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



FROM THE LEADERSHIP

Our Guard Makes a Difference in NY State Missions

It's an honor to contribute to this publication. Serving as the Director of Joint Staff has afforded me the privilege of traversing our state and witnessing the exceptional hard work and dedication that all our service members contribute. These efforts solidify our position as the premier state in the National Guard.

Throughout my tenure, I have had the distinct pleasure of observing our junior leaders develop into consummate professionals—adept at mobilizing our personnel and resources statewide to bolster our communities.

I have had the opportunity to engage with many members of the Army and Air National Guard, the Naval Militia, and the New York Guard. Everyone exemplifies readiness and an unwavering commitment to jump into action whenever our State and community's call.

This year has already proven to be exceptionally busy for the National Guard, with numerous requests for our support across New York.

I'd like to highlight the ways our service members have made an impact in 2024.

Operation Winter Weather, January 2024: From January 9-10, 2024, we mobilized 60 service members because of severe winter weather and potential flooding in New York City, the Hudson Valley and western New York.

Between January 13 and 15 another 142 people were mobilized because of severe winter weather in Erie County. They established and operated three warming centers and were also on hand with vehicles to transport essential

government and medical workers during the storm.

The April 8, 2024 Solar Eclipse: The New York National Guard mobilized 150 service members in Niagara Falls, Rochester, and Syracuse in case state and local officials needed help in dealing with traffic or other incidents during this period.

Operation Asylum Seeker Resource Support: DMNA has continued to support Operation Asylum Seeker, with over 2,100 service members providing support to New York City as it copes with the massive influx of people. This operation underscores our dedication to responding to diverse challenges, while showcasing the adaptability of our service members.

Joint Task Force Empire Shield (JTFES): Our security force in New York City, which currently has almost 800 personnel, expanded its mission to assist police in providing security in the New York subway system at the direction of the governor. The task force's Delta Company has shifted from securing bridges and tunnels to the subway mission to handle this new responsibility.

Citizen Preparedness Corps (CPC): The Citizen Preparedness Corps has made remarkable strides in community engagement and disaster preparedness. The 23 service members on the mission ran 179 events, which provided crucial preparedness training to 5,911 residents. We will add 10 more people by July to expand outreach efforts.

Cyber Support to NYS Homeland Security and Emergency Services: A team of New York National Guard personnel are providing support to the state's efforts to deal with cyber threats by conducting comprehensive cyber risk assessments. Their work is crucial to identifying and mitigating potential security weaknesses across the state's critical infrastructure.

WebEOC: Our operations per-

sonnel are working to implement the Web Emergency Operations Center digital platform which will improve our ability to track civil support missions. The system, which is also used by FEMA, will provide a new standard in maintaining a common operating picture when we deploy troops to assist local governments.

Intelligence Directorate Contributions to Intelligence and Operational Readiness: Our Intelligence and Security Directorate is tackling new missions that ensure our intelligence Soldiers and Airmen are expertly trained and ready to serve. A pivotal development was the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the New York National Guard and U.S. Army South.

This agreement initiated a program allowing New York Army National Guard Intelligence Soldiers to contribute to U.S. Army South's real-world missions. This collaboration enhances our operational capabilities and solidifies our commitment to national security.

A similar agreement with the Defense Intelligence Agency also allows our intelligence personnel



Brig. Gen. Isabel Smith

to actively support DIA missions worldwide.

In every corner of our state, our service members exemplify unwavering professionalism and an enduring commitment to supporting our communities.

Our Soldiers and Airmen demonstrate our motto 'Always Ready, Always There' and serve as the cornerstone of our collective resilience and commitment to shared values.

Your efforts strengthen our state's resilience and build our strategic partnerships. I look forward to meeting many of you as we meet the challenges that lie ahead.



Army National Guard 1st Lt. Ivelisse Velazquez, assigned to the Headquarters Troop of the 2nd Squadron, 101st Cavalry, finishes ground guiding an LMTV truck returning from a supply mission at the Buffalo Armory, January 13, 2024 during the winter storm response efforts in Western New York. The New York National Guard mobilized 142 personnel to state duty, establishing warming centers and transporting essential personnel during the storm. See our story on page 11. Photo by Airman 1st Class Carissa Fisher, 107th Attack Wing.





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 Maj. Jean Kratzer, COMMAND INFORMATION OFFICER
 Stephanie Butler, GUARD TIMES STAFF

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 DMNA-MNPA
 330 Old Niskayuna Road
 Latham, New York 12110-3514
 OFFICE (518) 786-4581
 or richard.l.goldenberg.mil@army.mil

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Senior Airman Colin Baker-Labreck, a security forces specialist assigned to the 174th Security Forces Squadron, throws a jab during combatives training as part of a security forces augmentee course at Hancock Field Air National Guard Base, Feb. 14. Members of the 174th Security Forces Squadron trained Airmen from across the wing to serve as additional duty security forces augmentees. Photo by Alexander Rector, 174th Attack Wing.



FRONT COVER: A 109th Airlift Wing C-130 Hercules flies over Naval Special Warfare Operators (SEALs), Norwegian Naval Special Operations Commandos and the attack submarine USS Hampton (SSN 767) during Arctic Edge 24, March 9, 2024. Photo by Chief Mass Communication Specialist Jeff Atherton, U.S. Navy.
 BACK COVER: Army Lt. Col. Adam Bojarski leads the 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry for the New York City St. Patrick's Day Parade. Photo by Master Sgt. Warren Wright, 42nd Infantry Division.

FACES of the FORCE

New York Airman Selected as Air National Guard Emergency Manager NCO of the Year

Story and photo by Senior Airman Rebekah Wilson, 105th Airlift Wing

NEWBURGH, N.Y. — Staff Sgt. Sam Doolittle, an emergency manager with the 105th Airlift Wing's Civil Engineer Squadron, was recognized by the Air National Guard for his exemplary leadership, innovation and technical accomplishments throughout 2023.

Doolittle was selected as the Air National Guard Noncommissioned Officer Emergency Manager of the Year after competing with emergency managers from across the nation.

He was chosen for a variety of achievements, including supporting multiple counter-violent extremist missions that have enhanced command and control capabilities during disasters. To prepare his fellow Airmen for emergencies, he has also instructed 32 Disaster Response Force classes and trained over 200 personnel in chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear defense.

"It's something I really enjoy," Doolittle said, explaining his long-time fascination with CBRN weapons and how to defend against them.

Doolittle has also demonstrated innovation and resourcefulness in his role, partnering with environmental management and a local water facility to design new potable water procedures with a potential cost savings of up to \$10,000 in the event of a water emergency. In addition, he was selected to lead the Diversity and Inclusion Council while deployed and he oversaw three diversity events for 500 personnel, enhancing team cohesion and morale.

"Simply put, Staff Sgt. Doolittle makes people around him better," said Lt. Col. Benjamin Thomas, commander of the 105th Civil Engineer Squadron. "He is a team player who also leads by example. He has a passion for people, emergency management, and the Air Force."

Doolittle first enlisted in the Air National Guard in 2018, determined to join the emergency management team at Stewart. He was first introduced to the career field through an internship at New York's Orange County Office of Emergency Management.


"I didn't know that emergency management was a career choice," Doolittle said. "As soon as I found it, it's something that I thought that I would really enjoy, and I have."



Air National Guard Staff Sgt. Sam Doolittle, emergency manager with the 105th Airlift Wing's Civil Engineer Squadron, poses for a portrait in front of a HAZMAT mural at Stewart Air National Guard Base, Newburgh, New York, Feb. 3, 2024. Doolittle was selected as the Air National Guard Noncommissioned Officer Emergency Manager of the Year.

Doolittle went on to express his gratitude to the 105th's leadership and his team for making his job not only possible, but enjoyable.

His leadership also commended him for his accomplishments and his earning of this esteemed and competitive award.

"To be chosen as NCO of the year is a complete honor," Thomas said. "I look forward to what the future holds for Staff Sgt. Doolittle and the 105th Emergency Management Flight." 

"Simply put, Staff Sgt. Doolittle makes people around him better"

-- Lt. Col. Benjamin Thomas, commander, 105th Civil Engineer Squadron



Honoring Millard Fillmore

BUFFALO, N.Y. -- Lt. Col. Randy Allen, 107th Operations Support Squadron commander, lays a wreath former President Millard Fillmore's grave, January 5 2024, at Forest Lawn Cemetery, Buffalo N.Y. Wreaths are placed on former presidents resting places every year on their birthday, on behalf of the White House and the President of the United States. Photo by 1st Lt. Jason Carr, 107th Attack Wing.



Sgt. Jordan Simpson, Patriot Hills of New York Chief Executive Officer Jeanine Mannarino and Pvt. Madison O'Connor display the 2024 Patriot Hills Leadership, Spirit, and Appreciation Awards following a presentation ceremony January 18, 2024 at the New York National Guard Headquarters in Latham, N.Y.

Soldiers Honored for Commitment to Service

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

LATHAM, N.Y. — A young Soldier, and the recruiter who brought her into the New York Army National Guard, were recognized by a local military and veterans support group during a January 18 ceremony at New York National Guard headquarters in Latham.

Patriot Hills of New York presented its first two Leadership, Spirit, and Appreciation Awards to Pvt. Madison O'Connor, who joined the Army Guard and completed her training in 2023, and her recruiter, Sgt. Jordan Simpson.

Thirty Patriot Hills volunteers and other supporters, including Colonie Town Supervisor Peter Crummey—who presented O'Connor with a citation from the town—attended the ceremony.

O'Connor, a resident of Colonie, is assigned as a medic to the 466th Area Medical Support Company in Queensbury. She is also a volunteer firefighter serving with the Shaker Road-Loudonville Fire Department.

Patriot Hills, a charity which helps connect service members and veterans with services they need, honored O'Connor for her service as a volunteer firefighter, and now as a Soldier, explained Jeanine Mannarino, Patriot Hills chief executive officer.

Mannarino, who is also a retired New York Army National Guard master sergeant, said O'Connor is “a very brave young lady.”

Simpson, a resident of Ballston Spa, was recognized for the time and attention he put into help-

ing O'Connor join the New York Army Guard.

O'Connor said she wanted to serve in the military, but she also wanted to continue to be a volunteer fire fighter.

“I knew I couldn't leave my firefighting family behind,” she said.

Sampson helped her realize how the Army Guard would work for her, she recalled.

“I could still be in the Army, spend time with friends, stay at the firehouse and maybe even go back to college,” she said.

The combat medic role was a natural fit in her discussions with Sampson.

“My whole life I wanted to save lives. I want to be that person to give everything to save others,” she said.

“Sergeant Simpson made my dreams come true and has always been there for me,” she said.

The recruitment process for O'Connor was a challenge, Simpson explained.

“Private O'Connor came into my office, not knowing what she wanted to do, and had her own issues with more than a few tattoos,” Simpson said.

“But Maddy was headstrong and wanted to do this, to go above and beyond.”

“She was my first female recruit, my first waiver application and exception to policy packet,” he said. “I was committed to helping her be all she wants to be.”

