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Volume 13 Number 4

guardtimes

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



FROM THE LEADERSHIP

Troops Learn to Balance COVID and Training

My name is Command Chief Master Sgt. Denny Richardson and I am honored to be selected as the New York Air National Guard State Command Chief. I am also extremely excited to begin the next stage of this journey.

As I settle in to this position, my main focus will be the development of the force and fostering a diverse and inclusive culture as we continue to build a better force for tomorrow. I would like to share some thoughts with you about the opportunities and challenges I see ahead of us.

Whether we are in the Army or Air National Guard, or the Naval Militia or New York Guard, we all share the same established military standards of mission effectiveness, professional development, military readiness, training and organizational morale. These are all critical parts in ensuring we remain ready and relevant.

The charge to all of us is to execute the mission, lead people, organizational improvement and the efficient management of resources.

Executing the mission means being ready to fight America's wars, deploy at a moment's notice and conduct domestic operations.

We members of the the New York National Guard, are entrusted with the safety of our nation and supporting the local community.

These essential tasking's are obtainable because of the comprehensive character development of our members who practice ethical leadership.

Our force must remain healthy physically, mentally, financially and spiritually to enhance mission effectiveness.

We all have the responsibility to defend our homeland, fight wars abroad and be ready to respond to civil support operations.

Our talent and standards must remain at a high level, built on a solid foundation of positive behaviors that will enable us to reach our full potential and accomplish current and future mission sets.

Every member has a role and plays a part in successful mission execution. We must be a viable and competent Total Force component capable of deploying near and far. How we recruit,

train, and retain talent is essential in executing the mission.

Leading people is a critical element in successful mission execution.

Our members are the cornerstone of our operation and must be mentored, developed, and treated with respect and dignity.

We must exhaust all opportunities to ensure our members are developed and shaped to become 21st century leaders.

We must endorse a culture built on a solid foundation of trust and respect established by credible relationships.

We must develop a safe and inclusive ethos, connecting a diverse force, which will allow all members the opportunity to reach full potential.

Leadership at all levels must clearly communicate expectations and hold themselves and members accountable through fair and consistent enforcement of principles.

Our standard must be an environment built on professionalism and respect. We are only as successful as the people we lead.

Remember the phrase "mission first but people always." Listen, learn, lead!

With the fiscal constraints we continue to face, we are required to be responsible stewards in managing resources.

The management of resources is critical to leading people, executing the mission and improving the New York National Guard enterprise.

Taking full advantage of innovation through diversity and empowerment is one avenue that will assist us in our efforts in effectively managing resources.

With diversity comes creativity.

A diverse force is a creative force, bringing different ideas from various viewpoints which will enhance the team's ability to be innovative. This innovation is the key to our future success,



Command Chief Master Sgt. Denny Richardson

allowing us to be effective in how we manage resources and conduct business.

As leaders we are required to foster an environment that empowers members to bring forward new concepts in how we conduct operations, we are obligated to influence change.

As a 21st century fighting force, the New York National Guard must continue to evolve in this uncertain environment, increasing our relevancy to the DoD and the National Guard.

Gen. Charles Brown, the chief of staff of the Air Force summarizes this issue when he says, "Accelerate change or lose."

Change is a constant and all members have equity in ensuring we are postured efficiently to meet the demands of today and tomorrow.

Change creates opportunity. Change makes space for creativity, innovation and bold leadership. Change ensures we keep moving towards crafting efficient operations to meet the demands of our leaders and the American citizen. Embrace change and together we will make a difference.

"One Team...one focus...together...we are the New York National Guard"

-- Command Chief Denny Richardson, NY Air National Guard senior enlisted advisor





guardtimes

Volume 13, Number 4

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About Guard Times

The *Guard Times* is published quarterly using federal funds authorized under provisions of AR 360-1 and AFI 35-101 by the New York State Division of Military and Naval Affairs and the New York Army and Air National Guard Public Affairs Office.

Views which appear in this publication are not necessarily those of the Department of Defense, the Army, the Air Force or the National Guard Bureau.

The *Guard Times* has a circulation of 17,000 and is distributed free to members of the New York State Military Forces and employees of the Division of Military and Naval Affairs.

Submissions

Articles, photos and letters are welcome. Please provide article submissions via email saved in Microsoft Word or rich text format (rtf) along with high resolution digital (jpg) photos. Submission deadlines are January 15 (winter issue), April 15 (spring issue), July 15 (summer issue), and October 15 (fall issue). Send your submissions to:

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Col. Robert Charlesworth, commander of the 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, presents Capt. Daniel Krug, outgoing commander of Headquarters and Headquarters Company of the brigade with the Meritorious Service Medal during a change of command ceremony in Syracuse, N.Y., Sept. 13, 2020. Photo by Capt. Avery Schneider, 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team.



FRONT COVER: Army National Guard Soldiers tour Fort Ticonderoga in Ticonderoga, N.Y., Sept. 16th, 2020 as part of the Company Commander and First Sergeant Precommand Course. Photo by Sgt. Matthew Gunther, Joint Force Headquarters.

BACK COVER: New York National Guard Army Sgt. Rakan Falah and Air Force Tech. Sgt. John Rodan, assigned to the 24th Civil Support Team, survey for radiological sources during their radiological material detection and identification training event at Icahn Stadium on Randall's Island, N.Y., Aug. 20, 2020. Photo by Spc. Marla Ogden, 138th Public Affairs Detachment.

FACES of the FORCE

First 'Street to Seat' Black Hawk Pilot for N.Y.

Story and photo by Ryan Campbell, *Guard Times* staff

LATHAM, N.Y. — Lars Olson, a 23 year old who is going directly from “street to seat” to become a New York Army National Guard UH-60 helicopter pilot, was recognized during a ceremony October 16, 2020 at the Army Aviation Support Facility in Latham, New York.

It’s unusual for a new recruit to join the Army National Guard and then go directly to pilot training school, said Sgt. 1st Class Barbara Morgan, Olson’s recruiter. Normally a Guard Soldier has to serve for a while and then apply for acceptance to flight school, she said.

Under the “street to seat” program, the Chatham, New York resident and small business owner will go directly to Warrant Officer Candidate School after graduating basic training, followed by Initial Entry Rotary Wing Training.

He will then be assigned to 3rd Battalion, 142nd Aviation, headquartered in Latham, New York, flying their UH-60 Black Hawk aircraft.

Olson officially joined the Army at the Albany, New York Military Entrance Processing Station on Wednesday, October 14. But family could not be there because of COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, so the battalion conducted a second ceremony for Olson so his family could be present.

He is the first Soldier to join a New York Army National Guard aviation

unit through this program, Morgan said.

“It was something I saw active duty could do,” said Olson. “I wanted to stay close to home, be part of the community, and serve the community.”

That’s when he contacted Morgan, a recruiter at New York National Guard headquarters in Latham. The process was long and tedious because of delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, but Olson was determined to get it done.

“He was scheduled to get a flight physical at Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania, but they weren’t able to do the eye exam,” said Morgan. “This was in March and everything was shut down in New York so he scheduled it on his own and the closest place was in West Virginia.”

Making the trek to West Virginia with his parents, then onto Pennsylvania, Olson was able to get everything completed within a couple of months he explained.

“The process was brand new to the New York National Guard,” said Olson. “We kind of just rolled with the punches and figured out how to get it done.”

It was a process that began when Olson said he initially planned on going to law school, but decided that wasn’t the path for him.

“I was sitting at home and said you know what, that’s



Lars Olson, from Chatham, N.Y., is congratulated by Capt. Devis Cici after taking the oath of enlistment during a ceremony at the headquarters of 3rd Battalion, 142nd Aviation at Army Aviation Support Facility #3, as he prepares to go through what the Army calls “street to seat” for helicopter pilots, Latham, N.Y., Oct. 16, 2020.

really not what I want to do,” said Olson. “I wanted to do something more and this is what I came up with.”

The idea came from his father, John, who served in the Army in Vietnam from 1967 to 1968, earning a Purple Heart and Bronze Star with valor.

“He always spoke really highly of the helicopter pilots that he knew in Vietnam,” Olson said.

His father John was quick to say that he thought it was a great opportunity for Lars.

“I think the public really underrates the opportunity the National Guard delivers to young people today and I’m very excited for him,” John Olson said.

He then said he spent

15 months in Vietnam, an experience that he wouldn’t trade for anything.

Flying into combat on many occasions, John called helicopters “the cavalry of today’s military.”

As the only staff photographer permanently assigned to the Stars and Stripes newspaper, John said he relied on Army helicopters to take him into battles such as Khe Sahn and Hue, two of the biggest engagements of the war.

Over the course of the next 10 weeks, Lars will be leaving behind his business, Lars Olson Tennis, where he provides group and private lessons, and will be the Army’s newest Warrant Officer Candidate after what

he described as a lot of hard effort from his recruiter.

“I have to give Sgt. Morgan a lot of credit,” said Lars. “She stuck with it and was able to do a lot of the leg work.”

Held a Fort Rucker, Alabama, Initial Entry Rotary Wing Training is 32 weeks long and Lars will receive a helicopter instrument rating after graduating.

“Learning to fly, moving away from here for a little bit, experiencing something new and seeing other parts of the country,” said Lars. “And then I can’t wait to come back here and be part of the community again.”

“I got my wish,” Olson said. **gt**

“I wanted to stay close to home, be part of the community, and serve the community.”

-- Warrant Officer Candidate Lars Olson, 3rd Battalion, 142nd Aviation Regiment

Airmen Ruck Up for Training

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

STEWART AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, N.Y. — Nine Airmen from the 105th Logistics Readiness Squadron shouldered 25 lb. packs and “ruck marched” 3 miles on October 6, 2020 during their weekend drill.

The goal, said Capt. Jason Nordlund, was to enhance unit cohesion and incorporate physical training as well.

The training scenario called for the Airmen to retrieve an injured pilot and carry her to safety. The Airmen’s mission was to head to the pilot, pick her up on stretcher and return her to base.

Due to COVID-19 training restrictions there was a concern that Airmen were not doing enough physical training, Nordlund explained.

“We saw a physical training challenge from a leadership perspective and found a different way to get members of the squadron to engage. We planned a great event in which squadron teammates came together to struggle through the endurance exercise. In the end, we did both those things and had fun as well,” he said.

The nine Airmen completed their mission in an hour and 15 minutes and covered just over 3 miles on the course.

“It was a great bonding experience,” said Senior Airman Mark Briscoe.

“It helped to highlight the importance of staying in shape, and the value of unity for the mission. It was rewarding in itself how we all came together and made great time with ground covered. I’m hopeful this will be something implemented more frequently in regularly scheduled drills to come,” Briscoe said. **gt**



Members of the 105th Logistics Readiness Squadron conduct a ruck march as a part of a unit cohesion exercise, Oct. 4, 2020, at Stewart Air National Guard Base, Newburgh, N.Y. Airmen simulated that they were rescuing a downed pilot. Photo by Senior Airman Jonathan Lane, 105th Airlift Wing.

Can't Keep Schrievers from Space

Story by Lt. Col. Jess Traver, 107th Attack Wing

NIAGARA FALLS AIR RESERVE STATION, N.Y. — There aren't many Airman who have a famous family member with an airbase named after them, but Staff Sgt. Brett Schriever, the 2020 NCO of the Year for the 107th Attack Wing, is one of them. Schriever is the great-grandson Gen. Bernard Schriever, the architect of Air Force's missile program in the 50s and 60s. Schriever Air Force Base in Colorado, home of the Space Force's 50th Wing, is named for him

Schriever, a space systems operator, who lives in Alexandria, Virginia, competed against five of the top sergeants to be named best at the wing.

His great-grandfather led the development of the Air Force's Thor, Atlas, Titan and Minuteman ballistic missiles. The Atlas and Titan were also used to launch Mercury and Gemini manned spacecraft in the run-up to the Apollo moon landing, and the Minuteman missile still forms part of the U.S. strategic deterrent.

