Abandon ship and water recovery training during Operation Commanding Force 2025, Phase I, July 2025. OCFP1 was a collaborative exercise involving the NYNM (afloat abandon ship facilitator to the right) US Coast Guard Station, Alexandria Bay, (afloat water recovery operations to the left), and USNR units assigned to Naval Medical Center Portsmouth (trainees).*

*(Photo courtesy of RDML Perry)*

#### Back Cover photo:

*EOCS Pease, RDML Perry, CAPT Nolan, and EMC Gerard in the Lantern/Lens Room atop the Rock Island Lighthouse, Fishers Landing, NY, July 18, 2025*

*(photo courtesy of CAPT Nolan)*

## **Commander's Corner:**



**Rear Admiral (LH)  
Michael Perry, NYNM**

### **From the Commander:**

Ahoy shipmates! This will be an abbreviated version of the NYNM Newsletter primarily to maintain continuity of its publication while we transition responsibility for producing future editions to a proposed Military Emergency Communications and Surveillance (MECS) Command. Once approved, MECS will combine our current Communications, Unmanned Aerial System, and Public Affairs units and functions into a single command under a newly established functional commander. The net result will allow our Military Emergency Boat Service (MEBS), and particularly our MEBS Commander, to further focus upon afloat operations. Many thanks and well done to CAPT McKnight who has been solely responsible for coordinating publication of the NYNM Newsletter for many years as a collateral duty. He has truly established an outstanding precedent for MECS to follow, and his efforts will be sorely missed.

Next, thank you again to the hundreds of NYNM members who have supported the ongoing NYS Department of Corrections and Community Services (DOCCS) mission. Our resulting contributions to the overall mission accomplishment and readiness of the New York National Guard (NYNG) cannot be overstated. Thus, if you have yet to do so, please consider volunteering to support the DOCCS mission.

As well as congratulations to our recent selectees for promotion to the next rank and annual Josephthal award winners. The Chief of Staff News portion of this Newsletter details their names and inspirational accomplishments. In addition, NOW is the time to begin thinking about next year's selection boards.

Same to those who helped support Exercise Empire Challenge 2025 (ECX25) and the Swedish State Partnership Program (SPP) of the NYNG over the past several months. ECX25 was easily the most complex and wide-ranging exercise that the NYNM has ever hosted and featured participation by over 25 different state, federal and local agencies and a detachment of representatives from the Swedish Navy as one of several SPP events that the NYNM has supported over the past several months.

Finally, this will likely be my last Newsletter. Solely because I have recommended to The Adjutant General that the NYNM follow the precedent set by nearly every other military force, including the New York National Guard, and limit NYNM Commander tours to two years with the expectation that subsequent candidates should have successfully completed NYNM Regional or Functional Commander and NYNM Chief of Staff fleet-up tours. Same with recommending no more than three-year tours for our Regional and

Functional Command and Force Senior Enlisted Leader (SEL) billets. Thereby establishing a clear and far more predictable career path that encourages our members to proactively seek and excel in our most challenging billets. Knowing that if they consistently work hard and generate results, they will eventually have at least a reasonable chance of being selected to fill even more challenging and our most senior billets. The proposed permanent change has already produced positive results. Specifically, I anticipate being relieved this Fall by someone who has already proven their ability to excel in our most challenging billets and easily and eagerly earned selection as our next NYNM Commander.

Otherwise, I have thoroughly enjoyed serving as an active member of the NYNM since 1991 as well as your Commander over the past two years and would gladly continue doing so indefinitely. Meanwhile, thank you for the loyalty and hard work, which has produced well over 250,000 days of State Active Duty (SAD) in support of the NYNG during two major activations over the past two years. Thus, please recall the advice that I have repeatedly given in this column to, “think twice and act once,” while on SAD, as well as in your personal life, with regard to questioning the wisdom of any possibly inappropriate actions that might endanger your ability to remain eligible to answer the call of duty when your state and shipmates need you most.

