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



FROM THE LEADERSHIP

Be ready to go Above and Beyond the Basics

The New York military team is made up of Soldiers, Airmen, Naval Militia members, and New York Guard members.

All of us fill a role here in our great Empire state; even if we don't always know what another's role might be.

I've recently been able to see members of all our forces join in missions within the state for support on the Buffalo snowstorm, the migrant support mission in New York City, and the continued COVID-19 support response.

I've assisted in firefighting, flooding events, and Super-Storm Sandy. On each mission I've been so impressed to see our volunteer force step up when their community asked.

Accomplishing missions within your community requires as much commitment to duty as does deploying to a foreign land to support our national interests.

The Army has defined duty as fulfilling your obligations. So, if you voluntarily chose to serve you then incurred obligations to serve when your state or nation requests your assistance.

That obligation to serve can mean doing more than you were trained to do and it can happen anytime.

On Christmas Eve in Buffalo, Air Guard 1st Lt. Richard Burns and his team from the 107th Attack Wing assisted a stranded woman in labor. Instead of the tasks that they were trained and planning on accomplishing, he ended up rushing this woman to the hospital, through a blizzard.

A few years before, on Feb. 26, 2017, a UH-60 Black Hawk crew set out for a routine exercise

involving picking up a concrete block at Gabreski Air National Guard Base,

"That obligation to serve can mean doing more than you were trained to do and it can happen anytime,"

-- Chief Warrant Officer 5 Mark Shumway

and training to fly with an external load.

But the airport tower notified the Soldiers from the 3rd Battalion, 142nd Assault Helicopter Battalion, that a small plane had crashed into the woods near the airport. The crew spotted the burning plane and immediately set down near the wreck.

Three Soldiers jumped out, ran to the burning plane and extracted the pilot, the only person alive of the three on board.

The work done by the New York Army National Guard's Recruiting and Retention Battalion for the last several years is another example of going beyond our basic obligation.

While the active component, and federal reserve components, and most other states have been unable to achieve their goals in Recruiting or Retention New York's team has consistently been in the top five of the 54 states/territories.

Staff Sgt. Angelica Mae Aquino, New York's top Recruiter received recognition from the Director of the Army National Guard for shattering the minimum recruiting mission requirements.

Each of the uniformed services sets forth its own yet interconnected core values.

When speaking of time spent in uniform many are inclined to say that the individual did their duty. This could quickly be dismissed by saying that they only fulfilled an obligation.

If you've been: activated on a state mission, been called to active duty to serve in country or overseas, or even excelled beyond requirements at your home duty station; I contend that you've done more than just fulfill an obligation.

You've given up your normal life with family, friends, hobbies, and other jobs. You've sacrificed your time and energy to support others in their time of need.

I recently assumed the role as the state Command Chief Warrant Officer and am responsible in advising the Adjutant General on all issues of the Warrant Officer.

Many may not understand what a warrant officer is, this isn't so surprising as they make up a much smaller portion of our Army forces than either the enlisted or commissioned officers. The Army has more warrant officers than the other services

Warrant officers fill unique roles in the military by performing



Chief Warrant Officer 5
Mark Shumway

duties that require special tactical and technical expertise in specific fields. A code for the warrant officer is to be the "Quiet Professional".

If being a warrant officer is a dream that you may aspire for, reach out any of New York's warrant officers, warrant officer strength managers, or myself.

Thank you for your service to your community, state, and nation.



A Promotion and a Farewell

LATHAM, N.Y. — New York Army National Guard Sgt. Victoria Kingman, a member of Detachment 5, Charlie Company, 2nd Battalion, 245th Aviation Regiment receives her new rank from her niece while being promoted during a farewell ceremony for her unit at Army Aviation Support Facility # 3 in Latham, New York on Nov. 6, 2022. Her husband Gary Kingman and Chief Warrant Officer 5 James MacCauley look on. The Soldiers, who fly the C-12 Huron transport aircraft deployed to Djibouti in East Africa to support United States military forces in the region. Photo by Eric Durr, Guard Times staff.





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Col. William McCrink, commander of the 174th Attack Wing, greets President Joe Biden as he arrives at Hancock Field Air National Guard Base in Syracuse, Oct. 27, 2022. Biden was in Syracuse for a speech at Onondaga Community College and flew in and out of the base on board Air Force One. White House photo by Adam Schultz.



FRONT COVER: New York Army National Guard Sgt. Matthew Scofield, a military policeman assigned to the 222nd MP Company, assists a Buffalo resident with snow removal during welfare checks December 26, 2022 following the historic Buffalo Blizzard over the holiday weekend. The National Guard deployed more than 650 troops to assist city and county residents with search and rescue, emergency transportation, snow removal, health and welfare checks, decedent recovery, logistics and traffic control. Courtesy photo.

BACK COVER: An HH-60G Pave Hawk rescue helicopter flown by the 106th Rescue Wing, and carrying Army Gen. Daniel R. Hokanson, Chief of the National Guard Bureau, refuels from and HC-130 Combat King II during Hokanson's visit to the wing at Gabreski Air National Guard Base in Westhampton Beach, New York on Nov. 5, 2022. Photo by Master Sgt. Dave Williams.

Governor Kathy Hochul, COMMANDER IN CHIEF
 Maj. Gen. Raymond Shields, THE ADJUTANT GENERAL
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FACES of the FORCE



Soldier Competes in Army Best Squad Finals

Story by Eric Durr, *Guard Times Staff*

Spc. Austin Manville, an infantryman assigned to Charlie Troop, 2nd Squadron, 101st Cavalry Regiment, negotiates the “law crawl” portion of an obstacle course event at the Army National Guard’s 2022 Best Warrior Competition at Volunteer Training Site-Milan, Tennessee, July 26, 2022. Manville did not win the competition but went on to compete as a member of the Army National Guard’s Best Squad which was among the finalists in the Army-wide Best Squad event. Photo by Master Sgt. Erich B. Smith.

LATHAM, N.Y. — Sgt. Austin Manville, a Rochester resident who competed in the Army National Guard Best Warrior contest in August, was one of five National Guard Soldiers who made it to the final round of the Army-wide Best Squad competition which concluded on October 10, 2022.

Manville and the other Guard Soldiers competed against 11 other squads from the Army Reserve and active Army commands, at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, from September 12 to October 6.

The final four top squads then went to Washington, D.C. where they were quizzed on their military knowledge.

The Guard team was bested by a five-man squad from Army Special Operations Command.

The Army National Guard squad’s success in being one of the final squads in the competition demonstrates the capabilities of National Guard

Soldiers, according to Command Sgt. Maj. John Raines, the command sergeant major of the Army National Guard.

“It’s a tough competition. It’s physically and mentally challenging,” Raines said. “Working cohesively as a team is what allows for success here and it’s also what makes Army Guard units effective when deploying overseas or responding at home.”

Manville is a member of Charlie Troop, 1st Squadron, 101st Cavalry Regiment based in Buffalo, and joined the Army National Guard in 2018.

Manville was picked as the top Soldier in the New York Army National Guard in the spring and then won the Best Warrior Competition for Army National Guard Soldiers in the northeast.

He competed against six other Soldiers for best in the Army National Guard honors during an August competition in Tennessee. Five of

those seven Soldiers were selected to be on the Army National Guard best squad team.

Manville’s participation in this Army competition represents the sixth year in a row that New York Army National Guard Soldiers have made it to national competitions, according to New York Army Guard Command Sgt. Maj. David Piwowarski.

“Sergeant Manville continues a tradition of excellence in competition for New York,” Piwowarski said.

The Army competitions are like a football game, Piwowarski said. There are a lot of factors at play in these events.

“It is an outstanding achievement that the best of the Army National Guard can compete with the best of our Army’s Special Operations Soldiers,” Piwowarski said. “It is truly incredible.”

NY Names New Command Chief Warrant Officer

Story by Eric Durr, *Guard Times Staff*

LATHAM, N.Y. — Chief Warrant Officer 5 Mark Shumway, a veteran of the Iraq War, was named the Command Chief Warrant Officer of New York during a December 19, 2022 ceremony at the New York National Guard headquarters in Latham.

Shumway replaced Chief Warrant Officer 5 Jacqueline O'Keefe who served in the position since 2018, and retired after 40 years of military service.

The command chief warrant officer is responsible to the commander of on issues involving warrant officer recruitment and training. There are 247 warrant officers in the New York Army National Guard.

Maj. Gen. Ray Shields, the adjutant general of New York, praised Shumway as an outstanding leader, and charged him with ensuring that the ranks of the warrant officer corps are filled with qualified people.

"Thank you for accepting this challenging and important position," Shields said.

In his remarks, Shumway thanked his family, most of whom have served in the Army, for their support and lessons during his 31-year

military career.

"I absolutely wouldn't be here without your help and support," Shumway said.

"I am extremely proud and humbled to be the New York command chief warrant officer," he added. "I promise you my best efforts every day."

During the ceremony, Shields transferred a ceremonial saber from O'Keefe to Shumway, representing the responsibility for the mission going from one warrant officer to another.

The transfer for responsibility ceremony was followed by a retirement ceremony honoring O'Keefe for her many years of service.

O'Keefe now serves as the civilian coordinator for the New York National Guard's sexual harassment and assault program.

In her remarks, O'Keefe said she was looking forward to continuing to serve the New York National Guard in her new civilian role.

She urged those military leaders present to continue to make taking care of their Soldiers a priority.

"To me the most profound lessons are, lead



Chief Warrant Officer 5 Mark Shumway, the incoming top warrant officer in the New York Army National Guard, receives a ceremonial sword from Maj. Gen. Raymond Shields, the adjutant general, a symbol of assuming authority during a ceremony at New York National Guard headquarters, Latham, New York, Dec. 19, 2022. Photo by Ryan Campbell, *Guard Times staff*.

by example, do my duty, and to always take care of people," O'Keefe said. **gt**



Troops Honored by NY Jets for Service

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. — New York Army National Guard Soldiers joined fellow service members to run the U.S. flag across the field for the NFL New York Jets during pregame activities at Met Life Stadium East Rutherford, New Jersey, Nov. 6, 2022 as part of the team's salute to service event. The event included oath affirmations for five recruits in front of 83,000 football fans before the game. Photo by Sgt. Andrew Valenza, Joint Force Headquarters.

Air Guard Commander Receives Second Star



SCOTIA, N.Y. — Dr. Robert Donnell, a retired Navy officer pins an additional star onto the uniform of his daughter, Air Force Maj. Gen. Denise Donnell, the commander of the New York Air National Guard, during her promotion ceremony Jan. 6, 2023 at Stratton Air National Guard Base in Scotia, New York. At right is her brother, John Donnell, a technical sergeant in the Michigan Air National Guard also assists. Photo by Senior Master Sgt. Willie Gizara, 109th Airlift Wing.

AROUND THE STATE

NY Only State to Meet FY 2022 Recruiting Goals

Story by Eric Durr, *Guard Times Staff*

LATHAM, N.Y. — The New York Army National Guard was the only state Army National Guard to meet and then exceed its recruiting goals for the federal fiscal year which ended on Sept. 30, 2022.

The National Guard Bureau, which oversees the National Guards of 54 states, territories and District of Columbia, gave New York the goal of recruiting 1,175 Soldiers during the year.

New York brought in 1,210 new enlisted Soldiers. This works out to 103% of the recruiting goal.

The New York Army National Guard also gained 159 new officers during the fiscal year. This exceeded the target of 138 set by National Guard Bureau.

Nevada was the state with the next most successful recruiting effort in fiscal year 2022, recruiting 95.1% of the goal set by the National Guard Bureau, according to data compiled by Army National Guard recruiting officials.

By Oct. 1, 2022, the New York Army National Guard's assigned strength was 10,707 Soldiers. This is 105% of its authorized strength of 10,194.

Authorized strength is the number of Soldiers needed to fill all necessary positions.

This is the fourth year in a row the New York Army National Guard has met, or exceeded, its recruiting goals, according to Lt. Col. Josh Heimroth, the commander of the New York Army National Guard's recruiting and retention battalion.

The New York Army National Guard has also been successful at retaining Soldiers who completed their original and follow-on enlistments.