After managing the waiver process, entrance exams and physical, Simpson worked with O'Connor to ensure he'd be able to mentor her through basic combat training and advanced individual training.

During allotted access to cell phones while at training, Simpson made sure to stay in touch, answer questions and provide motivation that O'Connor admits she needed most.

O'Connor's father, Patrick O'Connor, said he was proud of his daughter and her dual service as a volunteer fire fighter and a National Guard Soldier.

“Madison was raised to try to take on challenges and not to quit,” said her father, a Navy veteran and retired firefighter. “She's gone through many challenges and come through,” he said.

He also thanked Simpson for his support.

“I want to personally thank Sergeant Simpson,” he said. “Since she got home on December 7, her bed has been made each day. The changes you see in your Soldier are the changes you want to see in your child,” O'Connor said. “Now I know how my parents felt in 1984 when I went in.” **gt**

Airman Completes Bataan Memorial March Four Times

Story by Senior Airman Rebekah Wilson, 105th Airlift Wing

WHITE SANDS MISSILE RANGE, New Mexico — “You could feel the energy starting to rise while we were all just standing there,” New York Air National Guard Chief Master Sgt. Patricia Pullar recalled, describing the anticipation of her fellow racers before embarking on the 35th Annual Bataan Memorial Death March, Saturday, March 16, 2024.

Pullar, the senior enlisted leader for the 105th Airlift Wing’s Operations Group, was one of over 5,000 racers to participate in the memorial march. The 26.2-mile course spanned across the hilly terrains of White Sands Missile Range and included racers from across the globe to honor the service members who suffered through the Bataan Death March in World War II.

The Bataan Death March was a grueling, 65-mile trek that occurred in April 1942 in the Philippines. Following the attack on Pearl Harbor and Japan’s victory at the Battle of Bataan, approximately 75,000 American and Filipino troops were taken as prisoners of war and forced to walk 65 miles through the Philippines to Camp O’Donnell, a prison camp north of the peninsula.

During the march, the POWs faced starvation and dehydration, extreme tropical weather and brutality from their captors. Approximately 10,000 would perish before reaching the camp. Those who survived the journey were met with continued abuse at Camp O’Donnell. This harrowing event claimed an estimated 17,000 lives.

“It’s very emotional,” Pullar recalled. “Especially when you cross the finish line, because you’re only doing a small portion of what the actual Bataan Death Marchers did. It makes you think about the service they were providing to their country and the whole meaning of wearing the uniform.”

This was Pullar’s fourth time completing this historic course, first participating in the memorial march in 2006, 2007 and 2008. However, this was her first time going without anyone she knew as she sought to push herself physically and mentally without her usual support network.

Pullar decided to sign up for this year’s event after setting a goal to push herself physically and cultivate her fitness.

On the day of the race, Pullar explained her top priorities were ensuring she had enough sustenance to replenish her energy and enough protection around her feet to endure the hike. This was especially difficult as she competed in a military category, requiring her to wear her full Air Force uniform through the entire march- including the boots.

In addition to her uniform, Pullar carried her food and drinks in a Camelback decorated with patches from the 105th Airlift Wing, reminding her of the Airmen that motivate her as a senior enlisted leader.

“I had the wing patch and my two squadron patches, the Operations Support Squadron and the 137th Airlift Squadron,” Pullar said. “I wanted to show some unit pride and gratitude for our folks working hard here at home, and for those serving abroad who voluntarily stepped away from their lives and families for their nation.”

Once she was physically prepared for the march, the rest of the challenge would be pure resilience.

“It’s very much mental,” she explained. “But if you’ve made up your mind that you’re not going to stop and that you’re going to cross the finish line, then you will cross the finish line. It might hurt, it might not look pretty, but you’re going to do it.”

The course itself includes significant shifts in elevation and loose, sandy terrains. Beginning at a roughly 4,000-foot elevation, racers climb to an approximate 5,500-foot elevation by the halfway mark. They then descend the small mountain known as Mineral



Air National Guard Chief Master Sgt. Patricia Pullar, senior enlisted leader for the 105th Airlift Wing’s Operations Group, poses with Bataan Memorial Death March medal at Stewart Air National Guard Base, Newburgh, New York, March 22, 2024. Photo by Senior Airman Rebekah Wilson, 105th Airlift Wing.

Hill to be greeted by the “Sand Pit”, a deep, sandy path about a mile long.

“The Sand Pit was pretty rough and it slowed us down a lot,” she said.

Having completed the course four times, Pullar continuously encourages others to participate in the Bataan Memorial Death March as an opportunity to challenge themselves and do something outside their comfort zone.

“I think it helps to know that when I really want to do something, I believe in it and I have enough faith in myself to complete it, I’ll get it done. I’ll get I’ll get through it. No matter what it is.” **gt**



Participants from across the globe compete in the Bataan Memorial Death March at White Sands Missile Range, New Mexico, March 16, 2024. The 26.2-mile challenge is held in honor of those who were subject to the Bataan Death March in World War II. Courtesy photo.

Hellfighters Honor Fallen Soldier

Story and photo by Sgt. Ryan Scribner, 369th Sustainment Brigade

NEW YORK — New York Soldiers with the 369th Sustainment Brigade honored Sgt. Janil González at a memorial held at the Harlem Armory, on Jan. 21, 2024.

González, who was killed by her ex-husband on January 13, was assigned to the brigade's signal and support operations section, providing troubleshooting and network management expertise.

She served over ten years in the military and successfully completed multiple overseas deployments supporting the sustainment automation support management office system.

Gonzalez was adept at Soldier care, said 1st Lt. Saul Rodriguez, the executive officer of Headquarters and Headquarters Company of the 369th. She provided a healthy and nurturing environment, and served her unit with professionalism and dedication, he said.

Chaplain (Capt.) Alex Oommen said that González made sacrifices for fellow Soldiers and for her country.

"In every generation, only a small percentage of people answer the call to protect the vested interests of national security," Oommen said. "She answered the call."

Families of service members make sacrifices too, Oommen said.

"We want to sincerely thank the González family for the sacrifices they have made and for allowing us to borrow their loved one from time to time," Oommen said.

Chief Warrant Officer 4 Chris Fernandez said González was committed to her work and wanted her organization to be the best it could be.

"She bettered the Army because she cared," said Fernandez.

Remembering González and accepting the complexity of emotions that accompany her loss is healthy, said Oomen.

"Recall the times that you spent with her, laugh when you need to laugh, cry when you need to cry," Oomen said. **gt**

"In every generation, only a small percentage of people answer the call to protect the vested interests of national securityShe answered the call,"

-- Chaplain (Capt.) Alex Oommen, 369th Sustainment Brigade



Army National Guard Command Sgt. Maj. Leylan Jones, senior enlisted advisor to the commander of the 369th Sustainment Brigade, honors Sgt. Janil González after a memorial ceremony held at the Harlem Armory, New York, Jan. 21, 2024. González was killed by her ex-husband in Philadelphia, Penn. on January 13.

NY Air Guard Commander Recognizes Lifesavers

HANCOCK FIELD AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, SYRACUSE, N.Y. — Major General



Denise Donnell, Commander of the New York Air National Guard, coins Staff Sgt. Colin Kistner and Senior Airman Miguel Rodriguez Peraza December 2, 2023 during a visit to the 174th Attack Wing. The two were recognized for their efforts when Kistner and Rodriguez Peraza were walking in the community and came across a man in physical distress who needed CPR. Both Airmen jumped into action without hesitation and were able to get the citizen the help he needed. Photo by Staff Sgt. Tiffany Scofield, 174th Attack Wing.

NY General Completes Tour with Canadian Military

Story by Eric Durr, *Guard Times* staff

OTTOWA — During his 36-year career, New York Army National Guard Major General Michel Natali has been stationed in Germany and Fort Drum and later deployed to Haiti, Somalia, and Iraq.

Last year, he added Ottawa, the capital of Canada, to the list of places he's served.

Natali, the Assistant Adjutant general, Army for the New York National Guard, spent June to November serving as the American military advisor to Vice Admiral Robert Auchterlonie, Commander of the Canadian Joint Operations Command.

Canada's Joint Operations Command, according to the Canadian Department of National Defence, "leads most Canadian Armed Forces operations in Canada, North America and around the world."

It's like taking all 11 American worldwide combatant commands—and the National Guard—and putting one commander in charge of everything, Natali said.

His role in that headquarters was to advise and assist Canadian partners on integration of U.S. military capability.

The Canadians, he explained, wanted an American general officer serving in the Joint Operations Command headquarters to ensure smooth coordination and cooperation with the United States Northern Command and the rest of the U.S. military.

Natali commanded at the battalion, brigade, and general officer levels before moving into his current full-time role as the Assistant Adjutant General.

In that position, he oversees operations of the 11,000 Soldiers of the New York Army National Guard.

At the Canadian Joint Operations Command, his role was to link the Canadians with the U.S. military.

"If we could facilitate or we could bring some resources to bear, how could we help?" he explained.

For example, although the Canadian military wants to increase its Arctic presence, they don't have large ski-equipped planes to move troops and equipment there. So, they ask for U.S. support for those exercises, Natali said.

New York's 109th Airlift Wing, which flies the LC-130 ski-equipped Hercules transport, and 105th Airlift Wing, which flies the C-17 Globemaster III, have both participated in Canadian Arctic

exercises.

His other role was to keep U.S. Northern Command informed about issues that Canadian Joint Forces Command was involved with, Natali said.

While he was there, wildfires in the Canadian north were a significant issue for the Canadian military, Natali said. When the Canadian provinces or territories needed federal help fighting major forest fires they turned to the Canadian Forces, he explained.

Other key issues the operations command worked on during his tenure were sourcing a Canadian-led NATO brigade force in Latvia and assisting the British Army in training Ukrainian troops in the United Kingdom, Natali said.

The best part of his six-month mission was seeing the Canadian military in action, Natali said.

Natali had a chance to see operations and visit troops around Canada, ranging from the naval base in Halifax to the Canadian Forces Station Alert, the northernmost inhabited place globally.

The U.S. military counts on the Canadians to keep an eye out on what happens in the Arctic, and Alert plays a key role, he said.

Natali said he noticed many opportunities for the National Guard to conduct joint training with the Canadians.

The Vermont and Maine Army Guards have good relationships with the Canadian Army Reserve, and Canadian Forces personnel train regularly at Michigan's Camp Grayling, Natali said.


There are also opportunities for the New York Army Guard, he said.

For example, the 53rd Digital Liaison Detachment, which specializes in linking U.S. forces to coalition partners during corps-level operations, is planning to take part in a Canadian division-sized command post exercise, Natali said.

"The opportunities exist there to partner more," Natali said.

Along with the joint training conducted with the New York Air Guard, a Canadian contingent serves alongside New York Air Guardsmen at the Eastern Air Defense Sector in Rome, N.Y.

There could be new opportunities now that the Royal Canadian Air Force is acquiring a version of the MQ-9 Reaper, he said.

New York's 107th Attack Wing and 174th Attack Wing, are both close enough to Canadian bases to provide training opportunities, Natali said. 