## UNIFORMS

The N.Y. Naval Militia Uniform Instruction (NYNMINST 1020.1E) paragraph 1. e. (3) (c) directs that all members of the NYNM that are no longer in active or reserve federal status (including retirees, veterans, and non-drilling Reservists) must wear the N.Y. NAVAL MILITIA component tape in place of the U.S. component nametape above the left breast pocket. **In other words, a NYNM member must be a drilling Reservist to wear the federal component nametape on the uniform while on duty with the NYNM. All others are to wear the N.Y. NAVAL MILITIA component tape.**

The same instruction directs that for required Naval Militia badges or pins, the only authorized versions include the rectangular NYNM full-color or subdued patches, the 2-inch metal badge, or specific unit patches such as MEBS or the UAS Unit. No other versions are authorized for the NYNM uniform.

Additionally, NYNMINST 1020.1E Para. 1.c. directs that the NYNM follows the uniform guidance of the respective federal components. Modifications not in compliance with the federal components are not authorized except as identified in this instruction.

## Chief of Staff News:

By CAPT MaryEtta Nolan

### Summer Activities and Exercises

The New York Naval Militia, with a strength of 3,270 members, had an active summer, highlighted by the most action-packed Empire Challenge Exercise ever conducted. Exercise Empire Challenge 2025 (ECX25) left a strong impression on a visiting military delegation from the Kingdom of Sweden. MC1 Stephanie Butler contributed two outstanding articles regarding ECX25 as well as Swedish participation in pre-ECX25 activities in NYC to the Spring 2025 edition of Guard Times, which are highly recommended



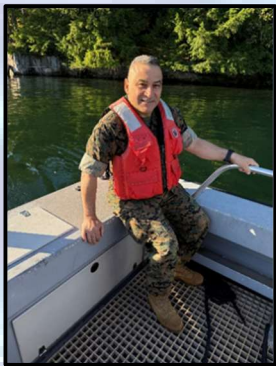
reading, beginning on pages 10 and 31, and available via: [https://dmna.ny.gov/gt/gt\\_spring\\_25\\_web.pdf](https://dmna.ny.gov/gt/gt_spring_25_web.pdf)

Operation Commanding Force 2025 (OCF25) was a collaborative two-phased exercise involving multiple participants, including United States Coast Guard (USCG) Station, Alexandria Bay, the Military Emergency Boat Service (MEBS) of the NYNM, and several United States Navy Reserve (USNR) units which support Naval Medical Center Portsmouth (NMCP) as their gaining command. Specifically, the Alexandria Bay training evolutions supported by the USCG and MEBS during Phase 1 and 2 of OCF25 marked the culmination of two-weeks of intensive medical field training, which was primarily conducted at Fort Drum for Nurses and Corpsmen, and overseen by Emergency Trauma Physicians.

On July 17, 2025, a MEBS detachment transported boats to Keewaydin State Park in Alexandria Bay, NY, in support of Phase 1 of OCF25. A second MEBS detachment supported Phase 2 later that month. After thorough mission and safety briefings, communication checks with USCG Station Alexandria Bay, and a reconnaissance run on the St. Lawrence River, the MEBS team prepared for the next day's exercise.

Greeted with clear skies following recent storms, senior leadership, including RDML Michael Perry, CoS CAPT MaryEtta Nolan, and Force Senior Enlisted Leader (SEL) MGySgt Sal Rignola, assembled at Keewaydin State Park with MEBS crew members MNMCM Niemitato, MMC Hill, EMC Gerard, EOCS Pease, and BU1 Putney and embarked aboard two NYNM boats on a route past Boldt Castle to USCG Station Alexandria Bay located on Wellesley Island.

Upon arrival, the group met with the leadership and members of the Coast Guard Station and USNR NMCP units involved, using the time to connect, recruit, and share information about the NYNM. After receiving additional safety briefings and mission expectations, the joint exercise began. First, participants equipped themselves with safety gear and boarded NYNM boats before heading out onto the river. Then they simulated an abandoned ship scenario. Most notably by jumping from the bow of PB221 one after another while it trolled slowly backwards. Then the trainees clustered together in the water until being rescued by a USCG Patrol Boat. Once ashore, the group divided into victims and caregivers, applying skills gained during their prior training under medical supervision.