The National Guard Bureau set a goal of retaining 1,300 Soldiers in federal fiscal year 2022. New York retained 1,406 Soldiers. This equates to 108% of the targeted goal.

Nationally, the Army National Guard has a strength of 329,700 Soldiers. According to the National Guard Bureau, the Guard was 6,000 members short of its recruiting goal for the fiscal year.

The active Army, overall, also faced a shortfall of Soldiers. The Army achieved only 75% of its 2022 recruiting goal, according to Army Chief of Staff Gen. James McConville.



New York National Guard recruiter Staff Sgt. Sam Devino chats with fair goers at the Washington County Fair in Greenwich, New York, Aug. 28, 2022. The recruiters set up a display at the fair that included a M997A3 HMMWV ambulance and a pull-up bar for attendees to test their strength. Photo by Staff Sgt. Matthew Gunther.

The Army, 20,000 Soldiers short of its recruiting goal, was the only service that didn't meet its target.

Personnel experts attribute some of this to a thriving job market. Others point to the limitations of in-person engagement due to COVID restrictions.

But, according to Army officials, only about 23% of men and women in the prime age to join the Army can meet the physical fitness, education and other requirements needed to join.

The New York Army Guard succeeded at enlisting new Soldiers because recruiting is important, according to Maj. Gen. Ray Shields, the adjutant general of New York.

"Other than Soldier safety, we have no higher priority than unit assigned strength," Shields said.

"We placed attention on recruiting and retention and the results have been remarkable," he added.

Recruiting enough Soldiers means more than just bragging rights, Shields said.

"We cannot be successful and do what the

nation and state ask of us without Soldiers in our ranks," Shields said.

Since 2020, the New York National Guard has deployed over 7,000 troops to assist in the state's COVID-19 response while sending almost 2,000 Soldiers to the Horn of Africa for security duties, Kuwait for support efforts to mission across the Middle East, and Europe to train Ukrainian soldiers.

The Army National Guard also fought wildfires, responded to windstorms, snowstorms and most recently sent two helicopters to Florida to assist in the recovery from Hurricane Ian.

Heimroth credited New York's well trained and motivated full-time recruiting force of 207 Soldiers for the success of the recruiting effort.

Shields concurred.

The success of New York Army National Guard recruiters during a year in which other states did not meet their number "speaks volumes on the hard work of our recruiting and retention team," Shields said. **gt**



New York National Guard Counterdrug Task Force personnel and Air Guard drug demand reduction personal assigned to the 105th Airlift Wing gather to mark national Red Ribbon Week, along with Brig. Gen. Gary Charlton, at Stewart Air National Guard Base on Oct. 23, 2022. Courtesy photo.

Counterdrug Task Force Helps in Awareness

Story by Eric Durr, Guard Times Staff
 SCOTIA, N.Y. — The New York National Guard Soldiers and Airmen who work with local community anti-drug groups, focused in on drug abuse education and disposing of unneeded prescription pills during the last two weeks of October.

New York National Guard Counterdrug Task Force Drug Demand Reduction Outreach teams across the state supported the Drug Enforcement Agency's Take Back Day on October 29th, and the agency's Red Ribbon Week from October 23 to 31.

Take Back Day is a national effort by the Drug Enforcement Agency to work with local law enforcement and community groups collect unneeded prescription medications and dispose of them properly.

Red Ribbon Week is the DEA's effort to educate people regarding the dangers of drugs. The week was launched to commemorate the death of DEA agent Enrique Camarena at the hands of Mexican drug dealers in 1985.

Soldiers and Airmen working on drug demand reduction, known as civil operators, work with local groups to help them organize effectively to reduce drug use in their communities, explained 1st Sgt. Dave You, the non-

commissioned officer in charge of the Drug Demand Reduction Outreach effort.

For Red Ribbon Week and the drug Take Back Day, the civil operators helped plan and implement local events, You said.

This year, for the first time, the 16 Counterdrug Task Force civil operators also collaborated alongside several Air National Guard Drug Demand Reduction Outreach program managers at the five air wings across the state involving them in this national effort, You said.

In Tioga County, civil operators worked with local law enforcement to collect 136 pounds of unused prescription drugs, while in the Albany area, 4,128 pounds of unused drugs were turned in.

In Irondequoit, near the Rochester area, hundreds of pounds of unneeded drugs were turned in. The effort in Hempstead, Oceanside and Long Beach on Long Island, also took in hundreds of pounds of unused prescriptions, according to You.

Along with collecting unneeded pills, the take back events also included an educational component on the proper ways to store drugs safely and to dispose of them, You said.

Dumping drugs in the garbage doesn't mean

somebody won't fish them out, You said. And flushing them down the toilet can contaminate water supplies, he added.

Task Force Soldiers and Airmen organized a variety of events to mark Red Ribbon Week in local communities.

In Orange County red ribbons were tied around 100 trees across the county to call attention to the event.

In Lindenhurst on Long Island, the civil operators helped the youth group Lindy Cares put together goodie bags for elementary and middle school kids, that included a fact card for parents about Red Ribbon Week.

In Farmingdale, Soldiers and Airmen set up a unique event for Girl Scouts which highlighted an anti-drug message while teaching them Morse code.

And at Bayport Blue Point High School, Soldiers and Airmen assisted in a program educating high school peer leaders about Narcan, the drug used to treat and overdose.

The New York Air National Guard's wings organized Red Ribbon themed events which included a "trunk or treat" event at the 106th Rescue Wing's F.S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base in Westhampton Beach. **gt**

THE JOINT FORCE

Troops Turn Out for Historic Buffalo Blizzard

Story by Eric Durr, *Guard Times Staff*

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Eight hundred and forty-nine Soldiers and Airmen took part in the New York National Guard's week-long mission to Buffalo, following a Christmas Eve snowstorm that dumped 50 inches of snow on the city and caused a 16-hour long whiteout.

Guard Soldiers and Airmen moved critical medical personnel to hospitals, assisted in snow clearance, rescued passengers from stranded vehicles and checked on the welfare of more than 3,700 households during the mission.

The mission kicked off Christmas Eve morning, December 24, with 54 personnel on duty. By the end of the day, that number had increased to 163.

Additional troops came on duty as more vehicles - Humvees, FMTVs trucks, front end bucket loaders and dump trucks were required by local authorities.

By December 29, the number of troops on duty reached its peak at 701.

The mission ended on New Year's Eve, December 31, although Soldiers remain on duty to conduct post-operations maintenance for the 172 vehicles that were employed across Erie County roads.

The snowstorm which began Saturday morning, December 24 and lasted into Christmas day was unprecedented. More than 4 feet of snow fell on Buffalo, shutting down the city, and stranding motorists.

"This is an epic, statewide hazard," New York Gov. Kathy Hochul warned on December 23 as the region prepared for the storm.

By the time it was over, 39 people had died. Some went outside, got lost and froze to death, others were stranded in vehicles and others died because emergency personnel could not get through.

New York National Guard personnel established a headquarter



Soldiers assigned to the 827th Engineer Company clear snow at the Cheekowaga Senior Citizens Center in Cheektowaga on Dec. 216, 2022, as part of the New York state government response to a major snowstorm. New York deployed 849 Soldiers and Airmen in western New York following the snow storm which hit the region over the Christmas weekend. Courtesy photo.

ters at Buffalo's Connecticut Street Armory, but the weather on Saturday made it impossible for troops reporting for duty to get there.

An 18-person response team from the 107th Attack Wing at Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station in F-350 trucks, led by 1st Lt. Richard Burns, was unable to get into Buffalo on Friday and had to

turn back.

When the storm wound down, the Airmen were able to get into Buffalo. They rescued stranded motorists and got one pregnant woman to John R. Oishei Children's Hospital just before she gave birth.

In another instance, the 107th team was charged with getting a heart patient to the hospital.

"We had one gentleman who lived with an artificial heart that was battery powered," Sgt. Kevin Au told WRGZ television.

"He was in need of getting a recharge. He had a spare battery that was in his home address and we were also trying to get him to a hospital so they could plug him in. As I understand it, his battery had less than a half-hour of timeline before we were able to get him someplace safe," Au said.

Maj. Gen. Ray Shields, the ad-



Soldiers assigned to the 827th Engineer Company and Airmen assigned to the 174th Attack Wing help to clear snow to recover an ambulance in Buffalo, Dec. 26, 2022, as part of the New York National Guard response to a major snowstorm. Courtesy photo.



Soldiers clear snow during welfare checks with residents in the City of Buffalo, Dec. 30, 2022 following the historic Buffalo Blizzard over the holiday weekend. Courtesy photo.



Airmen assigned to the 107th Attack Wing at Niagara Falls help rescue a motorist and his pet dog stuck in high snow drifts near Buffalo, Dec. 24, 2022 during whiteout blizzard conditions. Courtesy photo.

jutant general of New York, visited the 107th Attack Wing to recognize the Airmen in that initial response team on December 29.

“I can’t thank you all enough for coming in and helping our fellow citizens over a holiday weekend,” Shields told them.

As the storm began to wind down, critics accused Hochul of erring in not activating National Guard Soldiers and Airmen sooner.

Those critics don’t comprehend how bad the storm was, said Lt. Col. Justin Coats, the deputy commander of the 153rd Troop Command and the initial joint task force commander.

The weather conditions on December 24 that made it impossible for the 107th Airmen to get into Buffalo would have made it impossible to deploy people on any kind of rescue missions during the day, he said.

They would have been “pinned” in the armories, he said.

As the weather cleared on December 26, Soldiers from the 827th Engineer Company cleared snow away from the parking lot at the Erie County Fire Training Academy in Cheektowaga in order to prepare a staging area for local, country and state first responders.

Soldiers and Airmen in Humvees and F-350 trucks began moving critical medical personnel to hospitals and psychiatric centers and patrolling for stranded motorists.

Pfc. Matthew Waldman, a member of the 105th Military Police Company, was on his way to sign in on duty, when he diverted to help get a pregnant woman to the hospital.

His mother, riding in the car with him, let him know the woman was going into labor and was snowed in.

“So, I decided to veer off-course a little bit go to her address,” Waldman told CBS News.

Waldman got the woman out of the house, carried her to his car, and drove her to the hospital before checking in for snowstorm duty.

The 107th Attack Wing’s Fatality Search and Recovery Team, whose Airmen are trained to help recovery the dead following a disaster, was called in to assist in the recovery of those who died in the storm.

Over the course of the mission the team, which also deployed when the COVID-19 pandemic first hit New York City in 2020, recovered 22 decedents.

A key mission from December 27 to 29, was visiting homes without power and areas on the Buffalo’s east side which had been hit hard by the storm.

Over the three days, Soldiers and Airmen visited 3,755 households to find out if people had food, water and vital medications. If people needed food or water, they dropped off meals ready to eat and bottled water.

During the course of the mission, they delivered 278 cases of MRES — 3,336 meals — and 150 cases of water.

That mission made the Soldiers realize how hard the storm hit the region, Spc. Daniel Weimer told Spectrum News.

“When you see elderly people not being able to get out of their home, you just feel horrible, especially when they don’t have power for three to four days, they can’t keep warm,” Weimer said.

“You know how people were buried in. Specific homes, you could not even get to the door. Burned down homes, sadly, we saw several of those,” he said.

On December 29, Soldiers also



Airmen assigned to the 107th Attack Wing at Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station assist motorists stuck in high snow drifts near Buffalo, Dec. 25, 2022. Courtesy photo.

passed out toys donated to the New York National Guard’s Family Programs to families they visited.

Soldiers of the 105th Military Police Company were tasked with setting up traffic control points to keep people from driving down roads where crews were working to remove snow.

The 204th Engineer Battalion, based in Binghamton deployed additional dump trucks to help remove snow, as well.

The forecast of warmer temperatures in the week following the storm prioritized snow removal

to prevent flooding from melting snow, said Erie County Executive Mark Poloncarz.

A list of accomplishments during the week-long mission include:

- 124 people rescued from stranded cars
- 264 medical personnel transported
- 77 patients transported
- 3,755 households visited during health and welfare checks
- 9 traffic control points established
- 6 miles of roads plowed
- 8.5 acres of parking cleared **gt**



Soldiers and Airmen conduct welfare checks with residents in Buffalo, Dec. 30, 2022. Courtesy photo.