Brett Schriever graduated from the Air Academy High School, located at the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado in 2012 and joined later that year.

He chose a career in cybersecurity, exploring computers as a network and cyber systems technician instead of in a space-related field.

“My family lineage was initially the reason for avoiding the Air Force and the space field. I am a fifth generation family member to join the U.S. military and fourth generation to join the Air Force; my great grandpa, grandpa and dad all served in the Air Force, Schriever said. “Ultimately my dad finally convinced me to join the Air Force.”

But eventually he decided that he was interested in space-related fields after all, Schriever said. His father was able to introduce him to members of the 222nd Command and Control Squadron, the New York Air National Guard's only unit with a space mission.

Encouraged by his father, Lt. Col Schriever, who is assigned to 2nd Space Operations Squadron, he transitioned to the New York Air National Guard with the 222nd to become a space systems operator. In this new role he



Staff Sgt. Brett Schriever, a space systems operator, who lives in Alexandria, Va., competed against five of the top sergeants in the wing to be named 107th Attack Wing NCO of The Year. He is also great-grandson Gen. Bernard Adolph Schriever who was architect of Air Force's missile program in the 50s and 60s. Courtesy photo.

provides support for space operations with the National Reconnaissance Office.

“I decided that I wanted to do something different and took the opportunity to completely change career fields,” Schriever said. “I made this decision as space systems operations because it sounded, and is, more interesting to me personally.”

The 222nd, headquartered outside Rome, New York, works with the National Reconnaissance Office which maintains America's surveillance satellites. If the newly formed Space Force organizes a National Guard component the 222nd is likely to be part of that.

Gen. Schriever's ideas about adopting ballistic missiles as a weapon system were at the cutting edge in the 1950s.

Eventually Schriever's achievements were recognized by the Air Force.

“Working at the (National Reconnaissance Office) for the past three and a half years has significantly sparked my interest in the space domain and the community it fostered,” the newest Schriever said. **gt**

New Recruits Become Rangers in Guard Program

Story by Col. Richard Goldenberg, Joint Force Headquarters

UTICA, N.Y. — Two of the new faces in the 27th Infantry Brigade arrived at their first drill this year with a unique addition to their uniforms: the Army Ranger tab.

Pfcs. Jason Chun, 20, of Syracuse, and Brandon Snyder, 23, from Livonia, New York, both completed the demanding 61-day Army Ranger School before joining the 2nd Battalion, 108th Infantry Regiment, based in Utica, N.Y.

The Ranger School emphasizes close combat and direct-fire battles. Training focuses on small-unit tactics and leadership. Candidates carry out ambush and scouting missions in three phases, including mountain and swamp mission environments.

"The Ranger course is the Army's premier leadership school," according to Capt. James Sturges, commander of Alpha Company at the Army National Guard Warrior Training Center at Fort Benning, Georgia.

And both Chun and Snyder completed the Ranger course immediately following their initial entry training as infantrymen.

They got there through the Ranger Team Leader Initiative, or RTLI, for short. New Soldiers who excel in training are identified and offered a chance to tackle Ranger School right out of their One Station Unit Training.

The two had no idea the opportunity would present itself in their first year of military service.

"It was absolutely a surprise to me. I never thought that I'd get an opportunity like that," Snyder said.

"I've been wanting to go to Ranger School since I was in high school," Chun said back in December 2019 at his graduation. "It was the challenge. It was the ability to find out who you really were and what you're really made of."

"But I definitely didn't expect it to come as soon as it did," he said.

Snyder, who graduated in August 2020, agrees that as a new recruit, Ranger School was the highest training goal he had.

"It was kind of like my dream to go to Ranger School, and I remember asking my recruiter about it," he said.

"I understood that you wouldn't get sleep and you wouldn't get food, and I wanted to just to see who I really was. And I got a lotta lessons, a lotta lessons learned," Chun said.

The RTLI program scouts for candidates at Fort Benning, Georgia and identifies the best potential National Guard Soldiers to succeed.

"I didn't even know about the program until the day that cadre said they were offering me a chance to starve myself for an additional eight weeks," Snyder said of his selection.

Cadre visit Fort Benning's Infantry and Armor OSUT training, explained 1st Lt. Gabriel Musser, RTLI's officer-in-charge. The process begins the day trainees arrive, providing an overview about the Ranger School, he said.

"We go in there and say 'This is what we're looking for,'" Musser said. "Once we narrow that down, we'd like to talk to 10 or 15 kids."

They consult drill sergeants later in the course to identify and scout which National Guard Soldiers may be good candidates.

Snyder said he took the opportunity without hesitation.

"As soon as he offered it, I knew I should go after it with everything I have and give it 100 percent," he said.

"In sending young Guard Soldiers, we are developing the future of the National Guard," Sturges said. "When they go back to their units you have the young, competent leaders who can

influence things at their level."

Ranger qualification early in a military career can strengthen the Soldier's prospects for advancement and help develop and retain exceptional NCOs, Musser explained.

The 30-day course prepares enlisted Guardsmen for the Army National Guard "pre-Ranger" course, the Ranger Training Assessment.

"RTLI was one of the steps to get me to a level where I could successfully complete Ranger School," Chun said. "It was a building block. It was the basis, a foundation."

"RTLI it taught me how to be a Ranger," he said. "How to do Ranger pushups. How to do everything the correct way. So it was a great help," Chun said.

Snyder agrees that the preparations at the Warrior Training Center set him up for success.

"I have nothing but good things to say about the Warrior Training Center at Fort Benning," Snyder said.

Sending a new private to Ranger School is not the norm, explained Col. Michael A. Scarpulla, commander of the Airborne and Ranger Training Brigade at Fort Benning.

Snyder said he knows his experience is unique and wants to pass along his experience



New York Army National Guard Pfc. Jason Snyder, standing at center, marks his completion of the Army Ranger qualification course with fellow Rangers following graduation from the U.S. Army Ranger Course, Class 08-20 on Aug. 27, 2020 at Fort Benning, Ga. Courtesy photo.



to other recruits and his fellow unit Soldiers.

Returning to drill, Snyder spoke with other infantry recruits to prepare them for selection.

Knowing Ranger School is available can motivate them to ready themselves, Snyder said.

“Show up for training and work hard and anything is possible,” he said. “If I knew what to shoot for going in, I’d be better prepared, and that’s what I can relay to others.”

Chun joined his company at the beginning of the year.

“I’m just really enjoying being a regular Joe,” Chun said. “I bear the tab with pride.”

Snyder said his Ranger qualification brings high expectations on performance, even at such a junior level. He begins drills with his company in October.

“I realize this comes with a lot of weight and a lot of expectations, to be that leader, because I’ve been to Ranger School,” he said.

“But I’m ready, and if Ranger School has taught me anything, it’s taught me to be humble and be resilient.” **gt**



Ranger candidates maneuver through training during the Darby phase of the Ranger School at Fort Benning, Ga., July 7, 2020 for Ranger Class 08-20. Courtesy image.

Soldier's Daughter Wins Military Kids Talent Competition

Story by Eric Durr, *Guard Times* staff

REXFORD, N.Y. — Ten-year-old Addyson Tabankin, daughter of Army National Guard Lt. Col. Shawn Tabankin, is one of five winners in a 2020 contest held by the Elizabeth Dole Foundation to recognize the artistic talents of military kids.

Addyson, who usually goes by Addy, was selected as the winner in the age 10-11 category by people across the country who viewed a video of her performing the theme from Star Wars on the family piano.

People were invited to vote online for the performance they liked best in each age group and Addy’s was picked as best.

Founded by former Senator Elizabeth Dole, the foundation works to assist and recognize military and veteran caregivers and families. Dole’s husband, former Senator Bob Dole was wounded during World War II.

“We created this virtual opportunity because COVID-19 caused many celebrations and milestones to be canceled for military kids, and we are delighted by the enthusiastic nationwide response,” said Steve Schwab, CEO of the Elizabeth Dole Foundation.

Addy’s mother Jenn saw a mention of the event and suggested that it would be a great thing to do. Her daughter has been playing piano since she was 5 and this was a great way for her to do something she liked, Jenn said.

With Addy’s father deployed to the Middle East as a plans officer for the 42nd Infantry Division, and many summer activities canceled, the Dole Foundation contest looked like it would be fun for her family, Jenn said.

Because the entire Tabankin family, which includes 9-year-old Ephren, are all Star Wars fans, Addy decided she would play something from Star Wars.

She practiced hard to make sure she got it right.

“It was hard at the beginning but I have memorized it now,” Addy said.

The production was a joint family effort.

Jenn helped Addy find a Princess Leia costume and fix her hair in Lea’s signature buns.

Ephren loaned his 5-foot tall Darth Vader figure which stood by the piano as Addy played and held a placard identifying her.

Mom served as the camera crew with her cell phone while Addy played.



Ten-year-old Addyson Tabankin, the daughter of Army National Guard Lt. Col. Shawn Tabankin, currently deployed with the 42nd Infantry Division, practices her piano at home in Rexford, N.Y. on Sept. 9, 2020. Addyson was a winner in the Military Kids Have Talent virtual talent contest sponsored by the Elizabeth Dole Foundation. Photo courtesy of Jenn Tabankin.

The video was posted and when the voting was done, Addy’s video had the most votes.

“I didn’t think I would even make the finals,” Addy said. “It feels good.”

Shawn Tabankin said that he’s “incredibly proud” of his daughter.

“She’s at the point in her life where she’s starting to pursue her own hobbies and interests and it’s great to see her thriving in whatever she’s choosing,” Tabankin said.

Playing the piano gives her something to focus on with her father away, Addy said.

But thanks to technology, the fifth grader at Tesago Elementary School in Clifton Park, New York, can share piano time with her dad.

Her father uses FaceTime to call home when it is evening. Addy props an iPad up next to her piano and plays for her father.

“It’s fun,” she said.

Keeping in touch while deployed has come a long way since his first deployment, Tabankin said, or even since his last deployment to Afghanistan in 2012. Then he was lucky to call home once or twice a month, he said.

But for now, Addy and her brother are really just looking forward to getting Dad back.

“I like having him around. He is helpful with a lot of stuff. He is nice,” Addy said. **gt**

Guard Honors Nation's 21st President

Story by Eric Durr, *Guard Times* staff

MENANDS, N.Y. — New York Army National Guard Maj. Gen. Michel Natali marked the 191st birthday of President Chester Arthur, the 21st president, during a ceremony at his grave at Albany Rural Cemetery in Menands, New York on Monday, October 5, 2020.

Natali, the assistant adjutant general, Army for the New York National Guard was joined by State Command Sgt. Maj. David Piwowarski in laying a wreath at Arthur's memorial during the short ceremony.

Each year former presidents are honored on their birthday with the presentation of a wreath from the current president at their gravesite by military leaders.

The New York National Guard recognizes Arthur, who died at age 57 in 1886; as well as Martin Van Buren, whose grave is in Kinderhook, New York; and Millard Fillmore, who is buried in Buffalo.

The ceremony featured remarks by Natali as well as cemetery officials and concluded with the laying of the wreath.

New York Army National Guard Soldiers provided a color guard and honor cordon for the event, as well as a bugler who played taps during the ceremony.

"I am honored that members of the New York Army National Guard are able to take part in this commemoration," Natali said.

"To us in the New York National Guard, this ceremony not only recognizes President Arthur's legacy as the nation's 21st commander in chief, but also reminds us of his origins in the Albany area and of his military career in what was then known as the New York State Militia."

A skilled lawyer, Arthur served as the Judge Advocate General of the New York National Guard, then known as the New York State Militia. In this capacity he drafted a military law which restructured the organization.

At the start of the Civil War, Arthur was also given the job of surveying the New York City harbor fortifications, originally designed and built by Robert E. Lee, to determine what needed to be done to put them in shape defend the city.