Force SEL Rignola and NR NMCP unit members abandoning ship and practicing First Aid during OCF P1

A final water extraction involved the NYNM Force triad—RDML Perry, CAPT Nolan, and MGySgt Rignola—alongside the overall OIC of the NMCP USNR units. Naturally, Master Guns led the way, serving as a gung-ho mother duck and rally point until everyone was safely retrieved. Thereafter, the Coast Guard patrol boat quickly extracted the team and returned them to dry land.

Finally, the OIC of the NMCP USNR units presented a plaque to the OIC of the NYNM MEBS detachment, MNMCM Niemitato, commending his detachment's dedication to duty in support of OCF Phase 1 and the overall success of OCF25.

After partaking in a fabulous lunch sponsored by the Coast Guard Auxiliary, the NYNM leadership

team accompanied the MEBS Detachment during follow-on safety and familiarization patrols of Alexandria Bay and its environs, which included brief visits to State of New York facilities and activities located on both Rock and Wellesley Islands. In summary, MEBS was obviously an essential and enabling component of OCF25 and congratulations and well done to all involved!

### **Service Member Deployments**

Currently, nearly 400 service members are deployed throughout New York State in support of the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision Mission. The dedication and commitment of these individuals to ensuring the safety of New Yorkers is greatly appreciated.

### **2025 NYNM Promotion Board Results**

In June of 2025, the NYNM Promotion Board convened to review sixteen promotion packages. As President of the Board, I am pleased to announce that seven distinguished members have been selected for advancement and, upon completion of any outstanding concerns, can be promoted to their next rank no sooner than October 1<sup>st</sup> by the Commander of the NYNM or Force SEL. These promotions reflect the outstanding dedication and leadership demonstrated by each member throughout their service. Please join me in congratulating the following Naval Militia members:

- SSgt (sel) William Chavez
- MK1 (sel) Jerry Keith White
- MKC (sel) Wilson A. Fenty
- GySgt (sel) Tony D. Genao
- GySgt (sel) Christopher E. Vega
- MSgt (sel) Hopeton Thomas
- OSCM (sel) Timothy J. Otty

Members not selected were encouraged by our Force, Regional and/or Functional SELs to try again next year and provided recommendations for improving their subsequent promotion packages. Contact your Regional or Functional Command SEL or Force SEL MGySgt Rignola to help coordinate additional counseling or mentoring opportunities as/if desired.

### **2025 Josephtal Award Winners**

New York Naval Militiaman of the Year: \$500 award to GySgt Karla Arvayo for outstanding service as the Senior NCO of a joint MNBF Team charged with reconciling several years of COVID 19 and Asylum Seeker Resource Support financial records.

New York Naval Militia Team of the Year: \$1,500 award evenly divided between the following members of MEBS Detachment NORTHCOM in recognition of their outstanding teamwork supporting numerous training and operational evolutions despite extremely limited staffing:

MNCM Glenn Niemitalo  
GySgt Paul Hauschen (retired)  
MMC Robert Hill  
QMC Tim Petersen  
BU1 Steve Putney, and  
BM2 Christina Bobrowsky

Congratulations to the winners as well as numerous other deserving nominees.



## **NYNM Headquarters Reserve Staffing**

Naval Militia Headquarters is actively seeking willing applicants for leadership positions including Chief of Staff, Deputy Commander, Regional Commanders, Deputy Regional Commanders, Senior Enlisted Leaders, and various N-Code roles. Officers who have achieved the rank of Commander or Captain, Lieutenant Colonel or Colonel during Federal service, are eligible to serve as Commander of the New York Naval Militia. Senior Enlisted personnel, Warrant Officers, and Officers interested in these roles should contact Headquarters Staff for application details and attend Leadership Meetings to learn more about the available positions and responsibilities.

We value diverse backgrounds and encourage all qualified members to bring their unique perspectives to our leadership team. The first step in pursuing a leadership role is to join the Headquarters Staff and participate in upcoming Leadership Meetings, where you can explore opportunities and network with current leaders. All eligible members are welcome to apply and contribute to the future of this great organization.