NY Marks 386th National Guard Birthday

Story by Eric Durr, *Guard Times Staff*

Master Sgt. Jerry Swain and Airman 1st Class Emma Davignon cut the ceremonial National Guard birthday cake during a celebration of the Guard's 386th birthday at New York National Guard headquarters, Latham, New York, Dec. 13, 2022. Swain, age 60, and Davignon, age 18, participated in the tradition of the oldest and youngest service members coming together to cut the cake to symbolize the past and future of the National Guard. Photo by Ryan Campbell, *Guard Times Staff*.

LATHAM, N.Y. — A 60-year-old Soldier who joined the military in 1981, and an 18-year-old Airman who just finished her training the prior week, marked the 386th birthday of the National Guard during a ceremony at New York National Guard headquarters in Latham on December 13.

Master Sgt. Jerry Swain joined Airman 1st Class Emma Davignon in cutting a National Guard birthday cake during the ceremony.

Traditionally the oldest Guard member is joined by the youngest Guard member in cutting the cake. The older servicemember represents the history and traditions of the National Guard, while the young Soldier or Airmen represents the future of the Guard.

The National Guard claims Dec. 13, 1636, as its birthday. On that day the legislature of the Massachusetts Bay Colony approved a law organizing separate volunteer militia companies into an organized militia of three regiments.

Swain serves as a chaplain's aide in the National Guard's Joint Force Headquarters in Latham.

Davignon is assigned to the security forces squadron of the 109th Airlift Wing.

"Being the youngest and representing the future is a real honor," Davignon said.

She just completed training at the Air Force Security Forces Academy at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas on December 7 and is looking forward to joining her unit, Davignon said.

Swain, who assists Army chaplains in counseling Soldiers, began his military career in the Navy in 1981. He served in the Navy Reserve as well before joining the New York Army National Guard.

"Representing the history and traditions of the Guard is a fantastic honor," Swain said.

"I'm still kind of conflicted about being the oldest guy around, though," he added.

Command Sgt. Major David Piwowarski and Chief Master Sgt. Greg Mihalko, served as master of ceremonies for the event, teaming up to discuss New York National Guard history.

"Since the National Guard is really all about people, I want to say happy birthday to all of you," Piwowarski told the audience.

In New York, the first citizen-soldiers were members of the Burgher Guard, organized by the Dutch East Indian Company in 1640 to help protect New Amsterdam from their English neighbors in Massachusetts and Virginia or from hostile natives.

After New Amsterdam became the English colony of New York in 1665, a militia modeled on the system used in Massachusetts and other English colonies was put in place.

Citizen Soldiers of the militia and National Guard have fought in all of America's wars from King Philips War against Native Americans in the New England Colonies in 1675 to Iraq and Afghanistan.

There are 10,000 members of the New York Army National Guard and 5,800 members of the New York Air National Guard.

Some notes from New York National Guard history include:

- New York gave the country the term National Guard for its militia forces when the 2nd Battalion, 11th Regiment of the New York Militia renamed themselves the National Guard to honor the Marquis de Lafayette, a hero of the American Revolutionary War who had commanded a force called the "Guard de National" in the early days of the French Revolution.

- The 42nd Infantry Division was given its nickname "The Rainbow Division" during World War I by Gen. Douglas MacArthur. MacArthur, then a colonel, was charged with organizing a division of Guard troops from across the country to deploy to France in 1917. He described the division as reaching across the country "like a rainbow."

- The oldest Air National Guard unit in the nation is the 102nd Rescue Squadron of the 106th Rescue Wing traces its history back to the 1st Aero Company organized in the New York National Guard in 1908 as a balloon unit. 🇺🇸

Airman Graduates Brazilian Jungle Warfare School

Story by Eric Durr, *Guard Times Staff*

MANAS, Brazil — For Tech. Sgt. Jeremy Miter, adapting to the heat and humidity of the Amazon basin was the toughest part of the six weeks he spent at Brazil's Jungle Warfare School from the end of September until mid-November 2022.

"Once we got into the jungle it was a whole other level of heat," Miter said.

"The triple canopy rain forest keeps the heat in and all around you. It creates a pressure cooker," Miter added.

Despite the heat, Miter became the fifth New York National Guard member to graduate from the course that CIGS — the acronym for the school's name in Portuguese, Centro de Instrucao de Guerra na Selva — conducts for foreign military personnel in Manas, the capital of Brazil's Amazonas State.

The class the Brazilians run their own Soldiers through takes about 10 weeks.



Tech. Sgt. Jeremy Miter, right, assigned to the 274th Air Support Operations Squadron, is congratulated by the chief of Brazil's Jungle Warfare Training School in Manas, Brazil, Nov. 17, 2022. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Heather Riley.

New York Soldiers and Airmen have been attending the school since 2019 as part of the State Partnership Program relationship between Brazil and New York.

To operate in the heat and

humidity, the students — who came from India, France, Spain, Portugal, Paraguay, Uruguay and Argentina, as well as two other Americans from the 7th Special Forces Group — learned how to stay hydrated to keep up with the sweat loss, Miter said.

The course starts out with physical fitness tests and proving that you can swim and stay afloat in uniform and with combat gear, Miter said.

The next step is learning jungle survival. Students learn what to eat and not eat, how to find drinkable water, and how to find shelter.

"They put us out in the woods for 48 hours on our own to survive without food and only the water that you bring with you," he said.

"I don't think anybody ate for the entirety of the survival event," Miter recalled. "Luckily, it rained at the end."

Miter is a joint tactical air controller, or JTAC for short, assigned to the 274th Air Support Operations Squadron.

He is trained to support ground troops by calling air strikes.

The squadron is part of the 107th Attack Wing in Niagara Falls, but is located at Hancock Field Air Guard Base in Syracuse.

Miter, 33, joined the Air Guard in 2006, and served as a firefighter at the 109th Airlift Wing, until becoming a JTAC in 2010.

He deployed to Syria in 2019 and Horn of Africa in 2021.

Miter was picked to attend the course because "he has the mental focus and physical strength" needed to succeed, said New York Air National Guard Command Chief Master Sgt. Denny Richardson.

Swimming is central to the training, Miter said.

The students learned to use the rivers to move around. They would swim with rucksacks full of equipment and using makeshift rafts. They also learned how to use boats to infiltrate, Miter said.

The round the clock training kept the 20 class members so tired that nobody had the energy to worry about the caiman — Brazil's version of the alligator — or piranhas in the river, he said.

Students also learned how to navigate the dense jungle using terrain association, Miter said.

Since most students were from special forces units, that was simply refresher training, Miter said.

Working together with 20 soldiers from different countries, who didn't all share the same language was challenging, Miter said.

But between all the participants, they managed to find ways to talk to each other, he said.

"The exchange of knowledge between us and Brazil was great. Plus working with soldiers from other countries you don't normally work with was valuable," Miter said. **gt**



State Budget Director Retires After 33 Years

LATHAM, N.Y. — Maj. Gen. Ray Shields, the adjutant general of New York, presents a plaque to Robert Martin, the director of budget and finance for the New York State Division of Military and Naval Affairs during his retirement ceremony at the New York National Guard headquarters in Latham, New York, Oct. 28, 2022. Martin served as the Director of Budget and Finance for DMNA and retired after 33 years as a New York State employee. Photo by Eric Durr, *Guard Times, staff*.



Defense Force Members Save Infant's Life

Story by Eric Durr, *Guard Times* Staff

New York Naval Militia Marine Lance Cpl. William Kong, left, and New York Guard Pfc. Robil Rahyab, whose quick thinking helped save a baby's life, take a break at The Hotel on Times Square in New York City on Nov. 21, 2022. Photo by Lt. Michael Rehbaum.

NEW YORK CITY — Two New York state defense force members used their medical skills to save the life of an 8-day-old infant at a New York City hotel housing migrant asylum seekers on November 11.

New York Guard Pfc. Robil Rahyab, a former EMT, and Naval Militia Lance Cpl. William Kong, a volunteer firefighter, administered CPR to the baby, who had stopped breathing.

They got the infant's heart beating again, calmed the upset family, talked to the 911 operator, and provided information and assistance to the ambulance when it arrived, said New York Guard Lt. Michael Rehbaum, the OIC of the 72-member detail they were serving on.

"They took the initiative, without a second thought, and saved the baby's life," Rehbaum said.

Rahyab and Kong were on duty at The Hotel at Times Square as part of the New York National Guard mission to assist New York City in coping with more than 38,700 migrants who have been bused into the city from boarder states.

The migrants, who have come from Venezuela, Nicaragua, Guatemala and other Latin American countries and requested political asylum, are being housed in hotels by New York City.

As of mid-January, there were 940 Army and

Air Guard, Naval Militia and New York Guard members on duty in 27 hotels.

New York Military Forces members are in these hotels around the clock, providing hot meals to the migrants, letting them in and out of their rooms, and providing a sense of stability, Rehbaum said.

Personnel were also on duty at the Port Authority Bus Terminal on Manhattan to help receive migrants getting off buses there. The headquarters for the task force was located at the Harlem Armory on 5th Avenue.

Both Rahyab and Kong are new to their services.

Kong, a member of the Marine Corps Reserve's 6th Communications Battalion, said he joined the Naval Militia because he wanted to help with the migrant assistance mission.

"So far, honestly, I love it," Kong said.

Rahyab just completed his week of New York Guard initial training in August. He too volunteered for the migrant assistance mission because he wanted to help.

"I volunteered to see how operations work. I wanted to see firsthand what is going on," Rahyab said.

They were on duty in the lobby when one of the migrant families came in. They were upset and speaking Spanish, which neither man is flu-

ent in. One person was talking on a cell phone.

They listened and realized that the call was to a 911 operator who was trying to confirm the location of the caller.

They also saw that one person was holding a baby that wasn't moving.

Rahyab picked up the baby, checked for a heartbeat and took charge.

Rahyab, who has been certified as an EMT for 12 years, began performing CPR on her.

He's administered CPR to adults many times, Rahyab said. But this was the first time he'd done so on an infant.

It's a different technique, he said.

Rahyab was also talking to the 911 operator, who wanted to know what the infant's heart rate was. He asked Kong to help him time the heart beats.

The ambulance arrived in about three minutes, Rahyab said. He continued CPR and explained the situation to the ambulance crew and helped them administer oxygen to the little girl in the ambulance .

The infant was taken to Saint Luke's Hospital, treated and was back with the family in a few days.

"I am happy that I could help them, because they were frozen and in complete shock," Rahyab said. **gt**

Soldiers and Airmen March to Honor Deployers

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



Retired New York Army National Guard Sgt. 1st Class Arthur Coon, center, joins an Army Guard Soldier and civilian youth in leading the annual Christmas Eve Road March in Glens Falls, New York on Dec. 24, 2022.

GLENS FALLS, N.Y. — A dozen New York Army National Guard Soldiers and Airmen joined local veterans and community members to show their support for service members deployed overseas on Christmas Eve in Glens Falls.

Every year, members of the community come together for the annual Christmas Eve Road March, organized by retired New York Army National Guard Sgt. 1st Class Arthur Coon, a local recruiter.

Coon first organized the event in 2004 as a way to honor Soldiers deployed during Christmas stationed in Iraq.

“We didn’t want them to think that we had forgotten, or we were home staying warm while they

were deployed to Iraq. So, we came up with this idea to rope March, so they knew we hadn’t forgotten,” Coon said.”

The numbers grew since then and have fluctuated up and down in recent years.

“We’ve had years where there’s more than 1,000 people here. And there’s other years this year where it’s going to be I think, a little shorter than that because of the cold weather. But we have a hearty band of people they want to support so just no matter what the weather,” Coon said.

According to Coon, this year 500 people turned out in the cold, with temperatures in the low teens.

One of the Soldiers attending was Sgt. 1st Class Adam Barber, with his son, Austin Barber.

Barber has been attending the road march every year since 2006, after coming home from his deployment to Iraq.

He said one of the biggest reasons he attends is because it reflects the values of what it means to be a Soldier in the National Guard.