Most importantly, during the Civil War



New York Army National Guard Maj. Gen. Michel Natali and Command Sgt. Maj. David Piwowarski salute at the grave site of President Chester Arthur, the 21st president of the United States, during a ceremony marking the 191st anniversary of his birth at Albany Rural Cemetery in Menands, N.Y., Oct. 5, 2020. The current occupant of the White House sends a wreath to mark the grave sites of former presidents on their birthdays. Opposite page, Soldiers forming an honor cordon and color guard prepare to honor President Arthur. Courtesy photos.

Arthur served as the Quartermaster General, responsible for organizing and equipping 70 New York Volunteer Regiments, totaling about 70,000 Soldiers, during his two years on the job.

Chester Arthur came into office in 1881 when President James Garfield died on Sept. 19, 1881 after being shot by a gunman in July 1881.

He left office in March 1885 and is credited with turning the U.S. Navy into a modern force by backing the construction of more modern steel warships and creating the U.S. Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island.

Arthur also approved the first federal Civil Service law, even though he himself had taken advantage of party patronage to land an important job at the New York City Customs House and he had been associated with the faction of the Republican Party against the reforms.

Arthur was raised in Washington County, New York and attended Union College in Sche-

nectady. He taught school in the area and then became a lawyer in New York City.

In 1855, as a 24-year-old lawyer Chester Arthur represented a Black woman named Elizabeth Jennings who had been booted off a whites only horse car in New York City while on her way to her job as a church organist on July 16, 1854. She sued the transit company and Arthur represented her in court.

In February of 1855, she was awarded \$225 in damages. More importantly, the New York State Supreme Court, Brooklyn Circuit ruled that African Americans could not be excluded from the city's transit system.

In the second year of his presidency Arthur was diagnosed with Bright's Disease, a fatal kidney condition. One of the symptoms was excessive fatigue. **gt**



THE JOINT FORCE

Guard Continues Statewide COVID-19 Response

Story by Col. Richard Goldenberg, *Guard Times Staff*

LATHAM, N.Y. — More than 1,400 service members of the New York National Guard remained on duty as of November 1, 2020 for the state's COVID-19 response, after initial operations began with 200 personnel in New Rochelle, New York in early March.

As authorities closed down New York in response to the pandemic, National Guard members supported COVID-19 test sites, food distribution sites, cleaned public spaces in New Rochelle, staffed call centers, supported New York City, Rockland and Orange County medical examiners for decedent recovery and provided a massive logistical warehousing effort at seven locations for the distribution of medical supplies.

Since that first effort, members of the Army and Air National Guard, the New York Naval

Militia, New York Guard and agency employees have “rushed to the sound of the guns,” Maj. Gen. Ray Shields, the adjutant general of New York, said during an online video panel conducted as part of the Association of the United States Army virtual convention October 13.

“I know it is common military phrase, but I’ve seen nothing but great volunteerism, patriotism and enthusiasm of our members, the same as the police, fire and other emergency responders” during the statewide response, Shields said.

Boots on the ground peaked in late April with more than 3,600 personnel on duty statewide.

“Our New York National Guard response to the COVID-19 pandemic has been unprecedented when it comes to the scope and uniqueness of the response,” Shields said.

Troops responded to a wide range of new

“It’s rewarding to help with the pandemic the best we can,”

-- Spc. Cassandra Bissell, 105th Military Police Company



Army Spc. Kevin Hamilton, assigned to the 105th Military Police Company in Buffalo, N.Y., drops a N.Y. State Department of Health traveler health form into a collection box during flight arrivals at Buffalo-Niagara International Airport, Oct. 23, 2020. The team of Soldiers meet arriving passengers to distribute Department of Health Traveler Screening Forms to arrivals coming from restricted states. Photo by Master Sgt. Brandy Fowler, 107th Attack Wing.



Pfc. Diana Olivares-Salazar, assigned to Headquarters Troop, 2nd Squadron, 101st Cavalry, prepares to administer COVID-19 tests at a drive-thru test site in Albany, N.Y., July 9. During the last seven months, New York National Guard personnel have administered 683,864 COVID-19 tests at 15 sites across the state. Photo by 1st Lt. Alan Warner, 42nd Combat Aviation Brigade.

mission requests, Shields said, from call center operations to COVID-19 test sites to decedent recovery efforts.

Currently, New York Soldiers and Airmen conduct four missions in support of New York's COVID-19 response going into the fall.

Soldiers and Airmen staff 15 COVID-19 drive-through test sites located across the state from Long Island to Buffalo. As of October 23, personnel helped administer 683,864 tests.

National Guard personnel also work to help state emergency and department of health personnel conduct logistics and warehouse operations at warehouse facilities across New York.

Another enduring mission is the assembly of COVID-19 test kits in support of the New York State Department of Health. Guard Soldiers and Airmen assembled 3,957,377 COVID-19 test kits for distribution across the state.

On October 17, New York Soldiers and Airmen picked up a new mission; assisting the Department of Health in screening travelers entering New York at state airports.

Personnel replace Department of Health employees in collecting travel advisory forms.

“Our responsibility is to assist travelers from any of those states to make sure they fill out the questionnaire forms and submit them to the state Department of Health officials located in the airport,” explained Air National Guard Master Sgt. Adam Winters, the non-commissioned officer in charge of the team at Buffalo-Niagara International Airport.

New York State directs travelers arriving from one of the designated states with significant community spread to undertake a precautionary quarantine when entering New York for 14 days from the last day they were in their designated state.

The information assists in potential contact tracing should the need arise.

“It’s rewarding to help with the pandemic the best we can,” Spc. Cassandra Bissell said. “We are assisting the Department of Health to keep the public safe.”

Balancing pandemic missions in the force with ongoing military missions, training and recruiting efforts provided their own unique



Members of the New York National Guard assist state Department of Health officials for traveler advisory screening at JFK Airport in New York City, Oct. 16, 2020. New York State directs travelers arriving from one of the designated states with significant community spread to undertake a precautionary quarantine when entering New York for 14 days. National Guard Soldiers and Airmen are assisting health officials collect traveler health forms from those travelers upon arrival. Courtesy photo.



Pfc. Gian Zimnis, a combat medic assigned to Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry in New York City, instructs a motorist before administering a COVID-19 swab in Brooklyn, N.Y., April 20, 2020. The National Guard has assisted 15 test sites across the state since March. Photo by Senior Airman Sean Madden, 106th Rescue Wing.



Sgt. 1st Class Barbara Morgan, a recruiting and retention NCO, volunteers to hand out produce and dairy during a drive through food distribution event at Herkimer County Community College, Herkimer, N.Y., Aug. 26, 2020. Due to the pandemic, the American Dairy Association and farmers associations donated 500 gallons of milk and 15,000 lbs. of produce to supply community members in need. Photo by Ryan Campbell, Guard Times staff.

challenges, Shields told the AUSA audience.

“During this time, we continued to mobilize Army and Air units for active duty in defense of our nation,” Shields said, “continued to train our personnel on their federal military requirements, while at the same time devoting a significant efforts towards our state’s COVID response.”

While more than 4,500 personnel have performed some type of pandemic response duties this year, the New York National Guard has deployed 1,000 of its Soldiers and Airmen overseas, he said.

In a remarkable achievement in a time of social distancing, statewide missions and deployments, Shields said New York had exceeded its Army and Air National Guard recruiting and retention goals statewide.

Shields credits much of that to the public display of Soldiers and Airmen across the state.

“These last few months have been an adventure for every state dealing with COVID-19, and our Soldiers and Airmen have done a tre-

mendous job in being flexible and responsive and being there for their fellow citizens for whatever missions come our way,” Shields said.

“Along with all our leaders, I am especially proud of what our service members have accomplished.”

Even as New York has kept its COVID-19 positive test rate at or below 1% since August 4, New York Governor Andrew M. Cuomo continues to recommend vigilance.

After two months of statewide infection rates at or below 1%, October 15 saw micro clusters of infection climbing to an average of 4.84% in 20 communities.

“As we go through the fall and into the winter and cases continue to rise across the

country, it’s going to take the work of all New Yorkers to maintain our progress,” Cuomo said October 16. “We cannot and will not risk going backwards to where we were in the spring.” **gt**

Civil Support Team Lends Assist to U.S. Open

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

MAMARONECK, N.Y. — When top golfers from the U.S. and Europe faced off for the 2020 U.S. Open Golf Championship at Winged Foot Golf Club in Mamaroneck, New York, Sept. 14-20, the New York National Guard's 24th Weapons of Mass Destruction Civil Support Team was there to help spot radiological threats.

The U.S. Open Golf Championship is an annual open national championship and is one of the four major championships in golf in which top professional and amateur golf players from around the world compete against each other.

Normally, 45,000 spectators and staff attend the major golf championship event, but due to COVID-19 restrictions only 2,000 people per day were permitted to enter the course.

Even with fewer people, the 24th Civil Support Team's mission remains as important as ever: to help the state police, the town of Mamaroneck and the United States Golf Association to reduce the threat of a hazardous attack.

The mission of the 24th, known as a CST for short, is not limited to the U.S. Open. The Soldiers and Airmen are routinely present for key events across New York, including the U.S. Tennis Open and the United Nations General assembly, said Army Lt. Col. Andrew Couchman, the commander of the team.

"The military core competencies we bring fill in the gaps for our local and state agencies to help make these missions be successful,"



CST Training for Disasters

NEW YORK -- Army National Guard 2nd Lt. Sean Durst assists Air National Guard Tech Sgt. John Rodan, both assigned to the 24th Civil Support Team, with his Hazmat suit during radiological detection and identification training at Icahn Stadium on Randall's Island, N.Y., Aug. 20, 2020. Photo by Cpl. Erick Butler, 138th Public Affairs Detachment.

Couchman said. "It may look quieter, but all of the agencies here have brought a number of personnel to ensure that all U.S. Open players and staff remain safe."

The 24th CST is a 22 personnel team of Soldiers and Airmen, trained to detect chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear hazards. They're based out of Fort Hamilton, Brooklyn, and are ready to respond in the event of the use, or threatened use, of weapons of mass destruction.

The unit operates with personnel divided into survey and analytical teams.

The survey team's primary responsibility is retrieving samples of potential hazards, putting on hazmat suits and a site. The analytical team figures out what kind of stuff the survey team found, CST members explained.

"For this mission, our survey team is conducting radiological monitoring of vehicles entering the premises," said Army Staff Sgt. Christopher Rodriguez, the survey team chief. "We're screening for any type of delivery truck, or vehicles that are making their way onto the grounds of the venue for radiological sources that are deemed harmful to the public."

Typically for events that have a larger population, the CST conducts roving patrols using handheld radiological surveying equipment to ensure that crowds are thoroughly scanned.

"If a radiological source were to be detected, we would notify law enforcement on site in order for them to interject, stop the vehicle and apprehend the suspects," Rodriguez said. "The personnel inside the CST truck would then dismount and use their handheld monitoring and detection equipment to locate the source."

All samples are taken to a sophisticated mobile laboratory where they are processed by the analytical team for either a chemical or biological hazard.

"In the analytical lab we're ready to receive any kind of sample, chemical or biological, and analyze it in under two hours on the scene," said Army Maj. Gaetano Casarella, the nuclear medical science officer. "We can also analyze any of the radiation spectrum that the survey team may find on incoming vehicles."

While everyone on the grounds of the event is required to provide negative COVID-19 test



Army Staff Sgt. Christopher Rodriguez, assigned to the 24th Civil Support Team, dismounts his vehicle with a handheld radiation detection equipment used during the U.S. Open Golf Championship at Winged Foot Golf Club, Mamaroneck, N.Y., Sept. 19, 2020. The 24th CST is based at Fort Hamilton, Brooklyn, and aids civilian authorities in responding to chemical, biological and weapons of mass destruction events in New York City. Photo by Staff Sgt. Jonathan Pietrantoni, 138th Public Affairs Detachment.

results upon entry, the analytical team is also ready and prepared to provide rapid testing if need be.