Major Michael Golden's outstanding recruiting efforts have helped fill the following recent N-Code vacancies. These are key operational and administrative roles that keep our unit running smoothly and efficiently. Thereby ensuring we have talented individuals in every position strengthens our team and prepares us for future success:

- N-1 Personnel/Admin Officer – Ens Stephen Dombroski
- N-2 Intelligence Officer – Maj Frank Cinturati; Deputy – CWO4 Lester Chang
- N-3/5 Operations/Planning Officer – Maj Andrew Ehrenfeld
- N-4 Logistics Officer – LTjg Matthew Bullett
- N-6 Comm Officer – Maj. Michael Golden; Deputy – Capt Recordo Demetrius
- N-7 Training Officer – LCDR Filipp Khosh

I personally would like to say thank you to all our members who step up and help make the New York Naval Militia one of the best in the country. If you are interested in expanding your leadership experience, developing new skills, or making a direct impact on our organization, consider reaching out to the Officer-in-Charge. You'll have the opportunity to learn more about available roles, connect with current leaders, and discover how your unique strengths can contribute to the ongoing growth and excellence of our unit.

## **Director's Comments**

Although the last Newsletter announced his departure, NYNM Director CAPT (ret) David Hawley has continued serving on a part-time basis with the full time assistance of Maj Michael Golden on SAD while preparing for his full and final retirement this Fall. In addition, DMNA has authorized Director Hawley to continue serving post-retirement as a part-time advisor to the full-time members of the NYNM Headquarters Staff.

DMNA recently advertised for candidates interested in applying for Director Hawley's current full-time position as the supervisor of the NYNM Headquarters Staff, has interviewed the resulting candidates, and anticipates announcing the results of the interviews sometime before Director Hawley's final retirement.



Exercise Empire Challenge 2025 (ECX25), our annual emergency communications exercise, took place 4-6 June 2025 in Niagara County. The focus of this year's exercise was a simulated border interdiction event that included numerous federal, state, and local law enforcement and first responder agencies.

As expected, a delegation from the Swedish Navy observed ECX25, as one of their first bi-lateral events here in New York State. This is part of a first-in-nation Maritime State Partnership Program between the Swedish Navy and the New York Naval Militia.

As previously noted, summaries of ECX25 as well as Swedish observations before and during ECX25 can be found in articles written by MC1 Stephanie Butler for the Spring Edition of Guard Times and can be found on pages 10 and 31 via: [https://dmna.ny.gov/gt/gt\\_spring\\_25\\_web.pdf](https://dmna.ny.gov/gt/gt_spring_25_web.pdf)

## READINESS OFFICER

Operation Enduring Support to DOCCS is still going strong. Our Naval Militia Service members are filling key roles across the State. We are still actively recruiting for this mission. Please be aware the duty locations for this mission are not necessarily close to your home of record. You must be willing and able to go anywhere in the State.

The Naval Militia is now required to verify your dependency status and legal home of record for BAH. We require a driver's license or State ID that matches your legal home of record. This will be the address that your W-2 and pay stubs are sent to as well as what determines your BAH. To prove dependency status, we need a copy of your US marriage license certified by your city clerk or a vital records birth certificate signed by your city registrar of a child under 21 years of age. If your dependent child is 21 or over and a full-time student, we also need proof of enrollment.

Maintaining our membership at a healthy level will ensure we can continue to support current and future State Active Duty opportunities. Help me keep our force ready to respond by sending me any **changes to your status, pay grade, address, cell or email**. Remember, your federal branch of service does not share information with NYNM or the State pay office. If you retire or separate you must provide a medical on our forms 88 & 93 prior to separation to remain a member.