“So, this type of a community event is in line with the values of the Soldiers in Army Guard, because that’s what we do. We support our local communities and we deployed overseas as well,” Barber said.

Barber also felt it was important for it to be an event with the community and families because it helps them understand military culture and the sacrifices service members make.

The New York National Guard has some 2,000 personnel deployed for the holiday season in 2022, with Soldiers in Europe, the Middle East and Africa, and Airmen serving in Antarctica.

“I think it’s extremely important to bring out family and expose them to the culture of the military and all of those who have served and sacrificed especially in the holidays. It’s really important to share that with our families,” Barber said.

At the end of the day, Coon’s message was one of remembrance.

“We haven’t forgotten you. We may be home celebrating, but we think of you guys all throughout our day, and we will never forget,” Coon said. 

Long Island Soldiers Deploy

Story by Eric Durr, Guard Times Staff

FARMINGDALE, N.Y. — Thirty-seven New York National Guard Soldiers based in Farmingdale deployed to Kuwait this fall, and mobilized during a short ceremony held October 8.

The Soldiers are assigned to the 187th Signal Company, located at the Farmingdale Armed Forces Reserve Center. They left for additional training at Fort Hood, Texas on Sunday, October 9.

The Soldiers trained at Fort Hood for about a month before departing for Kuwait. They are expected to be overseas for about 10 months.

They reinforce 250 troops assigned to the 369th Sustainment Brigade which oversees personnel, logistical and maintenance support for Task Force Spartan, the force of 10,000 Army troops operating in

the region.

Maj. Gen. Michel Natali, the assistant adjutant general, urged the Soldiers to look out for each other during their deployment.

He told the Soldiers they were well-trained and ready for the mission and will do well.

New York had 1,900 Soldiers deployed overseas or in training to deploy.

1,100 Soldiers are assigned to security missions at U.S. facilities in the Horn of Africa, while 140 assigned to Task Force Orion are assisting in training Ukrainian soldiers in Germany.

Another 250 Soldiers assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 142nd Aviation, headquartered in Ronkonkoma, are now serving in Kuwait. **gt**



1st Sgt. Damon Glover and Capt. Donald Conste, case the guidon of the 187th Signal Company during a ceremony held at the Armed Forces Reserve Center in Farmingdale, New York on Oct. 7, 2022. This marked the company's mobilization for service in the Middle East. Photo by Col. Robert Mitchell, 53rd Troop Command.



Hell Fighters Keep Trucks Rolling

CAMP ARIFJAN, KUWAIT — Sgt. Shemar Steele, a tactical power generator specialist assigned to the 369th Special Troops Battalion, and Spc. Ishad Khan, a wheeled vehicle mechanic with the battalion, work on an air filter while performing maintenance checks and services on a vehicle in the unit's motor pool garage at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, Nov. 15, 2022. The 369th Sustainment Brigade is deployed to Kuwait in support of Operation Spartan Shield. Photo by Spc. Ryan Scribner, 369th Sustainment Brigade.

Orion Recognizes Troop Excellence



GRAFENWOEHR, GERMANY — Command Sgt. Maj. Edwin Garris, CSM of the 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, presents a command team award for excellence challenge coin to Spc. May Webb, a unit supply specialist assigned to Task Force Orion in Grafenwoehr, Germany, Nov. 24, 2022. Task Force Orion is deployed in support of the Joint Multinational Training Group – Ukraine mission to ensure the combat effectiveness of Ukrainian military personnel training on systems and equipment issued under the United States' Presidential Drawdown Authority. Photo by Staff Sgt. Jordan Sivayavirojna, Joint Multinational Training Group - Ukraine.

Aviators Complete Florida Hurricane Response

Story by Eric Durr, *Guard Times Staff*

ROCHESTER, N.Y. — A New York task force, composed of Soldiers from Bravo Company, 3rd Battalion, 126th Aviation and the 642nd Aviation Maintenance Battalion, returned from a deployment to Florida in early October, after a week of operations to assist civil authorities.

The movement was a response to an Emergency Management Assistance Compact request from Florida as Hurricane Ian headed towards the state.

The aircraft took two days to make the journey and arrived at the Fort Myers International airport September 29, less than 30 hours after Hurricane Ian had made landfall the day before, bringing maximum sustained winds of 150 mph to the Florida coast near Fort Myers.

The two New York aircraft moved “a bunch of search and rescue teams,” Florida State troopers, local police and sheriff’s deputies, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation agents and Florida National Guard Soldiers, between September 30 and October 5, according to Capt. Jonathan Peralta, the mission officer in charge.

The New Yorkers and aircraft from other states focused on moving people and supplies to Sanibel Island, off the Florida coast of Fort Myers, Peralta said.

When the storm hit on September 28, sections of the three-mile-long causeway that links the island to the mainland were destroyed. The Army Guard aircraft were used to bring in people and critical equipment quickly, he said.

The CH-47 crews moved Ford F-150 pickup trucks and Explorer SUVs, as well as gator type vehicles, military Humvees and skid steer work vehicles, Peralta said.

The Explorer and F-150s were

just backed up into the aircraft, as were the gators.

pilots had to fly a specific route, so that if the load had to be dropped



A civilian search and rescue team loads on a CH-47F Chinook operated by Bravo Company, 3rd Battalion, 126th Aviation prior to a mission on Sanibel Island, Florida, Oct. 2, 2022. Photo by Sgt. Samuel Sacco.

The skid steers, small single man work vehicles, were loaded into shipping containers, known as a conex. These were then carried across the channel to the island slung underneath the CH-47s.

The Humvees were also carried as a sling load, Peralta said. The New York helicopters carried two Humvees, the entire aviation task force moved 10, he said.

Carrying the sling-loads was particularly tricky because the

for safety reasons, it wouldn’t hit a house, Peralta explained.

Carrying heavy loads like a truck or armored Humvee is challenging for pilots, he said.

“We have to be concerned about power management and not over-torquing the engines,” Peralta said.

The helicopters used the general aviation fixed base operator at the airport as their home base.

Other supplies moved by the two New York helicopters included

two pallets of water, cell phone communications equipment and 65,000 pounds of cargo.

The Soldiers generally worked 12-hour days from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., although occasionally those days got extended, Peralta said.

The Florida National Guard ensured the Soldiers were billeted as comfortably as possible and well fed, he said, and as the week went on, they moved out of an aircraft hangar and into local hotels.

The maintenance personnel faced a special challenge when one of the Chinooks hit 120 hours of flying time, which required major maintenance checks, Peralta said.

This level of maintenance is normally conducted inside a hangar and takes about a day, he explained. In this case, the maintenance team had to work outside in the heat, so they rotated people into an air-conditioned building to give them a break, he said.


The maintainers also had to close whatever they were working on whenever an aircraft flew by, Peralta said. But the work was done with little lost time, he said.

The New York National Guard deployed personnel and aircraft to assist Florida in October 2018 following Hurricane Michael.

In that case, New York deployed two CH-47s, two UH-60 Black Hawks and 25 Soldiers.

Peralta was part of that 2018 mission and he said that there was much more for the aviators to do during this deployment.

In 2018, the storm had hit inland, Peralta said. This storm hit the coast harder and did more damage on the islands.

“The way the damage had occurred made for more aviation requirements this time around,” Peralta said. 

Soldiers Aid Trees for Troops

Story and photos by Sgt. Andrew Valenza, Joint Force Headquarters

BALLSTON SPA, N.Y. — Two dozen Soldiers helped spread the Christmas spirit Nov. 28th, 2022, by volunteering to load donated Christmas trees bound for service members and their families across the country.

The Soldiers joined local veterans and Gold Star and Blue Star families at Ellms Family Farm in Ballston Spa, to load 100 donated trees into a FedEx truck. The trees go to military bases and are distributed to military families as part of Trees for Troops, a charitable initiative of the Christmas Spirit Foundation.

The event was a chance to give back to the community and other Soldiers, said Staff Sgt. Nicholas Cossey, a member of the 42nd Expeditionary Combat Aviation Brigade Headquarters Company.

“I figured it was something I could do on my way down to work and help out the troops that are deployed overseas,” Cossey said.

Cossey said he has had experience working with unit rear detachments, supporting troops deployed overseas and their families back home in New York.

He understands the importance of family and community connections, especially during the holidays, Cossey said.

“You know, when it comes to the importance of family and togetherness, them being separate from everybody, anything we can do to make

them feel a little bit closer to home,” Cossey said.

“That’s what we really try to do on top of all the rear detachment work that we do, to try and send as many care packages as possible that we can over there. This just seems another thing to add on top of that, specific to the holiday season itself,” he said.

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

Ellms Family Farm started their support of Trees for Troops 18 years ago, during some of the peak years of New York National Guard deployments overseas, said Garth Ellms, owner of Ellms Family Farms.

It started when they first saw images of troops celebrating the holidays in places like Iraq and Afghanistan, with Christmas trees decorating faraway bases and combat outposts.

“Once you hear this story from somebody that’s received a tree, everything’s worth it,” Ellms said.

“Because when you’re away from your family, that smell of a real Christmas tree, it ties them back to probably a tradition that they did with their family as a child. And the feedback from that and the comments that we’ve gotten is just that’s why we do it,” he explained.

The event has become an annual tradition they are proud to continue, he said.

Ellms said there are about 12 Christmas Tree farms in the region that donate the trees every year, and over the past 17 years, the organization has delivered 277,001 real Christmas trees to military families and troops.

Trees for Troops estimates that 15,300 trees will be distributed to 84 military bases throughout the U.S. in 2022.

New York Army National Guard recruiter Sgt. 1st Class Brandon Moseman



Army National Guard Spcs. Tyler Tomlin, above, and Paige Moore, below, load Christmas trees at Ellms Family Farm in Ballston Spa, New York, November 28, 2022.

was one of a dozen recruiters who supported the event as a tribute to fellow Soldiers and Airmen who will be overseas for the holidays.

“It’s all about morale, honestly, from a day-to-day basis. When they get things like this. It definitely brings up the morale, and it keeps them in the fight,” Moseman said. **gt**



Sgt. 1st Class Brandon Moseman, a New York Army National Guard recruiter, loads a Christmas tree into a FedEx truck at the Ellms Family Farm in Ballston Spa, New York, November 28, 2022.



Rainbow Division Veteran Shares WWII Stories

Story by Maj. Jean Kratzer, 42nd Infantry Division

ALBANY, N.Y. — A World War II veteran of the 42nd Infantry Division shared his combat stories with 300 New York Army National Guard Soldiers currently serving in the division's headquarters during the division's annual dining out.

Lockered "Bud" Gahs, from Perry Hall, Maryland, who served as a private in the Division's 222nd Infantry Regiment, shared his memories on Dec. 2, 2022, at the Hilton Hotel in Albany.

Gahs, 98, is a Rainbow Division Veterans Foundation member, which co-hosted the event.

Hosting Gahs is an integral part of passing on the legacy of the Rainbow Division to its newest Soldiers, said Maj. Gen. Thomas Spencer, the 42nd Division commander.

The history and accomplishments of the division bind our Soldiers from every era, he said.

Initially created from National Guard units in World War I, the 42nd Infantry Division reactivated for World War II and fought in Southern France and Germany, capturing the cities of Wurzburg, Schweinfurt and Munich while liberating the Dachau Concentration Camp alongside the 45th Infantry and 12th Armored Divisions.

In 1947, the division became part of the New York Army National Guard and had gone on to serve as a combat headquarters in Iraq in 2004-05 and Kuwait in 2020.

Gahs, drafted into service in 1943, served in the anti-tank company of the 222nd Infantry. As a truck driver, it was his job to maneuver the guns into position.

Gahs told the audience what it was like to serve with the division during the war.

Without artillery and support-



Lockered "Bud" Gahs, from Perry Hall, Maryland, who served as a private in the 42nd Infantry Division's 222nd Infantry Regiment, meets six division commanders following his talk to share memories of World War II on Dec. 2, 2022, at the Hilton Hotel in Albany, New York, during the division Dining-Out. Courtesy photo.

ing units, the three infantry regiments of the 42nd were rushed to France in November of 1944 as the Army faced a manpower shortage.

