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# guardtimes

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Serving the New York Army and Air National Guard, Naval Militia, New York Guard and Families





# FROM THE LEADERSHIP

## Your Readiness, Responsibility means Vaccination

When you raised your right hand and joined the U.S. military—whether it was 20 days or 20 years ago—you made a promise to put the welfare of your fellow Americans before your own.

Selfless service is a core value of military service, whether on active duty, citizen Soldier or Airman, or member of our State Defense Forces. It even extends to our civilian workforce who, while not bound by an oath, share our common commitment to the better good.

“Service before self” places others above our own self-interest. That’s why we serve. Selfless service is the very core of our military.

It reminds us that when we wear the uniform of the United States we are part of something bigger than ourselves. We are all part of keeping the United States –America– a free, democratic example for the rest of the world to follow. The military serves to protect democracy and defend our freedoms.

Living up to this high expectation is not always easy. It’s why we have a professional code of conduct and critically important, it’s reflected in how we treat one another. That’s why I always find it painful when I hear someone say they fear retaliation from their fellow service members. Retaliation (while it may be human nature) has no place in our organization or our personal lives.

You swore an oath to be better than that. You swore an oath to support and defend the Constitution of the United States and the State of New York. That means accepting responsibility when you make a mistake, not working to cover it up or blame others.

We devote ourselves to our families, employers and communities in ways that reflect our military culture.

In the past two years, and over my 40 years in the Army, I have witnessed the

greater good your individual service has achieved. From combat zones to disasters here in New York and in other states and territories, your service and dedication have been unmatched.

Since March 2020, the collective service of our state’s military forces and civilian employees has been remarkable. Simply stated, New York State could not have responded as effectively had the National Guard and State Defense Forces and DMNA workforce not been available.

As I travel around the state, I never miss the chance to talk with service members to thank them for their service and help solve issues affecting them. The best part of my job as the adjutant general is talking with our remarkable service members. My highlight is always presenting TAG challenge coins for a job well done.

If you’ve met me in the field, you’ll know that I always stress the need to recruit and retain people for our units. I also emphasize the need for each Soldier and Airman to be physically fit, trained in their military specialty and medically ready to deploy. Many of you have heard me say “other than safety (which includes physical safety, prevention and response to sexual assault or sexual harassment, and treating everyone fairly and consistently) we have no higher priority than unit assigned strength, followed by individual readiness.”

Service before self and individual readiness are the starting points for an effective unit. We build unit readiness so we can be the combat reserve of the Army and Air Force.

It means spending personal time on physical fitness to prepare for the Army Combat Fitness Test and the Air Force Physical Fitness Test. It means studying during personal time to prepare for Army and Air Force courses.

Now it means adding the COVID-19 vaccine to the list of

other shots the Army and Air Force require you to take to ensure you are medically ready to deploy.

The COVID vaccine is just like other requirements the military places on us: like annual fitness tests, weigh-ins, weapons qualification, the flu vaccine or other training briefings. It is a readiness issue.

We do not send a Soldier or Airman overseas without the best training, equipment, or healthcare we can provide.

Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin said in his directive that “all FDA-authorized COVID-19 vaccines are safe and highly effective. They will protect you and your family. They will protect your unit, your ship and your co-workers. And they will ensure we remain the most lethal and ready force in the world.”

He’s absolutely right on this. We are a better, more ready force when the vaccine is protecting each of you, protecting our formations and your families and friends.

Our Airmen achieved full compliance in December, gathering up vaccination cards, administering shots where necessary or channeling medical or religious exemption requests for review and decision.

Our Soldiers, while facing a June 2022 deadline, should make every effort to meet compliance well before that. We are well past 80% at the end of December 2021. I’m aware many are already vaccinated, but haven’t provided a copy of that vaccination card to your unit. So here is your task: get vaccinated and provide a copy of your CDC card to your unit.

Leaders should take personal intervention -down to name tape level- to talk to our Soldiers and help them schedule their shot or if they have a CDC card, get a copy to input into the Army’s medical records system.

Medical experts recommend getting the shot. It is not the silver bullet to end the pandemic. But it will prevent serious illness,



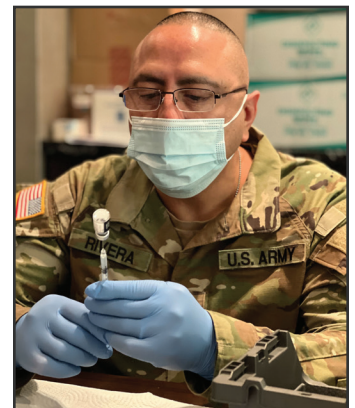
Maj. Gen. Ray Shields

hospitalization and death from the coronavirus.

That matters to me. It should matter to you as well.

The National Guard motto is “Always Ready, Always There.” We cannot be ready and we cannot be there, if you are sick with a disease that’s already killed over 800,000 of our fellow citizens.

Thank you for your service. Thanks to your employers for allowing you to serve. Our highest appreciation goes to your families, the ones who bear the brunt of loneliness and extra chores while you are away serving state and nation. We need you all. I wish you the very best as we enter 2022.



Staff Sgt. Pablo Rivera, assigned to the 106th Regional Training Institute, prepares vaccines for the final day of COVID-19 mass vaccinations at Yankee Stadium on Dec. 22, 2021 in the Bronx, New York, after providing more than 100,000 vaccinations. Photo by Maj. Michael O'Hagan, 106th Rescue Wing.

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# guardtimes

Volume 15, Number 1

## This Issue's Highlights:

### Faces of the Force

- 4 Chief Retires after 31-Year Career in Syracuse
- 5 Soldier Builds New Future in New York
- 6 Airman Honored for Saving Soldier
- 7 Soldier Recognized as 'Whole Health Hero'

### Around the State

- 8 New York State Police Encourage National Guard Applicants
- 9 Senior Leader Visits with Cornell ROTC Cadets

### The Joint Force

- 11 National Guard Supporting Nursing Homes
- 12 Troops Joint Governor for Turkey Donation
- 13 Guardsmen Volunteer to Support Trees for Troops
- 14 Strengthening NY's Partnership with South Africa
- 15 Civil Support Team Hosts Drill in NYC
- 16 NY Marks National Guard 385th Birthday
- 17 Soldier and Airman Graduate Brazilian Jungle School

### Army National Guard

- 18 258th Field Artillery Welcomes New Commander
- 19 Army Leaders Use NYC for Urban Training Course
- 20 27th Brigade Extends Soldier Reach with New Sniper Rifle
- 22 New Commander for 'Fighting 69th' Infantry
- 23 42nd Aviation Brigade Welcomes New Leader
- 24 Leadership Change in 53rd Troop Command
- 25 Troops Earn State's First Expert Soldier Badges

### Air National Guard

- 26 Syracuse Defenders Conduct Close Quarter Training
- 27 NY Supports Danish Forces in Greenland Training
- 28 Aor Fprce Leader Tpirs Eastern Air Defense
- 29 105<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing Recognized with Meirtoirious Unit Award

### New York Guard and Naval Militia

- 31 Naval Militia Marks 245th Marine Corps Birthday

**Staff Sgt. Michael Ryan, a member of the 827th Engineer Company and non-commissioned officer in charge at the New York State COVID-19 vaccination site in Johnson City, New York, greets New York Governor Kathy Hochul during her visit to the on Dec. 20, 2021. New York National Guard personnel are helping to staff the facility. Photo by Mike Groll, Office of Governor Kathy Hochul.**



Governor Kathy Hochul, COMMANDER IN CHIEF  
 Maj. Gen. Raymond Shields, THE ADJUTANT GENERAL  
 Eric Durr, DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS  
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FRONT COVER: Chief Master Sgt. Michael Hewson, a pararescue jumper assigned to the 106th Rescue Wing, joins more than 400 New York National Guard service members for the New York City Veterans Day Parade, Nov. 11, 2021, saluting the service of the U.S. Air Force. Photo by Maj. Michael O'Hagan, 106th Rescue Wing.

BACK COVER: Soldiers from the 153rd Troop Command and 152nd Brigade Engineer Battalion join Gen. Daniel Hokanson, chief of the National Guard Bureau, for the 385th birthday of the National Guard in Buffalo, New York, Dec. 12, 2021. Photo by Staff Sgt. Alexander Rector, 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team.



# FACES of the FORCE



## Chief Retires After 31 Year Career in Syracuse

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Duane Morgan, 174th Attack Wing

Chief Master Sgt. Bruce Fong (right) receives a Meritorious Service Medal from Col. Michael Adamitis, commander of the 174th Mission Support Group, during a retirement ceremony held at Hancock Field Air National Guard Base, Syracuse, New York.

HANCOCK FIELD AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, SYRACUSE, N.Y. -- On Dec. 5, 2021, Hancock Field said goodbye to Chief Master Sgt. Bruce Fong during a retirement ceremony held here.

Fong went to Air Force basic training in July of 1980 and after completing basic training, went on to Sheppard Air Force Base in Texas to attend air cargo specialist school.

His very first duty assignment was at Kadena Air Force Base in Okinawa, Japan. There he would be assigned to the 603rd Military Airlift Support Squadron.

He worked in the ramp services section where he was responsible for the on/off loading of cargo on military and civilian aircraft such as the Boeing 747, Lockheed Martin C-5 Galaxy, C-141A/B Starlifter, C-130 Hercules, the McDonnell Douglas C-9 Nightingale and KC-10 Extender.

Two and a half years later he would join the 436th Aerial Port Squadron at Dover Air Force Base in Delaware. Fong worked in the special handling section and was responsible for the timely and accurate inventory of critical cargo using the Aerial Port Documentation and Management System III.

After a 10 year break in service, Fong joined the New York Air National Guard in February of 1996 as a Drill Status Guardsmen with the 174th Attack Wing (then known as the 174th Fighter Wing). He was assigned to the 174th Logistics Readiness Squadron as a traffic manage-

ment specialist.

In October 1998, Fong was hired as a full-time military technician with the 174th Communications Flight. There he held positions such as network administrator, infrastructure technician, network control center supervisor, operations superintendent and ultimately the chief enlisted manager.

One of Fong's proudest moments has been serving as a ceremonial Guardsmen with 174th Attack Wing, Base Honor Guard. During that time he participated in over 700 various details supporting both the base and community.

When asked what he'd miss the most, "the people," Fong said.

"I love the Honor Guard. That was a big part of my life. I'm going to miss the work as well. I'm going to miss it all. The 174th is a great place to work."

With over 31 years of military service, Fong doesn't plan on relaxing just yet. He plans on working a little bit more.

"I'd like to work for a few more years and then fully retire," Fong said. "I know my next venture will most likely be in the IT department."

The message he wanted to leave with the Airmen and future Airmen of Hancock Field is, "Aim high. Don't set your sights low. If there is something that you really want to do, and you have a passion for it, do it, just go for it." **gt**



# From a Civil War to Building a Future in New York

Story by Ryan Campbell, *Guard Times Staff*

LATHAM, N.Y. -- Staff Sgt. Prince Dorbor, a native of the West African country of Liberia, was 14 the first time he saw an American in uniform.

Dorbor and his family had survived two civil wars, spanning 1989 to 2003. Almost a million people were killed in the fighting.

That day in July, 2003, U.S. Marines were flying into the Liberian capital of Monrovia to help stabilize the situation and end the years of fighting.

"I still remember that day as it was yesterday," he said. "Standing behind our little house in New Georgia Estate, looking up I saw a U.S. Marine UH-60 flying very low, a gunner sat by the window and all the children gathered around rejoicing as they waved at the Black Hawk."

"In my heart, right there in that moment, I pledged that if I was ever given the opportunity, the chance to come to America, I would gladly serve in the U.S. military," Dorbor said. "For they have helped save a nation that was close to the brink of annihilation."

In 2005 Dorbor arrived in Charlotte, North Carolina and when he moved to New York in 2011 he enlisted in the Army National Guard.

"All my life I have lived through turmoil in a poverty stricken country," Dorbor explained.

Liberia began as a

"I pledged that if I was ever given the opportunity, the chance to come to America, I would gladly serve in the U.S. military"

--Staff Sgt. Prince Dorbor, Army National Guard



Staff Sgt. Prince Dorbor, a quartermaster and chemical equipment repairer assigned to Joint Force Headquarters, is promoted during a ceremony at the New York National Guard Headquarters, Latham, New York, April 24, 2021. Courtesy photo.

colony for Black Americans, both born free and enslaved, to escape the racial discrimination they faced in the United States. Beginning in 1822, nearly 20,000 immigrated there by the turn of the century.