New York Army National Guard Major Gen. Michel Natali, right, poses for a photo with Royal Canadian Air Force Major Ryan Port, the commander of Canadian Forces Station Alert, during a visit to the remote Arctic outpost in November 2023. Natali, who serves as the assistant adjutant general, Army, for the New York National Guard, served as the American liaison officer to Canadian Joint Operations Command from July to December, 2023. Courtesy photo.



Central NY Students Meet Attack Wing Up Close

HANCOCK FIELD AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, SYRACUSE, N.Y. — More than 60 high school students from Baldwinsville Central School District attended a 174th Attack Wing career fair at Hancock Field Air National Guard Base, Jan. 18. During the career fair, students met with 174th Attack Wing Airmen, viewed unit vehicles and equipment, and learned about career opportunities with the New York Air National Guard. Photo by Alexander Rector, 174th Attack Wing.

Wing Marks Black History



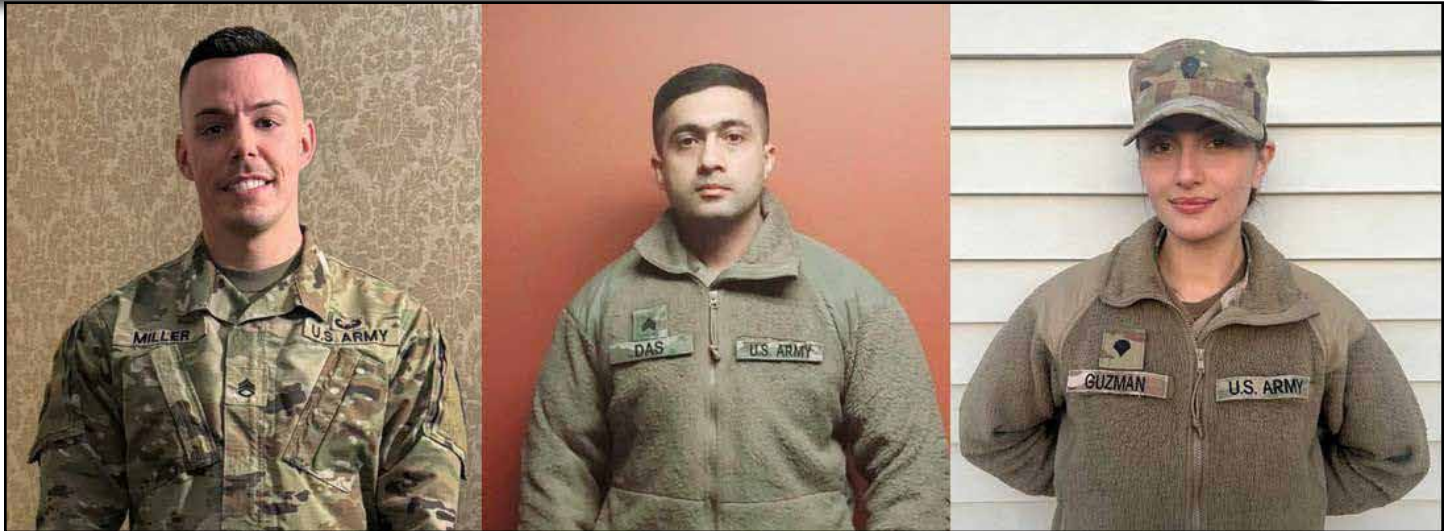
F.S. GABRESKI AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, WESTHAMPTON BEACH, N.Y. — Airmen assigned to the 106th Rescue Wing celebrated Black History Month with guest speaker Dr. Subrina D. Oliver at the air base in Westhampton Beach, N.Y., February 4, 2024. Oliver spoke about the importance of resilience, strength, and perseverance. Photo by Senior Airman Sarah McKernan, 106th Rescue Wing.



Honoring the Former Rainbow Division Commander

LATHAM, N.Y. — New York Army National Guard Master Sgt. Michael Folta presents a folded flag to Command Sgt. Maj. Arnold Reyes during the retirement ceremony for Maj. Gen. Thomas Spencer at the New York National Guard Headquarters, February 3, 2024. Spencer, center, retired after more than 30 years of service, culminating in command of the 42nd Infantry Division. Photo by Staff Sgt. Andrew Valenza, 42nd Infantry Division.

THE JOINT FORCE



Three Soldiers who were on duty at a hotel being used as a migrant shelter in Long Island City, New York, helped apprehend an arsonist and put out a fire he started on January 29, 2024. Pictured are, from left, Staff Sgt. Richard Miller, Sgt. Animesh Das, Spc. Jaslin Guzman. Courtesy photo.

Army Guard Soldiers Help Apprehend Arsonist

Story by Eric Durr, *Guard Times* staff

NEW YORK — Three New York Army National Guard Soldiers displayed quick thinking and teamwork to help track down an arsonist who tried to set fire to a building a few feet away from a Long Island City hotel housing migrants on January 29, 2024.

Spc. Jaslin Guzman, Sgt. Animesh Das, and Staff Sgt. Richard Miller were on duty at the City View Inn on Greenport Avenue, when just before 11 p.m., Guzman spotted somebody throwing bottles out of a silver SUV onto a collision barrier outside the hotel.

Guzman yelled at the man, later identified as Ping Huang, to stop.

Hearing his fellow Soldier's voice, Das ran outside to find out what Guzman was yelling about.

As soon as Das stepped outside to see what was happening, he saw flames erupt on the fence above the barrier. He ran towards the vehicle with his smartphone ready to capture the offender's license plate and yelled stop along with Guzman.

The suspect in the SUV moved over to the driver's seat and drove off quickly.

Das pursued the SUV on foot to get a picture of the license plate. He made it to the end of the block before the vehicle sped away from him.

Guzman instinctively began a foot pursuit too, but turned around and got her car instead.

She caught up to Das, he piled in, and they pursued the suspect by car to identify the license.

Inside the shelter, Miller heard the commotion and rushed towards the entrance. He saw the smoldering fire and joined others to extinguish it with whatever they could find – water bottles and any available containers.

Noticing someone struggling with a fire extinguisher, Miller, a military combat engineer and police officer took charge. He quickly extinguished the flames.

"I could see that others were unfamiliar with the fire extinguisher, so in the interest of time and safety, I took it, followed the steps starting at the base of the fire, and worked my way up," said Miller.

Meanwhile, Guzman drove her car after the suspect and caught up when Huang, the arsonist, stopped at a red light.

Das got out, captured the suspect's license plate, and then maneuvered around the SUV to get a picture of Huang's face.

According to Das, the suspect was surprised and when he noticed Das, he tried to leave. But the red light and the traffic moving in front of him created a barrier to his escape.

Das said that his priorities were to safeguard life, protect property, and mitigate suffering, so he had no intention of confronting the suspect.

"At this moment, I could only think of the children and the families that could be harmed and that this guy has to be caught," he said. "Catching him is a job for law enforcement, and I'm just here to help in any way I can."

Das quickly returned to Guzman's vehicle after capturing the information.

Huang drove away in his SUV the moment the light turned green.

Guzman and Das immediately returned to the shelter to deliver the information to their shift leader. By then, the police and fire department were already alerted via 911 by hotel security.

According to the fire department, information provided by the Soldiers helped fire marshals and police investigators identify Huang.

Fire investigators determined that Huang, who was reportedly involved in a business dispute with the owner of the other building, was seen on video acquiring gasoline from a nearby station before attempting to set the business on fire.

According to the Fire Department, Huang was apprehended by Fire Marshals on February 6th, 2024, and the Queens District Attorney's office will prosecute him. 📍

First Activation of 2024 for NY Guardsmen

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

BUFFALO, N.Y. — The New York National Guard activated 132 Soldiers and Airmen to help local officials deal with a winter storm that hit Buffalo over the Martin Luther King Day weekend, January 13 to 15.

The weekend storm dumped 17 inches of snow on the region, with temperatures as low as 9 degrees Fahrenheit and winds of up to 40 miles per hour. Roads were closed and a playoff NFL football game between the Buffalo Bills and the Pittsburgh Steelers was rescheduled for Monday, January 15.

Governor Kathy Hochul mobilized the New York National Guard personnel while declaring a state of emergency in western New York and closing roads in the area.

Ninety-six Soldiers and 36 Airmen volunteered for the weekend mission. The 107th Attack Wing, 2nd Squadron 101st Cavalry, 152nd Engineer Support Company, and 105th Military Police Company provided 28 vehicles to the mission.

The Soldiers and Airmen were configured as general-purpose immediate response forces.

Their main mission was to man and monitor three warming stations established at Erie Community College South Campus, Windom Elementary School and Orchard Park Middle School. The stations were stocked with cots, blankets, water, along with providing a warm space.

In the runup to the storm, Hochul emphasized the need for people to stay warm.

“During this time, it is important to check in on vulnerable friends and family and do whatever you can to stay safe and warm,” she said in a release.

“These shelters can have a huge impact during weather like this,” said Capt. Kathleen Urtz, the officer in charge of the 107th's contingent.

“If someone ends up stranded or homeless, it could mean the difference between life and death,

said Urtz, a material management officer.

Guardsmen who were on their first emergency response mission said they appreciated the chance to serve their community.

The massive snowstorm that hit Buffalo over Christmas in 2022 and resulted in the deaths of 47 people was on his mind when he was asked to volunteer for the mission, said Airman First Class Emmanuel Akanmu, a member of the 107th's Medical Group.

“After last year's tragedy, I couldn't say no, knowing something like that could potentially happen again,” he said.

“I was primarily on standby and while I didn't end up getting called up, I didn't mind,” Akanmu said.

“If anything was to happen, I was satisfied with the fact I could be there to help. Overall it was a positive experience that I would do again,” he added.

For seasoned Guardsmen, helping during the storm was all in a day's work, according to Tech. Sgt. Alexander Lawson.

Lawson, also assigned to 107th Medical Group, was in charge of the team supporting the shelter at Orchard Park Middle School, supporting Red Cross Operations, clearing access points of snow, and keeping community members safe.

“We made the best of it, and overall we were happy to support the community and do what we could to ensure those who were stranded, or lost power had a safe and warm place to go,” he said.

The Soldiers and Airmen stood down late afternoon on January 15, with thanks from Lt. Col. Justin Couts, the officer in charge for three-day mission. “The four Initial Response Forces staff performed well,” he said. “Early activation enabled a timely response to mission request and both personnel and equipment were postured to respond prior to the start of inclement weather conditions.” **gt**



Air National Guard Staff Sgt. Nathan Wojtkowiak, Tech. Sgt. Kevin Pawlukovich and Staff Sgt. Jacob Qualiana, assigned to the 107th Attack Wing, pause from keeping entrances clear at the Erie Community South Campus warming station in Orchard Park, N.Y., Jan. 15, 2024. Warming stations established around Western N.Y. provided stranded motorists and homeless civilians critical points of refuge from the extreme winter conditions. Courtesy photo.