Updates can be uploaded to our document portal on the website <https://dmna.ny.gov/nynm/?id=contact> , or sent to [ng.ny.nyarnng.mbx.nynavalmilitia@army.mil](mailto:ng.ny.nyarnng.mbx.nynavalmilitia@army.mil)

Thank you all!  
BMCS(EXW) Elizebeth Spain

## STATE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

The NYNM has proposed sending a detachment of two members to participate in **Exercise KRAKEN** in Gothenburg, Sweden, on 3-7 November, 2025, in response to an invitation received from Swedish Chief of Navy, Rear Admiral Johan Norlén last May. If successful, the detachment would likely be the first time NYNM members have been deployed overseas to support a military exercise since the NYNM stopped directly supporting the United States Navy in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.



## MEBS News:



Refer to the periodic operational summaries (OPSUMs) of the Military Emergency Boat Service, which are available via the following URL, for the latest news regarding MEBS operations and readiness. In summary, MEBS has supported a long list of training evolutions and operational requirements as well as another full season of overall MEBS proficiency training: <https://dmna.ny.gov/nynm/?id=opsum>

## COMMS and UAS Unit News:

By Maj Michael Golden, NYNM

Over the summer months, the Communications and Unmanned Aerial Surveillance units have completed training at the New York State Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Services State Preparedness Training Center located at Oriskany, NY. Naval Militia's Remote Pilots in Command (RPIC) first take the UAS Operators Course which is a combined ground and flight school designed to prepare participants to safely and effectively manage and conduct UAS operations. RPICs then will take as available the UAS Night Flight Course. This course is designed to provide public safety officials an introductory opportunity to safely fly small, unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) at night to support their agency's program. Course addresses the increased risk associated with flying at night by providing participants both ground instruction and practical flight experience necessary to mitigate risk as much as possible.

Additionally, the Unit participated in Exercise Empire Challenge 2025 at Fort Niagara, NY. This exercise allowed the unit to operate directly with partner agencies to ensure coverage of the area of operations as well as learn about their tactics, techniques, and procedures. The NYNM Communications Trailer was utilized as a command post for exercise control and relayed messages to higher headquarters with SSgt Gerard Schaefer taking the lead on digital HF VHF Chat communications. The UAS unit consisted of ET2 David Prescott, GySgt Joseph Soto, and BMC William Garcia who cross trained with New York State Police Troop A UAS team and United States Border Patrol agents on Communications Unit specific core competencies that will develop capabilities to integrate a collaborative and seamless mutual aid response to an incident or planned event by both local and state agencies. Subject matter experts (SMEs) from various agencies participated in the planning process, exercise execution, and evaluation. The Exercise Plan (ExPlan) was produced by the New York State Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Interoperable and Emergency Communications (OIEC) with the input, advice, and assistance of the COMMEX exercise planning team (EPT). The NYNM was assigned as a Search and Rescue (SAR) asset. The Communications Trailer was deployed notionally in the vicinity of Rome NY Water Canals where the Military Emergency Boat Service and the UAS team would potentially operate to conduct SAR operations.

## EDUCATION BENEFITS

Fall 2025 RIRP application period will be opening in July. If you are working towards your first

bachelor's degree, you are encouraged to apply for this great benefit. Please keep in mind these important dates. Failure to do so will result in a denied package. **AUGUST 8 2025** DMNA 96-1 and NYNM Acknowledgment form is due. **OCTOBER 8 2025** the remainder of your documents are due (FASFA Summary of Submission, TAP, APTS, schedule). Please look for an email in early July signifying the application period is open.

For all Members anticipating a Spring Semester, the deadline for applications for Spring 2026 is DEC 8<sup>th</sup> 2025.

## HISTORY BUFF

Guest Contributed by RDML Perry

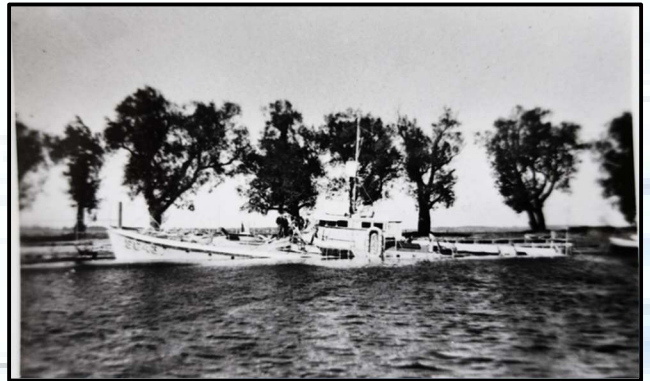
Hopefully, NYNM Historian Mr. Nicholas McKnight will continue submitting his outstanding contributions to the NYNM Newsletter when the new Military Emergency Communications and Surveillance Command assumes responsibility for its publication. Meanwhile, this guest edition of his History Buff column describes how Nick's contributions to date have substantially positively influenced the understanding and legacy of the NYNM in ways that may have otherwise never have happened.