By 1847 a declaration of independence and a constitution established an independent republic.

It was one of the few African nations to escape colonization, navigated its way through both world wars and was a founding member of the United Nations in 1945. However, the nation was fractured by a military coup that led to civil war in the 1980s.

In 1980, Liberian army

Master Sgt. Samuel Doe staged a coup that killed the president and took control of the country. In 1989 Doe, in turn was deposed and killed, launching a civil war that went on throughout the 1990s.

An agreement reached in 1996, with elections held in 1997 where Charles Taylor was elected president.

Soon after in 1999, a rebellion against Taylor led to the second civil war after the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy, along with the Movement for Democracy in Liberia, began their assault on government forces.

"Children as young as

10 years old were forced to become child soldiers," Dorbor said. "I, however, was fortunate to never become one, thanks to the guidance of my dearest mother."

Under her guidance, he said he walked six miles a day to get to and from school, avoiding becoming one of the estimated 20,000 children forced into the war.

With Monrovia in danger of being occupied despite the ongoing peace talks in 2003, the U.S. established Task Force Liberia with a Navy amphibious group.

U.S. forces arrived in Monrovia in July 2003 as

part of Operation Shining Express to rescue embassy personnel and American citizens after the embassy had come under attack the previous month.

By mid August, with U.S. and West African forces on the ground throughout Liberia supporting the peace efforts, Liberian President Charles Taylor resigned, ending the fighting after 14 years.

Dorbor's family then decided his future was in the United States.

"I moved to New York and I joined the U.S. Army National Guard, fulfilling the promise and pledge I made when I was just a teen in Liberia," Dorbor said.

Outside the National Guard, he began studying national security and intelligence analysis at Excelsior College and was hired in November 2021 by the U.S. Secret Service in Maryland.

He said it had been over a decade since he last visited Liberia, but his growing family will grow up learning about their Liberian heritage.

"When I look back at my story, the only thing I can say is that I thank God for his protection," Dorbor said.

"An immigrant, who once had nothing, not even enough food to eat and carry him throughout the week, who walked for miles to go to school, is now an American citizen." **gt**





## Airman Honored for Saving Soldier's Life

Story and photos by Master Sgt. Barbara Olney, 174th Attack Wing

Master Sgt. Adam Gagne, a member of the 174th Attack Wing, receives the wing's Safety Award from Col. William McCrink III, the wing commander, during a ceremony at Hancock Field Air National Guard Base, Syracuse, New York on Nov. 13, 2021.

HANCOCK FIELD AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, SYRACUSE, N.Y. -- Master Sgt. Adam Gagne received the 174th Attack Wing Safety Award for thinking quickly to save a friend's life on Sept. 13, 2021.

The incident occurred while they were setting up tree stands for the upcoming white-tailed deer hunting season in Homer.

Gagne, who is assigned to the contracting office, was working with his friend, Army Reserve Master Sgt. Richard Accardi who cut a large gash through his forearm.

He was cutting nylon zip ties when his knife slipped.

Accardi slashed a six-inch long gash exposing muscles and nerves. Blood was gushing out.

"I found myself slipping in and out of consciousness," Accardi recalled. "Years of Army training had not prepared me for anything like this. I'm not going to lie, I was terrified."

Accardi cried out for help.

"It was like someone had a milk jug that was filling up with blood. When I looked at it I could see different colors that you shouldn't see," Gagne said.

"I have been hunting for 20 years and have never seen anything like this," Gagne said.

His military first aid training kicked in, Gagne recalled.

He constructed a makeshift tourniquet using surveyor tape and started wrapping the tape above Accardi's bicep to slow the bleeding down, Gagne recalled.

While he was wrapping, another hunter removed his shirt, tore it up and handed it to Gagne.

Gagne used that to cover the wound. His focus was to slow the bleeding down.

At this point, Accardi started to fade out of consciousness. Gagne helped him down the stand and loaded him onto a four-wheeler and drove over treacherous terrain to Gagne's truck. They headed to the closest emergency room, at

Cortland Medical Center.


The emergency staff praised Gagne and the other hunter on their field care of Accardi.

"I was a combat weatherman prior and learned Air Force self-aid buddy training and Army lifesaver skills. It was like second nature," Gagne said.

Accardi received fluids, lidocaine, 20 stitches and 13 staples but made a full recovery.

He's grateful his Air Guard friend was there when he needed him, Accardi said.

"If I would have been alone I am fairly certain this would have turned out much different. He is someone who I do not just call my battle buddy, but on that day my guardian angel as well," Accardi said.

"I wouldn't expect anything less from Master Sergeant Gagne, and I am proud of his quick action to save his friend's life," said Chief Master Sgt. Ashley Pace, the 174th Contracting Officer Supervisor. 



# Soldier Recognized as 'Whole Health Hero'

Story by Eric Durr, *Guard Times Staff*

NEW YORK -- The colonel who administered a COVID-19 field hospital at Manhattan's Jacob Javits Convention Center in 2020, and then returned in 2021 to oversee the convention center's use as a mass vaccination site, has been named a "Whole Health Hero" by a major New York City business magazine and health insurer.

Army Col. Michael Bice, who is assigned to Joint Force Headquarters, was one of 25 New Yorkers recognized for their COVID-19 pandemic efforts by Crain's New York Business and Empire Blue Cross Blue Shield.

The awards, announced on December 6, "recognize exceptional New York leaders who demonstrate a commitment to public safety and wellness in the revitalization and reopening of New York City," according to the magazine.

The honorees, which included business executives, community groups, healthcare administrators and officials, and doctors, were featured in a special insert which ran in the magazine.

Bice was selected for the honor by Crain's editors for his efforts at the Javits Center, overseeing the logistics operations there, according to Sophia Juarez, the associate director of content for Crain's.

Bice said he was honored to receive the award, but that he saw it as recognizing everyone who worked at the Javits Center during the pandemic.

"I am accepting this on behalf of all the personnel from the multiple agencies that I had the privilege to lead and provide a better future for people," Bice said.

Prior to his current assignment at the New York National Guard headquarters, he commanded the

10th Mountain Division Main Command Post-Operational Detachment, a team which augments the active Army division headquarters at Fort Drum.

He used his experience with the New York State Police and his military background to be successful in both missions at the Javits Center, Bice said.

"My position in the State Police as a supervisor is to respond to incidents and take charge. My job in the military is to be a leader and provide guidance," he said.

In the spring of 2020, as the COVID pandemic raged in New York City, the National Guard worked to convert the convention center in to field hospital to handle overflow patients from city hospitals.

Eventually, 1,095 COVID-19 patients were treated at the facility before it closed on May 1, 2020.

Bice was called in to replace the original incident commander at the site and helped close the hospital down and handle the logistics operation.

In January 2021, as New York geared up for massive COVID-19 vaccinations, Bice was tapped to lead the 620 New York National Guard and 400 civilian personnel who worked at the location.

The Javits vaccination site was the largest in the country.

From Jan. 13 to July 9, 2021 staff at the site administered 647,973 vaccinations.

"I think what we found was the New York National Guard was the best agency to respond to incidents of this type," Bice said.

"This is what we do, and we had

**"I am accepting this on behalf of every person in uniform and every front-line civilian worker,"**

-- Col. Michael Bice, 2021 Whole Health Hero



Col. Michael Bice speaks to Cassie Huang of Manhattan, after she received the 500,000 COVID-19 vaccination administered at the New York State vaccination site at the Jacob Javits Convention Center on April 26, 2021. Photo by Capt. Mark Getman, New York Guard.

the right personnel to do it with," Bice said.

"While the Department of Health and the other agencies had specific expertise, we have expertise in multiple fields," he said.

The civilian skills that National Guard Soldiers and Airmen brought to the mission were invaluable, Bice said. For example, one Soldier was a computer expert who devised an online tracking system that provided a minute-by-minute view of vaccine status at Javits and was then expanded to be used statewide, Bice said.

"We found out that what people

did for a living really mattered," he said. "We used that civilian skill set to make our operation better."

The other key lesson learned, he said, is that convention centers are perfect for this kind of response mission. The staff at these centers know how to set things up quickly and work with outside groups, he added.

While he was the one recognized by Crain's, he couldn't have been successful without the hundreds of people involved, Bice said. He had great military and civilian deputies and an outstanding command sergeant major, he emphasized.

"I am accepting this on behalf of every person in uniform and every front-line civilian worker," Bice said. **gt**



## NY State Police Encourage Guard Applications

Story by Ryan Campbell, *Guard Times Staff*

LATHAM, N.Y. -- The New York State Police are accepting applications for taking the entrance exam for becoming a Trooper, with testing beginning Jan. 3, 2022 and ending April 10.

Current Soldiers that serve as state troopers say that members of the New York National Guard should take advantage of the benefits offered to military members during the application process.

"I knew from a young age that I wanted to be in law enforcement, I wanted to be the person to make my community safer and to effect change," said New York Army National Guard Sgt. Anthony Petrosky, a New York State Trooper and intelligence analyst with the 42nd Infantry Division.

Many requirements for the State Police will be familiar to currently serving military members.

"To take the exam, an applicant must be at least 20 years of age and not have reached their 30th birthday by date of application," said New York State Police Tech. Sgt. Mark Cepiel, military liaison.

Military applicants can extend the age eligibility if they have active duty for other than training. For each year of active duty, age can be extended by a year, up to a maximum of seven years.

Cepiel also explained that for the first time there is no one-time date for testing and that it will be ongoing at 54 locations throughout the state that applicants can select from once they apply.

There are also 112 locations at military installations worldwide for members to test, through installation education and learning centers.

To apply, visit the State Police recruitment website at [www.joinstate-police.ny.gov](http://www.joinstate-police.ny.gov). There is a \$20 application fee to take the exam and an additional \$35 fee for testing.

Additionally, applicants are required to be a U.S. citizen and have a high school diploma or equivalent.

Applicants are applying and testing for the position of Trooper and are subject to being assigned anywhere in New York where vacancies exist after completion of the academy.

"The exam list will result in the establishment of an eligibility list for selecting individuals for entrance to the academy," Cepiel said.

To be appointed to the academy, you must be at least 21 years old and appointed prior to 35th birthday, except when the maximum age is extended for prior active service.

All applicants must be able to pass a physical fitness test.

Applicants must also have at least 60 college credits or 30 college credits with at least two years of active duty for other than training.

Successful completion of a medical exam, vision and hearing test, background investigation, polygraph and psychological evaluation are also required.

They must also comply with the body piercing and body art policy which is found on the recruitment website.

The starting salary, including academy training and first year is \$58,443. After one year, the salary moves to \$82,667 and after five years is \$98,315.

"All military applicants tend to have experience already in an academy and training environment and tend to do well in training environments," he said. "Additionally, having already been in uniform, military applicants possess discipline, selfless service, honor, integrity and respect for others, which are all attributes needed for being a successful Trooper."

"I felt that my experience in the National Guard definitely gave me a leg up just in terms of my overall mindset," said Petrosky. After attending Fort Benning, NCO schools and other skills courses in the military, I knew what it was like to be tested. The State Police was no different."


Petrosky said that military experience gives you an advantage and sets you up for success to be able to handle the mental, physical and academic testing. He also said that Guard skills and certifications can open doors to work in units and details within the State Police that you're passionate about.

"Opportunities after the academy range from patrol work to specialized services such as crime scene evidence technicians, field training officers, K-9 handlers, firearms instructors, underwater recovery teams, special operations response teams, motor vehicle collision reconstruction and special investigations to name just a few," Cepiel said.

Local recruiters can be found on the recruitment website for more information, as well as military applicants can contact the State Police military liaison office for military specific information.

The military liaison office can be contacted at 518-457-6498 and at [military.liaison@troopers.ny.gov](mailto:military.liaison@troopers.ny.gov).

"What I like most about being a Trooper is how each and every day is different. You're not sitting at a desk in an office, you're out there interacting with the public, answering calls, investigating cases and helping people," said Petrosky.