“We made the best of it, and overall we were happy to support the community and do what we could to ensure those who were stranded, or lost power had a safe and warm place to go,”

-- Tech. Sgt. Alexander Lawson, 107th Medical Group



Saudi Salute to Women in Riyadh

RIYADH, SAUDI ARABIA — New York Air National Guard Lt. Col. Lindsay Doak, standing at far right, assigned to the 107th Attack Wing, poses with fellow participants as women leaders in the defense and security sectors, including the Deputy Head of Mission to the U.S. Embassy in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Alison Dilworth, Princess Reema Bent Bender, a member of House of Saud and the Saudi Arabian ambassador to the United States and former Secretary of the Air Force Barbara Barrett, at center, to celebrate empowering women's participation in the defense sector and promoting global security, February 8, 2024 in Riyadh.



Ribbon Cutting for new JFHQ Building Entrance

LATHAM, N.Y. — The New York National Guard marked the completion of Joint Force Headquarter building renovations with a ribbon cutting with local officials at the Division of Military and Naval Affairs in Latham, New York on March 15, 2024 to open the new entryway to the building. Cutting the ribbon are, from left, Gary Yaple, Director of Facilities and Engineering, Assemblyman Dan Steck, Office of General Services Commissioner Jeanette Moy, Major Gen. Ray Shields, the adjutant general of New York, and State Senator Jake Ashby. The \$4 million project, launched in the fall of 2022, replaced a covered walkway area between to halves of the building with a modern reception area and security desk. Photo by Stephanie Butler, Guard Times Staff.

NY National Guard Hosts Swedish Delegation

Story by Spc. Joseph Liggio, 138th Public Affairs Detachment

NEW YORK — Major Gen. Ray Shields, the adjutant general of New York, hosted seven delegates from the Swedish Embassy and Swedish Armed Forces, February 7-9, for a visit highlighting New York National Guard capabilities and civilian-military cooperation in the New York City area.

The delegation, composed of Swedish air force, army, navy, and Swedish Ministry of Defense representatives, got a first-hand look at New York Army and Air operations. They also got a chance to meet representatives of the city, state, and federal agencies the New York National Guard works with.

Sweden became NATO's newest member on March 7. Now Sweden is seeking to participate in the National Guard's State Partnership Program, which links National Guard forces to militaries of more than 100 nations around the globe since its inception in 1993.

Brig. Gen. Isabel Smith, director of joint staff for the New York Army National Guard, said that the Guard's ability to work alongside state and civilian partners offers unique perspectives to foreign counterparts who want to foster similar relationships.

"It was an honor and privilege to host the Sweden delegation, where we provided New York Army and Air National Guard capabilities, as well as a comprehensive overview of our state and federal missions," Smith said.

Meeting with the New York National Guard in person revealed more about the state's capabilities and needs of the region than originally anticipated, said Swedish Navy (Marine) Maj. Gen. Rikard Askstedt, the Swedish embassy defense attaché.

"In addition to my previous experiences of New York City, I now also have had the privilege to meet the city from the air and from the sea, which really adds dimensions to only experiencing the city by foot or by car," said Askstedt, who headed the Swedish team.

"Another interesting discovery was the cooperation between several agencies for the protection of New York and its harbors, including the New York Naval Militia," he said.

He had never heard of that type of organization in a state National Guard, Askstedt said.

The visit began Feb. 7 at Stewart Air National Guard Base in Newburgh, N.Y., where Swedish

officials received a briefing on New York Air Guard capabilities. This was followed by a base facilities tour and an aircraft walk through.

The following day, the Swedish team visited the 369th Regiment Armory in Harlem for presentations on New York Army Guard strength, and domestic operations.

That was followed by a trip to Brooklyn for a harbor security discussion with representatives of the New York Police and Fire Departments, New York Naval Militia, Coast Guard, and Port Authority of New York and New Jersey.

Those briefings were followed by a tour of New York harbor on board Naval Militia Patrol Boat 440 which highlighted harbor security issues.

The Naval Militia boat patrols New York harbor in coordination with the Coast Guard as part of Joint Task Force Empire Shield.

On February 9, the Swedish delegation and New York National Guard leaders met with New York City Emergency Management staff, followed by a tour of the New York Police Department's Joint Operations Center in Manhattan.

They also got a UH-60M Black Hawk tour of the New York metropolitan area. This gave the visitors the opportunity to observe and discuss urban terrain operations, said Maj. Roman Rushtlion, the New York National Guard liaison officer to New York City's Emergency Management Office.

The region's unique challenges can provide foreign partners with their own lessons and strategies for managing challenges at home, he explained.

This visit marks the latest effort by the New York National Guard to foster collaboration



New York State Command Sgt. Maj. Edwin Garris presents a challenge coin to Swedish Royal Air Force Col. Jonas Nellsjo, assistant defense attaché for the Swedish Embassy, in Brooklyn, N.Y. on Feb. 9, 2024. Swedish officials spent three days with New York National Guard leadership, receiving an overview of rapid response capabilities in the region. Photo by Spc. Joseph Liggio, 138th Public Affairs Detachment.



Tech. Sgt. Ben Hinderman, assigned to the 105th Airlift Wing, speaks with Swedish defense delegates at Stewart Air National Guard Base, New York, Feb. 7, 2024. Photo by Senior Airman Rebekah Wilson, 105th Airlift Wing.

with foreign partners, Smith said.

"I firmly believe that a partnership with the National Guard in general, and with the National Guard of a state like New York in particular, have a great potential to be mutually beneficial," said Askstedt.

"We also hope that our capabilities, equipment and systems, technological edge as well as our experience of operating in arctic conditions could be of great value," Askstedt added. 🇺🇸

Governor Deploys Empire Shield to NYC Subways



NEW YORK — New York Army National Guard Soldiers assigned to Joint Task Force Empire Shield support New York Police Department and New York State Police conducting enhanced security checks at an entrance to a subway system in New York City on March 8, 2024. New York Governor Kathy Hochul directed the National Guard to assist law enforcement as a part of a larger five-point plan to make the subways safer, including a search of bags entering the subway system targeted at heavily trafficked locations.

The effort includes surging state personnel to assist bag checks, adding new cameras to protect conductor cabins, increasing coordination between District Attorneys and law enforcement, and increasing the number of subway mental health outreach teams throughout the system.

Empire Shield is conducting approximately 75-80 missions per day, according to Col. Jeffrey Roth, the Joint Task Force Empire Shield Commander. Photo by 1st Lt. Stephanie Sylvain, 42nd Combat Aviation Brigade.



Chaplains Conduct Joint Training

Story by Staff Sgt. Tiffany Scofield, 174th Attack Wing

Army National Guard Col. Robert Mitchell, 53rd Troop Command Chief of Staff, speaks to chaplains and enlisted religious affairs specialists during the state's annual joint chaplain sustainment training in Syracuse, N.Y., January 8, 2024. Photo by Alexander Rector, 174th Attack Wing.

SYRACUSE, N.Y. — New York Air and Army National Guard religious affairs leaders came together for the annual Joint Chaplain Sustainment Training at the National Veterans Resource Center in Syracuse Jan. 8-11.

The theme of this year was Spiritual Leadership 360 degrees.

The chaplains received training on providing religious support during domestic operations, overseas operations, State Partnership Program opportunities, and tasks to maintain readiness.

“Our hope is to improve our chaplains and religious affairs specialists’ ability to lead from a spiritual position 360 degrees,” said Army Chaplain (Lt. Col.) James Miller, the National Guard Bureau deputy chief of chaplains. “As chaplains and religious affairs, we are in a unique position, we lead through the use of soft skills. We also supervise through our technical chain, and are responsible for our overall chaplain corps.”

Military chaplains are responsible for tending to the spiritual and moral well-being of service mem-

bers and families. They are also advocates for Soldiers and Airmen, consulting with leadership on ethical and quality-of-life issues.

“We are religious experts,” said Army Chaplain (Maj.) Robert Volk, the 42nd Expeditionary Aviation Combat Brigade chaplain. “We are the ones that are educated to be able to provide these services.”

One section of the training was about sharing experiences from those who have deployed or have been on a State Active Duty within the past year. During the discussion members gathered on stage and told stories and shared the ways they were able to help the servicemembers in their unit.

“The biggest benefit of these events, beyond the knowledge we gain, is just getting together with the team,” said Air National Guard Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Matthew Hallenbeck assigned to the 174th Attack Wing. “We get to encourage each other and share some best practices so we can provide the best care to all of our people.”

The sessions also provided a chance to forge new relationships.

“This training will help me in a way where I will be able to better listen to individuals about what they are going through in their life and know how to respond,” said Air National Guard Staff Sgt.

Nathaniel Cardiel, a religious affairs specialist assigned to the 174th Attack Wing. “Learning how to talk about topics like suicide, deployment settings and scenarios and learning how to build relationships create rapport.” **gt**



Enlisted Leaders Visit Empire Shield

NEW YORK — New York Air National Guard Command Chief Master Sgt. Michael Hewson speaks with Joint Task Force Empire Shield service members at Randall's Island January 21, 2024. Hewson and his senior enlisted Army Guard counterpart, State Command Sgt. Major Edwin Garris, visited Soldiers and Airmen assigned to Empire Shield across the city to familiarize themselves with the mission. Photo by 1st Lt. Stephanie Sylvain, 42nd Combat Aviation Brigade.



Fallen Aviators Honored

Story by Eric Durr, Guard Times staff

A New York Army National Guard Honor Guard and New York State Police honor New York Army National Guard Chief Warrant Officer 2 John Grassia III during military funeral services held at Gerald B. Solomon Saratoga National Cemetery in Schuylerville, New York on March 26, 2024. Photo by Staff Sgt. Matthew Gunther, Joint Force Headquarters.



Soldiers from the New York Army National Guard Military Funeral Honors team prepare to unload the remains of two helicopter pilots who lost their lives in a Texas UH-72 Lakota crash, Army National Guard Chief Warrant Officers 2 Casey Frankoski and John M. Grassia III, at Albany International Airport, March 18, 2024. Their remains were transported from Kelly Airfield, Texas to Albany on board an LC-130 Hercules assigned to the 109th Airlift Wing where honor guards, family and loved ones awaited. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Madison Scaringe, 109th Airlift Wing.

LATHAM, N.Y. — Two New York Army National Guard aviators who were killed when their UH-72 Lakota helicopter crashed outside Rio Grande City, Texas, were honored by their communities and the New York Army National Guard and Gov. Kathy Hochul on March 18, 22, and 26.

Chief Warrant Officers 2 Casey Frankoski and John M. Grassia III were flying a mission in support of the Border Patrol, when the helicopter went down on March 8.

Border Patrol agent Chris Luna was also killed and the crew chief, Sgt. 1st Class Jacob Pratt, was severely injured.

The three Soldiers were assigned to Detachment 2, Company A, of the 1st Battalion, 224th Aviation Regiment which is based at Army Aviation Support Facility #3 at Albany International Airport. The 21-Soldier detachment had deployed to Texas in October 2023 as part of Joint Task Force North, a federal mission in support of the Border Patrol.

Frankoski, a Rensselaer resident, was 28 and had joined the New York Army National Guard as an enlisted aviation Soldier in 2016. She was selected for training as a UH-60 and UH-72 pilot in 2019 and in 2021 she was promoted to Chief Warrant Officer 2.