Gahs and his fellow infantrymen faced down the German counteroffensive near Strausburg, France, called Operation Nordwind, launched in conjunction with the Battle of the Bulge further north in the Ardennes.

Gahs and his unit defended a town called Schweghausen. During the fight on Jan. 25, 1945, Gahs remained at his post for hours, fending off repeated German attacks with his M3 submachine gun, known as a grease gun for its appearance.

"We lost two Soldiers from our squad that day," Gahs said. "As soon as they (the Germans) left, we were grateful they didn't set the house on fire while we were still hiding out on the second floor."

The Army credited Gahs with killing 10 enemy troops, wounding eight and capturing eight in his defense of the position. For his actions, he received the Bronze Star.

Just 90 days later, Gahs found himself advancing with the 222nd Infantry through Dachau and the infamous concentration camp.

Gahs rode into Dachau on the date of its liberation, April 29, 1945, where he temporarily pulled security in the woods near the camp, expecting to find SS prison guards.

While clearing the woods, they heard rustling and a man crawled up to Gahs.

"Dachau was a surprise to all of us," he said of the camp's liberation. "We didn't know it was that bad."

"We were ready to shoot if needed," Gahs explained before the group of American GIs real-

ized the man was a prisoner.

"To this day, the most moving moment of my life was when that prisoner came up to me and kissed my boot. It brought a tear to my eye and still does."

The regiment continued its advance and by the next day, Gahs and the 42nd Division entered Munich, the birthplace of Nazism.

The realization of his accomplishment in that afternoon of late April 1945 didn't set in for a while, Gahs said. He never wandered through the front gates of the concentration camp until 1972.

"Thank you, Bud, for sharing the story of your exemplary heroism," Spencer said as Gahs finished to a standing ovation from the modern-era Soldiers. "You know the price of freedom better than anyone and we are all grateful for you." **gt**

69th Infantry Marks WWII Battle of Makin in Africa

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

DJIBOUTI — Soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment marked the 79th anniversary of the regiment's World War II capture of Makin Atoll with a barbecue at their deployed location at Camp Lemonnier on Nov. 26th 2022.

The annual Makin Dinner honors the brave legacy of the regiment and is one of many traditions associated with the historic unit. During World War II, the 69th Infantry was federalized and reflagged as the 165th Infantry Regimental Combat Team.

Assigned to the 27th Division, the 165th fought throughout the war in the Pacific theater at Makin, Saipan and Okinawa. The capture of Makin took place on Nov. 23 and 24, 1943.

The anniversary dinner is normally held at the battalion's historic Manhattan armory. This year's event was unique since the battalion is currently deployed 7,000 miles from home in East Africa.

With Soldiers stationed in Djibouti, Kenya and Somalia, the battalion, augmented with elements from the 101st Cavalry and 108th Infantry, is currently assigned to Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa (CJTF – HOA).

Maj. Gen. Jami Shawley, the CJTF – HOA commander, and Brig. Gen. Stephen Case, the deputy commander, attended the dinner as distinguished



Chief Warrant Officer 4 William Solmo, an automotive maintenance warrant officer, and Sgt. 1st Class Saul Pineda-Vega, a platoon sergeant, both assigned to 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment, cook sausages on a grill while preparing for the 69th Infantry Regiment's annual Makin Dinner, Nov. 26, 2022.

guests.

Also in attendance were Maj. Gen. Michel Natali, the assistant adjutant general, Army, for the New York National Guard, and Maj. Gen. Thomas Spencer, commander of the 42nd Infantry Division.

Despite the distance and the logistical challenges that come with being deployed to a combat zone, the unit held the event as usual, albeit with a few changes. Noticeably absent from the ceremony were friends, families and members of the regiment's veterans corps.

"This year, our Makin Dinner has changed," said Lt. Col. Shawn Tabankin, the 69th Infantry commander. "Instead of roasting one another and enjoying the company of our previous generations of combat veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan, we are here, now, in the Horn of Africa, creating the next generation of veterans."

sociated with the dinner is mixing the regimental cocktail. Made with one part Irish whiskey and two to three parts champagne, the regimental cocktail traces its origins back to the Civil War.

Gen. Thomas Francis Meagher, commander of the Irish Brigade at the time, liked to drink whiskey mixed with Vichy water. At Fredericksburg the general dispatched a Soldier to get the effervescent mineral water.

Infantry's senior enlisted leader, and other senior NCOs.

After the cocktail was mixed, first sergeants from across the formation led in toasting the president, the governor, the adjutant general, the New York Army National Guard, 42nd Division, 27th Brigade and the 69th Infantry.

Attendees watched a recorded interview of Lt. Col. Kenneth "Scooter" Barclay, a WWII member of the unit, recounting his experience during the battle. Barclay, a member of the 69th Veterans Corps, passed away in July 2021.

"We remain rooted in our history," Tabankin said. "These events, unique to the 69th, whether it be Makin Dinner, the St. Patrick's Day parade, the Commander's Reception, or the Logan-Duffy match... it's important for us to make best efforts to continue these traditions, even when deployed."

While the evening honored the unit's legacy, the dinner ended with a view toward the future.

"I look forward to sharing many future Makin Day dinners with you," Tabankin said. "I look forward to the time when some of our toughest moments, or biggest mistakes, eventually transition to some of the funniest stories for us, as old men and women, to tell back home in our Lexington Avenue armory." **gt**



Soldiers assigned to 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment, watch a video of Lt. Col. Kenneth "Scooter" Barclay, in which he recounts his experiences during the World War II Battle of Makin, during the 69th's annual Makin Dinner, Nov. 26, 2022.

The menu of the annual Makin Dinner, which is almost as important as the dinner itself, consisted of beefsteak and bread, pork chops, sausage and meatballs. The menu was a recreation of what the unit's Soldiers ate on the eve of the battle in 1943. The traditional dessert, a piece of apple pie topped with a slice of American cheese, wasn't available so far from home.

Another tradition as-

Unable to find the water, the Soldier returned with a bottle of champagne. Meagher mixed the two and the regimental cocktail was born.

This year, both the whiskey and the champagne were absent. A symbolic regimental cocktail, consisting of Perrier sparkling water and non-alcoholic sparkling-wine, was mixed by Command Sgt. Maj. Jason Zeller, the 69th



Soldiers carry the remains of Korean War MIA Cpl. Robert Charles Agard Jr. during his funeral ceremony honors May 27, 2022 at the Forest Lawn Memorial Park Cemetery in Elmira, New York. Photo by 1st Lt. Lauren Warner, 642nd Aviation Support Battalion.

New York Conducts Most Funeral Honors in Nation in 2022

Story by Eric Durr, *Guard Times Staff*

LATHAM, N.Y. — New York Army National Guard honor guard Soldiers performed more military funerals in federal fiscal 2022, than Army National Guard honor guards in any other state.

During federal fiscal year 2022, which ended on Oct. 1, 2022, the New York Army National Guard conducted 7,965 funerals, according to Ronald Thomas, the northeast regional coordinator for the honor guard program.

The California Army National Guard was the next highest, with 6,346 military funerals conducted during fiscal year 2022, he said.

For fiscal year 2023, the New York Army National Guard anticipates conducting 8,100 military funerals, while California is forecasting 6,000, according to Guard records.

Army National Guard honor guards conducted 105,241 funeral missions during fiscal 2022, according to Thomas.

For calendar year 2022, New York Army National Guard honor guards are expected to provide military funeral honors for the families of 7,753 former Soldiers by New Year's Day.

In 2021, the honor guards conducted mili-

tary honors at 8,275 internment ceremonies.

A 2000 federal law, amended in 2011, mandates that former members of the U.S. military who served on active duty or in the reserves and were not dishonorably discharged are eligible for a military funeral.

At a minimum, these honors are provided by a two-person team that plays taps with an electronic bugle, and folds and presents an American flag to the family.

Retired military personnel and those who passed away while on active duty are entitled to honors that involve as many as nine Soldiers or Airmen and can include a rifle firing party and pallbearers.

Each service is responsible for providing military funeral services for veterans of their service, so in each state and territory Army National Guard honor guard's provide honors for Army veterans, while the Air Guard conducts funeral for Air Force vets.

According to the Veterans Administration, New York's veterans' population is fifth largest in the nation with 745,157 former military

personnel. California, which has the highest veteran population in the country, is home to 1.64 million veterans, according to the VA.

The New York Army National Guard maintains a centralized honor guard system with seven regional offices across the state.

Thirty-eight Soldiers are on active duty conducting funerals, and another 60 Soldiers are available for part-time duties, according to Sgt. 1st Class Charles Gabriel III, the honor guard non-commissioned officer in charge.

Gabriel said he isn't sure why his honor guard Soldiers conduct more funerals than those in states with larger veteran populations.

Since each service handles their own veterans, there may not be as many former Soldiers in California, Texas, Florida and Pennsylvania, the states with larger veteran populations, Gabriel said.

Or in some states, like Texas, the active Army may handle more funerals than the 10th Mountain Division does in New York, he added.

But, he said, the New York Army National Guard honor guard works to sell itself to the funeral directors who are the ones that usually help a family arrange for military funeral honors.


"We attend a conference with them every year and put a good pitch out," Gabriel said. "I am working on making that contact system smoother for them to reach us."

Another factor in New York honor guard's numbers may be the relatively large veteran's population in New York City and Long Island, and the proximity to the veterans' cemetery in Calverton on Long Island, Gabriel said.

According to VA figures, there are 368,626 veterans living in the area. This is more than the veterans' population of 38 other states.

The New York City and Long Island offices of the New York Army Guard honor guard have conducted 3,719 funerals so far in 2022, Gabriel said just before Christmas.

With a week before the end of 2022, the New York Army National Guard's eight honor guard detachments have conducted these funerals:

- Albany: 770
- Camp Smith (Hudson Valley): 790
- New York City: 1,134
- Long Island: 2,585
- Buffalo, 947
- Rochester, 605
- Horseheads (Southern Tier) 236
- Syracuse: 578 

NY Marks the Guard's Birthday in Germany

Story by Maj. Avery Schneider, 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team GAFENWHOER, Germany — New York National Guard Soldiers deployed to Germany to support training of Ukrainian soldiers celebrated the National Guard's 386th Birthday on Dec. 13, 2022 by cutting a birthday cake and talking about their distinguished history.

Sgt. 1st Class Raul Llopis, a 54 year old unit supply specialist from Livonia, New York, and Spc. Catherina Ma, a 21 year old combat medic specialist from Utica, New York – both assigned to Task Force Orion of the 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team – carried on the Army tradition of a unit's oldest and youngest Soldiers cutting a birthday cake together with a ceremonial sword.

"The National Guard birthday is important because it's the beginning," said Col. William Murphy, commander of Task Force Orion. "It aligns with the beginning of our nation. It aligns with ordinary citizens standing up for what's right and what's just."

The National Guard's history dates back to Dec. 13, 1636, when the first militia regiments in North America were formed in Massachusetts.

An order of the Massachusetts Bay Colony's General Court organized three permanent regiments to defend the colony. The descendants of these first regiments – the 181st Infantry, the 182nd Infantry, the 101st Field Artillery and the 101st Engineer Battalion of the Massachusetts Army National Guard – share the distinction of being the oldest units in the United States military.

With more than three and a half centuries of history to trace its roots back through, the National Guard is the oldest component of the U.S. armed forces and one of the oldest active military organizations in the world, still in operation.

"Serving in an organization that is 386 years old means to me that there is a lot of legacy that needs to be kept," Llopis said. "We, as Soldiers, need to represent all those values that have been alive for so long."

445,000 Soldiers and Airmen, serve in the National Guard in all 50 states, three territories, and the District of Columbia. As today's "Citizen Soldiers," they bring a diversity of experience from all walks of life, small towns and big cities, scores of different civilian careers and different motivations to serve their communities.

"Serving in my community means I have a greater sense of purpose, that there are people out there who support me, and I'm here supporting them, as well," Ma said.

In November in New York, 130 Guard Soldiers and Airmen deployed domestically to dig residents out of a historic snowstorm.

Seven hundred were deployed to New York City to help manage the inflow of migrants seeking asylum.

Seven hundred more were on duty as part of the state's Joint Task Force Empire Shield, augmenting homeland security operations in the New York metropolitan area.