"Every day is really what you make of it. I like going into work each day knowing that I have the ability to make a positive impact on the community I serve." 



New York State Troopers render salutes during their graduation ceremony from the state police academy. Courtesy photo.



# NY Senior Leader Visits with ROTC Cadets

Story and photos by Lt. Col. Roberta Comerford, Joint Force Headquarters



Brig. Gen. Joseph Biehler and Cornell University President Martha Pollack, center, with cadets of the Cornell University Reserve Officer Training Corps in Cornell, New York, commemorate Veterans Day, Nov. 11, 2021.

ITHACA, N.Y. -- New York Army National Guard Brig. Gen. Joseph Biehler, commander of the 53rd Troop Command, joined with Cornell University to honor veterans on the college campus here for Veterans Day, Nov. 11, 2021.

Cadets of the Reserve Officer Training Corps helped mark the 100th anniversary of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier dedication in the nation's capital by placing a wreath and placing a guard of honor at the university veterans memorial flagpole.

Biehler joined University Provost Michael Kotlikoff at the flagpole for a remembrance of veteran alumni. Following the wreath presentation, the Bell Tower at the memorial site played Cornell Chimes, along with a unique musical tribute to service members by playing the songs for each branch of service, ending with the national anthem.

After the musical tribute, the group conducted a walking tour of the college memorials and key locations on campus, including the ROTC building.

Cornell President Martha Pollack and Biehler then joined ROTC cadets for a remembrance service led by Debra Howell, chair of the Cornell Veterans Colleague Network Group.

Howell, a veteran herself, thanked veterans for their service and sharing the history of what was originally Armistice Day, marking the end of World War I, renamed to Veterans Day in 1954.

"While we intentionally pause to recognize veterans today, it is important to remember that veterans are defending us and need our support 365 days a year," Howell said.

At 11:11 a.m., Jowell paused her remarks as the Cornell Chimes tolled a 21-bell salute to mark a century of honor, duty, respect and reverence with moments of silence.

Howell introduced Biehler who thanked veterans and future military leaders.

Biehler thanked everyone and shared the role of the Army and how the mission has evolved over the past 40 years of his military career.

The role of the military since 9/11, Biehler said, "has become far more for preventive, deterrence and preemptive activities."

Biehler reflected that his own career has followed that path, from homeland security efforts following 9/11 to combat operations overseas and the most recent pandemic response efforts across the state, assisting local communities in their COVID-19 response.

"20 years ago the National Guard began the transformation from being a Strategic Reserve force for our nation's defense to an Operational Reserve," he said. "This essentially made the National Guard a reserve force that is called upon regularly."

Biehler closed with addressing the ROTC cadets and midshipmen and women directly.

"For our cadets and midshipmen and women," he said, "you can prepare for your future in the military by training as our nation asks of you: to win our nation's wars."

"Your primary focus now is to be the best Soldier or Sailor you can be and a very good leader to your Soldiers and Sailors under you command," Biehler said. **gt**

"While we intentionally pause to recognize veterans today, it is important to remember that veterans are defending us and need our support 365 days a year,"

-- Debra Howell, Cornell Veterans Colleague Network Group Chair



# THE JOINT FORCE

## National Guard Supporting Nursing Homes

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Alexander Rector, 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team

SYRACUSE, N.Y. -- Eighteen New York National Guard medics and medical technicians on duty at a Syracuse area nursing home opened up more care slots in the region's medical system, according to Dr. Kimberly Townsend, the president and chief executive officer of Loretto Health and Rehabilitation.

The Soldiers and Airmen on duty there have enabled her to open 20 additional beds and accept 10 to 12 additional admissions at the facility, Townsend said.

"Over the last week we've been successful in increasing our admissions which is helping the long term benefits of our health system in this region," she said.

"We're very excited and very honored to have the National Guard troops here helping us," Townsend said. "We're just so grateful for their support because it's helping us keep our regional health care system up and running."

The troops working at Loretto, which specializes in care for elderly patients after they leave the hospital but before they can return home, are among 120 troops deployed to 13 long-term care facilities across the state by Governor Kathy Hochul at the beginning of December.

The goal, the governor explained at the time, was to relieve staffing shortages in nursing facilities, so that patients in hospitals could move into those facilities and, in turn, free up hospital beds for COVID-19 patients.

The New York National Guard identified 120 Army Guard medics and Air Guard medical technicians, not already working in a medical field in civilian life, and mobilized them to fill those holes in the nursing home staff.

"Over the last month or so, our health care in the region has really backed up," Townsend explained.

The state offered National Guard troops to help fill staffing shortages and she said yes, Townsend said.

Specializing in short-term rehab and long-term care, Loretto offers comprehensive eldercare for more than 10,000 clients in central New York.

Pvt. Nastasia Morgan, a medic in the 107th Military Police Company, said she thought she



Pvt. Nastasia Morgan, assigned to the 107th Military Police Company, sits with a resident at Loretto Health and Rehab in Syracuse, New York, Dec. 20, 2021.

was going to be doing medical related tasks.

Instead, she and the others, are performing duties similar to a certified nurse assistant, or CNA. They tend to residents' personal needs, assisting in bathing, at meals and other ways.

"The National Guard troops are serving as CNA's up on our floors and delivering care to our residents," Townsend said. "It could be anything from helping them get up in the morning, get dressed and ready for their day."

"All of the things that you would do for your loved one in your home, that's what they're doing for our residents here," Townsend said.

The Soldiers and Airmen arrived at Loretto in the first week of December. They got two days of training and then they went to work.

"At the end of the day, this is why we joined the Guard, so we can help out and support our community in a time like this when they need the help," Morgan said.

"I know that our senior population are the most vulnerable," Morgan said. "As a medic, you always want to help and do what's right."

Not everything the Guard Soldiers and Airmen do for the residents is focused on care issues all the time, Morgan said. Sitting and

talking is important to, she added.

"We sit with them and chat with them," Morgan said. "Just to make them feel some semblance of normalcy."

This is the latest in unusual missions the New York National Guard has conducted since the first 200 Soldiers and Airmen went on duty in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

Since then, over 6,500 personnel have been part of the mission at one point or another, performing a wide range of tasks.

This latest mission has troops now deployed to sites in Syracuse, Rochester, Albany, Buffalo, Utica, Plattsburgh, Uniondale, Liberty, Vestal, Olean, Schenectady, Lyons and Goshen.

"What I'm hearing is that they are extremely polite, very diligent and eager to deliver a great service," Townsend said.

"These are people who are dedicating their lives to the mission of caring for others. They've been doing that here for us and it's just really such an honor and privilege to have them." **gt**





Sgt. Ethan Hart, assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 108th Infantry, moves a resident down the hall at Loretto Health and Rehab in Syracuse, New York, Dec. 20, 2021.



Senior Airman Taylor Dunham, a medical technician assigned to the 174th Attack Wing, and Saquest Derby, a certified nurse aide, prepare a resident's bed at Loretto Health and Rehab in Syracuse, New York, Dec. 20, 2021. 120 medics and medical technicians are deployed across 13 nursing homes or long-term care facilities.



Pvt. Nastasia Morgan, a combat medic assigned to the 107th Military Police Company, sits with a resident at Loretto Health and Rehab in Syracuse, New York, Dec. 20, 2021.



Sgt. Ethan Hart, assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 108th Infantry, meets with Gina Coomey, a registered nurse at Loretto Health and Rehab in Syracuse, New York, Dec. 20, 2021.





New York Governor Kathy Hochul thanks volunteers of the New York National Guard while packaging Thanksgiving turkeys for distribution to families across the state at the Jacob Javits Convention Center in New York City, Nov. 22, 2021. Photo courtesy of Darren McGee, Office of Governor Kathy Hochul.



Staff Sgt. Jonathan Llinin, serving with Joint Task Force Empire Shield, assists state volunteers in packaging Thanksgiving turkeys for distribution to families across the state at the Jacob Javits Convention Center in New York City, Nov. 22, 2021. Photo courtesy of Darren McGee, Office of Governor Kathy Hochul.

## Troops Join Governor for Turkey Distribution

Story by Capt. Mark Getman, New York Guard

**NEW YORK --** Fifty New York National Guard Soldiers and Airmen turned out to help New York Governor Kathy Hochul and her staff sort and package 3,200 donated turkeys at the Jacob Javits Convention Center in Manhattan on Monday, Nov. 22, 2021.

“We are here to help with the National Guard, to show New Yorkers and our communities what New York State love is all about and we are going to get to work right away because there are families waiting for this,” Hochul said.

The Soldiers and Airmen bagged the 20-to-30 pound turkeys for distribution to needy families across New York. The turkeys were loaded into New York State Department of Transportation vehicles and trucked across the state for distribution events November 23, from Buffalo to Long Island.

The National Guard continued their support at three distributions sites, providing the turkeys directly to the community.

In the Hudson Valley town of Kingston, 10 Airmen from the 105th Airlift Wing and 10 Soldiers from the 53rd Troop Command helped distribute the turkeys at the Salvation Army.

In Roosevelt on Long Island, 10 Airmen from the 106th Rescue Wing and 10 Soldiers from the 42nd Infantry Division helped pass out turkeys at the Police Activity League.

And in Harlem, 20 Soldiers and Airmen

assigned to Joint Task Force Empire Shield, the New York National Guard security force in New York City, helped distribute the birds at Memorial Baptist Church in Harlem.

“The state is thankful for the assistance of the National Guard, the kindness of corporations statewide and Feeding New York State for working with us to ensure 3,200 households will have turkeys on their tables this Thanksgiving holiday,” Hochul said.

The turkeys were donated by several corporations, including Amazon, The Coca-Cola Company, Liberty Coca-Cola Beverages, Golub Family Foundation, UJA-Federation of New York, China General Chamber of Commerce, MetLife and Geico.

Maj. Gen. Ray Shields, the adjutant general of New York, who joined Hochul for the Javits Center event, said that Guard Soldiers and Airmen like doing these kinds of missions.

“After more than a year and a half of support to our communities during the state’s COVID-19 response, the men and women of our New York National Guard are glad to be part of an event like this that helps give back to our communities,” Shields said.

Staff Sgt. Danny Collado, a member of the 145th Support Maintenance Company, said he enjoyed working alongside the governor for packing turkeys at Javits.

National Guard Soldiers have been asked to help prepare thanksgiving meals in the past, and it’s always a good mission, Collado said.

This year, with many people still hurting economically from the pandemic, it is even more important to help, Collado said.

“I am honored to serve and help the governor in making a difference on Thanksgiving,” Collado said. “Our hard work will help our neighbors and children in need this holiday.”

Army National Guard 1st Lt. Stephanie Sylvain, the officer in charge of the turkey packing detail, said she was happy to be part of the mission.

“This year has been challenging for many people, especially those who have lost their jobs and are grieving the loss of loved ones due the devastating effect of COVID-19,” Sylvain said.

“It is gesture of compassion for me to be a part of this mission, knowing that thousands of families will not have to buy food for Thanksgiving and can use that money for their utility bill,” she added.

“I hope that this Thanksgiving we will give people a sense of dignity that comes with having families over, cooking great food and catching up over the last two years”, she said. “As a National Guard officer, I am delighted to contribute to the well-being of this community.” **gt**



# Guardsmen Volunteer to Support Trees for Troops

Story and photos by Col. Richard Goldenberg, Joint Force Headquarters

**BALLSTON SPA, N.Y.** -- Fifteen New York National Guard volunteers joined veterans at Ellms Tree Farm in Ballston Spa, Nov. 29, 2021 to load 110 Christmas trees as part of the Trees for Troops program.

New York National Guard Soldiers and Airmen have been loading the donated trees that go to military families and deployed troops for 17 years.

"It amazes me each and every year to see the support of our local tree farmers and the turnout of the military to help load these trees," said Garth Ellms, the third generation owner of Ellms Family Farm.

Ellms Family Farms serves as a collection site for Christmas trees donated by tree farmers in the Albany area.

Nationally, Trees for Troops has delivered a total of 262,265 real trees in the past 16 years. More than 16,000 trees were donated in 2020.

This year, trees will be delivered to 77 military bases, including Fort Drum and the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station in New York State.

The Trees for Troops program was launched in 2005, when FedEx Corp. delivered more than 4,300 Christmas Trees to five U.S. military bases, as well as an overseas shipment to the Middle East.