"We are the ultimate backstop for an immediate result of a negative test for law enforcement, or any United States Golf Association staff, or players, that may come down with COVID symptoms," Casarella said.

These events help the CST build better communications and familiarity with local law enforcement, state and federal agencies.

"Working alongside local law enforcement really adds to our unit's preparedness in the event of a live threat," Rodriguez said. "We're more than capable and always ready to ensure the safety of the American people." **gt**



Michael Carl, a radio engineer from the New York State Office of Interoperable and Emergency Communications, uses a portable public safety radio to test the ability of a radio installed in a New York Army National Guard UH-60 to receive signals from a civilian radio while Lawrence Mitchell, another engineer, programs the radio using software on a laptop at the Army Aviation Support Facility in Latham, N.Y. on Sept. 30, 2020. Teams from the office uploaded civilian emergency response channels onto radios on all New York National Guard helicopters. Photo courtesy of Chet Lasalle, New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services.

State Radio Experts Upgrade N.Y. Army Aircraft

Story and photo by Eric Durr, Guard Times Staff

LATHAM, N.Y. — Thanks to assistance from New York State’s Office of Interoperable and Emergency Communications, New York Army National Guard helicopter aircrews can now talk quickly and easily to teams on the ground when responding to emergencies.

Teams from the office visited all three of New York’s Army Aviation Support Facilities to load frequencies used by fire departments, law enforcement and other emergency teams across the country into the radios New York Army National Guard aviators use to talk to those with boots on the ground.

This means that if an Army UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter crew flies to support the Department of Environmental Conservation conducting a firefighting mission, they simply get the information on what presets to use and punch it into their radio, explained Mike Carl, a radio engineer with the office.

In the past, they would have had to land and take a Ranger on board with a handheld radio who could then talk to fire teams on the ground, Carl said.

Over the past few months, Carl and his colleagues, who are part of the New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services, updated the radios in the CH-47 Chinooks, UH-72 Lakota Helicopters light utility helicopters, and the UH-60 A/L and UH-60 M

Black Hawk helicopters operated by the New York Army National Guard.

Army helicopters are not configured to communicate with civilians on the ground, said Capt. Forest Thrush, operations officer at Army Aviation Support Facility #3 in Latham. Older model helicopters need an additional radio installed to let National Guard aircrew talk to first responders during domestic operations missions, he explained.

The UH-60 models flown by the 3rd Battalion, 142nd Aviation in Latham and Ronkonkoma, and Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 171st General Aviation, the medical evacuation company in Rochester, have a military FM radio replaced with a TDFM-9000 radio, Thrush explained.

The new UH-60 M models, which will eventually replace the UH-60s flown at Ronkonkoma and Latham, are adapted for domestic operations use by adding an extra radio, Thrush said. This is in addition to the four radios already in the helicopters.

While the radios can be programmed by a pilot or co-pilot, it is easy to “fat finger” a code and make a mistake, Carl said. Loading the domestic operations frequencies ahead of time avoids that error and saves time, he added.

Loading civilian communications channels into radios on military aircraft is part of the na-

tional push to ensure that emergency responders can always talk to each other, Carl said.

During the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001 firefighters, police and the military couldn’t talk to each other, Carl said. His office, and others like it across the country, was created to correct that.

“The goal is to coordinate at a statewide level so that all first responders and agencies on a ‘bad day’ scenario have an ability to communicate,” Carl said.

He and other radio engineers use a laptop computer loaded with “hundreds and hundreds of channels” to upload data into the radios on New York Army National Guard helicopters, Carl explained.

They also double and triple check the inputs to make sure the information is correct and works on the radios, he added.

Many other agencies hire vendors to handle their radio programming, but DHSES supports the National Guard, as part of the NYS Division of Military and Naval Affairs, directly by uploading their frequencies, Carl explained.

Along with uploading the data which took a full day to service nine aircraft, Carl and his colleagues also provide training to Guard aircrew members on using the systems.

“We give them some training on how to find the channels and what to expect when they go into an area of operations,” Carl said. 📻

New York and Brazil Share COVID-19 Experiences

Story and photos by Ryan Campbell, *Guard Times* Staff

LATHAM, N.Y. — New York was one of the states impacted the most by the COVID-19 pandemic, so New York National Guard members passed on lessons learned in coping with the pandemic to their Brazilian counterparts during a Zoom call on September 29, 2020.

The New York National Guard is developing a relationship with Brazil's military through the National Guard's State Partnership Program.

Soldiers assigned to the states' Medical Command laid out how New York dealt with COVID-19 in going from having some of the highest rates of infection in the country, to some of the fewest.

The shared experiences between New York and Brazil were aimed at creating a better understanding of which responses are the most successful at handling the pandemic during the discussion with Brazilian ambassadors, doctors and members of the Brazilian military.

During the conversation, the Brazilians, said their perception of the pandemic was that "it was a terror in New York"

Brazil, with a population of 210 million, has recorded nearly 5 million coronavirus cases. The United States with a population of 330 million has reported 7 million cases.

"New York was one of the first epicenters in the United States," said Col. Dennis Deeley, who commanded the Javits Medical Center in New York City. "The governor requested assistance of the National Guard at the early stages of the pandemic."

At its peak, over 3,600 members of

the New York National Guard were on duty responding to the pandemic across the state. Ultimately, 1 in 4 New York Guardsmen served in a COVID-19 response capacity.

Deeley explained to the Brazilians that the state set up five joint task forces across the state to manage personnel, logistics and medical assets.

Because of this structure, Deeley was able state when asked, that at no point were New York's resources overwhelmed. However, he did say that testing at first was an issue.

"This was originally a limiting factor for New York," Deeley said. "New York encountered this in early March and saw an improvement in May once increased quantity was available. Drive through testing was very effective."

With one concern being encouraging citizens to take all precautions, the Brazilians asked if the New York National Guard was ever used to enforce quarantine measures.

"No," Deeley said. "The people in New York got the message very quickly. They took the

brunt of it."

The New Yorkers and Brazilians discussed the use of field hospitals, as each have had their own epicenters. New York had New York City and Brazil had Sao Paulo, with 247,000 and 972,000 cases, respectively.


Deeley talked about how New York built up four alternate care facilities across the state, with only the one established at Manhattan's Javits Convention Center coming online.

The point he explained to the Brazilians though, was that even though one was used, New York was ready for things to get worse before they got better.

So far have been more than 32,000 COVID-19 deaths in New York, and more than 145,000 in Brazil. The two sides wrapped up their video call with a better understanding of how each dealt with the pandemic and how the two sides can continue to work together on major issues such as this.

Dr. Paulo Rossi Menezes, disease control coordinator at the Brazilian State Department of Health and Col. Walter Nyakas, chief secretary of the Military House and state coordinator of civil protection and defense of the State of Sao Paulo, wrapped things up by expressing their appreciation to New York for discussing these topics and the level of cooperation between the two parties.

Speaking through a translator, they both concluded with an eloquent "thank you" and hopes for further discussion.

"This is the reality of what we're living with," they said, 



Army Maj. Amy Crouse, New York National Guard State Partnership Program officer, begins a Zoom call with representatives from Brazil to discuss how the two sides responded to COVID-19 at the Joint Force Headquarters, Latham, N.Y., Sept. 29, 2020. The call was aimed at discussion what worked best when handling the pandemic and how New York and Brazil can continue to work together on the issue.



New York National Guard officers working with the State Partnership Program, layout New York's response to COVID-19 during a Zoom call with representatives from Brazil in Latham, N.Y., Sept. 29, 2020.

N.Y. Air Guard Welcomes Senior Enlisted Leader

Story and photos by Ryan Campbell, Guard Times Staff

“When I look back on my career, I don’t just think about why I joined, but what kept me from leaving. It was a sense of belonging and family atmosphere that you get from the Guard. No other profession makes you feel like you are an important piece of the mission,”

-- Command Chief Denny Richardson, N.Y. Air National Guard senior enlisted advisor

meet the National Defense Strategy priorities not only now but in the distant future, creating hope, longevity and security for the N.Y. ANG enterprise.”

LaBarge said he was proud and grateful for Dooley’s service as he welcomed Richardson to the headquarters of the New York Air National Guard after he said was an exemplary tour as the 109th Airlift Wing command chief which he took in 2016.

“Chief Richardson has set the bar for the New York Air National Guard with his leadership development program,” LaBarge said. “We will continue to innovate, we will accelerate our efforts, we will survive and be better, faster, higher, stronger when we are done.”

Richardson began his Air National Guard career in 1989 with Maryland’s 175th Airlift Wing as an aircrew life support technician.

He said he joined in order to find something rewarding in life which has led to a career spanning more than 30 years so far.

“When I look back on my career, I don’t just think about why I joined, but what kept me from leaving,” Richardson said. “It was a sense of belonging and family atmosphere that you get from the Guard. No other profession makes you feel like you are an important piece of the mission.”

Taking on the latest phase of his career the day before the 19th anniversary of the attacks on 9/11, he looks back on that day saying it “enhanced my motivation and inspiration to want to continue our business of protecting our nation’s interests.”

His career has taken him all over the world including deployments in support of Operation Deep Freeze to McMurdo Station, Antarctica, Operation Desert Storm and Operation Enduring Freedom.

“It has taken me to heights I did not imagine when I first joined,” Richardson said. “It has given me a voice and platform as a leader that has propelled me to the highest enlisted position in the N.Y. Air National Guard. I’m grateful for the opportunity and the ability to keep giving.”

Richardson said that non-commissioned officers should use that platform to “listen, learn then lead” in order to understand what is important to the younger generation of Airmen. Being that everyone is raised and trained differently he said, it is important to be adaptable leaders in order to be successful and motivating and inspiring younger service members.

“Best piece of advice I was given was to be yourself, trust your gut and never stop building credible relationships.” **gt**



Command Chief Master Sgt. Denny Richardson, right, receives the Joint Force Headquarters, Air National Guard guidon from New York Air National Guard Commander Maj. Gen. Timothy J. LaBarge, left, as he assumes the position of senior enlisted Airman in the New York Air National Guard during a ceremony in Latham, N.Y., Sept. 10, 2020. Photo by William Albrecht, Guard Times staff.

LATHAM, N.Y. – In front of 50 socially distant friends, family and fellow Guardsmen, New York Air National Guard Chief Master Sgt. Denny Richardson took over as the top enlisted leader of the states’ 5,600 Airmen on Thursday, Sept. 10, 2020.

Richardson, a Schuylerville resident, takes over from Chief Master Sgt. Maureen Dooley who retired after 41 years of service. In this position, Richardson will serve as the advisor to Maj. Gen. Timothy LaBarge, commander of the New York Air National Guard, on issues affecting enlisted Airmen.

He previously served as the senior enlisted leader of the 109th Airlift Wing based at Stratton Air National Guard Base in Scotia, New York.

“I applied for this position because I believe Maj. Gen. LaBarge and I can and will have a positive impact moving the New York Air National Guard forward,” Richardson said. “I believe in myself and have a humbled confidence in my ability to lead and connect with people.”

The New York Air National Guard is located at five bases across New York and operates the MQ-9 Reaper remotely piloted aircraft, the C-17 Globemaster III, the LC-130 ski-equipped Hercules transport, the HH-60 Pavehawk search and rescue helicopter and HC-130 search and rescue Hercules.

New York also includes the Eastern Air Defense Sector, responsible for the air defense of the United States east of the Mississippi River.

Richardson said his vision for the force is focused on Airmen by enhancing recruiting and retention efforts through professional development opportunities, as well as building a respectful, diverse and inclusive culture across the state that allows Airmen of all ranks to be heard.