Grassia, a resident of Schenectady, also served as an enlisted Soldier before becoming a helicopter pilot. He enlisted in 2013 and was also selected for pilot training in 2019. He was promoted to Chief Warrant Officer 2 in 2020.

In civilian life, he was a New York State Trooper

and planned to apply for a job as a State Police pilot.

Major Gen. Ray Shields, the adjutant general, resolved to bring the remains of Frankoski and Grassia back to New York with full honors.

The state obtained an exception to policy and dispatched an LC-130 assigned to the 109th Airlift Wing to Texas on Sunday, March 17, to bring the two New Yorkers home.

An eight-Soldier honor guard led by Sgt. 1st Class Charles Gabriel was on board and provided plane-side honors as the remains were transferred from hearses to the New York aircraft at Kelly Field, outside San Antonio on Monday, March 18.

The LC-130 arrived at Albany International Airport at 3 p.m. that afternoon and backed into the runway at the Army aviation facility. The families of Grassia and Frankoski were on hand as, one by one, the caskets containing the two pilots were transferred from the plane to two waiting hearses.

Shields and other New York National Guard leaders were joined by Gov. Hochul and Acting State Police Superintendent Steven James on the flight line. DMNA employees and military personnel were also in attendance.

The Albany-area press corps covered the arrival, and WTEN television broadcast the return live for 17 minutes.

The two pilots were “valued team members who are heroes,” Col. Jason Lefton, the commander of the 42nd Expeditionary Combat Aviation Brigade, told the reporters.



Army National Guard Col. Jason Lefton, the commander of the 42nd Expeditionary Combat Aviation Brigade and the New York State Aviation Officer presents an American flag to the father and mother of Chief Warrant Officer 2 John M. Grassia III following military funeral services held at Gerald B. Solomon Saratoga National Cemetery in Schuylerville, New York on March 26, 2024. Photo by Staff Sgt. Matthew Gunther, Joint Force Headquarters.

The hearse carrying Grassia department for a funeral home in Glenville with a New York State Police escort, while the hearse with Frankoski's body was escorted to her hometown by the Rensselaer Police Department, Her father, James Frankoski had been the police chief in that city.

Calling hours for Frankoski were held on Thursday, March 21, at St. John the Evangelist Church, and her funeral was held there the next day. Hundreds attended both events, and a New York Army National Guard Honor Guard was present to escort her remains into and out of the church.

New York State Police, Sheriff's Deputies, and members of the Border Patrol lined the road outside the church as her remains were carried inside.

Shields and other New York Army National Guard leaders attended, as did Gov. Hochul, who spoke at the service.

Following the service in Rensselaer military funeral honors, including a UH-60M helicopter flyover took place at Gerald B. Solomon Saratoga National Cemetery in Schuylerville. Lefton presented the folded flag from the casket to the Frankoski family.

On Monday, March 25, calling hours for Grassia were conducted at the Schenectady's St. John the Evangelist Church, with his funeral service on Tuesday, March 26. Again, hundreds attended the calling hours and funeral. About



Staff Sgt. Jacob Pratt, left, Chief Warrant Officers Two Casey Frankoski and John Grassia III stand beside their UH-72 Lakota aircraft in an undated photo from their deployment to the Southwest Border. Frankoski and Grassia were killed in the March 8 helicopter crash outside Rio Grande City, Texas while patrolling the southwest border in support of the Border Patrol. Courtesy photo.

200 New York State Police, along with delegations from the New Jersey and Pennsylvania State Police and the Texas Rangers, stood at attention outside the church as Grassia's remains and his family entered.

Again, the governor delivered remarks at the services.

Three New York State Police helicopters flew over the church as the family left the building in a salute to a fellow pilot and State Trooper.

Again, Grassia was interned at Saratoga National Cemetery, and again, New York Army National Guard helicopters flew overhead in salute, and again, Lefton presented the folded flag to the family.

An Army report on the accident is ongoing.

"We're doing everything we can to find out what happened and take care of their families and the rest of our Soldiers," Lefton said. **gt**



Army National Guard Col. Jason Lefton, the commander of the 42nd Expeditionary Combat Aviation Brigade and the New York State Aviation Officer presents an American flag to the father and mother of Chief Warrant Officer 2 Casey Frankoski following military funeral services held at Gerald B. Solomon Saratoga National Cemetery in Schuylerville, New York on March 22, 2024. Photo by Stephanie Butler, Guard Times staff.

Logan Duffy Competition Winner by a Single Point

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

CAMP SMITH, N.Y. — Army National Guard Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment squared off against the 1st Battalion, 182nd Infantry Regiment, their Massachusetts-based sister unit, in the annual Logan-Duffy Marksmanship Competition on March 13.

The 182nd came out on top, winning the match by a single point. The final tally was 280 to 279.

“I’ve been with the 69th since 2016 and I have never seen the Logan-Duffy Competition this close,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Jason Zeller, the 69th’s senior enlisted leader.

This year’s match took six top shooters from each battalion and tested their rifle marksmanship in standing, prone, and seated positions. Using only the iron sights of the U.S. Army’s M4 carbine to aim and fire at paper targets, the Soldiers’ skills, speed, and accuracy were put to the test.

Setting the teams apart was the 182nd’s top shooter, Sgt. Tristan Manchester, an infantryman and team leader from the battalion’s Alpha Company.

“The real victory here is the relationship between our two battalions,” said Lt. Col. Landon Mavrelis, 1st Battalion, 182nd Infantry Regiment commander. “The most important part of



Army Sgt. Miguel Lopez, a team leader assigned to Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment, fires his M4 carbine at Camp Smith during the 2024 Logan-Duffy Marksmanship Competition, March 13, 2024. The competition, first held in 1936, is an annual shooting match between 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment, and 1st Battalion, 182nd Infantry Regiment.

this is the camaraderie and esprit de corps that we’re building.”

The competition, named for Brig. Gen. Lawrence Logan of Massachusetts and Brig. Gen. Edward Duffy of New York who commanded

the regiments during the Spanish-American War, started with the aim of encouraging competitive marksmanship. It also aimed to enhance the friendship between two units with similar backgrounds and heritage.

The 69th and 182nd are two of the U.S. Army’s oldest units, with the 69th tracing its lineage back to the Civil War when the unit was mainly composed of Irish immigrants, and 182nd tracing its lineage back to the Massachu-

setts Colonial Militia.

Today, the units serve in different states, but under the same brigade – the 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team.

With a few exceptions, the Logan-Duffy match has been held annually since 1936. The 182nd won in the inaugural year, only for the 69th to win the next.

The units alternate who hosts the competition, with the 69th hosting this year at Camp Smith in New York.

The match’s trophy – a large, silver gilded cup – is owned jointly by the regiments, with the stipulation that the latest winner keep it until the next competition.

When both units served in World War II in 1940, the competition was put on hold. In 1958, the match resumed, and the battalions competed every year until 2023 when both were deployed overseas – the 69th to the Horn of Africa and the 182nd to the Middle East.

“It’s great to have this tradition that we carry on every year,” said Lt. Col. Adam Bojarski, commander of the 69th.

“As we’ve moved into the digital age, we’ve lost some of our traditions. Keeping those traditions alive is important.” **gt**



Army Lt. Cols. Landon Mavrelis and Adam Bojarski, commanders of 1st Battalion, 182nd Infantry Regiment and 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment, respectively, prepare to take the opening shots in the 2024 Logan-Duffy Marksmanship Competition at Camp Smith, March 13, 2024.

Rainbow Welcomes New Commander

Story by Maj. Jean Kratzer, 42nd Infantry Division



LATHAM, N.Y. — New York Army National Guard Major General Joseph Biehler, a veteran of the Iraq and Afghanistan War, took command of the 42nd Infantry Division during a ceremony held February 3, 2024, at the New York National Guard headquarters in Latham, N.Y.

Biehler had been serving as the Commanding General of the 53rd Troop Command since 2021.



Maj. Gen. Joseph Biehler receives the 42nd Infantry Division colors from Maj. Gen. Ray Shields, the adjutant general, in Latham, N.Y., Feb. 4, 2024, as the new commander. Photo by Staff Sgt. Andrew Valenza, 42nd Infantry Division.

The 42nd Infantry Division is one of eight National Guard division headquarters.

Biehler replaces Army National Guard Maj. Gen. Thomas Spencer,

who is retiring after 37 years of service in the military. Spencer took command of the division in April of 2021.

"Joe was selected based on his leadership style, experience, and how well he takes care of his people, said Major General Ray Shields, the adjutant general of the New York National Guard.

"You have a critical job leading one of the Army's 18 divisions. Keep focusing on our people within the organization, and you will continue to be successful," Shields told Biehler.

In his remarks, Biehler told the Soldiers present that it was a tremendous honor to be selected as commander of a division with the history of the 42nd.

"This is an honorable division with a long history," Biehler said. "Very few have stood where you are right where you are right now in this formation. We are a proud, honorable, and small community," he added.

The 42nd Infantry Division, with headquarters in Troy, N.Y., has 20,000 Soldiers assigned to elements in New York, New England, and New Jersey.

The 42nd Infantry Division was first organized in World War I by National Guard forces across the United States.

The division's first chief-of-staff, Gen. Douglas MacArthur, said the division would stretch across the United States "like a

rainbow." Since World War I, the division has been nicknamed "The Rainbow Division," and its patch is a rainbow.

Prior to the ceremony, Biehler was promoted from a one-star brigadier general to the two-star major general rank.

Following the change of command, Spencer was recognized with the award of the Distinguished Service Medal and formally retired from the Army.

"Thank you, everyone, for the past 37 years. It's been a great honor and thank you all for your support; I would never have made it all these years without every one of you," Spencer said.

"I am overwhelmed with a sense of gratitude and humility.



Maj. Gen. Thomas Spencer directs the 42nd Division Band prior to his change of command as outgoing commander of the 42nd Infantry Division in Latham, N.Y., Feb. 3, 2024. Spencer retired after more than 30 years of service. Photo by Staff Sgt. Matthew Gunther, Joint Force Headquarters.

We volunteer to serve and take on that obligation freely to serve this country," he said. 🇺🇸



Maj. Gen. Joseph Biehler is pinned his new rank by his family during his promotion ceremony held prior to change of command ceremony for the 42nd Infantry Division in Latham, N.Y., Feb. 3, 2024. Photo by Staff Sgt. Matthew Gunther, Joint Force Headquarters.



Field Feeding Company Stands Up

Story by Spc. Jean Sanon, 138th Public Affairs Detachment

Army National Guard 1st Sgt. Anthony Mills, the senior enlisted advisor to the commander of the 1501st Quartermaster Company (Field Feeding), passes the guidon to Lt. Col. Michael Bedryk, commander of the 369th Special Troops Battalion, during a unit activation ceremony at Camp Smith, N.Y., Jan. 20, 2024. Photo by Staff Sgt. Sebastian Rothwyn, 369th Sustainment Brigade.