Specifically, Nick's outstanding Winter of 2025 NYNM Newsletter article regarding the history of the NYNM in Watertown and Sackets Harbor, NY, caused me to dig even deeper into that history while visiting Sackets Harbor this past July.

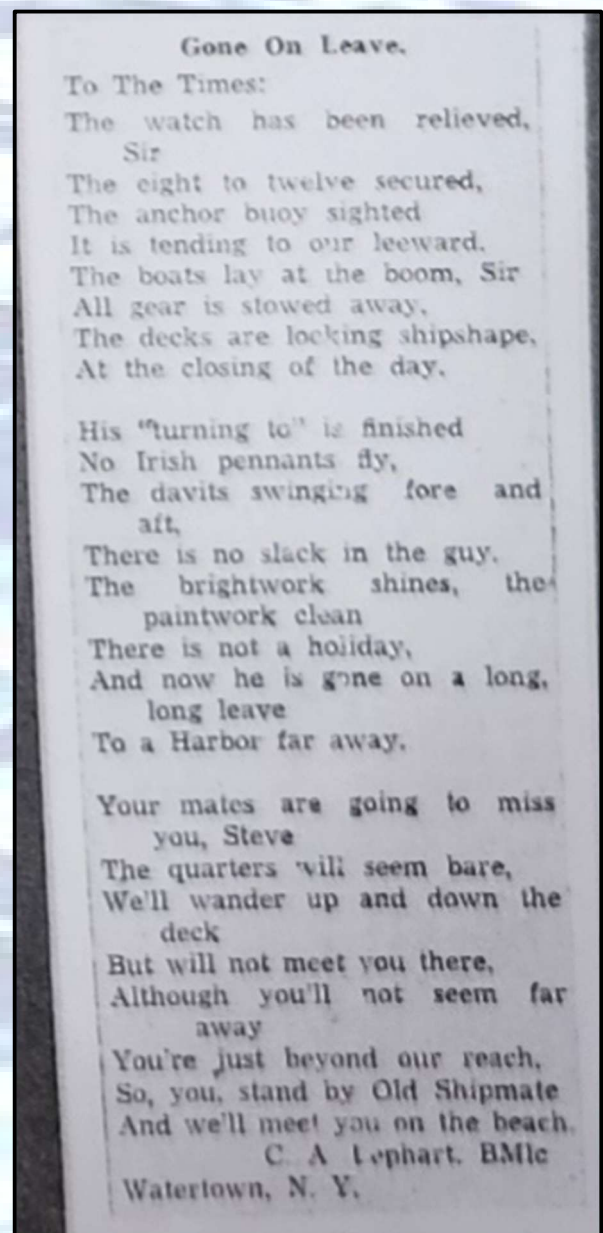
I soon discovered that the current Director of the Sackets Harbor Battlefield State Historic Site (SHBSHS), Ms. Constance Barone, is the granddaughter of Chief Petty Officer Stephen Walter Kafka, NYNM, who served as the full-time NCOIC of NYNM operations at Sackets Harbor until his tragic death on September 6, 1936, due to an easily preventable accident. Specifically, Chief Kafka perished due to a shipmate failing to activate fresh air blowers to purge a bilge of fumes which resulted in a fuel-air explosion that nearly proved fatal to Submarine Chaser 431 (SC431), which was a 110-foot, wooden hull, WWI era, warship that had been loaned to the NYNM for training purposes. SC431 barely survived the explosion and went on to serve admirably during WWII. However, Chief Kafka died from his injuries a few days later. Resulting in his shipmates publishing the following photo and poem in the Watertown Daily Times, which we are republishing here in his memory.