He continued by saying also that he wants to “continue the transformation of all five N.Y. air wings and EADS, ensuring we are postured to

ARMY NATIONAL GUARD



Ticonderoga Teaches Troop Lessons

Story and photos by Sgt. Matthew Gunther, Joint Force Headquarters

Soldiers learn from reenactors during a visit to Fort Ticonderoga in Ticonderoga, N.Y., Sept. 16, 2020 as part of the Company Commander and First Sergeant Pre-Command Course of instruction. Three dozen Soldiers toured the historic battlefield of the American Revolution and French and Indian War to discover leadership lessons to prepare for their upcoming command tours.

TICONDEROGA, N.Y. — New York Army National Guard Soldiers selected as company commanders and first sergeants visited one of America's most historic sites September 16, to learn lessons from the past to apply to their future commands.

Three dozen students in the Company Commander and First Sergeant Pre-Command Course spent the day at Fort Ticonderoga, the site of pivotal battles in the French and Indian War and the American Revolution.

"It's really interesting to me how much we relate to these guys so many years later," said Capt. Andrew Carter of Schenectady.

Built by the French between 1755 and 1757, the fort controlled the portage route between Lake Champlain and Lake George. It was dubbed the Gibraltar of North America and control of the fort allowed armies to move south from Canada.

In 1759, 4,000 French soldiers defeated 16,000 British and American who attempted to take the fort. In 1776, the American Army surrendered the fort to the British.

But the pivotal American success at Ticonderoga came in May 1775. The Vermont militia, known as the Green Mountain Boys and led by Ethan Allen, along with militiamen from Connecticut and Massachusetts led by Col. Benedict Arnold took the fort from a 48-man British garrison at the start of the American Revolution.

The attack was critical in seizing the artillery pieces needed for the siege of British forces at Boston.

The cannons at the fort were hauled across snowy New York, Connecticut and Massachusetts and emplaced on the heights above Boston by Henry Knox, the commander of the Continental Army's artillery. The threat of those guns forced the British to leave Boston on March 17, 1776.

The history of that 1775 raid was the focus of instruction for the Army Guard officers and NCOs.

"I love delving into the many battles that took place here, such as Benedict Arnold and Ethan Allen taking the fort from the British in 1775," said Capt. Joshua Williams. "This allowed them to send the



Reenactors wearing 18th century uniforms demonstrate the firing of a cannon at Fort Ticonderoga, Sept. 16th, 2020 for members of the New York Army National Guard.

cannons to Boston, which they used to drive the British from the city, a pivotal moment in American history," he added.

"From the point of view of the leadership at the time, their challenges to overcome weren't much different than ours," Carter said. "There is a lot to be learned from the choices they made."

The Soldiers flew in UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters from Saratoga County Airport to Ticonderoga, providing them with an

impressive aerial view of the site.

Capt. Ryan Gonch, of Albany, said he enjoyed the dynamic nature of the day's events.

"It's a microcosm of our job as leaders. We began the day with transporting this group in UH-60's to this site, which has its own set of challenges," he said.

"Then we get here and must change gears to absorb the history and lessons learned from this historic site," Gonch added. **gt**

42nd Medics Support Troop Health Overseas

Story and photo by Sgt. Andrew Winchell, Task Force Spartan

CAMPT ARIFJAN, KUWAIT — Medical readiness is an essential factor in ensuring the U.S. Army can deter aggression and defend freedom.

Doing their part to maintain readiness, 42nd Infantry Division medics did their part and set up an aid station close to where many Soldiers work.

“When we first got here, we looked for a building, but with no luck, so we found a conex building which turned out to be better,” said Sgt. 1st Class Maurice Cousineau the Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion medical noncommissioned officer in charge. “Using assets on base, we were able to get supplies, storage lockers and set the aid station up to be able to see Soldiers.”

Having an aid station like this helps alleviate the number of Soldiers the main hospital sees and cares for.

“We set this station up to be able to see one Soldier at a time, to mitigate exposure in a COVID environment,” Cousineau said. “This also helped to cut down on the number of Soldiers going to the hospital with systems that were similar to COVID but were not.”

COVID-19 has caused hospitals everywhere to see a rise in patients and with the use of the aid station, the 42nd was able to help cut down on that number of Soldiers going to the hospital on post. The aid station as also helped to mitigate

the risk from COVID, keeping Soldiers safer.

“We built this aid station to deal with the risks of operating in a COVID environment, allowing only one Soldier in at a time,” said Cousineau. “Soldiers would make an appointment through email,

helping to prevent lines like at the hospital. The smaller space also helped us to keep a clean and sterile area for Soldiers to be seen.”

Hospitals do their best to keep people safe and healthy, but with so much unknown about COVID-19, it was hard to handle the

number of people they came in.

“The hospital would have 50-60 Soldiers to see at sick call and that was out of the control of the hospital,” said Cousineau.

With the aid station in place, Soldiers were able to be seen quickly and with little impact on their duty day. With most Soldiers living in Zone 6 and the hospital being in Zone 1, which is over a mile walk one way, the aid station made it easier for Soldiers.

“It just made sense to have something close for Soldiers, so they didn’t have to travel to get medical aid or have to wait in a line,” said Cousineau. “The aid station is open from 0800 to 1100 and 1300 to 1600, and we have seen over 300 Soldiers.”

Cousineau said the most significant benefit to having a smaller aid station is its ability to provide the quality and timely medical care Soldiers deserve, especially with the threat of COVID-19.

“We had a great staff and great doctors to make sure that Soldiers were healthy and ready to conduct their missions,” said Cousineau. “Our set up allowed us to check Soldiers outside the conex for COVID while keeping the area inside clear of any infection.” **gt**



A 42nd Infantry Division Soldier works at the battalion aid station in support of Task Force Spartan Oct. 6, 2020, Kuwait. The aid station was set up to give Soldiers a place to be seen quickly for medical concerns, rather than walking over a mile to the hospital.

“We had a great staff and great doctors to make sure that Soldiers were healthy and ready to conduct their missions,”

--Sgt. 1st Class Maurice Cousineau, 42nd Infantry Division Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion



Cavalry Graduates New Leaders in Western NY

NIAGARA FALLS AIR RESERVE STATION, N.Y. – Fourteen cavalry troopers of the 2nd Squadron, 101st Cavalry completed training in the Army’s Cavalry Leader’s Course here from September 14 to October 2. The course trains leaders in the planning and execution of reconnaissance collection tasks. The training, led by a mobile team from the Maneuver Center of Excellence at Fort Benning, Georgia, focused on fundamentals of reconnaissance and security at the troop level. The squadron, based in Niagara Falls, N.Y., provides reconnaissance, surveillance and target acquisition in support of the 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team. Courtesy photo.

Aviation Battalion Welcomes New Leader

Story and photo by Sgt. Matthew Gunther, Joint Force Headquarters

RONKONKOMA, N.Y. — New York Army National Guard Soldiers assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 142nd Assault Helicopter Regiment welcomed a new commander during a change of command ceremony October 17, 2020 at the Army Aviation Support Facility at Islip MacArthur International Airport.

Lt. Col. Matthias Greene, a veteran of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, assumed command of the battalion from Lt. Col. Jason Lefton.

Greene commented on the unit morale and cohesion as his first impression of the battalion.

“I quickly observed the camaraderie and affection the troops in this battalion have for one another during my first drill,” Greene said. “Diversity is valued, and caring for each other and the local community is a top priority. These are all great things that I want to keep going forward,” he added.

“These things no doubt contribute to this battalion having the highest retention rate in the New

York National Guard,” Greene said.

Lefton welcomed the opportunity to pass command on to Greene since the two had trained together as Army aviators more than two decades ago.

“Having worked with Lt. Col. Greene in the past, I have the utmost confidence that he will take this battalion to new heights,” Lefton said. “This battalion is in good and capable hands.”

Lefton will now serve as the New York Army National Guard state aviation officer at the Joint Force Headquarters in Latham.

Greene previously served at the National Guard Bureau headquarters and is currently attending the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island.

Having served with Lefton in the past, Greene said assuming command from him meant a lot.

“If not for Lefton mentoring me 20 years ago and again more recently, I would not be in the New York National Guard and I would not be before you today,” Greene



Lt. Col. Matthias Greene receives the battalion guidon of the 3rd Battalion, 142nd Assault Helicopter Regiment from Col. Michael Charnley, the 42nd Combat Aviation Brigade commander, during his change of command ceremony Oct. 17, 2020 at the Ronkonkoma Army Aviation Support Facility at Islip MacArthur International Airport.

said. “So thank you. I will not let you down.”

The battalion has two flight companies in New York, one based at Islip MacArthur International Airport in Ronkonkoma and

another at Albany International Airport in Latham.

The battalion's third flight company is divided between the Maine and Connecticut Army National Guard. **gt**

Logan Duffy Trophy Returns to N.Y.

CAMP DEVENS, MASS. -- New York Army National Guard Lt. Col. Joe Whaley, right, commander of the 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment, and Lt. Col. Shane Maxon, commander of the 1st Battalion, 182nd Infantry Regiment, Massachusetts Army Guard, fire the ceremonial first shot during the Logan-Duffy Competition at Camp Devens, Mass., Sept. 12, 2020. The rifle competition between the two units dates back to Oct. 12, 1936 at Camp Curtis Guild in Reading, Mass. From then on, the match would take place annually with various halts during major conflicts such as World War II or the terror attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. The match, named after Brig. Gens. Lawrence Logan and Edward Duffy, the commanders of each regiment during the Spanish American War, started again in 2010 and has been held annually since. The 69th Infantry Regiment took the win and trophy for the competition in 2020. Photo by Staff Sgt. Jeremiah J. Clark, Massachusetts Army National Guard.





Army IG Comes to Town

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

Lt. Gen. Leslie Smith, inspector general of the Army, speaks with Army National Guard Soldiers and civilian employees during a visit to Camp Smith Sept. 2, 2020. Smith visited the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and Camp Smith to engage with Soldiers as part of an effort to learn what Soldiers think about a variety of concerns impacting the Total Army. Photo by Spc. Marla Ogden, 138th Public Affairs Detachment.

CAMP SMITH TRAINING SITE, N.Y. — The Army’s top inspector general spent an hour with New York National Guard Soldiers at Camp Smith September 2, 2020.

Army Lt. Gen. Leslie Smith and Inspector General Sgt. Maj. Larry Orvis visited Camp Smith as part of planned visit to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point across the Hudson River, according to Col. Isabel Smith, chief of staff of the 53rd Troop Command.

Smith spoke with West Point cadets interested in joining the Chemical Corps as part of the academy’s Branch Week. Branch Week is when West Point Cadets find out which of the Army’s 17 branches they will serve in.

Since he was in the area, he decided to take advantage of the chance to visit Camp Smith to speak with Guardsmen, according to Smith.

As inspector general, Smith is responsible for overseeing Army training and conducting investigations when needed to act as the eyes and ears of the Army chief of staff.

Smith met with 40 Soldiers assigned to the 53rd Troop Command Headquarters with 30 Soldiers in the lecture hall and another 10 Soldiers took part virtually.

Smith discussed important topics that addressed current equal opportunity issues, inequality in the service, sexual harassment/assault response and prevention statistics, serving in times of social disparity and civil unrest. Smith also spoke on the current status of CO-

VID-19 and its development since March.

“This session was a very illuminating experience. These sessions help me understand the importance of making the Army a working environment where every Soldier is treated fairly despite their gender, race or religious affiliation,” Sgt. Jose Meza Barahona said.

Smith praised the New York National Guard Soldiers for their efforts in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

He also recognized five Soldiers for excel-

lence with his inspector general challenge coin.

Public Affairs Spc. Marla Ogden said she was really honored to be recognized.

“That was my first coin ever, so it’s an incredible honor to receive this award,” Ogden said. “Sensing sessions that highlight the progressive steps the Army is taking are the moments that motivate me to keep progressing as a Soldier.”