CAMP SMITH, N.Y. — The New York Army National Guard officially stood up its field feeding company January 20, 2024, in a ceremony at Camp Smith.

The 1501st Quartermaster Company (Field Feeding) consolidates cooks who had been assigned to units within the 53rd Troop Command.

These included the 102nd and 104th Military Police Battalions, the 101st Expeditionary Signal Battalion, and the 204th Engineer Battalion and other elements in the 369th Sustainment Brigade and 153rd Troop Command.

The new unit, according to Col. Patrick Clare, commander of the 369th, enables culinary service specialists in these units to feed Soldiers more effectively.

“The 1501st field feeding company will play a pivotal role in supporting our Soldiers during training exercises, deployment, and other situations where expertise is required,” Clare told the Soldiers of the 1501st.

“It is with great pride and honor that we witness the birth of this essential unit in supporting sustainment operations, operations at home and abroad,” Clare said.

During the ceremony, Lt. Col. Michael Bedryk, the commander of the 369th Special Troops Battalion, and Capt. Jowayne Meadows, the 1501st’s company commander, uncased the colors of the company to mark the unit’s activation.

The new field feeding company is part of the 369th Special Troops Battalion, in the 369th Sustainment Brigade.

The Army began creating field feeding companies in 2018 to move mess teams where they are needed the most when feeding Soldiers in combat support and combat service support units, according to the Army Quartermaster School.

The field feeding companies can also be deployed during disasters to support both response forces and residents who need food, according to the reference guide.


New York began standing up the 1501st in October 2022, Clare said.

The 1501st is organized with a headquarters and a platoon in Orangeburg with two additional platoons in Rochester and Troy. Those elements will provide support to units in those areas, but will train together during annual training, according to Clare.

The company is authorized 162 Soldiers and includes mechanics and staff.

Platoons are divided into field feeding teams of 15 Soldiers each.

The new organization also provides more opportunities for culinary specialists, military occupational specialty 92G, to advance in rank, Meadows said.

“Having opportunities to grow in an organic way, with positions such as first sergeant is great for developing the leaders of tomorrow,” he said. 

NY's 222nd MPs Train in Poland



DRAWSKO POMORSKIE, Poland – New York National Guard Military Policeman Spc. Juan Justiniao, assigned to the 222nd Military Police Company, performs simulated detainee escort duties during cumulative training at Exercise Guardian Sphinx at Landforce Training Center in Drawsko Pomorskie, Poland, Jan. 22, 2024. The 222nd is deployed in support of the Louisiana Army National Guard's 773rd Military Police Battalion and the XVIII Airborne Corps' 525th Expeditionary Military Intelligence Brigade, with approximately 23 other U.S. teams and nine NATO allies participating in training for professional detention operations, legal interrogation methods, and logistical support operations for NATO's Eastern flank. Photo by Sgt. Karen Sampson, 343rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment.

27th Finance Reorgs as a Battalion

NEW YORK -- The 27th Financial Management Support Unit became the 27th Finance Battalion during a Dec. 16, 2023, ceremony held at the Whitestone Armory here in Queens.

For the past 17 years, the unit operated like a battalion and was federally reorganized as a finance battalion on October 1, 2023.

Lt. Col. Sara Mitchell, the new battalion commander, uncased the colors with her senior enlisted advisor Command Sgt. Maj. Alfonso Villacres.

“Going back to being a battalion is the right structure for our type of unit and will, hopefully, allow us to grow and perform even better,” she said.

Photo by Staff Sgt. Sebastian Rothwyn, 369th Sustainment Brigade.



Fighting 69th Clears the Way for St. Patrick's Day Parade

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

NEW YORK — For the 173rd year in a row, Soldiers of the 1st Battalion, “Fighting 69th” Infantry Regiment, marched at the head of New York City’s Saint Patrick’s Day Parade — the largest in the world.

It marked the return of the entire battalion to the front lines of the parade, following their deployment to the Horn of Africa last year. The parade also marked the first and last Saint Patrick’s Day celebrations on the streets of New York for some of the Fighting 69th Soldiers.

Master Sgt. Robert Walsh, an infantryman assigned to Delta Company, joined in the late 1990s. He estimated he’s marched in 25 parades. After 38 years of military service, Walsh is retiring, making this year’s parade his last.

“I’m going to miss the Soldiers,” he said. “I’m going to miss having that new guy in the platoon that this is their first Saint Patrick’s Day and seeing the experiences that they’re seeing for the first time.”

And for the 800 Soldiers of the Fighting 69th, there is a lot to experience.

The parade day begins with a 6 a.m. toast of Irish whiskey at the historic Lexington Avenue Armory.

Soldiers add sprigs of boxwood to their uniforms, emulating their Irish predecessors who fought at the Civil War battle of Fredericksburg. The unit’s officers receive blackthorn fighting sticks, imported from Ireland and considered the mark of an Irish leader and gentleman.

Before dawn, they march in formation up to Saint Patrick’s Cathedral, filling the streets of New York with echoing cadence calls. They attend a mass to remember the regiment’s fallen and to honor its heritage.

Then, it’s off to the start of the parade.

Pfc. Danyel Rodriguez, a computer and detection systems repairer assigned to the 69th’s logistics unit, Hotel Company, 427th Brigade Support Battalion, recently back from boot camp. He’s the kind of Soldier Walsh will miss.

Rodriguez was warned by fellow Soldiers to prepare for a long day and a long march.

“But in the moment, singing, just walking with everyone ... it didn’t feel long at all,” said Rodriguez. “Being around so many people, just singing along with everyone, it felt really nice. You just lose track of time, having a good time.”

Rodriguez was not this year’s only first-timer.



Army Sgt. Estefania Solis gives cadence to 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment Soldiers during the New York City Saint Patrick’s Day Parade, March 16, 2024. Below left, women Soldiers of the battalion stand outside St. Patrick’s Cathedral. The Soldiers gathered to honor the legacy of military women in recognition of Women’s History Month. Below right, the color guard enters Saint Patrick’s Cathedral for mass. Photos by Master Sgt. Warren Wright, 42nd Infantry Division.



The battalion commander, Lt. Col. Adam Bojarski, took command in October 2023. This was his first time leading the parade.

“It’s a unique opportunity that nobody else in the Army gets to do,” Bojarski said.

The opportunity comes from a tradition dating back almost to the start of the 69th.

The regiment was formed in 1849 mostly as Irish immigrants. Two years later, amid anti-Irish Catholic sentiment, they were asked to lead the parade and fend off any attackers.

Today, a squad of 69th Soldiers still makes a traditional “show of force” by marching in “battle rattle” — combat uniforms, body armor and helmets.

“Traditions like these are fading out of our society,” Bojarski said. “It’s so important that



units like the 69th continue to be the face of the Army National Guard.”

Bojarski said the battalion will continue leading the parade. And while they’ll do it without Walsh, he’s hopeful those who take place gain from the experience.

“I hope they take away pride and this amazing feeling you get as you’re marching in the parade and listening to thousands of people cheer you,” he said. **gt**

109th Airlifts Special Ops to Arctic for Training

Story by Tech. Sgt. Madison Scaringe, 109th Airlift Wing



Air National Guard Tech. Sgt. Eric Junquera marshals a High Mobility Artillery Rocket System into a C-130 Hercules aircraft in support of Arctic Edge 24 at Eielson Air Force Base, Alaska, Feb. 24, 2024. Arctic Edge is an annual defense exercise for the U.S. Northern Command that emphasizes Joint Force operations in an extreme cold and high latitude environment. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Madison Scaringe, 109th Airlift Wing.

STEWART AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, NEWBURGH, N.Y. — Forty-six Airmen from the New York Air National Guard's 109th Airlift Wing participated in Arctic Edge 24 (AE24), a U.S. Northern Command-led homeland defense exercise demonstrating the U.S. military's capabilities in extreme cold weather.

The event demonstrated combined force readiness and the U.S. military's commitment to security interests in the Arctic region.

During AE24, more than 400 joint and allied Special Operator Forces (SOF) honed their skills in extreme cold, focusing on specialties like long-range fires and movements, special reconnaissance, rapid resupply, personnel recovery, and medical care in the challenging Arctic environment.

The 109th conducts annual missions to Greenland and Antarctica, making them suitable partners to bring their Arctic expertise to Alaska.

Based out of Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, the 109th flew 31 sorties, transporting over 95,000 pounds of cargo and 61 passengers from February 23–March 11.

"Our Airmen displayed unmatched dedica-

tion, expertise, and resilience in the face of extreme conditions," said Col. Rob Donaldson, commander of the 109th Airlift Wing.

"Their participation not only showcased the unique capabilities of the 109th Airlift Wing and our mission ready airmen, but also underscored the critical role Air National Guard units play in enhancing joint force readiness," he said.

The cargo transported by the 109th throughout the exercise supplied various special forces groups with the equipment needed to carry out their training in Kotzebue, Utqiagvik, Kodiak and Fairbanks, Alaska.

On March 9, high in the Arctic Ocean off Alaska's north shore, the 109th airdropped a supply package to East Coast-based Naval Special Warfare Operator (SEALs) and Norwegian Naval Special Operations Commandos as part of a first-ever integration of SOF personnel, aircraft and snowmobiles in conjunction with a submarine that surfaced in the Arctic Circle.

The event utilized special operations MH-47G Chinook helicopters to transport 15 SOF personnel to a secure zone on the ice, identified by the submarine, where four snowmobiles were unloaded.

The team then set up a command-and-con-

trol tent where they coordinated the air-drop of a critical package from the 109th's C-130 Hercules. The package was retrieved and navigated to the waiting USS Hampton (SSN 767).

Just moments before, the Los Angeles-class fast attack submarine had surfaced through the thick sheet of ice, emerging from the sea below.

"This historic integration of Special Operations Forces personnel, aircraft, snowmobiles and a surfaced submarine represents a remarkable milestone in Arctic operations, showcasing the extraordinary capabilities and readiness of our combined force," Donaldson said.

Notable among the airlifted equipment was an M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) operated by Marines from Fox Battery, 2nd Battalion, 14th Marine Regiment, 4th Marine Division, Marine Forces Reserve.

The vehicle was transported to Eielson Air Force Base in Fairbanks, Alaska, as part of a HIMARS Rapid Infiltration.

The training involved offloading the HIMARS from the 109th's C-130, along with two C130J Hercules, stopping at a resupply checkpoint and concluding with a live-fire showcasing the Marine Reserve's ability to deploy and deter threats in harsh Arctic conditions. **gt**



Air National Guard Senior Master Sgt. Dylan Hassis, a loadmaster with the New York Air National Guard 109th Airlift Wing, tightens the tie-down straps securing a High Mobility Artillery Rocket to a C-130 Hercules aircraft in support of Arctic Edge 24 at Eielson Air Force Base, Alaska, Feb. 24, 2024. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Madison Scaringe, 109th Airlift Wing.

Unforgiving Arctic weather and aircraft mechanical issues proved to be hurdles for the 109th during the exercise.

“Mother nature is always the biggest challenge and potential hazard in these types of environments,” said Lt. Col. Matthew Sala, the 109th deployed commander.