"It was a long time ago for me, but deploying over the holidays is always a

difficult time," said Sgt. 1st Class Jason Wells of the New York Army National Guard Recruiting and Retention Battalion. "Having a tree was like having a piece of home."

The Ellms Family Farm collects fresh cut Christmas trees before pick up by Trees for Troops partners, and FedEx Freight. The trees are then routed through distribution centers for delivery to military bases.

Volunteers from the National Guard, both new and old, turned out for the loading of trees to show their support for others serving away from home during the holiday season.

"I didn't really know much about this before," said Staff Sgt. Mark Mertzluft, who is assigned to the National Guard Joint Force Headquarters Logistics Directorate. "But I was deployed last year and was able to return home in time for the holidays. It feels good helping out, sending trees to those deployed this year," he said.

This year, there are two Albany area New York National Guard elements deployed over the holidays.

Members of the Air National Guard's 109th Airlift Wing, based at Stratton Air National Guard Base in Scotia are supporting Operation Deep Freeze, the National Science Foundation support to research in Antarctica.

Army National Guard



Staff Sgt. Tyler Center, assigned to the National Guard Joint Force Headquarters Logistics Directorate, center, walks back for an additional tree as 15 other volunteers from the National Guard lend their support for the shipment of 110 donated Christmas Trees at Ellms Tree Farm in Ballston Spa, New York, Nov. 29, 2021.

Soldiers assigned to the 501st Ordnance Battalion, an explosive ordnance disposal headquarters also based in Scotia, are deployed to Kuwait in support of operations in the Middle East.

"Those troops serving far from home and family are the reason we do this," Ellms said. "Especially around Christmas, it's important for us to continue doing this for them."

"This is my first time participating," said Staff Sgt. Tyler Center, a member of the Joint Force Headquarters logistics section. "My wife is currently deployed with the 501st EOD and I thought this would be a great way to show some support." **gt**



Sgt. 1st Class Jason Wells, assigned to New York's Recruiting and Retention Battalion, passes a tree up to Sgt. Hunter Bates, another volunteer assigned to Bravo Company, 3rd Battalion, 126th Aviation, as they load 110 donated Christmas Trees at Ellms Tree Farm in Ballston Spa, New York, Nov. 29, 2021.



# Strengthening Partnership with South Africa

Story by Spc. Jorge Garcia, 138th Public Affairs Detachment

NEW YORK -- New York's assistant adjutant general for the Army National Guard, and South Africa's new Defense Attache' met at the historic Harlem Armory on Dec. 9, 2021 to reinvigorate the training partnership between the New York National Guard and the South African military.

Maj. Gen. Michel Natali and Brig. Gen. Richard Maponyane discussed new opportunities to learn from each other as part of the State Partnership Program agreement which has been in place since 2003.

"We are still tying the knots from the things that could not be accomplished last year," Maponyane said. "But I believe, as a representative of South Africa, that the information they presented to us will assist us moving forward."

During the meeting, Natali and his staff conducted a briefing with Maponyane and Col. Eric Mabalane, South Africa's Deputy Defense Attaché, detailing successful past events and future exercises that New York and South Africa will support.

Maponyane and Mabalane both agreed the meetup was informative, productive and are hopeful for the future of partnership with the New York National Guard.

"I'm grateful that Maj. Gen. Natali took time out of his tight schedule to accommodate us during this SPP event," Maponyane said.

The New York National Guard has two state partners: along with South Africa, New York established a State Partnership Program with Brazil in 2019.

The New York and South Africa partnership was the first state partnership relationship established on the continent of Africa.

Over nearly two decades, South Africa and New York have sustained the partnership, with exchanges and opportunities to partner in exercises and events in both countries.

In past engagements, the New York Soldiers and Airmen participated in multiple events with South Africa, including the Defense Committee Conference led by U.S. Africa Command, which lays out the priorities for the partnership programs between South Africa and New York.

Other engagements included African Aerospace and Defence Expo, the South African Military Skills Competition, disaster pre-

paredness and multiple subject matter expert exchanges.

The New York National Guard also participated in firefighter exchange missions facilitated at the U.S. Consulate in Cape Town, South Africa, where they engaged with the Southern Cape Emergency Services, who face a recurring wildfire season similar to Southern California.



Maj. Gen. Michel Natali, left, the assistant adjutant general, provides a walking tour of the historic Harlem Armory for Brig. Gen. Richard Maponyane, the South Africa Defense Attaché, second from left, and Col. Eric Mabalane, the Deputy Attache, with Col. Seth Morgulas, the commander of the 369th Sustainment Brigade on Dec. 9, 2021. Photo by Staff Sgt. Jonathan Pietrantonio, 138th Public Affairs Detachment.

"We sent New York Air National Guard firefighters there two years ago," Natali said. "We're doing that operation now on a regular basis, and they help out with sharing best practices with the local firefighting agencies that are in Western Cape Town... it's a pretty rewarding operation."

However, COVID-19 presented obstacles last year that made communication between the military forces challenging, said Maj. David Myones, the New York State Partnership Program Director.

"Most of the engagements (in 2020) were virtual and there were challenges from the U.S. and South African perspectives due to the nature of the pandemic. However, we were able to share the best practices on how both sides responded to COVID-19," Myones said.

New York Army National Guard Maj. Teofilo Espinal, the bilateral affairs officer stationed at U.S. Embassy Pretoria, South Africa, was a key component in sustaining the partnership

with South Africa throughout the pandemic, Myones said.

Espinal's primary focus is to facilitate engagements between the state of New York and South Africa, working with embassy and combatant command leaders and staff.

While Myones and the SPP team were unable to travel to South Africa due to COVID-19, Espinal was able to develop an SPP joint exercise scheduled for next summer, called Shared Accord, in July 2022 and participation in a large South African air show in the fall of 2022, Myones said.

The SPP began after the fall of the Soviet Union in the early 90s. The Department of Defense partnered former Soviet countries with National Guard states to develop relationships and focus on the interoperability of each other's military.

Since then, the state partnerships have grown exponentially, with 85 partnerships with 92 nations around the globe.

"Now that the world is slowly emerging from COVID-19, we are going to re-energize the partnership. In the spring of 2022 we will attend Defense Committee and have what we call 'staff talks' between our military and their military," Myones said.

"We will get together and agree on what areas we're going to cooperate on in the coming years... New York will always be partners with South Africa so we will continue to develop and build those relationships," he said. **gt**



Maj. Gen. Michel Natali, the assistant adjutant general, presents a plaque to Brig. Gen. Richard Maponyane, the South Africa Defense Attaché based in Washington D.C., at the Harlem Armory in New York City on Dec. 9, 2021. Photo by Staff Sgt. Jonathan Pietrantonio, 138th Public Affairs Detachment.





Staff Sgt. Jonathan Vasconez, left, a member of the 24th Civil Support Team, and Connecticut Army National Guard Staff Sgt. Christian Manson, a member of the 14th Civil Support Team, collect data samples during a test on biological and chemical dispersion in a city, at the World Trade Center subway station in New York City on Oct. 19, 2021.

## CST Hosts Drill in NYC

*Story and photos by Maj. Michael O'Hagan, 106th Rescue Wing*

**NEW YORK --** The 24th Civil Support Team hosted 124 of their counterparts from 19 other states in New York City to support a homeland security exercise focused on figuring out how biological and chemical weapons disperse in a city.

Known as the Urban Threat Dispersion Project, the exercise began October 18 as a test by the Department of Homeland Security and New York's Metropolitan Transportation Authority to defend against chemical or biological attacks in a major city.

The CSTs were recruited to help because they understand how chemical and biological agents act, said Capt. Sean Lucas, the 24th's operations officer.

Members of civil support teams are trained to detect and identify chemical, biological and radiological materials and weapons.

Soldiers and Airmen from Alaska, Hawaii, Montana, California, Florida, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Connecticut and New Jersey are among those who participated in the exercise.

"This the largest event they have ever done for this type of study," Lucas said. "They did the same thing in 2016 but it was only in Manhattan and there was probably only about 30 CST personnel."

The CST Soldiers and Airmen released non-toxic aerosols and particulates in locations across New York City on five days during the two week period. Then they determined how far those materials traveled, where they wound up and how long it took to get there, Lucas said.

"Particulates can travel by many means; ventilation systems, outdoor wind, people's clothing

and shoes as they travel throughout the city," explained Maj. Guy Casarella, the nuclear medical science officer for the 24th.

"The subway systems also create what is called a piston effect from the inertia of a train going down the tunnel both pushing and pulling the air as it travels," he said.

The particles and gas contained short strands of DNA which are enveloped

inside a sugar molecule, Casarella explained. This allowed the test matter to be easily traced.

Devices designed to detect the gases and particulates were placed at multiple locations across the

city.

Some were large metal plates on the ground that were swiped clean. Then those wipes were collected to be analyzed along with filter pads removed throughout the day.

"This will give us an idea of the dispersion from our different sites as well as the coupling between the above ground and below ground site due to the subways," explained Trina Vian, a staff member from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Lincoln Laboratory.

The materials released are distinct so that each sample can be traced back to the release site it came from, she explained.

Lt. Col. Dan Colomb, the commander of the 24th CST, said the exercise was a great opportunity for his team and the others as well.

"It allows team members from all over the country to come together and share ideas and best practices that inform relationships," Colomb said.

"This is also true for the relationships that can be built between the CST's and partner agencies that were represented. The best time to meet someone is not when emergency begins." **gt**



New York Army National Guard Sgt. David Dahlberg, the readiness NCO for Alpha Company, 427th Brigade Support Battalion, left, and Capt. Vera Fedorenko, operations officer for the Rhode Island National Guard's 13th Civil Support Team, collect vapor and particulate samples from a detector at the Times Square Police Station in New York City Oct. 19, 2021, as part of a study on how chemical and biological agents disperse in a big city.



# NY Marks National Guard 385<sup>th</sup> Birthday

Story by Eric Durr, *Guard Times Staff*

LATHAM, N.Y. -- A 59-year old Air Guard wing command chief master sergeant and a 17-year old Army Guard truck driver recruit, teamed up to salute the National Guard's 385th Birthday on December 13, 2021 during a ceremony at the New York National Guard headquarters in Latham.

Command Chief Master Sgt. Jeff Trottier, the senior enlisted leader for the 109th Airlift Wing, and Pvt. Jacob McConville, who is joining the 427th Brigade Support Battalion, cut the National Guard birthday cake during a ceremony hosted by Maj. Gen. Ray Shields, the adjutant general of New York.

The National Guard claims Dec. 13, 1636 – the date the Massachusetts Bay Colony formally established its militia – as the birthday of the Guard – the oldest component of the United States military.

Traditionally, the oldest Soldier or Airman present joins the youngest in cutting the cake. The older member represents the traditions and history of the National Guard, while the young service member represents the future of the National Guard.

Last year's ceremony was virtual due to COVID-19 precautions. This year's event was in person, although participants all wore face masks.

Trottier, a resident of Lake Luzerne in the Adirondacks, is the top enlisted leader in the 109th Airlift Wing, which flies the largest ski-equipped aircraft in the world. Trottier said he was honored to be representing all Guard members who are ready to deploy to defend the nation.

Trottier joined the Air Force in 1980 and served with the National Security Agency until 1984, when he left active duty.

After a break in service, he joined the New York Air National Guard's 109th Airlift Wing in 1998. Since then he's been to Antarctica, Greenland, Iraq and Afghanistan.

It's been a special privilege to see the 109th Airlift Wing grow to play a key role in the nation's polar strategy, Trottier said.

McConville, who lives in the Mohawk Valley town of Amsterdam said he joined the Army National Guard because his sister had enlisted and "it sounded cool."

A high school senior, he is enrolled in the New York National Guard Recruit Sustainment Program to prepare him to report to basic training.

Representing the young Soldiers is an honor, McConville said.

"It's a way to show there are great opportunities in life in the National Guard," he said.

In 1636 every man between 16 and 60 who could carry a musket trained regularly to defend the Massachusetts Bay Colony, Shields said during his remarks

The Guard of today is better trained and his better weapons and the mission has evolved, he added.

"But one thing remains constant: our collective sense of service and sacrifice for our state and nation," Shields said.