And Air Guardsmen assigned to the Eastern Air Defense Sector were working around the clock, protecting the skies across the eastern



Sgt. 1st Class Raul Llopis, a unit supply specialist, and Spc. Catherina Ma, a combat medic specialist, both assigned to Task Force Orion, 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, carry on the Army tradition of a unit's oldest and youngest Soldiers cutting a cake during a celebration of the 386th National Guard birthday in Grafenwohr, Germany, Dec. 13, 2022. The task force is deployed in support of training Ukrainian military forces. Photo by Staff Sgt. Jordan Sivayavirojna, Joint Multinational Training Group-Ukraine.

United States.

In the last 20 years, the National Guard has shifted from being the nation's strategic military reserve to an operational reserve, and a critical part of deployed forces during what was the longest period of armed conflict in U.S. history.

The unit's more than 140 Soldiers deployed to Germany in early August in support of the Joint Multinational Training Group – Ukraine mission, to ensure the combat effectiveness of Ukrainian military personnel training on systems and equipment issued under the U.S. Presidential Drawdown Authority.

"You're adding a capability and a capacity that we on the active component simply can't do. You're building relationships and you're touching people in a way that we simply can't touch," said Brig. Gen. Joseph Hilbert, commander of 7th Army Training Command, and Task Force Orion's deployed higher headquarters.

In a speech to the task force's Soldiers, Murphy thanked them and explained that the birthday is not just about a number and a cake.

"It's reminding us that a community of people stood up, and they took all the skills and abilities they had within their communities, and brought it forward to make the world a better place," he said. "The same thing [they] did back then is the same thing that we're doing today." 🇺🇸

Soldier Serves as MP and Trains to be Officer

Story and photos by Sgt. Andrew Valenza, Joint Force Headquarters

LATHAM, N.Y. — Army ROTC Cadet Nathaniel Breedon is getting a head start in both his civilian and military careers by serving in the New York Army National Guard's 206th Military Police company while also attending college and preparing to be an officer.

Breedon, a student at Norwich University in Vermont, is taking part in ROTC's Simultaneous Membership Program, which allows ROTC cadets to serve in an Army National Guard or Reserve Unit as well as taking ROTC classes and training.

In school, Breedon is a criminal justice major, with a minor in criminology and leadership Studies. Breedon said the mix of his college studies and work in the 206th is getting him ready for both future careers.

"I feel like it prepares me pretty well," Breedon said.

"I'm getting good experience within the company, I'm a soldier like everybody else. So I get the full-on experience of the day-to-day activities of a Soldier while also shadowing leadership," he said.

As a ROTC cadet, Breedon, conducts military training alongside his regular classes. This includes physical fitness training during the weekdays and learning Army tactics.


When Breedon does his drill weekend with the 206th, he shadows 2nd Lt. Ryan Skinner, the 1st Platoon leader for the 206th.

Skinner said the experience has been a good one and he's proud to be a part of Breedon's development as a Soldier.

"It's been very good having him as a responsibility and feeling that is helping me become a better officer, seeing how we do things in the National Guard," Skinner said.

Skinner earned his commission through the Officer Candidate School.

With that perspective, he said students like Breedon in the SMP have an advantage when going to their unit as a commissioned officer.

"He's actually learning responsibilities of [military police officers]," Skinner said, "so that when he goes to MP Basic Officer Leader Course after he graduates if he gets branched MP, he'll have a lot better understanding than what I did when I first came here." 



Cadet Nathaniel Breedon, a cadet with the 206th Military Police Company, poses for a photo in Latham, New York, Nov. 21, 2022.

Guardsmen Honored at Hofstra University

Story and photos by Sgt. Andrew Valenza, Joint Force Headquarters HEMPSTEAD, N.Y. — New York Army National Guard Soldiers helped with tip off at the Hofstra University “Salute to Service” basketball game, honoring veterans and military troops across the U.S. Armed Forces on Nov. 11, 2022.

During the national anthem, New York Army National Guard Staff Sgt. Richard Garcia rappelled from the rafters above the David S. Mack Sports and Exhibition Complex basketball court with the game ball in a bag tied to his belt, giving spectators a rare and fun look at the National Guard’s capabilities and an exciting pregame show.

The event also included a color guard presentation by Hofstra’s Reserve Officer Training Corps cadets before the game versus Iona College.

Garcia said that delivering the ball was a great experience, and it meant a lot to him to be a part of this event.

“It feels amazing,” Garcia said. “It’s great being in front of people that don’t really get to see Soldiers. And with the National Guard, they never see that their citizens are actually Soldiers.”

The other part of the event was the presentation of the colors by Hofstra’s ROTC cadets.

Cadet Dominic Del Toro carried the U.S. flag. He felt it was a great honor to be not just a part of the ceremony, but to be holding the flag.

“I think it’s a great honor to be representing it,” Del Toro said. “And I think in a way, kind of honoring the veterans that came before us and the active servicemen that came before us who defended our nation.”

According to Del Toro, Hofstra University has been proactive in their honoring of veterans and the armed forces. This hasn’t gone unnoticed by the cadets, who take great pride in their school.

“I’m happy that they’re hosting an event, especially for veterans,” Del Toro said. “And I think it’s gonna be a really good night and give good representation to the students of the school and the attendees of the game.”

Hofstra senior Tyler Thomas provided the go-ahead three-pointer with 35 seconds remaining to give Hofstra a 83-78 win. 🏀



Staff Sgt. Luis Diaz-Cruz (left) and Richard Garcia (right), deliver the game ball to referees of a basketball game at Hofstra University, in Hempstead, New York, Nov. 11, 2022.



Staff Sgt. Richard Garcia rappels onto a basketball court with the assistance of Staff Sgt. Luis Diaz-Cruz at Hofstra University, in Hempstead, New York, Nov. 11, 2022.



Pfc. Rafael Caballero, assigned to the 101st Signal Expeditionary Battalion, trains on the AN/TSC-156 Phoenix Tactical SHF Satellite Terminal during pre-mobilization training at the Camp Smith Training Site in Cortlandt Manor, New York, Oct. 3, 2022.

Signal Soldiers Prep for Deployment

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Jonathan Pietrantonio, 138th Public Affairs Detachment

CAMP SMITH TRAINING SITE, N.Y. — Forty-six 101st Expeditionary Signal Battalion Soldiers spent October 24 to November 7 ensuring their communications gear will keep Army command posts talking to each other when they deploy to the Middle East in 2023.

The Yonkers-based battalion is slated to mobilize 344 Soldiers to deploy to Kuwait in support of the Army's Task Force Spartan Shield in August of 2023.

But requirements for training, and for the mission itself, require that the satellite communications equipment and other components of the Warrior Information Network-Tactical system the battalion operates are working properly, according to Lt. Col. Paul Mulligan, the battalion's commander.

The 46 Soldiers who volunteered for the additional annual training mission spent two weeks identifying component and equipment shortages, updating software systems, making sure the equipment is configured properly, ordering needed parts and submitting work orders for items they could not fix themselves, Mulligan explained.

"This event was crucial in identifying equipment issues so we can request resources to fix them," Mulligan said.

In all, the Soldiers inventoried and provided maintenance for 126 pieces of equipment, including the communications systems, vehicles and generators, he said.

The Warrior Information Network-Tactical system is the Army communication system of transmitters, receivers, routers, switches, modems and cables that allows Army units to securely transmit voice, data, text, video and graphic data using the military's version of the internet.

The 101st can deploy 30 teams and equipment to link command posts from the battalion up to the theater level together, Mulligan said.

Along with making sure the equipment is working, the two-week

annual training also gave Soldiers the chance to learn more about the equipment, said 1st Lt. Manuel Baltazar from the battalion operations staff.

Baltazar, a former enlisted Soldier who is looking forward to deploying as the battalion plans officer, said Soldiers are learning about equipment they didn't normally work with.

"This training is crucial to increasing our Soldiers' readiness as operators for their equipment," Baltazar said.

"They're doing cross training on equipment they have never operated before, so it's helping really increase the unit's knowledge overall," he added.

Spc. Domingo Perez, who is a New York City police officer in civilian life, said he appreciated the chance to learn more about the battalion's systems while troubleshooting them.

Perez, a multi-channel transmission systems operator and maintainer from Brooklyn, said he was learning a lot about the Phoenix satellite terminals used to communicate over vast areas by digging into the technical manual.

"The TM is your best friend," Perez said. "Go into it and learn the Phoenix, learn how to trouble shoot it. It is very productive."

The extended opportunity to work on vehicles was a great benefit from the limitations of a weekend drill, said Pfc. Janaiya Alexander, a wheeled vehicle mechanic in the battalion's Alpha Company.

Alexander said she enjoyed having enough time to really learn about the battalion's vehicles.

It's great to have more than a weekend to work on the trucks and Humvees, she said.

Alexander has been learning how to do all the services on the Light Medium Tactical Vehicle trucks the battalion operates.



New York Army National Guard Soldiers assigned to the 101st Signal Expeditionary Battalion train on the AN/TSC-156 Phoenix Tactical SHF Satellite Terminal during pre-mobilization training at Camp Smith Training Site in Cortlandt Manor, New York, Oct. 3, 2022.

"I have been enjoying doing all the hands-on stuff," Alexander said. That gear will be used for the battalion's pre-mobilization training and then packaged and shipped to Kuwait, Mulligan said.

"I am very proud of the hard work and effort that the Soldiers, NCOs and officers of the battalion put in," Mulligan said. 🇺🇸

Air Guard Honors President Van Buren

Story by Eric, Durr, Guard Times Staff

KINDERHOOK, N.Y. — The New York Air National Guard marked the 240th birthday of President Martin Van Buren, the first president not born a British subject, in his rural hometown of Kinderhook on Dec. 5, 2022.

Air Force Brig. Gen. Denise Donnell, the commander of the New York Air National Guard, and Command Chief Master Sgt. Jeffery Trottier, laid a wreath from President Joe Biden at Van Buren's grave in Kinderhook Reformed Church Cemetery to mark the event.

Airmen from the 109th Airlift Wing, located at Stratton Air National Guard Base in Scotia, provided the honor cordon and color guard for the event.

Since 1967, military officers have laid wreaths from the current White House at the graves of former presidents on their birthdays.

Van Buren was the eighth president, serving from 1837 to 1841. He retired to Kinderhook after that and died in 1862.

"It is great to see so many people here on this cold, yet sunny day," Donnell told the audience of 75 people.

"It's a privilege to be here today representing President Biden," she said.

The Kinderhook ceremony is a community-wide event, said Kinderhook Village Mayor

Mike Abrams.

Along with the wreath from the president, wreaths were presented from the town and village of Kinderhook, the garden club, the nearby village of Valatie, the National Park Service, which maintains Van Buren's home as a historic site and a local group which supports the Park Service.

Fourth graders from the local elementary school recited the details of Van Buren's life.

Martin Van Buren was proud to be from Kinderhook and was happy to describe himself as "a farmer in my native town," National Park Service Ranger Dawn Olsen told the audience.

He would still feel at home here today, once he got over automobiles and traffic lights, Olsen said. He would fit right in talking to people at the farmers market, she said.

Van Buren grew up in Kinderhook speaking Dutch at home. He was a lawyer who served as a judge and then as a New York State senator before being elected governor.

He was considered a political genius who turned the Democratic Party into a national party.

He served as secretary of state and then vice president for President Andrew Jackson before



Brig. Gen. Denise Donnell, commander of the New York Air National Guard, and Command Chief Master Sgt. Jeffery Trottier, salute after placing a wreath at the grave of President Martin Van Buren in Kinderhook, New York, Dec. 5, 2022. Photo by Staff Sgt. Matthew Gunther, Joint Force Headquarters.

running for president himself in 1836.

He took one of his nicknames "Old Kinderhook" from his hometown. During his campaign "OK Clubs" were created to promote his candidacy.

Reportedly, Van Buren would scrawl the initials of his nickname "OK" on documents he approved, giving the world the term OK. **gt**

106th Rescue Wing Drops Puck for Islanders Game

Story and photo by Airman 1st Class Sarah McKernan, 106th Rescue Wing

ELMONT, N.Y. — Four pararescuemen from the 106th Rescue Wing rappelled from the rafters of UBS Arena to drop the puck and kick-off the New York Islanders Military Appreciation game against the Arizona Coyotes on November 10th.