“Our crews regularly train and operate in these conditions, and demonstrated their abilities once again during this exercise,” he said.

“We had maintenance issues with a few different types of leaks, as well as a tire change,” said Chief Master Sgt. Jeffrey Hanna, the 109th maintenance group senior enlisted leader.

“When the aircraft challenged us, this team continually worked together as multi-capable Airmen to ensure missions were not missed. Our aircraft are pushing 50 years old and there’s a dwindling number of C-130H-model aircraft in the Air Force inventory. The supply chain is our greatest challenge, it is very difficult to track down replacement parts,” he said.

Despite the setbacks, the 109th Maintenance Airmen worked long hours to ensure the aircraft was back as soon as possible.

“I have been in this maintenance supervisor role for many years, and this is the greatest maintenance team I have ever worked with. It was a privilege to lead them. They worked extremely hard to ensure the aircraft was good to go with no time wasted on our part. I’m very

proud of them,” Hanna said.

Arctic Edge 24 involved participation from multiple nations, including special forces from the United States, Norway, Denmark and the United Kingdom.

“This collaborative training emphasized collective efforts in securing the Arctic region and enhancing military capabilities in extreme



A C-130 Hercules assigned to the 109th Airlift Wing, air drops a package to Naval Special Warfare Operator (SEALs) and Norwegian Naval Special Operations Commandos during an integration exercise designed to bolster skills in an arctic environment March 9, 2024, as part of Arctic Edge 24. U.S. Navy photo by Chief Mass Communication Specialist Jeff Atherton, Naval Special Warfare Group Two.

environments.

“I am very proud of all the members from the 109th,” Sala said.

“These Airmen proved to be Arctic Multi-Capable Airmen and women that the Wing can be proud to call their own,” he said.^{gt}



Air National Guard Tech. Sgt. Eric Junquera marshals a High Mobility Artillery Rocket System off of a C-130 Hercules aircraft in support of Arctic Edge 24 at Eielson Air Force Base, Alaska, Feb. 24, 2024. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Madison Scaringe, 109th Airlift Wing.

106th Rescue Wing Hones Search & Rescue Skills

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

SAVANNAH AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, Ga. — Two hundred Airmen assigned to the New York Air National Guard's 106th Rescue Wing honed their combat search and rescue skills, during Agile Rage 2024, from February 28 to March 4 at the Savannah Combat Readiness Training Center in Savannah Ga., Feb. 26 - March 8, 2024.

Agile Rage 2024 practiced leading-edge combat in Air Operations Maritime Surface Warfare, Combat Search and Rescue, Agile Combat Employment, and advanced ground operations tactics, techniques, and procedures, according to exerciser planners.

"Agile Rage 24 is a nine-month venture, capturing vital training for three Air National Guard Wings and eight squadrons, totaling near 750 personnel," said Air Force Lt. Col. Garrett Ruby, the exercise director.

Operating locations spanned from F.S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base, N.Y., to Savannah CRTC, Ga., over the Atlantic Ocean, and further South to Avon Park, Fla.

"Our goal with Agile Rage is to prepare units for future overseas deployments, and provide readiness and integration opportunities unable to be achieved with home station training," Ruby explained.

Other participants were the 107th Fighter Squadron of the 127th Wing from Michigan, with ten A-10 Thunderbolt II attack aircraft; the 156th Contingency Response Wing, from the Puerto Rico Air Guard, the 236th Combat

Communications Squadron from Louisiana's 159th Fighter Wing, and various Air Force Special Warfare elements.

The 106th Rescue Wing maintenance, medical and operations groups all participated in the exercise.

While the main role of the 106th was Combat Search and Rescue, a simulated scenario called for the rescue of two downed Air Force

pilots, other specialized preparedness training was conducted around the core mission.

Anytime multiple Air Force specialties come together for a major exercise it adds to the mission and capability, U.S. Air Force Col. Shawn Fitzgerald, 106 RQW Commander, explained.

Maintenance crews worked in three shifts for 24-hour operations, conducting critical maintenance and inspections on aircraft. **✪**



Airmen assigned to the 106th Maintenance Group repair an HC-130J Combat King II search and rescue aircraft during Exercise Agile Rage 2024 at F.S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base, Westhampton Beach, New York, February 29, 2024. Photo by Staff Sgt. Kevin J. Donaldson, 106th Rescue Wing.



A maintainer marshals a 106th Rescue Wing HC-130J Combat King II search and rescue aircraft as it leaves the flightline at F.S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base in Westhampton Beach, N.Y., February 29, 2024. Photo by Airman 1st Class Sarah McKernan, 106th Rescue Wing.



Senior Master Sgt. Violeta Tellinghuisen, the 106th Civil Engineering Squadron operations manager of the 106th Rescue Wing, remains focused on tasks while in MOPP gear during Agile Employment training amid heightened threat levels at Exercise Agile Rage 2024, held at F.S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base, Westhampton Beach, New York, on March 2, 2024. Photo by Airman 1st Class Sarah McKernan, 106th Rescue Wing.

Medical personnel simulated trauma incident responses and treatment, while also playing out medical scenarios like food-borne illness exercises.

Also simulated was a chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and high-yield explosive event (CBRNE) threat, which required all exercise participants to don their protective clothing, including gas masks, known as Mission Oriented Protective Posture (MOPP) gear.

There are two reasons events like this are important, one is to exercise the ability to accomplish the mission so the Wing is more combat effective, Fitzgerald said. The second reason is the necessity to improve how we execute these exercises, he added.

The exercise helps prepare for future Air Guard deployments.

“This is the new model going forward,” said U.S. Air Force Command Chief Master Sgt. Edward Rittberg, the senior enlisted leader of the 106 RQW. “Essentially with the Air National Guard, this is the new style of our deployments going forward, to embed with our active duty counterparts.”

Fitzgerald declared the operation 100% success from the perspective of the 106 RQW and indicated the success will include future participation in similar events.

“There’ll be more of these in the future,” Fitzgerald said. “That’s the goal, is to continue to exercise.” **gt**



Air National Guard Tech. Sgt. Diana Carreon, an aerospace medical technician with the 106th Medical Group, performs trauma care during a simulated car accident scenario as part of Exercise Agile Rage 2024, at F.S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base, Westhampton Beach, N.Y., March 3, 2024. Photo by Airman 1st Class Sarah McKernan, 106th Rescue Wing.



Air National Guard Capt. Tyler Knabb, an HH-60G Pave Hawk pilot assigned to the 106th Rescue Wing, performs a pre-flight check on an HH-60G Pave Hawk search and rescue helicopter as it prepares to leave for Savannah, Georgia as part of Exercise Agile Rage 2024, at F.S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base, Westhampton Beach, N.Y., February 29, 2024. Photo by Airman 1st Class Sarah McKernan, 106th Rescue Wing.



Climbing to Qualify for Jungle Warfare School

WEST POINT, N.Y. — New York Air National Guard Tech. Sgt. Cristian Marulanda, assigned to the 105th Base Defense Group at Stewart Air National Guard Base in Newburgh, N.Y., performs a rope climb as part of the qualification test for the Brazilian Jungle Operations International Course at West Point, N.Y., February 28, 2024. The Brazilian Jungle Operations International Course is a specialized course held in Manaus, Brazil and is designed to train foreign military in jungle warfare. New York National Guard participants are invited through the State Partnership Program with Brazil. Photo by Master Sgt. Patrick Espeut, 105th Airlift Wing.

Global Lift Visits Singapore for Airshow

Story and photos by Tech. Sgt. Daniel Hotter, 105th Airlift Wing

CHANGI, Singapore — A C-17 aircrew assigned to the New York Air National Guard's 105th Airlift Wing supported Singapore Airshow 2024 at Changi Airbase East, Republic of Singapore this February.

The 105th aircrew flew to Singapore and provided its C-17, as well as two other U.S. military aircraft, as static displays for the event. This gave the United States an opportunity to both sharpen ties with Singapore and demonstrate their flexible global reach capabilities.

"The 105th is proud to participate in this opportunity, and opportunities like it, to strengthen our ties with Singapore and other partner nations," said Air National Guard Col. Ryan Dannemann, the commander of the 105th Airlift Wing. "We're always excited to showcase our C-17s and their impressive airlift capabilities."

The aircrew manned the C-17 static display for five days, answering questions, taking pictures with guests and giving tours to children, allies and industry partners.

"Families from all around the world flew down there for the event," said Air National Guard Lt. Col. Emile Sendral, the acting 105th Operations Group commander and one of the aircrew's four pilots. "Interacting with them, handing them patches and stickers, and just teaching them about the C-17 was a lot of fun. It was a highlight."

The aircrew also had the opportunity to meet with airmen of many ally and partner nations, bonding with aviators from Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Australia, and South Korea at the Paya Lebar Republic of Singapore Air Force Base.

"We got to interact with pilots and aircrew from

all over the world," said Sendral. "We shared commonalities like the joy of flying, and we learned about each other's missions."

In transit to Singapore, the C-17 transported an MQ-9 Reaper and Guards-

men from the 174th Attack Wing in Syracuse, N.Y. It also carried an AH-64E Apache Guardian with soldiers from the Army's 1st Battalion, 229th Attack Aviation Regiment of the 16th Combat Aviation Brigade, Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington.

This was the first time the 105th had loaded both an MQ-9 and an Apache together.

"Cramming those in the back of a C-17 and taking it halfway around the world was a great experience that we learned from and displayed the sheer combat power of a C-17," Sendral recalled. "It can quickly take a drone and an Apache anywhere around the world, offload them in a matter of hours and then have them up and ready to go. It was a great display for our partners in the region."

The airshow included eight aerial demonstrations, including the RSAF's F-15SG fighter jet, the Indian Air Force's Sarang aerial display team of HAL Dhruv utility helicopters, the Indonesian Air Force's Jupiter aerobatic team of KT-1B Light Attack Aircraft, and the Republic of Korea Air Force's Black Eagles in their KAI T-50B jets. There were also more than 1,000 exhibitors from 50 countries and approximately 99,000 visitors over the five-day event, making it one of the largest defense exhibitions in the Pacific.

"This has been just one of many initiatives taken by our Airmen to increase readiness while supporting missions worldwide," said Dannemann. "We look forward to our continued partnership with Singapore as we strengthen our relations throughout the Indo-Pacific region." **gt**



C-17 Globemaster III crewmembers assigned to the 105th Airlift Wing stand in front of their aircraft for a group photo during the Singapore Airshow 2024 at the Changi Airbase East, Republic of Singapore, Feb. 20, 2024. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Andrea Posey, Pacific Air Forces.



At top, a C17 Globemaster is staged alongside an Army AH-64E Apache helicopters at Singapore Airshow 2024 at Changi Airbase East, Republic of Singapore, Feb. 24, 2024. Above, Black Eagles from the Republic of Korea Air Force perform aerial demonstrations.



Air National Guard Staff Sgt. Brandon Bisaccia, a crew chief with the 105th Airlift Wing's Operations Group, speaks with guests at Singapore Airshow 2024 at Changi Airbase East, Republic of Singapore, Feb. 24, 2024. The aircrew interacted with airshow guests and allies from across the globe.