In addition, we are currently working with Ms. Barone to help recover and return at least some Sackets Harbor related NYNM memorabilia to the SHBSHS in the hope of encouraging the Site to establish at least some sort of a NYNM and USNR-related display within its galleries. Currently, the SHBSHS includes little reference to its longstanding relationship with the NYNM and USNR. If you are aware of any additional Sackets Harbor related memorabilia, please let me know. Most important, the memory of shipmate Kafka serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of following safety procedures to both ourselves and others:





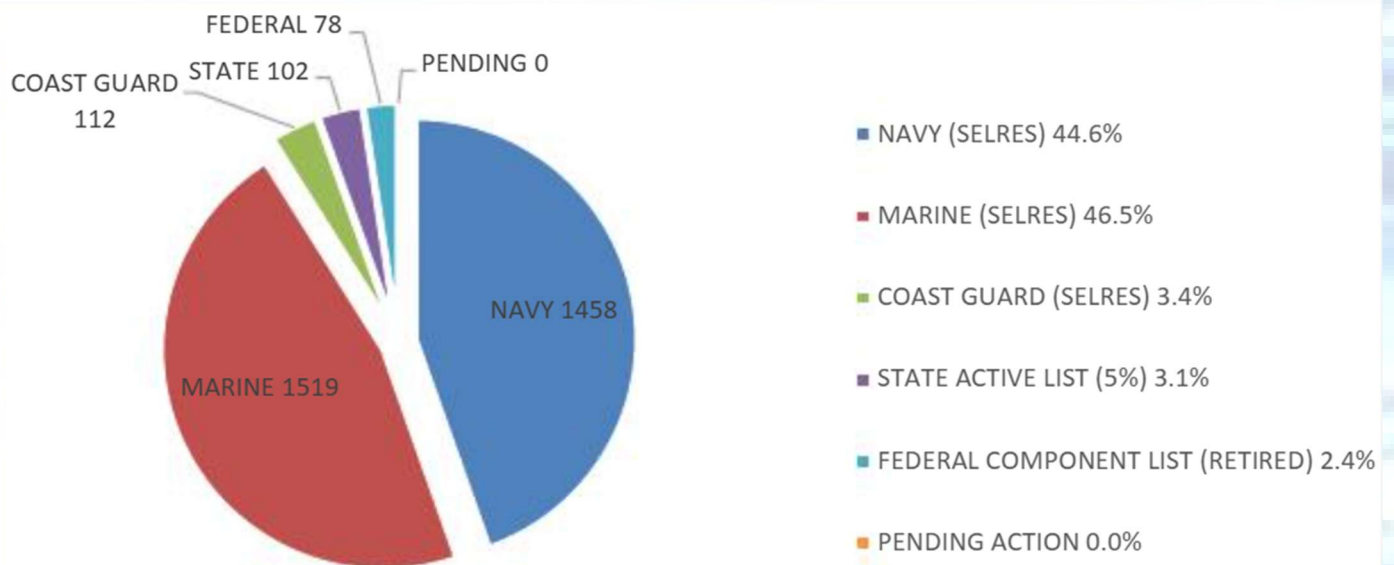
NYNM Sub Chaser 431 before and after the fatal explosion



Chief Stephen Walter Kafka (NYNM) and Watertown Times Poem

## New York Naval Militia by the Numbers

2-Sep-25	SOUTH	NORTH	WEST	TOTAL
OFFICER	146	16	27	189
WARRANT	10	0	1	11
ENLISTED	2494	181	394	3069
<b>TOTAL</b>	2650	197	422	3269
NAVY	1113	99	246	1458
MARINE	1284	77	158	1519
COAST GUARD	103	3	6	112
STATE ACTIVE LIST (5%)	96	4	2	102
FEDERAL COMPONENT LIST (Retired)	52	15	11	78
PENDING ACTION				





## SHIP'S STORE INFORMATION

The New York Naval Militia provides this information for the benefit of our members. The NYNM does not endorse any of the vendors' products:

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