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



FROM THE LEADERSHIP

A Year Like No Other, a Response Like No Other

Hello everyone. Today, as I write this note, it is June 15, 2020 and day 100 of our COVID-19 response efforts. By the time you read these remarks, it will be well into summer. I hope that things across the state and nation will have improved significantly by then. New York is reopening and moving forward. The governor's New York Forward plan is working and allowing regions to reopen in phases. The response of our service members and civilian employees is nothing short of astounding.

2020 will be a historic year by all accounts – it certainly will be a year none of us will soon forget.

Starting back in March, the New York Military Forces were called into State Active Duty (SAD) to assist with the COVID-19 crisis - initially in New Rochelle, but then rapidly expanding into New York City, Long Island, the lower Hudson Valley, and then eventually across the entire State. We then received presidential approval to place the Army and Air National Guard on federal Title 32 502(f) orders starting on 28 March 2020.

Then on May 25, 2020, Minneapolis police officers killed George Floyd. His death sparked massive civil unrest unseen in our country since the 1960s. Combined with the needless death of George Floyd, the COVID crisis, and the resulting economic downturn in our economy, 2020 is a year like no other.

I want to reiterate that we are an organization that lives by and practices our respective service's core values. Racist, hateful, violent, and hurtful conduct or comments, which discredits the reputation of our military services, are not acceptable. We have no room in our ranks

for people who do not abide by their sworn oath of service to protect and defend the Constitutions of the United States and the State of New York and to live by our military values. It is that simple.

When violations are reported, commanders have an inherent responsibility to investigate. Commanders have the full spectrum of administrative and/or disciplinary actions at their disposal.

The safety and well-being of our service members is our highest priority. To that end, we are working with the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research and the Warrior Resilience (WRAIR) and Fitness Division of the National Guard Bureau to conduct two studies of our personnel to assess the force's wellness and resilience.

For all those Soldiers and Airmen who participated in the decedent recovery and transportation missions with New York City, Westchester County, and Orange County Office of Chief Medical Examiner, the WRAIR has developed a tool to assess service members at regular intervals to determine their psychological health. The entire leadership team strongly encourages participation in this study.

The other assessment run by the National Guard Bureau's Warrior Resilience and Fitness Division looks at the entire force to look at stressors associated with deploying for the COVID-19 response, those not deploying, and the impacts of family and community stressors associated with dealing with the COVID-19 crisis. Senior leaders will use the results of this study across the country to inform programs regarding resiliency. Both of these efforts will help the total force and improve resiliency programs.

Keeping on the theme of safety and summer vacations, I ask everyone to refocus on keeping themselves, their families, and their units safe. It is also motorcycle season; wear the required reflective vests

and required personnel protective equipment when riding. Water and fire safety is especially important for young children. When training, remember military vehicle speed is 50 MPH unless the road's speed limit is lower. Everyone is a safety Officer or NCO when training. If you see something unsafe, stop the action and make immediate corrections.

Thank you again for everything you do. You are fantastic service members and civilian employees. We simply could not do what we do without each one of you. Stay safe and healthy!



Maj. Gen. Raymond Shields



Senior Airman Paul Lambert, assigned to the 109th Airlift Wing, dons personal protective equipment to assist the City of New York Office of the Chief Medical Examiner recovering the deceased in New York City, May 2. National Guard members supported the city's recovery of decedents during the peak of the pandemic. See our related story on page 12. Photo by Senior Airman Sean Madden, 106th Rescue Wing.





guardtimes

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New York Army National Guard Spc. Reagan Long, assigned to the 827th Engineer Company of the 204th Engineer Battalion, alongside Pfc. Naomi Velez, assigned to the 152nd Engineer Support Company register people at a COVID-19 Mobile Testing Center in Glenn Island Park, New Rochelle March 14 2020. Photo by Sgt. Amouris Coss, 138th Public Affairs Detachment.



FRONT COVER: 1st Lt. Camille Valenza, a Fire Direction Officer in Alpha Battery, 1st Battalion, 258th Field Artillery, puts together a test kit at the Brooklyn Testing Site on May 1, 2020. Soldiers assembled over 3,000 kits in the day to support regional COVID-19 testing. Photo by 1st Lt. Greg Cheung, 1st Battalion, 258th Field Artillery.
BACK COVER: Spc. Matthew Hart, assigned to the 1st Battalion, 258th Field Artillery, carries a large box of prepackaged meals to a licensed delivery vehicle at the Hunts Point - Bronx Food Distribution Site on April 8, 2020. Photo by 1st Lt. Kyle Kilner 1st Battalion, 258th Field Artillery.