"That is 385 years of leaving families and jobs to deploy to combat zones around the world. 385 years of responding to winter storms, floods, hurricanes, and wildfires."



Chief Master Sgt. Jeff Trottier joins Pvt. Jacob McConville in cutting the National Guard Birthday Cake during a ceremony at New York National Guard headquarters in Latham, New York, Dec. 13, 2021, marking the 385th anniversary of the National Guard. Photo by Sgt. Andrew Valenza, Joint Force Headquarters.

"385 years years of running to the sound of the guns as we did on January 6, 2021 when we sent 1,350 Soldiers and Airmen to protect our Nation's Capital."

"385 five years of helping our fellow New Yorkers as we did on 9/11, Super Storm Sandy and since March 2020 responding to the worst public health crisis in a century – the COVID pandemic," Shields said.

Over 6,500 New York National Guard members have been part of the COVID-19 response mission and 1,261 are currently on duty, Shields said.

Since March 2020, New York's Soldier and Airmen have served over 1.3 million workdays on COVID-19 related missions.

Meanwhile Soldiers and Airmen continue to deploy and prepare to deploy, Shields said.

Airmen from the 109th Airlift Wing are on duty in Antarctica and the 27th Infantry Brigade and 42nd Combat Aviation Brigade are preparing for deployments as well.

Another 750 Soldiers and Airmen serve everyday on Joint Task Force Empire Shield, to help secure New York City.

"None of this could be done without the dedicated members of the Army and Air National Guard, the Naval Militia, the New York Guard and our federal and state employees," Shields said.

"You all represent the National Guard," he told the audience.

"You are the face of the United States military in our communities. You are the key to our success," he said. **gt**



# Soldier and Airman Graduate Brazil Jungle School

Story by Ryan Campbell, *Guard Times Staff*

MANAUS, Brazil -- An Airman and a Soldier from the New York National Guard were among six Americans who completed Brazil's Jungle Warfare School international course in November of 2021.

Air National Guard Tech. Sgt. Paul Cange and Army National Guard Cpl. Dakoatah Miller started the course on September 24 and finished it on November 11.

Brazil's Jungle Warfare Center, known as CIGS, the abbreviation for its Portuguese name of Centro de Instrução de Guerra na Selva, conducts a special course for foreign students each fall.

"This was a volunteer basis, names were submitted through the unit," said Cange, a full time Joint Terminal Attack Controller instructor assigned to the 274th Air Support Operations Squadron.

"I was one of the names that got selected to go. I was very fortunate," he continued.

Cange said he expected the course to be similar to the U.S. Army's Ranger School, where his endurance would be pushed to the limits.

"I did a lot of cardio, running, swimming, calisthenics, kind of took away the weight training," he said. "Long endurance was the preparation as well as mental prep. I did as much reading on the course as I could and did a deep dive into jungle tactics."

He also talked to fellow New York Air National Guardsman Caleb Lapinel on best strategies and advice for the course.

"Thankfully, I was already pretty well prepared due to my participation in the 2021 Best Warrior Competition," said Cpl. Dakoatah Miller, an infantryman assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 108th Infantry.

Miller competed at the Army

Guard's Best Warrior Competition at the end of July where he placed 2nd in the junior enlisted category. This left him only a few weeks before heading to Brazil.

"Though I didn't have much time between the end of nationals and the start of the school, I was able to focus on specific tasks like swimming and the operations process."

One of the biggest obstacles to tackle right away ended up being acclimating to the Brazilian environment, Cange said.

"Definitely a lot of environmental factors going from the north right to equator," said Cange. "One of the hardest things was hydration and trying to keep up with that."

Cange said training in the tropical climate with 100% humidity added to the difficulty of the course, which started immediately upon arriving in Brazil.

"We started pretty much right away," he said.

The course is broken up into seven phases of about a week each.

However, Cange said the academics phase lasted only a few days before heading into the jungle.

The students first learn how to survive in the jungle before learning the tactical techniques of jungle operations, which eventually leads into performing military operations in the jungle.

"The course itself was difficult at times, mostly due to the bodily stress caused by limited food and sleep as well as large distances walked," Miller said.

"But the course gave me a great experience, not only with a gain in understanding jungle operations, but allowed me to meet great soldiers from around the world and experience a new way of life I wouldn't have gotten otherwise," he added.



Tech. Sgt. Paul Cange, far left, and Cpl. Dakoatah Miller, far right, join other American graduates of the Brazilian Jungle Operations International Course after graduation in Manaus, Brazil, Nov. 11, 2021. Below, Miller receives his graduation badge. Courtesy photos.

Cange joked that his team couldn't even find snakes to eat.

They tried to trap some but came up short, he said.

"It was very difficult to find any kind of meat to eat," he said.

Nearing the end of the seven weeks, the students went through one last event meant to signify what they had just gone through by completing the course.

"We did a last walk, it was about four days of walking and we got to the point of a site in the middle of the jungle," Cange said.

"It is more of a heritage walk to them. After the completion of that we went to a crash site. To bring us there as a group was very important and only jungle warriors who complete the walk get to see it," he said.

Seeing the decades-old crash site sitting in a remote part of the jungle marked the end of the course and that the students were soon to graduate.

"The graduation portion of it is not for the individual, it is for the greater good of the Amazon," Cange said. "When you receive the machete during the ceremony, you know you're part of something much bigger than you."



Each graduate received the CIGS jaguar blade.

"It felt great to graduate, not only to be proud to join the many before me who can be called jungle warriors, but also to know I would be able to go home soon to pass on that knowledge," said Miller.

"The machete is the symbol of the jungle warrior, it's unmistakable," Cange said. "When you identify the machete on someone, you know they're a jungle warrior."

Cange said looking back he was most impressed with the professionalism of the instructors saying, "that is what is really important, the relationships that are now formed." **gt**



## 258<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Welcomes New Commander

Story by Maj. Jean Krazter, 42nd Infantry Division

CAMP SMITH TRAINING SITE, N.Y. -- Lt. Col. Jeffrey Roth, a veteran of deployments to Kuwait and Jordan, took command of the New York Army National Guard's only field artillery battalion Nov. 6, 2021.

Roth took over command of the 1st Battalion, 258th Field Artillery from Lt. Col. Marc Lindemann, who had led the unit since 2018.

The 258th Field Artillery is normally headquartered at the Jamaica, Queens armory, and has elements in the Bronx, and Harlem, as well as New Windsor.



Lt. Col. Jeffrey Roth, commander of the 1st Battalion, 258th Field Artillery, speaks at his change of command ceremony at Camp Smith, Nov. 6, 2021. Photo by Capt. Mark Getman, New York Guard.

The battalion is now operating at Camp Smith Training Site near Peekskill, while the armories in the Bronx and Jamaica are renovated.

Lindemann is moving into a new assignment as the chief of fire support of the 42nd Infantry Division Headquarters which is based in Troy.

In his final remarks to the battalion's Soldiers, he thanked the Soldiers for their support.

"The comradery of the fulfillment of duty and sense of honor are the rewards for those whose care and care are enough to stay and serve beyond their time. Our battalion's past accomplishments are many; your futures are bright,"

Lindemann said.

The ceremony involved Roth accepting the battalion's flag, or colors, from the commander of the 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Col. Sean Flynn, symbolizing the transfer of command.

In his remarks, Roth said "we will build upon the past successes of this battalion, redouble our efforts to strengthen the artillery and grow leaders for the future of the field artillery which today has an unparalleled opportunity for impact and career growth."

He also thanked the previous commander and the battalion Soldiers. "Much is expected of those of us who choose to raise our hand and serve in today's military particularly as Citizen Soldiers," he said. "It is demanding. It isn't easy. It requires flexibility and commitment and consistency in showing up."

Roth, who joined the Michigan Army National Guard after earning a commission through the Reserve Officer Training Corps in 2001, has served as a battery commander and operations office and executive officer for the battalion.

While assigned to the Michigan Guard, he deployed with the Multinational Force and Observers, a peacekeeping force in the Sinai established in 1981 as part of a treaty between Israel and Egypt.

While deployed to the Middle East with the 42nd Infantry Division in 2020, he served as the deputy officer in charge at a training center in Jordan.

In civilian life, Roth is Deputy Commissioner of the New York City Department of Veterans Services. He is currently on leave from his civilian job serving on duty supporting special projects for the New York National Guard. **gt**



Soldiers present arms during change of command ceremony for the 1st Battalion, 258th Field Artillery held at Camp Smith, Nov. 6, 2021. Photo by Capt. Mark Getman, New York Guard.

"We will build upon the past successes of this battalion, redouble our efforts to strengthen the artillery and grow leaders for the future,"

-- Lt. Col. Jeffrey Roth, incoming commander, 1st Battalion, 258th Field Artillery Regiment

### New York's Newest Sergeant Major



NEW YORK – Col. Seth Morgulas, commander of the 369th Sustainment Brigade, promotes Master Sgt. Brian Manny, the incoming 42nd Infantry Division human resources sergeant major, at the Harlem Armory, Nov. 19, 2021. Photo by Staff Sgt. Jonathan Pietrantonio, 138th Public Affairs Detachment.



# Army Leaders Use NYC for Urban Training

Story by Eric Durr, *Guard Times Staff*, and Spc. Marla Ogden, *138th Public Affairs Detachment*



A UH-60 Black Hawk flies past lower Manhattan while carrying Soldiers taking part in the New York Army National Guard's Dense Urban Leaders Operations Course, to give participants a feel for the city's layout. Photo by Spc. Marla Ogden, 138th Public Affairs Detachment.

**NEW YORK --** Eighteen New York National Guard officers and senior NCOs used New York City as a laboratory to explore the challenges of operations in massive cities during a weeklong class which ended Nov. 6, 2021.

The troops walked through neighborhoods, flew over them and toured the waterfront to gain an appreciation of the complexity of urban warfare. They also learned from city officials who deal with those challenges every day.

"This class was critical in terms of bridging a knowledge gap between military operations and working with our civilian counterparts," said Lt. Col. Jason Secrest, commander of the 2nd Squadron, 101st Cavalry Regiment.

The New York National Guard is hoping to create a two-week Dense Urban Leaders Operation Course, DULOC for short, which would draw officers and NCOs from across the Army to New York City to get a first hand look at the challenges of combat operations surrounded by high rise buildings, tight city streets and surrounded by hundreds of thousands of civilians.

"Here in New York City, we were able to learn from our civilian counterparts about how these mega cities and trends of urbanization affect operations, planning and troop movement," said Lt. Col. Matthias Greene, commander of

the 3rd Battalion, 142nd Aviation.

Lt. Col. Brian Higgins, the class leader and a New York City Police detective, spent two and a half years on active duty as the OIC of the Dense Urban Terrain Detachment of the Army's Asymmetric Warfare Group at Fort Meade, Maryland.

His job there, Higgins said, was to take the expertise he'd honed as a cop in one of the world's densest cities, New York City's population is 8.2 million and the New York City metro area population is 20.3 million, and help the Army figure out how to fight in those places.

"The problem has to do with globalization trends," Higgins explained. "The world is becoming more populated. The majority of people are living in cities for a variety of reasons."

The Army's traditional approach to cities was to bypass them and avoid getting bogged down in a punishing fight, Higgins said. But with the rise of the mega-city, those with populations of more than 10 million, it doesn't work anymore.

Lt. Col. Dan Colomb, commander of the 24th Weapons of Mass Destruction Civil Support Team, based out of Fort Hamilton in Brooklyn, said he volunteered to participate to offer their expertise in urban operations but to also take new concepts back to their team.

"Every day we work in New York City and

the metro area," said Colomb. "We're those sensors that are out in these streets every day, so, I'd like to take some of these methodologies, apply them and see if they work better," he said.

The five day course focused on getting Soldiers in command and key staff positions to understand how a big city works and how that can affect military operations.

The Soldiers walked downtown Manhattan where the streets are narrow and irregular, explored Harlem, where the streets are in a grid and visited the world famous subway system.

Instructors included experts from the Modern War Institute at the U.S. Military Academy and the National Center of Urban Operations, a think tank on military operations in megacities. New York City fire officials, transit staff and emergency managers also took part.

"Learning from the perspective of our civilian counterparts is important because we're able to gauge what they have to offer, what their limitations are and how we can integrate ourselves into the solution," he added.