Smith said he was glad to get “the pulse” of Soldiers and civilian employees in his role as the “eyes, ears and conscious” of the Army. **gt**



Lt. Gen. Leslie Smith, the inspector general of the Army, right, greets Chief Warrant Officer 3 Michele DiGeso, during a visit to Camp Smith September 2, 2020. Photo by Spc. Marla Ogden, 138th Public Affairs Detachment.

New Lieutenants Pin Rank after OCS

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



2nd Lt. Azar Boehm receives his officer's rank from his family during his commissioning at Camp Smith, N.Y. Aug. 29, 2020. Photo by Staff Sgt. Jonathan Pietrantonio, 138th Public Affairs Detachment.



2nd Lt. Carl Robinson receives his officer's rank from his parents during his commissioning at Camp Smith, N.Y. Aug. 29, 2020. Ten new officers were pinned their second lieutenant shoulder boards by family members during the 106th Regional Training Institute's Officer Candidate School graduation. Photo by Staff Sgt. Jonathan Pietrantonio, 138th Public Affairs Detachment.

CAMP SMITH TRAINING SITE, CORTLANDT MANOR, N.Y. — Ten Army National Guard Soldiers raised their right hands and affirmed their oath of office as part of their graduation of the Officer Candidate School commissioning ceremony August 29, 2020 at Camp Smith.

The commissioning ceremony marked the completion of the 16-month Officer Candidate School (OCS) course.

Maj. Gen. Michel A. Natali, the assistant adjutant general - Army, administered their oath and family

members pinned the 10 new officers as newly commissioned second lieutenants.

Shane Cooney, who branched in the Engineer Corps, described OCS as a humbling experience.

“OCS was mentally and physically challenging, but overall it was an unforgettable experience nonetheless,” Cooney said.

Cooney will now go on to serve in the 1156th Engineer Company.

The course consisted of challenging tasks and curriculum, said OCS graduate Jose Meza-Barahona, who defers his commission to

later in the year.

Candidates are expected to successfully complete land navigation, be proficient in writing operation orders, conduct squad tactical exercises and have a comprehensive understanding of military history, Meza-Barahona said.

“As a noncommissioned officer with prior experience, I thought that it would make OCS a lot easier, but it’s designed to challenge the candidates in every aspect,” he said. “OCS will challenge you, but it will also bring the best out of you.”

The training is administered by the New York National Guard’s 106th Regional Training Institute, with tactical officers providing training and mentorship to prepare the next generation of Army National Guard leaders.

The goal of OCS is to prepare newly commissioned second lieutenants to assume responsibility as officers and hold future leadership positions, Natali said.

Newly commissioned 2nd Lt. Matthew Hofbauer said he is ready for the new opportunities that an

officer’s career will provide.

“I believe that OCS prepared us to be leaders that our Soldiers deserve,” Hofbauer said.


Receiving a branch assignment with the Signal Corps, Hofbauer will now be assigned to the 101st Expeditionary Signal Battalion.

Both Cooney and Meza-Barahona said they are looking forward to setting a good example and caring for their Soldiers.

“I’m looking forward to taking the skills that I’ve learned and applying them to lead and take care of Soldiers,” Cooney said.

Meza-Barahona shared that he also hopes to learn from his Soldiers, just as he hopes they’ll learn from him.

As a NCO, he wants that past experience to be a part of his leadership style going forward.

“I’m looking forward to leading Soldiers, learning from them and teaching them what I’ve learned in my decade-long career in the New York Army National Guard,” he said. 

Welcome Home after Deployment

WEST POINT, N.Y. -- Maj. Gen. Ray Shields, the adjutant general for New York, recognizes Spc. Karina Tavarez, left, and Maj. Sara Mitchell with challenge coins during the 27th Finance Battalion and 101 Signal Battalion post-deployment Yellow Ribbon at West Point, N.Y., Aug. 15th, 2020. Photo by Spc. Marla Ogden, 138th Public Affairs Detachment.



Soldiers Qualify as Equal-Opportunity Leaders

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

CAMP SMITH TRAINING SITE, N.Y. — Thirty-four New York National Guard Soldiers from across the state spent Sept. 20-26 at Camp Smith Training Site learning about the how equal opportunity works in the Army.

The Soldiers are equal-opportunity leaders in their units and the weeklong session taught them the latest on equal rights and opportunities in the workplace, explained Lt. Col. Monique Foster, the state's equal-opportunity employment manager.

The Soldiers learned the latest information on Army Regulation 600-20, which governs equal opportunity and sexual assault policies. They also heard from Maj. Gen. Michel Natali, the Assistant Adjutant General - Army, about the importance he places on what they do.

"In this new information age, Soldiers and civilian employees have more awareness and educational tools at their disposal to deal with harassment," Foster said. "They're being encouraged to use those tools to take action, and they're feeling more confident

that their leadership will facilitate a resolution."

Maj. Stephen Keblish, the state equal employment/military employment officer, added how vital this information is in helping people see through their internal biases which allows them to come to a reasonable conclusion.

"Understanding human nature helps in creating better policies for prevention," Keblish said. "In this line of work, we're trying to deal with human nature which comes with stubbornness and complex issues, but these new policies should enable soldiers to function as a team in the workplace more effectively."

Sgt. Felix Fermin, a recruiter assigned to the Bronx recruiting and retention office said he is excited to bring back what he learned to his Soldiers.

"It's great training for every Soldier—it doesn't matter what rank you are—whether you're a private or general, you should take this course," Fermin said. "The new policies help protect human dignity which propels Soldiers to a



Maj. Gen. Michel A. Natali, the assistant adjutant general - Army for New York, educates Soldiers at an equal-opportunity course at Camp Smith from Sept. 21-25, 2020. The course teaches Soldiers about the importance of equal rights and opportunities in the workplace. Photo by Cpl. Erick Butler, 138th Public Affairs Detachment.

higher plateau in their career.

The updated changes to Army Regulation 600-20 include the Army Harassment Prevention and Response Program—a policy that allows Soldiers to report on harassment such as hazing, bullying and discriminatory harassment.

Furthermore, if a Soldier is having an issue with performing duties, the corrective action must be oriented for improving that deficiency. However, according to the updated regulation, a brief

physical exercise is an acceptable way of disciplining a Soldier, such as doing push-ups, as long as Army policies prohibiting hazing, bullying and unlawful punishment are not violated, Foster said.

"For the past two years there has been an emphasis placed on enhancing this program to better assist the Soldiers in need," Foster said. "The focus of this course is not reacting to harassment, but how to prevent it before it happens." **gt**



Taking Your Best Shot

CENTRAL COMMAND AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY -- New York Army National Guard Command Sgt. Maj. Corey Cush, the senior enlisted leader of Task Force Spartan and 42nd Infantry Division, looks down the sights of a sniper rifle Aug. 24, 2020 during a visit with the 2nd Battalion, 130th Infantry Regiment. Photo by Sgt. Trevor Cullen, 42nd Infantry Division and Task Force Spartan.



Army Aviators Modernize with Newest Aircraft

Story by Col. Richard Goldenberg, Joint Force Headquarters

A new UH-60M Black Hawk helicopter assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 142nd Aviation Regiment comes in to land at their flight facility in Ronkonkoma, N.Y., Aug. 18, 2020. The UH-60M is the most current version of the Black Hawk helicopter and offers many improvements including more efficient rotor blades, glass cockpit, improved engines, flight controls and aircraft navigation. Photo by Senior Airman Sean Madden, 106th Rescue Wing.

RONKONKOMA, N.Y. — Army National Guard helicopter pilots, crews and Soldiers assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 142nd Aviation Regiment based in Ronkonkoma, N.Y. welcomed the arrival of the first of 20 new UH-60M Black Hawk helicopters at their flight facilities at Islip MacArthur and Albany International Airports August 18, 2020.

The two new aircraft, each arriving at the two facilities, represent the upgrade of the unit's fleet of aircraft.

“For us, this fielding puts us on par with the rest of the Army,” said Army Maj. Gen. Ray Shields, the adjutant general of New York. “This finally moves us from 1980s generation aircraft up to the modern era.”

The fielding is part of the upgrade of the New York fleet of UH-60 helicopters from the L-model to the M-model, frequently referred to by their military designations, Lima model to the newer Mike model, said New York Army National Guard Lt. Col. Jason Lefton, commander of the assault aviation battalion.

The fielding for New York represents more than \$200 million for the aviation modernization program.

An additional 10 aircraft will be fielded to detachments of the battalion serving in the Connecticut and Maine Army National Guard.

The arrival of the aircraft, fresh from the Sikorsky factory, improves the unit's efficiency and effectiveness, noted Chief Warrant Officer

4 Robert Hansen, the senior instructor pilot in the battalion.

“The Mike model UH-60 Black Hawks are new, fresh from the factory upgrades to our current fleet, providing aircrews with the latest in the Army's inventory of aviation,” Hansen said.

The UH-60M is the latest design for the Black Hawk helicopter and incorporates upgraded T700-GE-701D engines, improved rotor blades, a fly-by-wire glass cockpit, and improved flight controls and aircraft navigation. The aircraft provides 500 lbs. of more lift capability from prior versions of the aircraft.

“These 20 aircraft will provide significant improvements in the Army National Guard's ability to safely execute missions both here in New York and around the world,” Hansen said, “with improved lift capabilities, auto-pilot, ergonomic technology and state of the art digital cockpits.”

While the flight characteristics of the new aircraft are similar to previous Black Hawks, the new digital cockpit provides a learning curve for pilots, said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Thomas Scott, a standardization pilot in the 3rd Battalion, 142nd Aviation Headquarters Company.

“There is an entirely new set of visual cues and available information,” Scott said after his flight from Lakehurst, New Jersey to the flight facility in Latham. “So many calculations made by pilots in previous models is now presented

to us in the Mike model. It makes crew work much easier and efficient.”

More than 2,000 UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter variants are in service with the U.S. military. The Army is fielding Mike models out through 2026, purchasing more than 950 airframes.

Each aircraft is about \$21.3 million, Hansen said.

For the New York, Connecticut and Maine aircrews, the fielding improves flight operations and mission support across the force, said Col. Michael Charnley, commander of the 42nd Combat Aviation Brigade.

“This is about interoperability with other forces across the Army,” Charnley said. “We're quickly getting to the point where only Mike model Black Hawks will be deployed overseas.”

The fielding is a welcome upgrade to the battalion pilots. Newer aviators qualify on the Mike model aircraft during flight school, Scott said.

“Our current fleet is a lot older than most of our pilots,” Scott said. “A lot older.”

A significant improvement in the new aircraft will be its communications capabilities, Hansen said.

“One of the biggest upgrades is going to a fully digital cockpit,” he said. “It will greatly enhance our ability to safely operate the aircraft in any environment. The situational awareness gained from digital moving maps, threat

overlays and aircraft systems pages will help decrease some of the workload we have while operating the aircraft.”

“Flying Army aircraft, especially on real world missions, is a high-intensity activity. Downstate New York is the busiest airspace in the world,” Hansen noted. “The addition of two multiband radios will allow us to monitor and transmit on more than one Air Traffic Control frequency at a time, giving us a greater situational awareness. That was one of the biggest hindrances we have with the Lima model.”

The battalion began preparations and training for the aircraft upgrade in 2018. Lefton said, sending pilots and crew chiefs for training on the new aircraft, qualifying a third of its crews even before the first airframe arrived in New York.

“The Mike model aircraft has been something we have been training for and our pilots, crew chiefs and maintainers have been working on this over the last two plus years,” he said.

The arrival of these first two aircraft helps prepare the battalion for the arrival of a new fleet beginning in 2021.

“Our fielding window begins in January 2021 with all 30 aircraft delivered by December 2021,” Hansen said.

Aircraft arrivals occurs over many months to allow for a sustainable maintenance flow for the scheduled work required for each aircraft.