Senior Master Sgt. Sam Prescott, Master Sgt. Jordan St. Clair, Tech. Sgt. Eric Cooley and Senior Airman Matt Pluhowski, made up the team that rappelled from the rafters during the national anthem.

Once the four were on the ground, they walked along the blue carpet and met center ice as Prescott dropped the puck between Islanders captain Anders Lee and Coyotes forward Christian Fischer to the sound of roaring fans.

"It's an awesome opportunity to rappel from the rafters for this game," said Pluhowski. "We

have to thank the Islanders for the opportunity and for all their support. It's an amazing event."

More than 500 tickets to the game were distributed to military members and their families as gratitude and appreciation for their service.

At the game, each seat contained an "I Salute" placard where fans could show support for veterans and hold them up during the game.

"Veteran's Day is one of the most important days of the year," said Ann Rina, community director for the New York Islanders.

"A night like tonight is about saying thank you. It's all about thanking these brave men and women who are overseas protecting our freedom, and being able to offer them an opportunity to come to an Islanders game and enjoy themselves for a night just means the world to us," she explained. **gt**



Pararescuemen from the 106th Rescue Wing drop the puck for the Veteran's Day New York Islanders Game at UBS Arena, Elmont, New York, Nov. 10, 2022.



Air Guard Leaders Salute WWII Vet on his 100th

Story and photo by Ryan Campbell, Guard Times Staff

Command Chief Master Sgt. Denny Richardson presents a challenge coin to World War II veteran William H. Meyer during his 100th birthday celebration at Shaker Place Nursing Home in Latham, New York, Nov. 28, 2022.

LATHAM, N.Y. — New York Air National Guard leaders gathered at the Shaker Place Nursing Home to honor a local World War II veteran on his 100th birthday on Nov. 28th, 2022.

William H. Meyer served in the Army Air Forces, and later the Air Force once it became its own branch in 1947, as an aerial photographer from 1940 to 1962.

He retired as a master sergeant and went on to become a teacher at Shaker High School until 1998.

“I’ve known Bill for several years,” said Col. Eric Underhill, the director of operations for the New York National Guard’s Joint Force Headquarters. “I wanted to come show my respect to him.”

Underhill said many of his fellow Air National Guardsmen volunteered to go to the celebration, which featured an Air Force themed cake and decorations, and photos from Meyer’s career as an Airman and teacher.

Airmen, staff, nursing home residents and local government officials gathered around Meyer singing happy birthday and presenting him with gifts on behalf of the New York National Guard.

Meyer enlisted in December of 1940, before

America had formally entered World War II. A year later once war was declared, Meyer found himself sent to Australia, having been diverted from his original destination of the Philippines once the island-nation fell to the Japanese.

“To see what these heroes accomplished and what they accomplished it with...its amazing to see how it inspires others to serve,” Underhill said.

He spent 34 months based in Australia. His unit was stationed in Australian port of Darwin when it was bombed by the Japanese in February 1942, according to friends.

He flew on missions throughout the region and was bombed countless times. One time a bomb hit 50 yards away, according to a newspaper article.

On one mission over Burma his plane was shot down leaving him as the only survivor.

“Being in the military and being able to honor those who served while they’re still here is extremely important,” said Command Chief Master Sgt. Denny Richardson.

As of 2022, out of over 16 million Americans who served in World War II only 167,000 are still alive, according to the Veterans Administration.

Of those remaining World War II vets, 180

day each day, according to the VA.

“It gives you that clarity and purpose of why we serve and when I say we are standing on the shoulders of giants, we really are standing on the shoulders of giants,” Richardson emphasized.

“Bill is one of those giants,” he said.

Meyer returned to America in late 1944 and was one of the first to be discharged on May 28, 1945 after the war in Europe ended.

Meyer later said he never adjusted well back to civilian life.

So he re-enlisted in Army Air Force in June of 1946, resuming his career as an Air Force photographer.

He would go on to cover events like as President John F. Kennedy’s official visit to South Africa in 1961.

Former students of Meyer also attended.

They remembered him as a social studies teacher who ran the school’s audiovisual department. One edition of the school yearbook was dedicated to Meyer, featuring a portrait of him with his camera.

Richardson summed up how the Airmen felt saying: “It fills us with a sense of pride, a sense of purpose just to be able to honor him as a veteran.” **gt**



Students watch an HH-60 Pave Hawk check ride during career day at Francis S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base, in Westhampton Beach, New York, Nov. 10, 2022. Photo by 1st Lt. Cheran Campbell, 106th Rescue Wing.



Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape Tech. Sgt. Ian Kuhn of the 106th Rescue Wing speaks to students during career day in Westhampton Beach, New York, Nov. 10, 2022. Photo by 1st Lt. Cheran Campbell, 106th Rescue Wing.

Taking Community Engagement to New Heights

Rescue Wing Educates High School Guidance Counselors

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

F.S. GABRESKI AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, N.Y. — Sixteen guidance counselors and officials from Long Island schools got a chance to get up close and personal with the people and mission of the 106th Rescue Wing during an HH-60 Pave Hawk flight at F.S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base in Westhampton Beach on November 10.

Guidance counselors from Islip, East Islip, West Islip, Connetquot, Patchogue, Medford and Longwood took part in the civic leader orientation flight.

Along with the flight, they learned about the 106th Rescue Wing and what makes the Air National Guard different from active-duty Air Force.

"This civic leader flight is incredibly important because it enables us to showcase our mission, capability and professionalism of our Airmen to the local population... high school guidance counselors and administrators are especially positioned civic leaders who can share their positive experience with parents, students or other faculty members," said Col.

Glyn B. Weir, the 106th Mission Support Group commander.

"It is critical for any Air National Guard wing to foster a positive relationship with the local community because we are citizen Soldiers, made from the very members of the community we serve," Weir added.

Most of the guidance counselors said they didn't know much about the 106th or the Air National Guard.

"Students need to become much more aware of the Air National Guard and especially, the 106th Rescue Wing, the opportunity for personal growth and maturity and just life advancement that exist out here I think are unmatched... and more students need to become aware," said Dennis Patrick O'Hara, the superintendent of the Islip Union Free School District.

Each 30 minute flight in the rescue helicopter took four counselors out to the Montauk Lighthouse, some over the Long Island Sound and some hugging the South Shore, which was exciting, O'Hara said.

"It was exhilarating. I mean it was really great. The views and how smooth the helicopter was and how stable it felt. I've never been in a helicopter before so it was just a great experience," he said.

The visitors also learned about the structure of the wing, the mission sets and the many different career paths offered by the wing and the educational and other benefits made available to those who join.

"I think a lot of it surprised me," said Jennifer Salvaggio, a school counselor from East Islip High School.

"I really had no idea what the National Guard does and what opportunities are available to our young men and women that maybe want to give a little back to our community," she said.

On the same day, the 106th Rescue Wing hosted their largest career fair to date with over 350 students in attendance.

Today we hosted various high schools throughout Suffolk County and Staten Island, said Tech. Sgt.

Christopher Gee, 106th Rescue Wing recruiter. We invited the students in for a briefing, gave them the features and benefits of the New York Air National Guard and the Air Force as a whole and described how these benefits can be applied to their personal and professional life, Gee added.

After the briefing, the students walked down to Hangar B where they were exposed to various career fields.

"Pararescue jumpers were one of the main attractions along with security forces and civil engineering," explained Gee. "A lot of the students did not know that we had an emergency response career field available and were intrigued with the display."

This was the most successful career day we had so far, he said.

"All the students and guidance counselors including teachers, were impressed at our capabilities and didn't know we were out here," Gee explained. "It was nice to share our story and our mission set with our local community and students." **gt**

Airmen Earn Commendations for Storm Response

Story and photo by 1st Lt. Jason Carr, 107th Attack Wing

NIAGARA FALLS, N.Y. — Eighteen Airmen assigned to the 107th Attack Wing drove into the heart of the storm that hit Buffalo on Christmas Eve, 2022, to rescue stranded motorists, get patients to hospitals and save several lives.

The members of the 107th Attack Wing general purpose response team were recognized for their dedication and determination by the commander of the New York National Guard during a December 30 ceremony at Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station.

Maj. Gen. Ray Shields, the adjutant general of New York, presented the 18 Airmen with the New York State Military Commendation Medal.

The Airmen are credited with completing over 100 missions, playing a vital role in the New York National Guard's response to the storm.

By the end of the mission on December 31, the New York National Guard had mobilized 849 Soldiers and Airmen and deployed 172 vehicles.

The 107th team's missions included transporting over 99 medical personnel to hospitals, conducting 30 welfare checks, transporting patients in dire need of care to hospitals, assisting civilians with snow removal and delivering over three pallets of MRE's and water.

"We were mostly prepared for the most part about the weather, but it definitely was an eye-opening experience, seeing people blocked in their cars, blocked in their houses, the amount of people trying to get groceries and things like that," said Senior Airman Reagan Kramer

"We had one gentleman who lived with an artificial heart that was battery powered," said Staff Sgt. Kevin Au. "He was in need of getting a recharge. He had a spare battery that was in his home address and we were also trying to get him to a hospital so they could plug him in. As I understand it, his battery had less than a half-hour of timeline before we were able to get him someplace safe."

When the emergency first started, personnel had to report first to Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station then fight their way through the same weather already affecting the citizens of Buffalo, Shields noted in his remarks.

That took grit and determination, Shields said.



Senior Airmen Emily Maccallum of the 107th Attack Wing, receives the New York State Military Commendation Medal from Col. Andrew Carlson, 107th Attack Wing commander, Dec. 30, 2022, at Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station. Eighteen members of the wing received the medal for displaying exemplary dedication and resiliency during their activation through a blizzard that would eventually claim 39 lives.

"Buffalo is the city of good neighbors for a reason," said Au. "When times are tough, it doesn't matter if you're military or first responder, everyone pitches in as they can to help out."

The storm that brought the city of Buffalo to a near complete standstill would eventually surpass the death toll of the infamous Blizzard of '77, claiming 39 lives.

The 107th Attack Wing also deployed members of the wing Fatality Search and Recovery Team. These are Airmen trained to recover the remains of those killed in disasters. They recovered 22 decedents during the operation and the 107th general purpose team also assisted in those missions.

"Our members never cease to amaze me," said 107th Command Chief Master Sgt. Edward Stefik.

"The example set by their selfless service and dedication to their fellow New Yorkers is a gold standard on how the Air National Guard can react and sustain during times of domestic crisis," he said.

Col. Andrew Carlson, the wing commander, agreed. "The 107th did an extraordinary job,"

he said.

"The men and women who stepped up to process our Airmen and work with the JTF-5 staff made us proud. This is what being in the National Guard is all about; we answered the call to serve our community and help our fellow neighbors in their time of need," Carlson said. **gt**



Senior Airman Colin King of the 107th Attack Wing, receives the New York State Military Commendation Medal from Maj. Gen. Denise Donnell, commander of the New York Air National Guard, Dec. 30, 2022, at the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station.

Air Commander Salutes Veterans

Story by and photo by Sgt. Andrew Valenza, Joint Force Headquarters

SCHUYLERVILLE, N.Y. — Brig. Gen. Denise Donnell, the commander of the New York Air National Guard, was the keynote speaker on December 17 as 2,000 volunteers placed 15,100 wreaths on gravestones at Gerald B. H. Solomon Saratoga National Cemetery in Schuylerville.

The wreath laying was part of the annual Wreaths Across America effort to decorate the graves at Veterans Administration cemeteries with Christmas wreaths.

The effort, Donnell said, was a symbol of the commitment the nation has to its former service members.

“The circle is a never-ending symbol of our commitment to our veterans and also our commitment to our future to make sure that

our children and our communities know the sacrifices of our veterans, and we don't forget anybody,” she told the crowd.

“And it's humbling to be here amongst so many people to pay our respects to people who have passed away after serving their country and to be a small part of that circle of honor and respect and teaching,” she added.

During the ceremony, members of each branch of the armed forces presented a wreath at the central memorial for all fallen members of their respective branch.