The course Higgins and New York National Guard leaders would like to create would be a two-week long course going into urban operations in more detail. But the week-long class was an excellent start, Higgins said. **9**



# 27<sup>th</sup> Brigade Extends Reach with New Sniper Rifle

Story by and photos Maj. Avery Schneider, 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team



Smoke clears from the chamber of an M-110A1 Squad Designated Marksman rifle fired by Spc. Steven Monnat, an infantryman assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 108th Infantry, during new equipment training at Fort Drum, New York, Nov. 5, 2021.

FORT DRUM, N.Y. -- Across the 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Soldiers are closing the gap between the reach of the basic Soldier and the highly trained sniper with the Army's Squad Designated Marksman rifle.

During two days of new equipment training, 30 Soldiers learned to operate and maintain the new rifle and gained combat skills they'll bring home to their units.

Known as the M-110A1, the SDMR is a 7.62mm rifle manufactured by Heckler & Koch Defense Inc. It comes equipped with a Sig Sauer Tango6 optic, as well as a special buttstock and suppressor.

"It feels like this weapon and me belong together," said Cpl. Luis Alvarez, an infantryman assigned to Delta Company, 1st Battalion, 182nd Infantry Regiment.

In the class, Alvarez and the other students were taught each of the SDMR's features, how to disas-

semble and reassemble the weapon and how to fire it. He also learned new skills, like understanding the impact of wind and elevation on firing over longer ranges.

Then the Soldiers spent a day on the sniper range at Fort Drum putting those skills into practice against paper and steel targets.

"[The SDMR] was developed to fill the gap between the rifleman and a sniper," explained David Beesley, a training specialist with the U.S. Army Tank Automotive Armaments Command, and lead instructor for the new equipment training.

"The rifleman shoots out to 300 meters effectively. We needed something to get between that three and 600 meter gap so that we don't necessarily have to rely on a sniper for those long shots."

Beesley said, on a good day a Soldier equipped with the SDMR

can shoot as far as 800 meters.

For Sgt. Johnathan Harris, a cavalry scout assigned to Alpha Company, 2nd Battalion, 108th Infantry Regiment, the SDMR comes with other advantages, too.

"We don't have to carry as much equipment for surveillance, be-

cause we have a six-time zoom on our rifle. And it has night vision, too," he said.

Both Alvarez and Harris intend to bring the lessons they learned back to their units.

"After all," he said, "Who doesn't want to hit targets from further?"



Sgt. Troy Perez, an infantryman from Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment, looks through the scope of an M110 A1 Squad Designated Marksman Rifle during a new equipment training at Fort Drum, New York, Nov. 4, 2021.





David Beesley, a training specialist with the U.S. Army Tank Automotive Armaments Command, helps adjust a scope for Sgt. John Ritornato, an infantryman assigned to Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment, during M110 A1 Squad Designated Marksman rifle new equipment training at Fort Drum, New York, Nov. 5, 2021. Ritornato was among 30 Soldiers from the 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team who learned to operate the SDMR and close the gap between the reach of a rifleman and a sniper's weapons.



# New Commander for the 'Fighting 69<sup>th</sup>'

Story by Eric Durr, Guard Times Staff

NEW YORK -- Lt. Col. Shawn Tabankin, a veteran of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, who also serves as deputy director of joint operations for Joint Force Headquarters, took command of New York City's historic "Fighting 69<sup>th</sup>" Infantry Regiment on Sunday, Oct. 24, 2021.

Tabankin took over command of the 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry, from Lt. Col. Joseph Whaley, who has led the unit since 2019.

Whaley is moving into a new assignment as the deputy operations officer of the 42nd Infantry Division Headquarters which is based in Troy.

In his remarks, Tabankin thanked his family for their support throughout his career and the leadership of the New York Army National Guard for selecting him to command such a famous unit.

He also thanked Whaley for helping him "hit the ground running."

"I promise not to squander the head start you have provided me," Tabankin said.

He also thanked the Soldiers of the battalion for being part of the traditional change of command ceremony at the Lexington Avenue Armory in Manhattan.

"Thank you for your service and for continuing to do the great work of this regiment, particularly

during the past two years under extremely trying conditions. I promise you that I will endeavor to do the same," Tabankin said.

Tabankin first enlisted in the Army in 1997 and served in the 82nd Airborne Division before receiving his commission in 2002 through the Army Reserve Officers Training Corps, joining the New York Army National Guard in order to attend New York Law School.

In 2003, Tabankin took a voluntary leave of absence from law school in order to deploy to Iraq as a platoon leader with Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 108th Infantry. Tabankin conducted combat operations for 11 months including participation in the October 2004 Battle of Samarra, a four day house to house fight to clear the city of insurgent forces.

Tabankin went on to continue his service with assignments as commander of Charlie Company, 1/69th Infantry, followed by a second command in 2012 with Charlie Company, 2nd Battalion, 108th Infantry while deployed to Afghanistan.

The 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry, has a distinguished history that includes service in the Civil War, World War I, World War II and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In 2004-05 the battalion

was mobilized and then deployed to Baghdad, Iraq where it was given the mission of security for Route Irish, the road from the Baghdad Airport to the center of the city. At one time this was considered the most dangerous road in Iraq.

Members of the 69th also deployed to Afghanistan in 2008.

Closer to home, members of the battalion were part of the response to Superstorm Sandy and have participated in numerous state weather emergencies as well as the state's COVID-19 response since March of 2020. **gt**



Lt. Col. Shawn Tabankin during his change of command ceremony for the 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment at their armory in New York City, Oct. 24, 2021. Photo by Sgt. Matthew Gunther, Joint Force Headquarters.

## New York' Troops Honor Former President



KINDERHOOD, N.Y. -- Army National Guard Brig. Gen. Isabel Rivera Smith, the director of joint staff, passes through an honor cordon at ceremonies commemorating President Martin Van Buren, the eighth U.S. president, on the anniversary of his 239th birthday, Dec. 5, 2021 at his grave in Kinderhook, New York. Each year military officers present a wreath at the grave of previous presidents. Photo by Sgt. Matthew Gunther, Joint Force Headquarters.



# 42<sup>nd</sup> Aviation Brigade Welcomes New Leader

Story by 1st Lt. Lauren Warner, 42nd Combat Aviation Brigade

LATHAM, N.Y. -- Col. Jason Lefton, a veteran of the Iraq War and a Niskayuna resident, took command of the 42nd Expeditionary Combat Aviation Brigade during a change of command ceremony held on Nov. 6, 2021 at the New York National Guard headquarters.

Lefton has been serving as the state Army aviation officer since 2020 and will continue to serve in that position while also commanding the aviation brigade.

He has deployed to Bosnia, Herzegovina, Kuwait and Iraq.

Lefton replaces Col. Michael Charnley, who is retiring after 30 years of service in the military. Charnley took command of the brigade in July of 2019.

"I am honored, grateful, humbled and excited to command the 42nd Combat Aviation Brigade. Thank you for your trust and confidence," Lefton said. "I understand the gravity of this great honor and will do my absolute best."

"We must lead and take care of each other. We must remain brave in the face of inherent danger and train for the missions we know will come," Lefton said.

Lefton is not new to the brigade, as he has served as the executive officer of the brigade and was the 3rd Battalion, 142nd Assault Helicopter Battalion commander from September of 2017 to October of 2020.

"Jason Lefton comes well qualified to lead our brigade having served the aviation enterprise here in New York for 20 years," Charnley said. "Your attributes and experience will serve our formation well during your command time."

"I wish you well as you assume command of our great organization and lead it into the future,"

Charnley said.

During the ceremony, the flag, or colors, of the 42nd Expeditionary Combat Aviation Brigade was transferred from Charnley to Lefton by Maj. Gen. Thomas Spencer. The transferring of the colors symbolizes the transfer of authority for the Soldier in the brigade.

Spencer praised Lefton and Charnley for fantastic careers in the military, specifically in aviation. He commended Charnley for his 30 years of service and thanked his family for their dedication to the military.

"Col. Charnley will surely be missed," said the brigade's Command Sgt. Maj. Arnold Reyes. "He was truly a leader who focused on the mission and cared about the welfare of his Soldiers, which made my role easier."

Reyes commended Charnley for his service and wished him well on his retirement.

Reyes said he was eager to work with Lefton as the 42nd Combat Aviation Brigade welcomes the new commander.

"We share the same vision and look forward to continuing the momentum to make this the best aviation unit," Reyes said, "His enthusiasm coming out of the gate is a reflection that making this goal happen is not impossible."

Lefton has served in numerous leadership and staff positions in his 25 year career as an officer in the Army National Guard since earning his commission from the Marion Military Institute in 1996.

He joined Army aviation in November of 2000 and became a UH-60 Black Hawk pilot in the 3rd Battalion, 142nd Assault Helicopter Battalion in January of 2001.

During his career, Lefton deployed to Bosnia and Herzegovina

in support of the Stabilization Force 12 as a liaison officer for Multinational Division Southeast and task force battle captain and later deployed as a staff officer to Iraq.

Lefton has served as a company commander, battalion executive officer, brigade executive officer and battalion commander. During his time as a battalion commander for the 3rd Battalion, 142nd Assault Helicopter Battalion, Lefton lead the battalion to Puerto Rico in response to Hurricane Irma and Maria.

He holds a Masters in Strategic Studies from the Army War College and a Master of Business Administration from the University of Phoenix. He completed his bachelor's degree in Rhetoric and Communications at the State University of New York.

He has civilian work experience as a fully registered representative in the financial services industry. He holds a commercial helicopter pilot license and single engine airplane license.

Col. Lefton's awards include the two Bronze Star Medals, three Meritorious Service Medals, the Army Commendation Medal, three Army Achievement Medals, the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, Southwest Asia Service Medal, Iraq Campaign Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal Expeditionary Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Overseas Service Ribbon and the NATO Medal for service in the former Yugoslavia, the Combat Action Badge, Master Army Aviator Badge and Air Assault Wings. ✪



Col. Jason Lefton accepts the flag of the 42nd Combat Aviation Brigade from Maj. Gen. Thomas Spencer, the commander of the 42nd Infantry Division, during change of command ceremonies held at New York National Guard headquarters in Latham, New York, on Nov. 6, 2021. Photo by Staff Sgt. Trevor Cullen, 42nd Infantry Division.



# Leadership Change for 53<sup>rd</sup> Troop Command



Story and photos by Spc. Marla Ogden, 138th Public Affairs Detachment

Brig. Gen. Jack James, the outgoing commander of the 53rd Troop Command, joins the incoming commander Brig. Gen. Joseph Biehler, in front of the color guard during a change of command ceremony at the Camp Smith Training Site, Cortlandt Manor, New York, on Oct. 17, 2021.

CAMP SMITH TRAINING SITE, N.Y. -- Brig. Gen. Joseph Biehler, a veteran of combat deployments to both Iraq and Afghanistan, assumed command of the 53rd Troop Command during a change of command ceremony at Camp Smith Training Site, Oct. 17, 2021.

Brig. Gen. Jack James, himself a veteran of deployments to Haiti, Bosnia and Kuwait, relinquished command during the ceremony after serving two years as commander of the 53rd Troop Command.

Speaking to a formation of more than 200 Soldiers representing the entire command, Adjutant General Maj. Gen. Ray Shields, recognized both Biehler and James for their leadership and contributions.

"Since assuming command of the 53rd Troop Command, which makes up almost 4,500 of our 10,700 Soldiers, Jack has exhibited exceptional leadership," Shields said.

"Under your command, the troop command has deployed multiple units to combat zones and around the world," he said.

Shields said that Biehler is an exceptional leader whose experience makes him a perfect fit as the 53rd Troop Command's new commander.

"Joe has commanded at company, battalion, brigade and division levels and has been highly successful," he said. "He has also deployed three times and each has been highly successful."

The two New York Army National Guard leaders will swap responsibilities and each congratulated the other for their new role.

"(He) and I are switching positions," Biehler said. "He's going to get an opportunity to work with the 42nd Infantry Division that's getting ready for a Warfighter, which is a great experience."

Biehler, previously the deputy commander for operations for the 42nd Infantry Division in Troy, said he's honored to lead the Soldiers of the 53rd Troop Command.

"Being a commander in the Army is special and unique," Biehler said. "There is no comparison in the civilian world to being a commander


of an Army organization."