“The amount of aircraft received each month varies from two to five aircraft,” Hansen said. “It is important to stagger their arrivals so that

our maintenance folks can work them into the current flow of maintenance. If we received all of them at the same time, most of the scheduled maintenance would occur at once or several aircraft would have to sit in order to spread the scheduled maintenance out.”

Qualification training for pilots include a six-week transition course at either Fort Rucker, Alabama or the Eastern Army Aviation Training Site located at Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania.

“Many of our newer aviators were qualified on the UH-60M during flight school and will require refresher training at our facilities,” Hansen said. “Our enlisted crew chiefs and maintainers have the opportunity to attend formal Army training but can conduct the training ‘in house.’”

The UH-60M aircraft are manufactured at the Sikorsky manufacturing plant in Stratford, Connecticut and completed the Army’s test flights prior to acceptance and delivery at the U.S. Army Communications-Electronics Research, Development and Engineering Center Flight Activity on Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey.

“These new aircraft will add excitement and build on our top-tier retention,” Lefton said. “Proficiency will be our issue. We need to fly and get everyone progressed and comfortable with the new systems.”

“This aircraft is our bridge for the next 10 years,” Charnley said. **gt**



Chief Warrant Officer 4 Tom Scott and Chief Warrant Officer 3 Aaron Chiu, assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 142nd Aviation Regiment, prepare to perform a test flight on a UH-60M Black Hawk helicopter at the Sikorsky fielding facility in Lakehurst, N.J., Aug. 18, 2020. The unit is scheduled to field 20 aircraft fresh from the factory over the coming year with another 10 rounding out the battalion's elements assigned in Maine and Connecticut. Courtesy photo.

'Badger' Company Arrives at New Armory

CAMP SMITH TRAINING SITE, CORTLANDT MANOR, N.Y. -- Army National Guard Soldiers assigned to Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 108th Infantry -- who go by the nickname of "Badger Company"--form up at the Camp Smith Training Site near Peekskill, N.Y. Oct. 14, 2020. The company completed a reorganization that saw the unit relocate from Morrisonville, N.Y. combine with infantryman from Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry formerly located at Camp Smith. The Charlie Company guidon similarly relocated to the Lexington Avenue Armory in New York City as part of the six-month movement. Photo by Staff Sgt. Charles Haas, 2nd Battalion, 108th Infantry.



AIR NATIONAL GUARD



A LC-130 assigned to the 109th Airlift Wing offloads cargo at Nellis Air Force Base, Las Vegas, Nev. while a member of the 321st Contingency Response Squadron, based out of Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J., employs a Ghost Robotics Vision 60 prototype, known as a robotic dog, for flightline security, Photo by Senior Airman Madison Daquelente, 109th Airlift Wing.



Above left, a LC-130H Skibird of the 109th Airlift Wing provides ordnance and airfield security personnel during the Advanced Battle Management System Exercise at Nellis Air Force Base in Las Vegas, Nev. Airmen airlifted personnel of the 321st Contingency Response Squadron and delivered ordnance for rearming F-16 fighters from the 140th Fighter Wing. At right, members of the 321st Contingency Response Squadron, based out of Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J., employ a Ghost Robotics Vision 60 prototype, known as a robotic dog, for flightline security, Opposite page, aircrews offload armaments for rearming F-16 fighters during the exercise. Photos by Senior Airman Madison Daquelente, 109th Airlift Wing.



109th Airlift Wings Joins Advanced Digital Exercise

By Senior Airman Madison Daquelente, 109th Airlift Wing


NELLIS AIR FORCE BASE, LAS VEGAS, Nev. — Thirty Guardsman from the 109th Airlift Wing, based in Scotia, New York, flew two LC-130H “Skibirds” to Nellis Air Force Base in Las Vegas, Nevada, to participate in a nationwide exercise that tested the digital Advanced Battle Management System. The exercise, held August 30 to September 6, 2020 involved 24 states at more than 30 installations and command and control centers.

While the Mojave Desert might seem like an unlikely place for a ski-equipped LC-130H to visit, the scenario was simulated to take place in the south arctic – a place 109th Airmen are highly experienced with due to the full time missions that bring them to the polar ends of the earth.

“What we bring to the table, especially in a simulated arctic scenario, is our LC-130Hs coming in with our experience in the polar regions and our capabilities... [We are] able to bring a team to an airfield to secure or prep it for other assets to come into that airfield” stated Capt. Eric Chan, LC-130 aircraft commander.

As increasing global temperatures change the physical environment of the Arctic, Chan explained, interests in the geographical advan-

tages are also peaking on a global scale. Because of this change in global potential, the Air Force is looking to train Airmen like those from the 109th to maintain job proficiency in austere environments. Staying up to date in arctic operations, like the ABMS exercise, is crucial to future operations and mission success, Chan said. As an experimental command and control network, the Advanced Battle Management System enables multiple branches of service to function cohesively in a joint operation. “It’s demonstrating a capability that’s supposed to be what we call joint all domain command and control. Joint meaning all services, all domain meaning air, ground, sea, space... It’s fusing all these sensor inputs into a big picture that allows the decision makers to get ahead of threats and ahead of where we want to drive the battle, so we can get faster at the decision cycle and better anticipate the enemy. It’s building a picture for the folks at the top of the strategic and operational levels to be able to see the big picture as we, in this case, defend the United States from a simulated attack” Chan explained.

In this active scenario, participants were given the task to respond as if there was an attack from an adversary in the arctic region. For the demonstration, the 109th airlifted four air intercept missiles and two missile loaders which were used to rearm F-16 Falcon fighter jets at Nellis AFB. “This is my first time loading this kind of cargo,” explained loadmaster Senior Airman Katy Mausert. Also transported on the LC-130Hs were members of the 321st Contingency Response Squadron from the 621st Contingency Response Group, out of Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey. Once dismantled, the armed contingency response group patrolled the flight line with two Ghost Robotics Vision 60 prototypes, more commonly referred to as robotic dogs. The joint efforts of the 109th and the 321st allowed for successful rearming, refueling, and protection of the fighter jets. The combined exercise was an opportunity for all branches of the military, including the newly formed U.S. Space Force, to practice joint capabilities, technologies and operations. 



New York Airmen Assist with California Wildfires

Story by Col. Richard Goldenberg, Joint Force Headquarters



LATHAM, N.Y. – Four New York National Guard Airmen made a big difference in California’s effort to contain 27 massive wildfires which struck the state this summer.

Three MQ-9 Reaper remotely piloted aircraft crewmembers and a tactical air controller apprentice provided their skills and assistance in support of MQ-9 flights launched by California’s 163rd Attack Wing from September 1-30.



Photos at top, middle and above, with smoke visible at altitude, pilot 1st Lieutenant Nicole Clay, assigned to the 174th Attack Wing in Syracuse, N.Y., pilots an MQ-9 while deployed in Sept., 2020 at March Air Reserve Base, Calif.. Courtesy photos.

The remotely piloted aircraft penetrated fierce firestorms to provide real-time full-motion video of the ground fires to first responders, mapping the fire lines and providing damage assessments, according to 163rd Attack

Wing officials.

The Airmen, pilot 1st Lieutenant Nicole Clay from the 174th Attack Wing in Syracuse, pilot 1st Lt. Timothy Morgan and sensor operator Tech. Sgt. Andrew Pajak assigned to the 107th Attack Wing in Niagara Falls, supported the flight operations of the MQ-9 Reaper.

Joining the three was Senior Airman Matthew Kohlmyer, a tactical air control party Airman assigned to the 274th Air Support Operations Squadron based in Syracuse, part of the 107th ATKW. Kohlmyer acted as a liaison between firefighters and aircrews.

The MQ-9, designed to provide extensive loiter time for enhanced reconnaissance and attack capabilities against adversaries overseas, brings unique capabilities to the 18,000 firefighters battling wildfires for the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire).

During the September mission, there were 7,982 total wildfires, burning more than 3.6 million acres and damaging or destroying

7,630 structures, according to Cal Fire.

On the ground, Kohlmyer helped direct aircraft to critical areas and advised firefighters and emergency personnel about MQ-9 aircraft capabilities.

The information gathered from the aircraft, flown high above the smoke and fire, mapped the spread of fires and assisted firefighters in planning containment efforts.

“The mission involved fire mapping and tracing, hot spot surveillance, damage assessment, helping emergency crew coordination and supporting evacuation for people and animals in affected communities,” Clay said.

Cal Fire employs Reapers from the 163rd Attack Wing annually in this fire control effort since 2017, with special approvals from the Department of Defense.

With the extensive fires across California in 2020, the state requested additional crews from eight National Guard states to expand flight operations.

“At this point (September 22), we’ve flown over 24 different fires,”

“Supporting this effort is the definition of being a true, on-the-call Guardsman,”

-- 1st Lt. Nicole Clay, 174th Attack Wing MQ-9 pilot

said Air National Guard Maj. Lee Nichols, senior intelligence officer in the 163rd Operations Group. “That’s meant doubling our support of any year in the past.”

The New York pilots and sensor operator helped California employ three aircraft at one time, reflecting the high demand for wildfire information 24 hours a day.

“The guest help has been hugely instrumental to surging to three lines,” said Capt. Eric Jeppsen, 196th Attack Squadron chief of current operations. “The timing has been difficult.”

“Supporting this effort is the definition of being a true, on-the-call Guardsman,” Clay said. “It feels amazing to be able to assist emergency personnel while on the ground and support a fellow Guard base when they need additional crews.”

The contribution of the New York crewmembers saved lives over Labor Day weekend when MQ-9 flight operations over the Creek Fire near Fresno, California, identified potential helicopter landing zones to support the evacuation of nearly 400 local residents trapped by local fires.

The MQ-9 provides a significant advantage, Clay said, referring to past experience responding to disasters on the ground as an enlisted Airman with the Missouri National Guard.

“While there, I supported state active duty missions

for local flooding,” Clay said. “Being on the ground is a completely different perspective than in the air. You work with what is in front of you and often have delayed, out of date information to work from.”

“During the Cali fires, with the MQ-9 overhead, I was able to get a birds-eye view of the fires, pass real-time information to our intel (analysts) so they can quickly feed the incident commanders or personnel on the ground. This greatly increased situational awareness and effectiveness to combat the fires’ spread and quickly evacuate civilians from danger.”

Reaper imagery helped support the safe landing of Chinook and Black Hawk helicopters from the California Army National Guard’s 40th Combat Aviation Brigade’s dramatic rescue, according to the California Guard’s Joint Operations Center.

“The infrared provided the ability to “see” through the smoke and get a great view of the fire lines,” Clay said. “The MQ-9 was able to stay in the fight while other aircraft were pushed too far out due to smoke and pyro clouds forming from the fires.”

Jeppsen has also flown fire missions as part of the expanded flight operations as an MQ-9 pilot.

“We’re thousands of feet above a fire so fierce it was generating its own weather, in this case, causing

thunderstorms. Our role was helping intel determine where the helicopters needed to go.”

Morgan also recounted the contribution of the MQ-9 locating a fire flare up behind a fire line. Alerting firefighters and responders, they redirected evacuation and fire control measures to prevent further spread.

“We’re proud of our personnel and what they accomplished in working with our counterparts in the California National Guard,” said Maj. Gen. Ray Shields, adjutant general of New York. “We are always prepared to lend a helping hand and our expertise whenever we’re called upon to assist a state in need.”

The Airmen, back in New York at the end of September, acknowledged a sense of pride in taking their mission skills and applying them to lifesaving efforts to support firefighters.

Morgan said he had tremendous satisfaction to “utilize his skills and experience gained during overseas combat operations to help save American lives and prevent the fires from spreading further.”