National Guard Soldiers and Airmen represented the Army and Air Force.

Cemetery Director Scott Lamb estimated that about 2,000 people

turned out for the annual event this year.

One of the coordinators for the event was Kevin Ressler, a retired New York Army National Guard sergeant, who coordinates the event for the local chapter of the Association of the United States Army.

The Association of the United States Army chapter, which includes many current and former Army Guard members, covered two sections in the cemetery, attending to more than 4,300 headstones.

“We have a lot of family members here that have taken time, they've placed their wreath, you

know, they've taken a moment,” Ressler said.

“But now we have a lot [of grave sites] that family members aren't here for. A lot of these people have been interned for, you know, 20 years. So, they know that their loved one is being honored with the wreath,” he said. **gt**



Brig. Gen. Denise Donnell, commander of the New York Air National Guard, speaks during the Wreaths Across America event at Gerald B.H. Solomon Saratoga National Cemetery, in Schuylerville, New York, Dec. 17th, 2022.

Top Guard Leader Visits 106th Rescue Wing

Story by Master Sgt. Monica Dahlberg, Airman 1st Class Sarah McKernan, Maj. Michael O'Hagan, 106th Rescue Wing

WESTHAMPTON BEACH, N.Y. — The National Guard's top officer, Army Gen. Daniel Hokanson, the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, spent November 5, at Gabreski Air National Guard Base with Airmen of the 106th Rescue Wing.

Hokanson flew on board an HH-60G Pave Hawk rescue helicopter to observe multiple rescue scenarios, had lunch with some Airmen and held a town hall meeting with all of the wing's councils that represent the different tiers of rank from during his visit.

106th SNCO officer of the quarter, Master Sgt. Kenny Griego, got to fly with Hokanson in his role as a special mission aviator, performing such duties as flight engineer and aerial gunner.

“It's not every day you get to fly with the highest ranking person in your organization. The general was very interested in us and our mission,” said Griego.

Tech. Sgt. Carley Esposito, a client systems technician for the wing's communications flight, said she was pleased to get the opportunity to have lunch with the general along with five other Airmen.

“It was nice to see, on a personal level. that the general wanted to know more about us outside of what we do in uniform. It was nice to know he really cared on that level,” Esposito said.

Speaking to Airmen gathered at the town hall discussion later in the day, Hokanson said, “The best thing I do is right now, is I get to see our Airmen and our Soldiers who work in the Guard.”

“I'm the guy that gets to tell your story in the Pentagon and it is an amazing story to tell. For me to get a chance to go out today with everybody and see all the work that you guys do is really incredible,” he said.

Hokanson flew a training mission on board an HH-60G Pave Hawk rescue helicopter, which demonstrated a range of 106th Rescue Wing capabilities.

The demonstration included a parachute jump, a water rescue, aerial refueling an HH-60G from a HC-130J Combat King II and a land rescue involving high mobility tactical vehicles operated by pararescuemen.

“It was great to get to showcase the recovery

of two 'survivors', aerial gunnery, aerial refueling, daytime water rescue, and land rescue,” Greco said.

One thing I try and remind people is the primary mission of the National Guard is to fight and win our nation's wars,” said Hokanson. “Because we are prepared for that, we can do just about anything our country asks us to do.” **gt**



Gen. Daniel R. Hokanson, Chief of the National Guard Bureau, prepares to fly in an HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopter during his visit with the 106th Rescue Wing at F.S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base, Westhampton Beach, New York, Nov. 5, 2022. Photo by Maj. Michael O'Hagan.

106th Rescue Wing Hosts Joint Storm Exercise

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Sean Madden, 106th Rescue Wing



Members of the New York Army National Guard and New York Guard collect information in the Emergency Operations Center of Joint Exercise Hurricane Madison at F.S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base, New York, Nov. 5, 2022.

F.S. GABRESKI AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, N.Y. — For the second consecutive year, the 106th Rescue Wing hosted a joint exercise to maximize readiness in the event of a storm related disaster, at the 106th Rescue Wing in Westhampton Beach, November 4-6.

Military and civilian authorities made up of the New York Army and Air National Guard, Naval Militia and the New York Guard, with Department of Homeland Security Emergency Services, formed the Joint Task Force for Exercise Hurricane Madison.

This year, the disaster was modeled on Super Storm Sandy, Tropical Storm Ida and Hurricane Gloria, which was the last hurricane to make landfall on Long Island, said Capt. Douglas Duncan, officer in command of the exercise and a co-lead, exercise planner.

Each of the three storms significantly affected Long Island in different ways that helped build the model for this storm, explained Duncan.

Power outages caused by Super Storm Sandy in 2012, severe urban

flooding caused by Tropical Storm Ida in 2015 and the landfall and track of Hurricane Gloria in 1985, inspired the main elements of Exercise Hurricane Madison. The eye of the simulated storm made landfall near the border of Nassau and Suffolk counties.

Limited access due to flooding was a major issue for the Joint Task Force to contend with. Assisting civilian counterparts with overcoming limited access is something the military is equipped to handle.

A lot of simulated requests for high-axel vehicles, all terrain assets like trucks and HUMVEEs, especially from the utility companies who needed to get damage assessment teams to do surveys in areas only we could get to, Duncan explained.

Additionally, the Mobile Emergency Response Center (MERC), was on standby.

Critical channels of communication such as cell towers, mobile radio repeaters and antennas, internet and phone lines, are often damaged or destroyed during a

hurricane. When officials and responders need to reestablish reliable communication or extend the range of existing services, a MERC, which is equipped to address those needs, is towed to where it's needed and set up by Airmen and Soldiers.

Because of differences in terminology, verbal communication can also be an issue when many different agencies work together. Joint exercises allow these organizations to improve their ability to communicate effectively.

The importance of common language is emphasized, to mitigate situations where one military branch may not understand the terminology of another as well as civilian agencies with their own codes and language, said Chief Master Sgt. Kevin Scanlin the Joint Force Headquarters J-3 senior enlisted leader and an observer for the exercise.

Communication was not an obstacle for very long nor was having a large group deal with a situation most had little experience with.

"Well you took approximately 50 folks into two different rooms

and none of them had worked together to this level of a joint exercise and by the end [of the first day of the exercise] they were gelling as a complete team," Scanlin

explained.

The event, which took place over nearly three days, condensed what could be a weeks long disaster response and participants were given a barrage of scenarios at a pace meant to be as realistic, rigorous and relevant as possible.

In 20 years of experience with real world disaster response and training exercises, this one was the most effective in executing the missions given to the different sections, said Lt. Col. Jeff Sabatini Joint Task Force commander for the exercise. The will to succeed and the positive attitudes just kept it going and got better and better each day.

The success of Exercise Hurricane Madison warranted special emphasis on one of its major participants by the lead planner.

It can't be overstated how much DHSES contributed not only to this year's exercise overall, but to its success as well, said Duncan. Based on experience from last year, more involvement from them was requested for this event and they delivered tremendously, he continued. **gt**



Members of the New York Army National Guard and New York Guard collect information in the Emergency Operations Center of Joint Exercise Hurricane Madison at F.S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base, New York, Nov. 5, 2022.

Adjutant General Says NY Guard Matters

Story and photos by Capt. Mark Getman, New York Guard

ALBANY, N.Y. — The contribution state defense force volunteers who support the National Guard in state emergencies make is too often underestimated, Maj. Gen. Ray Shields, the adjutant general of New York, told members of the State Guard Association at their annual conference on Nov. 19, 2022.

“The civilian skills that your citizen service members bring to your state is a treasure often forgotten,” Shields said. “

“These skills are vital in supporting many of your missions, and the contributions your members make shouldn’t be minimized,” Shields emphasized.

Ninety members of state defense forces from 13 states attended the 37th annual State Guard Association of the United States at the Desmond Hotel.

They represented 22 state defense forces which are military forces states are allowed to main-

tain, separate from the National Guard, under federal law. State military forces respond only to the governor.

As the commander of New York’s National Guard, he fully appreciates the contributions state guard members make, Shields said in his keynote remarks.

“Here, in New York, the New York Guard is an integral part of our state’s emergency response. They have contributed over 166,000 workdays combined as part of the state’s COVID response,” he said.

New York hosted this year’s state guard conference because former Brig. Gen. David Warager, the former commander of the New York Guard, is also the outgoing president of the state guard group. Traditionally the conference is hosted in the state of the association’s outgoing president.

“I wanted to host our annual

conference in New York to both showcase the New York Guard and what the New York Guard has accomplished, and also to provide the opportunity for our soldiers to attend the conference in person, without having to travel very far,” Warager said.

The conference attendees, who paid their own way to the event, got a chance to take part in training sessions on subjects ranging from cybersecurity to public affairs.

Perhaps the best part of the conference was just the chance to talk to counterparts from other states and learn new things, said Alaska State Defense Capt. Peter House.


For example, he got some great ideas for cyber security and physical fitness training from other attendees, House said.

A leadership forum that included Brig. Gen. Isabel Smith, the director of joint staff for the

New York National Guard, focused on how state defense forces can take the lessons of the COVID-19 response in each state to integrate better with their National Guards.

The panel also included Dr. Barry Stentiford, a professor of military history at the Army Command and General Staff College who authored the definitive history of state guards.

These annual conferences are important to developing the professionalism of state guards across the country, said Brig. Gen. Mark D. Gelhardt Sr., the commander of the Georgia State Defense Force.

“The best part of the SGAUS national conference is the ability to share ideas across different states, to talk about the best practices in each state, and to find a common denominator that all units can use,” Gelhardt said. 



New York Army National Guard Brig. Gen. Isabel Rivera Smith, the director of joint staff for the New York National Guard, speaks during a panel discussion about the role of state defense forces in disaster response at the Desmond Hotel in Albany, New York, Nov. 19, 2022.

Naval Militia Honors Best Unit

Story and photos by Eric Durr, Guard Times Staff

ALBANY, N.Y. — A 25-member task force organized to assist the DMNA budget and finance office in reconciling tens of millions of dollars in COVID-19 related expenses, has been recognized as the best unit in the New York Naval Militia.

New York Naval Militia Task Force J-8/Military and Naval Affairs Budget and Finance was awarded the Josephthal Trophy Award during a ceremony at the Corning Preserve in Albany on September 20.

Large amounts of money were being expended to pay for lodging, meals, rental vehicles and supplies used by Guard personnel on pandemic response duty. The full-time staff in the state finance office, which accounts for New York state dollars spent on missions as opposed to federal dollars, was not staffed to handle the additional accounting processes required, according to Robert Martin, the budget office director.

The Naval Militia was asked to mobilize Sailors and Marines in state active duty status to help with the paperwork involved.

Over a two-year period, 50

New York Naval Militia members have been part of the response, according to Naval Militia Capt. Dave Hawley, the Naval Militia's executive officer.

The task force members reconciled \$88 million worth of expenses in lodging, catering, purchases, state payroll for state active duty, vehicle rentals and other expenses, said Kathleen Phillips, the deputy director of finance.

During the September 20 ceremony, New York Naval Militia Chief Petty Officer Bill Kaul, was named as the individual winner of the Josephthal Trophy for 2022.

Kaul served in the United States Coast Guard from 1987 to 1997 and joined the New York Naval Militia in December 2015.

He is in charge of Detachment 21 of the New York Naval Militia's Military Emergency Boat Service which operates a fleet of 12 patrol boats.

He was recognized for his service as an outstanding trainer and the efforts he has made to build morale withing his detachment and the boat service as a whole, according to his citation. **gt**



LATHAM, N.Y. — Members of the New York Naval Militia on duty at New York State Division of Military and Naval Affairs headquarters in Latham, marked the 247th Birthday of the United States Navy on Oct. 13, 2022 by spending time with two goats, the mascot of the Naval Academy. The Sailors and Marines got some up close and personal time with the two goats following the formal photo. Photo by Eric Durr.



Naval Militia members assigned to NYNM Task Force J8/MNBF, along with budget office civilians, receive the New York Naval Militia's Josephthal Trophy for Outstanding Unit during an awards ceremony onboard Landing Craft 350 on the Hudson River at the Corning Preserve in Albany on Sept. 20, 2022.