James said that he is proud to relinquish his command to Biehler. The two served side by side previously as brigade commanders.

"We served together as partners in brigade command integrating our 42nd Combat Aviation Brigade and 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team training in ways that truly build readiness and combat power," James said. "I couldn't be happier that he's my successor."

"You are eminently qualified and I could not be more pleased than to pass the colors of (the) troop command to you," James said to Biehler following the transfer of unit colors during the ceremony.

James, as the new deputy commanding general for operations, will oversee the training and readiness of the associated brigades and headquarters of the 42nd Infantry Division.

"This is an incredible opportunity and I could not be more excited or honored to be selected to move to the historic Rainbow Division," he said. 



# Troops Earn State's First Expert Soldier Badges

Story by Eric Durr, *Guard Times Staff*

FORT DRUM, N.Y. -- Four Soldiers became the first in the New York Army National Guard to earn the new Expert Soldier Badge on Oct. 1, 2021 following two weeks of training and testing at Fort Drum.

The four men joined another 950 Soldiers across the Army who have earned the new badge which was created in October of 2019.

As of July, according to Army Training and Doctrine Command, only 19% of the 5,000 Soldiers who have sought the Expert Soldier Badge have passed the course.

Sgt. 1st Class Ryan Blount, a member of the 427th Brigade Support Battalion; Sgt. Alexander Sonnevile and Spc. Nicholas Weber, both assigned to the 2nd Squadron, 101st Cavalry; and Spc. William Neumeister, assigned to the 10th MCPOD; had to successfully complete 30 Soldier tasks, qualify expert, complete a PT test, day/night land navigation and complete a timed 12 mile foot march.

The session run by the 10th Mountain Division allocated two weeks for the skill badge evaluation. The first week, from September 20 to 26, gave Soldiers a chance to review the skills and then master them with hands on training. The second week, from September 27 to October 1, was the testing phase.

"Once we got there and we saw what it was all about and how challenging it was, it was pretty clear we were going to succeed or fail as a group," said Blount, a full time human resource specialist.

"We wanted to make sure we didn't leave anybody behind," Blount said. "We went at it as a team."

"We would stand there and test each other while we were getting



Spc. William Neumeister, Spc. Nicholas Weber, Sgt. Alexander Sonnevile and Sgt. 1st Class Ryan Blount gather after earning their Expert Soldier Badges at Fort Drum, New York, Oct. 1, 2021. Courtesy Photo.

ready to go through the lanes," Sonnevile said.

"Having other people there to talk it through and correct me if I am wrong, or out of sequence was important," Neumeister said. "If I didn't have them with me, it would be a different story."

**"We wanted to make sure we didn't leave anybody behind," Blount said. "We went at it as a team."**

-- Sgt. 1st Class Ryan Blount, 427th Brigade Support Battalion

The tasks are broken down into three lanes: weapons tasks, medical tasks and patrol tasks which involve things like map reading, transmitting a spot report and emplacing a Claymore mine.

They also had to learn to break down the new M-17 Sig Sauer pistol, instead of the M-9 Beretta pistol used by the New York Army National Guard, because that is the pistol issued to 10th Mountain Division Soldiers.

Sonneville said his training as a scout stood him in good stead when it came to the patrol tasks lane, Sonnevile said. His unit spends a lot of time training on range estimation and call for fire,

he explained.

Weber, a part-time college student and full-time security guard who lives in Cicero and is also a cavalry scout in Alpha Troop, said he also found the weapons lane the most challenging.

That was probably because it

was the first set of tasks they had to complete and he had to get used to the system, Weber said.

He got interested in tackling the badge after talking to Sonnevile, Weber said.

"Because it is a new badge, and not many people have it, it was something I wanted to go for," Weber said.

"Just having the word 'expert' attached to you is awesome," he said. "And at the very least, if I failed, I know I would have learned a lot of stuff I could bring back to my unit."

Neumeister, a signals intelligence analyst, said he signed up for the ESB competition when his

chance to go to Air Assault School fell through.

Going to the ESB competition at Fort Drum was Neumeister's last official act as a member of the New York Army Guard and the 10th MCPOD, a unit which supplements the 10th Mountain Division headquarters.

He has since transferred to the Colorado Army National Guard's 19th Special Forces Group, where he will serve as a full-time intelligence analyst.

Earning the ESB has been a real confidence booster as he moves into a full-time job with a highly specialized unit in Denver, Neumeister said.

The biggest challenge for him, Neumeister said, was learning a new skill, becoming an expert on it and then "completely brain dump" the information and master something else.

"I usually carry a notebook with me and in two years in the Army I have filled in 10 pages," he said.

"I filled that up immediately. My hand is a lot stronger now from taking notes, with how much I had to write," he joked.

The medical lane was purely memorization: how to treat a casualty for a spinal injury and shock, how to control bleeding, how to treat an abdominal wound, he said.

The weapons testing involved building the muscle memory to disassemble and assemble the weapons with correct steps. The patrol lane involved thinking through the tasks, he said.

"It was a lot of work, but it was a lot of fun," he said. "I'd never touched a Mk. 19. I never touched a .50 caliber machine gun. It was fun studying up, and recognizing, and getting used to the sequences," Neumeister said. **gt**



## Syracuse Defenders Conduct Close Quarter Training

Story and photos by Senior Airman Tiffany Scofield, 174th Attack Wing



Security forces Airmen from the 174th Attack Wing clear a building during a Close Quarters Battle training at a shut-down hotel in Syracuse, New York, Dec. 5, 2021.

HANCOCK FIELD AIR NATIONAL BASE, Syracuse, N.Y. -- Members of the 174th Security Forces Squadron conducted active shooter/close quarters battle training Dec. 5, 2021 at a shut down hotel near the Syracuse International Airport. CQB presents multiple techniques, tactics and procedures and allows the unit to develop skills that ensure readiness.

Twenty-eight security forces Airmen participated in practicing making entries, moving tactically throughout the building, clearing the building of any hostels and learning how to take over the building.

"This training will ensure that all of our Airmen know how to tactically take a building over," said Tech. Sgt. William McLennan,

NCOIC of training for the 174th SFS. "This could happen in an active shooter event or expeditionary."

McLennan explained that this training event was valuable in that it gave many of the newer Airmen more experience on how to deal with an active shooter event should it happen at home or while deployed.

Though it would be highly unlikely for the 174th SFS to respond to an active shooter at a school, the practice on a different floor plan is invaluable. The skills that were worked on at the hotel can be applied to buildings both on base and off.

Airmen have never trained at this location before so they will not know the floorplan ahead

of time, providing a more realistic experience. Active shooter response is a significant training task for the unit and is trained several times throughout the year.

"When put into this situation as training or the real thing, going into unfamiliar territory can be unsettling," said Capt. Devin Will, the 174th SFS commander. "So our Airmen have to rely on the training and tactics they have been taught."

Airmen were split up into teams of four and went through a series of workouts such as sprinting, push-ups and squatting to get their heart rate up to how it would be in real life.

"Our goal in these exercises is to become comfortable with the

"Our goal in these exercises is to become comfortable with the uncomfortable. Exercises such as this allow our squadron to focus on teamwork,"

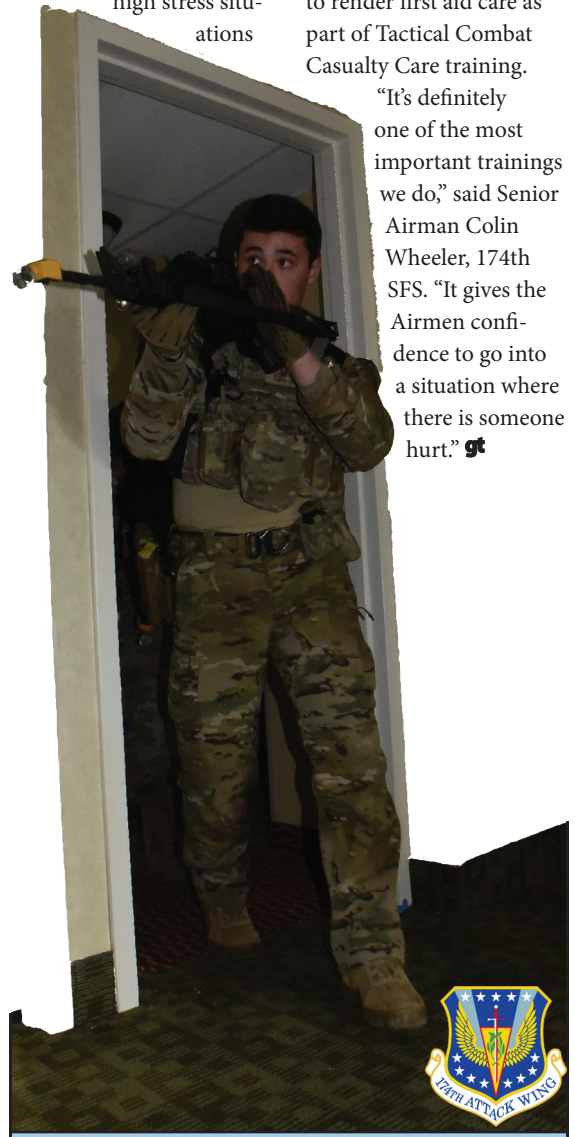
-- Air National Guard Capt. Devin Will, 174th Security Forces Squadron commander

uncomfortable," said Will. "Exercises such as this allow our squadron to focus on teamwork in simulated high stress situations

while improving our readiness for when we deploy."

While clearing the buildings, Airmen also had to render first aid care as part of Tactical Combat Casualty Care training.

"It's definitely one of the most important trainings we do," said Senior Airman Colin Wheeler, 174th SFS. "It gives the Airmen confidence to go into a situation where there is someone hurt." **gt**



An Airman from the 174th Security Forces Squadron clears a building during Close Quarters Battle training in Syracuse, New York, Dec.5, 2021.



# NY Supports Danish Forces in Greenland Training

Story and photos by Tech. Sgt. Jamie Spaulding, 109th Airlift Wing and Staff Sgt. Daniel Farrell, 106th Rescue Wing

KANGERLUSSUAQ, GREENLAND -- Thirty-four New York National Guard Airmen from the 109th Airlift Wing and the 106th Rescue Wing teamed up with Denmark's Joint Arctic Command during a search and rescue exercise in Greenland from Nov. 3 to Nov. 9, 2021.

The 109th Airlift Wing, based at Stratton Air National Guard Base outside Schenectady, deployed one LC-130 ski-equipped aircraft and 17 personnel, while the 106th Rescue Wing, based at Gabreski Air National Guard Base in Westhampton Beach on Long Island, deployed an HC-130J Combat King II search and rescue aircraft along with 17 personnel.

The 109th Airlift Wing operates regularly in Greenland, resupplying science facilities there from Greenland's Kangerlussuaq International Airport.

It was a new mission though, for the search and rescue Airmen.

"This was our chance to dip our toes in cold weather and arctic operations," said Lt. Col. Sean Garell, the commander of the wing's 102nd Rescue Squadron, which flies the HC-130s.

"We wanted to look at the 109th approach to cold weather operations because they have experience

when it comes to Greenland and Antarctica," Garell said.

The search and rescue exercise, dubbed Arctic Light, included the Royal Danish Air Force, the Danish Special Operations Command and Denmark's Joint Rescue Coordination Center which is responsible for search and rescue operations in Greenland.

Greenland is a self-governing part of the Kingdom of Denmark, so the Danish military is responsible for defending the island.

The exercise focused on the ability to activate, deploy and redeploy capabilities in an arctic environment, according to Maj. Christopher Husher, the 109th's lead exercise planner.

The New Yorkers received tasks from the Joint Arctic Command in the search and rescue mission.

The training scenario called for Danish personnel to conduct ground operations following a tsunami which hit Qoornoq, located on Greenland's northeastern coast.

The Arctic Light exercise was a perfect fit for the 106th because it revolved around a search and rescue mission, Garell said.

The main mission of the New

York National Guard contingent was to drop supplies to the Danish troops on the ground, Husher said.

"We were essential to operations for this exercise," Husher said.

"We conducted three airdrops consisting of survivability rations, equipment and gear. We even dropped a boat for Danish search and rescue personnel," he said.