Clay admitted a sense of “pride in the support I was able to provide. Knowing that my job may have saved property and lives. The MQ-9 is an extremely valuable technology that should be utilized for other disaster operations due to its unique capabilities.” **gt**



Air National Guard Tech. Sgt. Andrew Pajak, a MQ-9 sensor operator assigned to the 107th Attack Wing, Niagara Falls, N.Y., poses upon his return to home station Oct. 2, 2020. Photo by Master Sgt. Brandy Fowler, 107th Attack Wing.



Air National Guard pilot 1st Lt. Nicole Clay, assigned to the 174th Attack Wing in Syracuse, N.Y., with an MQ-9 remotely piloted aircraft Oct. 5, 2020 following her deployment to California. Photo by Master Sgt. Barbara Olney, 174th Attack Wing.



Air National Guard competitors from New York, Texas and California compete in a weapons crew loading event Aug. 11, 2020 at Hancock Field Air National Guard Base in Syracuse, N.Y.

Weapons Teams Tackle Competition in Syracuse

Story and photo by Airman Tiffany Scofield, 174th Attack Wing

HANCOCK FIELD AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, SYRACUSE, N.Y. — Texas and California Air National Guard weapons crews traveled to the 174th Attack Wing to compete in a training competition from August 10-13, 2020.

During the weeklong event, teams practiced weapons loading in four competitive events.

“The training enhances our readiness and proficiency while allowing us to exchange ideas and build off of other units,” said Chief Master Sgt. Scott Rachon, 174th Attack Wing weapons manager.

The 174th hosted the event for the past four years with different units

attending.

Rachon said the weapons crew from the 174th took home first place this year but it was very close between the other units.

Crews practiced teamwork and communication in several different events. One event required an Airman to be blindfolded while a wingman guided them to select different tools out of a toolbox.

“This week was absolutely amazing,” exclaimed Senior Master Sgt. Ricardo Davila, weapons manager from the California Air National Guard’s 163rd Attack Wing. “We are able to learn a lot from the other units because we all do things slightly different.” **gt**

Mission Assurance Ensures Missions Continue

Story and photo by Tim Jones, Eastern Air Defense Sector

ROME, N.Y. — The COVID-19 pandemic has forced the Eastern Air Defense Sector (EADS) to overcome several challenges in the last seven months.

An element of the North American Aerospace Defense Command and 1st Air Force, EADS defends the airspace east of the Mississippi. It's an all day, every day, no-fail mission.

At the pandemic's beginning in March, Maj. Gen. Raymond Shields, the New York adjutant general, ordered the state's Title 10 federal missions to continue without interruption. EADS responded immediately.

Initial efforts focused on the Battle Control Center (BCC). An operations floor within a restricted facility, the BCC receives radar and communications feeds from sources across the eastern U.S. This data builds a real-time air picture of the air traffic east of the Mississippi River.

Airmen at the BCC monitor the air picture around the clock. They determine whether a radar track is an inattentive pilot, a flock of birds or a threat.

When it's a threat, the BCC takes action to counter it, which can include scrambling fighter aircraft.

Computers, radars and radios are key components. The most essential components however, are heathy, well-trained Airmen.

"We can't create trained air battle managers, radar technicians, and weapons and aircraft controllers overnight. And there's no place we can get them quickly," said Col. Paul Bishop, the EADS commander. "Making sure our core operational force remains healthy is really the only way we have to achieve mission assurance."

At the pandemic's outset, a dispersion and isolation strategy was instituted. All non-essential personnel began telework, reducing the transmission threat to the operations floor.

This was reinforced by strict social distancing protocols, mandatory mask-wearing, constant reminders to wash hands and stringent equipment and facility cleaning measures.

The most labor-intensive step was redesigning the operations floor to meet social distancing guidelines. Dozens of monitors, computers and desks were rearranged or removed, and hundreds of cables were rerouted. Completed



An Airman conducts a temperature check at the gate to the Eastern Air Defense Sector compound in Rome, N.Y. Temperature checks are part of mission assurance at the Eastern Air Defense Sector.

in August, the redesign enables Airmen to maintain 6 feet distance during operations and training missions.

These measures have been successful. Despite New York's high COVID cases early in the pandemic, only one EADS member contracted the virus in the last seven months. The member, exposed outside the facility, quickly recovered.

As the pandemic continues, education has become the centerpiece of protective measures.

"We have an intelligent work force clearly focused on remaining healthy and it's made communicating the protective measures and continually evolving health information much easier," said Col. Joseph F. Roos, the 224th Air Defense Group commander. The group provides the Guardsmen for the EADS mission.

"We're helped by the fact that our Airmen and civilian employees realize that it's not just about them," Roos added. "Our members live

in the surrounding communities. Their spouses work at local businesses and their children attend local schools. They're invested in eliminating the spread of COVID and are very receptive to the health information provided to them."

The unit implemented installation health screenings and temperature checks at the entry control point. Virtual software reduces in-person meetings and an existing ultraviolet (UV) disinfection system has been leveraged to provide an added layer of defense.

Several steps also keep the unit's dispersed Airmen socially and emotionally connected.

"It was evident from the start that one of our biggest challenges was keeping our Airmen connected," Bishop said. "It's hard. Nothing replaces in-person communication, but we've taken multiple steps – virtual awards and promotion ceremonies and online social events – to let our people know they are not alone." **gt**

Guard Members Conduct Online Recruit Training

Story by Capt. Mark Getman, New York Guard

CAMP SMITH TRAINING SITE, N.Y. — Fifty-three new members of the New York Guard, the state's volunteer emergency response force, went online this fall for their version of basic training from October 5 to 9.

Traditionally the New York Guard holds a week-long Initial Entry Training program for new volunteers at Camp Smith.

During the five-day course, the brand-new members learn the basics of serving in a military force. They learn how to march, they learn about military courtesy, how to wear the uniform, how to tell military time and use the military phonetic alphabet, explained New York Guard Col. Ed Keyrouze, the New York Guard's chief of staff.

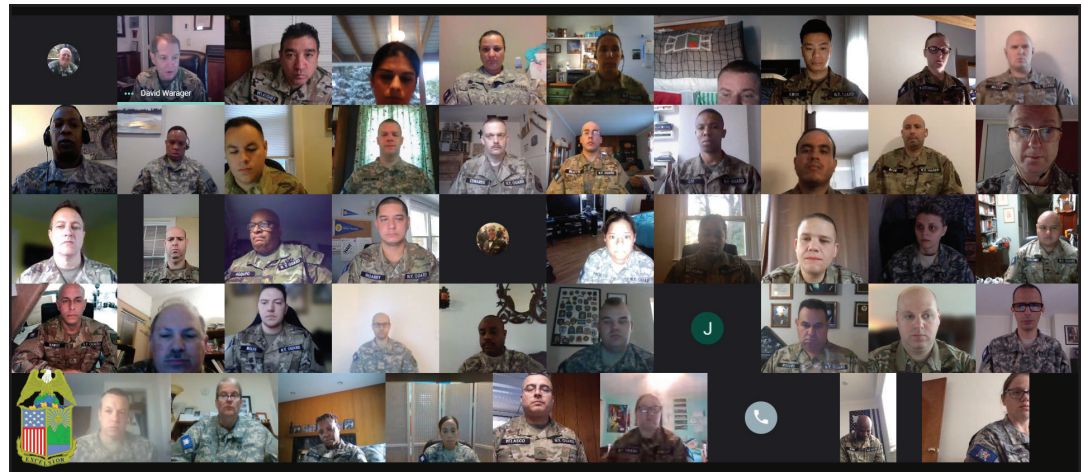
New York Guard members are volunteers who wear military uniforms and use a military rank structure and chain of command, but are a state-only force who do not carry weapons. Members augment the New York Army and Air National Guard during state emergencies, serving alongside Soldiers and Airmen in the field and in command posts.

As of October 15, 47 members were on duty as part of the 1,400 member New York National Guard COVID-19 task force.

Many members of the New York Guard have prior military experience, but for those who have never worn a uniform the Initial Entry Training is an important introduction into the military world, Keyrouze explained.

That course is usually part of annual training, canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Because New York Guard members are considered state employees for legal purposes, state regulations against large gatherings meant that conducting annual



Members of the New York Guard Initial Entry Training class, the state's volunteer self-defense force, signed into Zoom on Oct. 4, 2020 to listen to remarks from Brig. Gen. David Warrager, the commander of the New York Guard, during their training period which ran from the week of Oct. 4 to 9. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic the training course could not be held in person, so the New York Guard members trained online.

training for 250 to 300 people at Camp Smith was not possible.

So like businesses and schools across the country, the New York Guard took their education online.

Classes which would have been taught in person were conducted over the Zoom conferencing application using slide shows and videos, Keyrouze said.

"We took our core training, which you would have received in person, and we presented it to you virtually," New York Guard Brig. Gen. David Warager, the commander of the New York Guard, told the online trainees. "We simply changed tactics and applied technology to solve the problem."

"The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted us all in our daily lives and it has significantly impacted the New York Guard in its ability to conduct the normal Initial Entry Training that we do annually to prepare new soldiers to support state active duty missions," Warager said.

Instructors from the New York Guard's 12th Regional Training Institute conducted classes over

Zoom during five days. Classes were recorded so that members who missed a session due to family or job responsibilities could catch up later, explained 2nd Lt. Steven Blake, one of the instructors.

"This training isn't a replacement for the in-person experience, but critical points and training we were able to get across," Blake said. "And of course, there are technical issues on both ends, which you wouldn't have with in person training."

Since the volunteers were on duty during the training, they were expected to wear their uniforms. Instructors conducted online spot uniform inspections, ID card checks and boot checks to ensure these new members were in the proper uniform during their virtual training, just as they would in a classroom, Blake said.

New York Guard Spc. Petar Simonovic, a member of New York City's 88th Area Command, said he was skeptical about the online training. But the training turned out to be interesting and engaging and it worked, he said.

He even figured out how to serve as a squad leader when the members could only see each other on a Zoom call.

"Let's just say my email folder has never been bigger and thank goodness for unlimited text messaging," Simonovic said.

Spc. Israa Cahill, a member of the 10th Area Command in Buffalo, also said the training worked.

"For sure it's not the same experience like in person training but still I had an awesome week. The NCOs did great job and I learned a lot from them," Cahill said.

"The 12th RTI was able to quickly adjust course and prepare a quality curriculum and arrange the technology to deliver this course in a virtual environment, but one that allowed significant interaction between instructor and student and between students," Warager said.

"The students were actively engaged and excited to participate in and complete the program and are now fully eligible to deploy for state active duty missions as needed," he said. **gt**

New York Naval Militia



Craftmaster Recognized

VERPLANCK, N.Y. – New York Naval Militia Master Chief Patrick O'Sullivan, right, pins the Military Emergency Boat Service Craftmaster Pin on Chief Machinery Technician Bill Munch while aboard Patrol Boat 400 in Verplanck, N.Y., Sept. 25, 2020. The award presentation followed a practical demonstration and oral qualification board to determine proficiency. Munch is the ninth Naval Militia member to receive the Craftmaster designation, identifying him as a subject matter expert in Naval Militia boat operations. Courtesy photo.



Sailor promoted after 17-year break

LATHAM, N.Y. – New York Naval Militia Commander Rear Adm. Warren Smith, left, promotes Naval Militia Sailor Keith White to the rank of petty officer as a Machinist Mate 2nd Class at the Joint Force Headquarters in Latham, N.Y., Sept. 1, 2020. White spent four years in the Coast Guard beginning in 1995 before spending another four years in the New York Army National Guard. After a 17-year break in uniform, he returned to service in the New York Naval Militia in 2019. Photo by Ryan Campbell, Guard Times staff.



Out for an Autumn Spin for Training

NEW HAMBURG, N.Y. -- Members of the New York Naval Militia's Military Emergency Boat Service prepare to head out on the Hudson River for a training mission Oct. 28, 2020. The service provides patrol boats to assist other agencies in missions on New York's waterways. Courtesy photo.



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