106th Communications Flight Now a Squadron

Story and photo by Staff Sgt. Kevin Donaldson, 106th Rescue Wing

FRANCIS S. GABRESKI AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, WESTHAMPTON BEACH, N.Y. — The 106th Rescue Wing Communications Flight was redesignated to the 106th Communications Squadron in a ceremony here on Feb. 4, 2024.

Col. Glyn Weir, commander of the 106th Mission Support Group, alongside Lt. Col. Marybeth Koller, formerly the 106th Communications Flight commander and now the commander of the 106th Communications Squadron, performed the ceremonial changing of the guidons, symbolizing the unit's evolution.

Col. Weir commended Airmen of the squadron for their exceptional performance and strategic vision.

This redesignation signifies our commitment to advancing our cyber defense capabilities to meet the dynamic challenges of today's digital battlefield, Weir said.

Koller highlighted the squadron's critical role in addressing the ever-changing spectrum of cyber threats.

"In a world where threats evolve rapidly, our mission to protect and communicate vital information has never been more important," Koller said. "Today, we stand ready to face these challenges with renewed vigor and enhanced capabilities."

Chief Master Sgt. Robbie Hunt, the squadron's senior enlisted leader, detailed the benefits of transitioning to a squadron structure.

"Becoming a squadron not only increases our manpower and resources but also enhances our flexibility in responding to and neutralizing cyber threats efficiently," Hunt explained.

The transition also marks the

squadron's adoption of the Agile Combat Employment (ACE) strategy, using smaller, versatile teams for rapid response and sustained readiness, Hunt said.

The change aligns with the Air Combat Command directive for a unified Cyber Defense Operations career field, consolidating diverse cyber roles to streamline operations and bolster defense capabilities.

The Communications Squadron consists of over 30 information technology professionals, responsible for providing information security, technological support, and installation of applications, systems, and tools for the wing's workforce.

The integration of 11 cybersecurity Air Force jobs enhances our agility and puts us at the forefront of the cyber mission, Hunt said. One day an Airman could be working as a client support technician, the next as a network administrator, and then switch to radio communications, he added.

Senior Airman Dsent Nicholas, a cyber defense operator who has been with the Communications Flight since 2020, shared his enthusiasm for the upgrade.

"I am excited about the change from flight to a squadron because it represents our resiliency," Nicholas said. "Focusing too much on the present can hold us back,



Members of the 106th Rescue Wing Communication Flight retire their unit's flight guidon and unveil their new squadron guidon in a redesignation ceremony at F.S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base, Westhampton Beach, New York, February 4, 2024.

but this change shows our ability to adapt and move forward."

Reflecting on the squadron's legacy and future, Koller expressed pride and optimism.

"For decades, our unit has been pivotal in ensuring successful missions through robust commu-

nications support," Koller said. "As the first commander of the 106th Communications Squadron, I am honored to lead our dedicated professionals into a new era of cyber excellence." **gt**

Airmen Lunch and Learn with Chaplain

STEWART AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, Newburgh, New York — Members of the



105th Airlift Wing make their lunch at a chaplain sponsored lunch and learn in Newburgh, New York Feb. 9, 2024. Air National Guard Chaplain (Capt.) Melissa Benedict, chaplain for the 105th Airlift Wing, hosted a lunch and learn series on base for members to learn about spiritual resiliency, strengthening relationships, stress reduction and more. Photo by 1st Lt. Briana Ross, 105th Airlift Wing.

Security Forces Tackle Red Flag Exercise

Story by 1st Lt. Breanna Ross, 105th Airlift Wing



205th Base Defense Squadron Airmen pose in front of an off road vehicle following their participation in Exercise Red Flag January 26, 2024 at Nellis Air Force Base in Nevada. The security force Airmen trained in the field on essential security forces concepts. Courtesy photo.

NELLIS AIR FORCE BASE, Nev. — Ten New York Air National Guardsmen from the 105th Airlift Wing's 205th Base Defense Squadron trained in cutting edge base defense operational concepts at Exercise Red Flag 24-1, hosted at Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada, from Jan. 15-26, 2024.

Exercise Red Flag was originally intended for aircrews to gain the experience of multiple, intensive air combat sorties in a training environment. Mission partners, including security forces personnel have since been incorporated for hands-on training in defending operating bases and contingency locations in austere environments.

"The security forces world is changing their focus from protecting established bases to being able to protect wherever our assets may be," said Capt. Steven Morris, acting 205th Base Defense Squadron commander. "It's a lot more focused on those expeditionary skills, Army tactics & doctrine, and using more joint concepts, such as being organized as a platoon rather than a flight."

Base defense personnel were included in the exercise to develop skills needed for Agile

Combat Employment. ACE is the Air Force's new operational concept that focuses on generating air combat power from established bases, as well as remote locations that provide temporary basing for refueling and rearmament of aircraft closer to the fight.

"There's no fence line. There's maybe no infrastructure. There's maybe some host nation, partner defense force. But how do you provide area security to protect those resources from indirect fire, mortars, things that are coming from miles away?" Morris continued. "It also emphasizes 'mission command,' the principle of operating autonomously based on higher level intent when your communications are cut off and can't receive follow-on orders."

The 205th was joined by 24 Airmen from Guard units in Kansas, Ohio and Florida, as well as the 205th's active-duty partner, the 820th Base Defense Group based at Moody Air Force Base, Georgia.

"If we're going to deploy, we're going to integrate with other units, so it's beneficial for many reasons to train together," said Airman 1st Class Kaitlin McGovern, a defender assigned to the 205th Base Defense Squadron serving as a

radiotelephone operator during the exercise.

The Airmen spent eight days in a remote location on the National Test and Training Range in Nevada, creating and defending multiple simulated contingency locations. This involved 24-hour operations, digging out battle positions, setting up machine gun nests and entrenching themselves in the desert.

"When it's a field exercise, and you have to sleep out there and you have different conditions that you're not used to, it's really the only way to prepare for what could happen in a real world scenario," McGovern explained. "It's all-around training and you don't necessarily know what's coming next."

They faced challenges from simulated enemy combatants and communications losses all while enduring their cold, harsh environment.

"You go to Las Vegas and you don't expect it to be 20 degrees with two inches of snow and 50 mph wind gusts, but that's exactly what we got," Morris recalled. "Operating cold and wet can easily make you combat ineffective, so it makes you consider how to prioritize precious space and weight in your rucksack." **gt**

88th Company Marches in St. Patrick's Day Parade

Story and photos by 1st Lt. Ed Shevlin, New York Guard Headquarters

NEW YORK — Twenty volunteers of the New York Guard's 88th Company marched in the 263rd Annual St Patrick's Day Parade in New York City on Saturday, March 16. Led by Capt. David Tsin, the unit commander, and 1st Sgt. Joseph Ronda, the company senior noncommissioned officer, the 88th stepped off from their marshaling area on East 46th Street at 1:40 p.m. for the nearly daylong celebration.

While the city parade is normally held on St. Patrick's Day proper, whenever March 17 falls on a Sunday, as it did this year, the parade is moved to Saturday so as not to interfere with Sunday Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral.

"Our participation in the New York City Saint Patrick's Day Parade is a privilege and is in keeping with the 88th's rich history, which traces back to the Union Army's Irish Brigade at the time of the Civil War," Tsin said.

The 88th is the largest of the three companies in the New York Guard, and traces its lineage back to the Civil War, when it was designated as the 2nd Regiment of the Irish Brigade.

The weather was perfect for the event, Tsin said, and 5th Avenue was lined with spectators on both sides.

As the 88th passed the throng of revelers, cheers went up all along the two-mile parade route, said Pfc. James Merritt of the 88th Company's color guard.



Leaders of the New York Guard's 88th Company march past the reviewing stand along 5th Avenue with their volunteers and color guard during the 263rd New York City Saint Patrick's Day Parade, March 16, 2024.


"The excitement and electricity of the crowds cheering as we marched along 5th Avenue was nothing short of spectacular,"

-- Pfc. James Merritt, 88th Company, New York Guard

"The excitement and electricity of the crowds cheering as we marched along 5th Avenue was nothing short of spectacular," Merritt said.

Much more than a tribute to St. Patrick, the patron saint of New York City and Ireland, the city parade is also a marching competition, a fact not widely known.

Marching units and bands are scored by judges positioned all along the parade route. Groups are judged within various categories on their dress, deportment, marching and when applicable, their musical performance.

During their centennial year of 2017, the competition awarded the 88th third place in the "specials" category for their outstanding performance. Members of the 88th Company said they were confident that following their showing in the 2024 parade, there might be another marching honor coming their way when judges finish their tallies. 

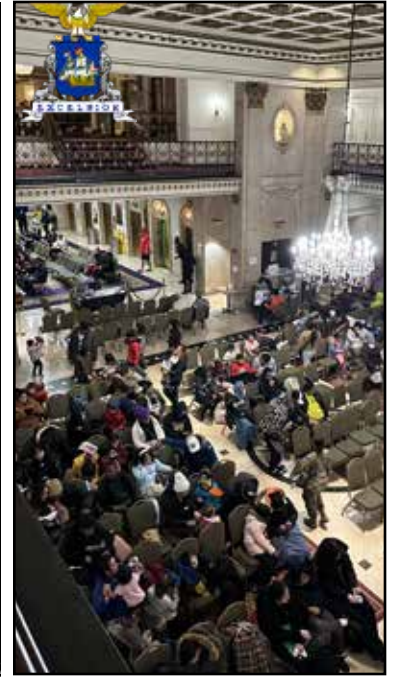


The colors of the New York Guard's 88th Company prepare to pass the reviewing stand for the New York City Saint Patrick's Day Parade, March 16, 2024.



New York Guard Capt. David Tsin, commander of the 88th Company, greets the Most Reverend Robert Brennan, Bishop Brooklyn, during the New York City Saint Patrick's Day parade, March 16, 2024. The 88th Company halted at Saint Patrick's Cathedral on 5th Avenue to receive a blessing.

New York Naval Militia



Leadership Visits Asylum Support Staff

NEW YORK — Naval Militia Commander Rear Admiral Michael Perry and senior staff of the Naval Militia headquarters element visited with Sailors and Marines serving on state active duty during a three-day tour of sites across New York City in January. Above, Perry speaks with personnel at the mission command post at Fort Hamilton. Above right, members of the New York Naval Militia support operations at the Roosevelt Hotel in Manhattan, the starting point for asylum seekers who arrive by bus or train. They are evaluated by medical personnel, given immunizations, needed supplies, social services, temporary shelter, and reconnection services. Below, Perry speaks with reception personnel at one of the sites. Perry said that Naval Militia volunteers on the mission are dedicated and truly want to help the asylum seekers. Many of our own service members, Perry said, are first or second generation Americans themselves and are committed to the mission. Courtesy photos.



Winter Refit for Fleet

New York Naval Militia members prepare to replace the outboard engines for landing craft LC-350 at the Leeds Armory, March 3, 2024. Courtesy photo.