The 109th dropped an inflatable boat, properly known as a combat rubber raiding craft, along with scuba equipment and rations, said Tech. Sgt. Logan Brennan, a loadmaster with the 109th.

The boat was dropped on a combat expendable platform, a term for a pallet built for one time use when dropping non-standard loads, Brennan explained.

"The significance of the drop, was that we were able to showcase an underutilized skillset for us as loadmasters and a capability for the 109th as a whole," Brennan said.


The 106th Airmen conducted low-level mountain flying and a resupply airdrop to a Danish special operation forces team as their part of the mission.



Tech. Sgt. Karl Burghar, a crewchief with the 109th Airlift Wing, fuels up his LC-130 for an air drop mission in support of exercise Arctic Light at Kangerlussuaq, Greenland, Nov. 4, 2021.

The ration filled bundle landed less than 10 meters from target, culminating a successful exercise for the participants, Garell said.

"Whether it be a downed aircraft over the icecap, a sinking ship in the fjord, or some sort of international conflict, the capabilities and techniques that were used in Arctic Light will be integral to addressing whatever circumstances that we or our allies encounter in the arctic," Husher said.

"Opportunities like this build trust and operational familiarity between partners," He added. 



Airmen assigned to the 109th Airlift Wing stand on top of an LC-130 "ski bird" while preparing for an airdrop mission in support of the Danish military during Operation Arctic Light in Kangerlussuaq, Greenland on Nov. 4, 2021.



# Air Force Leader Tours Eastern Air Defense

Story and photos by Timothy Jones, Eastern Air Defense Sector

ROME, N.Y. -- Under Secretary of the Air Force Gina Ortiz Jones traveled to upstate New York on Nov. 24, 2021 to thank Airmen at the Eastern Air Defense Sector for their around-the-clock efforts defending the nation.

The under secretary of the Air Force is the second highest ranking civilian official in the Department of the Air Force, serving directly under the secretary of the Air Force. Together with the chief of staff of the Air Force and the chief of space operations, as well as the chief master sergeant of the Air Force and the chief master sergeant of the Space Force, the six make up the senior leadership team of the Department of the Air Force.

Jones recognized the New York Air National Guardsmen and Canadian Forces members at the Eastern Air Defense Sector, many of whom would be working over

**"Thank you for standing watch."**

-- Gina Ortiz Jones, Under Secretary of the Air Force

the Thanksgiving holiday.

"You defend the homeland from airborne attack 24/7 - 365," said Jones. "We share this critical mission with the Canadian military and our countries are stronger and safer for it. Thank you for standing watch."

The visit's focal point was EADS' Battle Control Center, where Airmen explained the unit's around-the-clock operations to the under secretary. EADS' Mission Defense Team also briefed Jones on its cyber defense efforts.

The under secretary recognized three Airmen during her stop. Jones coined Tech. Sgt. Brittany Carrier, a member of the 224th Support Squadron; Staff Sgt. Brandon Kerr of the 224th Air Defense



Under Secretary of the Air Force Gina Ortiz Jones presents her coin recognizing outstanding performance to Staff Sgt. Brandon Kerr of the 224th Air Defense Squadron during her tour of the Eastern Air Defense Sector on Nov. 24, 2021. Photo by Staff Sgt. Nicholas Erwin, Headquarters, U.S. Air Force.

Squadron and Staff Sgt. Laura Fontana of the 224th SPTS Security Forces, for their superior work.

Jones toured the Air Force Research Laboratory Information Directorate, also located in Rome, prior to arriving at EADS.

EADS is composed of New York Air National Guardsmen from the

224th Air Defense Group, a Canadian Forces detachment, liaison officers from the Army and Navy, federal civilians and civilian contractors. Part of the North American Aerospace Defense Command, the Sector is responsible for the air defense of the eastern U.S. **gt**



## NY Airmen Support Annual Veteran's Day Parade in NYC

NEW YORK -- Airmen assigned to the 106th Rescue Wing from Westhampton Beach, prepare to step off as part of the New York City Veteran's Day Parade on Nov. 11, 2021. The parade honored the service of the U.S. Air Force and the parade grand marshal was retired Air National Guard Senior Master Sgt. Kevin Carrick. Carrick was a pararescueman with the 106th Rescue Wing for 25 years. The 106th and the New York Army National Guard's 369th Sustainment Brigade from Harlem, participated in the parade. Photo by Maj. Michael O'Hagan, 106th Rescue Wing.



# 105<sup>th</sup> Recognized with Meritorious Unit Award

Story by Master Sgt. Sara Pastorello, 105th Airlift Wing



A C-17 Globemaster III with the 105th Airlift wing taxis out onto the runway, Dec. 4, 2021 to prepare for flight operations from Stewart Air National Guard Base, New York. The C-17 is a long-haul aircraft that can tackle distance, destination, and heavy, oversized payloads in unpredictable conditions. The Air Force recognized the 105th Airlift Wing with the Air Force Meritorious Unit Award for its wide range of successful operations in 2020. Photo by Staff Sgt. Mary Schwarzler, 105th Airlift Wing.

STEWART AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, Newburgh, N.Y. -- The 1,300 Airmen of the 105th Airlift Wing have been awarded the Air Force's Meritorious Unit Award for their accomplishments during 2020.

Units which qualify for the award display "outstanding devotion and superior performance of exceptionally difficult tasks as to set it apart and above other units with similar missions," according to Air Force regulations.

The 105th Airlift Wing, which flies transportation missions around the world in support of the United States military, was recognized for performance and accomplishment in a number of areas between Jan. 1, 2020 and Dec. 31 2020.

"This Meritorious Unit Award is a testament to the efforts of every single member of the 105th Airlift Wing," said Brig. Gen. Denise Donnell, the commander of the 105th Airlift Wing in a message to the wing on November 24.

"This is our first ever Meritorious Unit Award and I couldn't be any prouder of the

tremendous achievement of our Citizen Airmen who are always ready and always there," she added.

During 2020, the wing mobilized 208 Airmen to New York State's response to the COVID-19 pandemic while also providing exceptional support of combat units in Afghanistan and the Middle East.

During 2020, the wing's Airmen supported eight military operations and conducted 73 combat and combat support missions. The wing's Airmen moved 9.2 million pounds of cargo in and out of combat zones.

At the same time, the wing's nine C-17's airlifted 10.1 million pounds of cargo and over 5,000 passengers during 92 strategic airlift missions in support of the Department of Defense around the world.

The wing also moved almost 300 personnel and 429,000 pounds of cargo in support of COVID-19 related missions in support of U.S. troops operating overseas.


While conducting these missions and many

more, the wing's maintenance teams kept aircraft flying reaching an 89.5% readiness rate; this was the highest among the total Air Force's 15 C-17 wings.

Aircraft maintainers deployed into combat zones helped keep aircraft flying, while another team from the wing's air terminal detachment supported Special Operations Command.

Wing Airmen were also on active duty at home during the darkest moments of the pandemic, working at the COVID-19 field hospital at the Javits Convention Center in Manhattan, and COVID-19 testing sites, and helping to feed hundreds of thousands of New York City residents who needed food support.

The wing also conducted a training exchange with the South African military as part of the National Guard State Partnership Program and continued to conduct challenging training programs at the base.

Members of the wing are now entitled to wear a red, white and blue ribbon denoting the award on their service dress uniforms. 



# New York Guard



## Leadership Change in Western NY

BUFFALO, N.Y. -- The New York Guard's 10th Area Command held a change of command ceremony for the 65th Detachment based at the Masten Ave. Armory in Buffalo, which saw Capt. James Cousins, photo at left, take command and address members of the detachment on Dec. 12, 2021. Photos by Pfc. Emily Kaffenberger, New York Guard.

## NY Guard Honors Past Soldiers

LONG ISLAND CITY, N.Y. -- Members of the 88th Area Command, based at the Lexington Ave. Armory in Manhattan, conducted its annual commemoration of the 1862 Battle of Fredericksburg on Dec. 11, 2021 at the Irish Brigade Monument in Calvary Cemetery in Queens. The forebears of the New York Guard's 88th Area Command, the 88th New York Infantry Regiment mustered into service in the fall of 1861 for service in the Union Army and sustained heavy losses during their 1862 assault upon Marye's Heights, near the town of Fredericksburg, Virginia. 159 years after the battle, New York Guard volunteers on an overcast day joined the Veteran Corps of Artillery, the 69th Infantry Volunteers and Pipers of the County Tyrone Pipe and Drum Band to pay tribute to them in Calvary Cemetery to honor the bravery and sacrifice of the Irish Brigade. Photos by Warrant Officer Ed Shevlin, New York Guard.





# New York Naval Militia

## Naval Militia Marks 245<sup>th</sup> Marine Corps Birthday

Story and photos by Ryan Campbell, Guard Times Staff



Members of the New York Naval Militia and leadership from the New York National Guard, celebrated the 245th birthday of the Marine Corps with a traditional cake cutting at the New York National Guard headquarters, Latham, New York, Nov. 10, 2021.

LATHAM, N.Y. -- Sailors and Marines of the New York Naval Militia joined New York National Guard leadership in celebrating the 246th birthday of the Marine Corps on Nov. 10, 2021, at the New York National Guard headquarters.

Formed on Nov. 10, 1775, the Second Continental Congress resolved to raise two battalions of Marines which was done by Samuel Nicholas, captain of the Marines, out of Tun Tavern in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Every year since 1925 the Marine Corps birthday has been celebrated with a ball and is one of the biggest social events of the year for Marines.

The New York Naval Militia, which was formed in 1889 with just one battalion, recognizes the birthday each year. As today, with 2,700 members, 95% come from the Marine Corps Reserve as well as the Naval Reserve and Coast Guard Reserve.

"I love it, last year at this time I was at boot camp, I was out there dying and now I'm here working on computers. I love doing my job,

I love where I'm at right now," said Lance Cpl. William Newcomb, a data systems administrator assigned to 6th Communication Battalion, Marine Corps Reserve, Brooklyn.

Newcomb said he enlisted in July of 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic and was shipped out to boot camp that fall which to him, was an entirely new experience.

As a Marine Corps Reservist, Newcomb is also a member of the New York Naval Militia, who have been working at New York National Guard headquarters to support ongoing efforts such as the COVID-19 response.

"I wanted to be a Marine and basically my friend talked me into it," Newcomb said. "I wanted to serve in some branch since high school and since my friend was joining the Marines, I joined with him and we did it together, boot camp and everything."

It is tradition that the Marine Corps birthday cake is cut by the oldest Marine present who then serves it to the youngest Marine present.

It was also a tradition of service that brought David Reger, who cut the cake, into the Corps.

"All of my family was Navy, I was actually the first Marine," said Reger, who served as a sergeant in the infantry at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, from 1973 to 1975.

"Being part of it, I was very proud," Reger continued. "I stepped into Paris Island on July 5, 1973. Something you never forget."

After watching the Marine Corps birthday message from Gen. David Berger, commandant of the Marine Corps, and Sgt. Maj. of the Marine Corps Troy Black, those at the celebration also heard Maj. Gen. John Lejeune's birthday message from 1921.

It was Lejeune who issued Marine Corps Order No. 47, Series 1921, which summarized the history, mission and tradition of Corps, and directed that it be read every command each year on November 10 in honor of the Marine Corps birthday. The cake cutting began as a tradition as early as 1935.

Following the remarks, Capt. David Hawley, deputy commander of the New York Naval Militia, gave the Marines in attendance a vial of soil from Iwo Jima, where 6,821 Marines were killed in action during battle for control of the island during February and March of 1945 and where the U.S. flag was famously raised over Mt. Suribachi.

"You never lose the title of Marine, you're proud of it," said Reger.

Reger, who later joined the New York National Guard in 1985 and served until 2006, never stopped celebrating the Marine Corps birthday.

"We don't forget, we have a tradition about 10 of us former Marines get together for the Marine Corps birthday and we celebrate and enjoy ourselves for a couple hours so we never forget," he said.

"Considering last year at this time I didn't get to really enjoy it much since I was at boot camp, now that I get to enjoy it, it feels great," said Newcomb. **gt**



Members of the New York Naval Militia receive sand from Iwo Jima from Capt. David Hawley, deputy commander of the Naval Militia during celebrations of the 245th birthday of the Marine Corps at the New York National Guard headquarters, Latham, New York, Nov. 10, 2021.