FACES of the FORCE

NYC ER Doctor joins Air Guard During Pandemic

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

WESTHAMPTON BEACH, N.Y. — A New York City emergency room doctor at the heart of the fight against COVID-19 added another role to his already impressive lists of medical credentials on March 18: flight surgeon in the New York Air National Guard's 106th Rescue Wing.

Now a major, Dr. Lorenzo Paladino, has 20 years of experience as an emergency room doctor and has also been training the pararescuemen of the 106th Rescue Wing's 103rd Rescue Squadron in medical techniques for the past six years.

In civilian life, Paladino is Associate Professor of Emergency Medicine at SUNY Downstate Medical Center and also at Kings County Hospital Center. Research he conducted on the use of a single ventilator to support up to four subjects in 2008 was cited in a March 26, New York Times article on the COVID-19 crisis.

"We are grateful and proud to have Dr. Paladino join us," said Lt. Col. (Dr.) Stephen Rush the 106th Medical Group commander.

Paladino also traveled to Washington to discuss his research with federal health officials.

"He is a master educator at one of New York City's busiest emergency rooms," Rush said. "His clinical skills and research background are a force multiplier for the Air National Guard, the Air Force and the pararescue community."

Paladino said he made his decision to join the New York Air National Guard's 106th Rescue Wing over a year ago. He liked the idea of being able to serve in his community while also serving the nation, Paladino said.

"I was always a New Yorker. I was born in New York, went to school

in New York, went to med school in New York, I did my residency in New York also," he said. "You always have a love for your hometown. I think being in New York was a big attraction, being able to help my hometown."

Paladino's relationship with the 106th Rescue Wing began when he was teaching Army Special Forces medics at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

Paladino's journey into medicine started with scuba diving, then scuba rescue, then becoming a New York City paramedic before deciding on medical school. While working as a resident in training, Special Forces Soldiers would rotate through his hospital for training and Paladino, as a former paramedic would teach them.

"The pre-hospital environment is a different animal" than working in a hospital and because he understood that, he could share that perspective with the soldiers, Paladino explained.

Eventually, he was invited to teach at the Special Forces School itself where he met Dr. Rush from the 106th Rescue Wing. Rush, in turn hooked him into teaching classes to the Air National Guard pararescuemen, known as PJs for short.

"I want to help those who are helping us, the soldiers, the PJs, the Airmen, I want to help them do their job because they are helping us for the greater good," Paladino explained.

Along with working in a big city hospital, Paladino has operated in austere environments. He's worked in the aftermath of earthquakes in Haiti, disasters in South America, and with refugees in Iraq.

These experiences prepared him



Dr. Lorenzo Paladino, an emergency medicine physician in Brooklyn, enlisted into the New York Air National Guard's 106th Rescue Wing, as the coronavirus pandemic spread through the city, March 18, 2020. Courtesy photo.

for working in now overcrowded emergency rooms in America's largest city.

"I've been in places where the basics like toilet paper and food were scarce even for us as the rescuers, but also where the medical supplies were scarce for us. So I've grown accustomed to working in those environments," Paladino said. "but it is very alien to do that in my own zip code."

He and other medical colleagues knew the coronavirus hitting China would spread to the United States and worked to get ready, Paladino said.

"For those of us who had our finger on the pulse, we had a little bit of a heads up," he said. "We could see what the situation was going to look like, what the burden was and the equipment that was going to be needed ahead of time."

The problem, he said, was that doctors and hospitals in China and Europe were also trying to order the same equipment at the same time.

His swearing in to the armed forces was planned before the current health crisis and there was discussion about putting it off or doing it by teleconference, the doctor said.

Instead, with downtime being so precious at the moment, he decided to come to the wing in person to have the oath of office administered by Lt. Col. Glyn Weir, the 103rd Rescue Squadron commander.

He then carried out his first action as a major that afternoon, holding a training session for the 103rd Rescue Squadron's pararescuemen. He recalled not answering to one of the PJs calling him a major for the first time, realizing "oh, he's talking to me," said Paladino.

The ability to attract people like Doctor Paladino to join is what makes the Air National Guard so unique, said Col. Michael Bank, the commander of the 106th Rescue Wing.

"I am continually amazed at the level of talent and ability we recruit to our team," Bank said. "Dr. Lorenzo Paladino has already been making a difference for us as an instructor and we couldn't be happier to have him join our team. As the commander of the 106th Rescue Wing, I am proud we are home to some of the best medical minds in the military."

Air Guard Chaplain Delivers Easter Mass in NYC

Story by Maj. Patrick Cordova, 105th Airlift Wing

NEW YORK — Social distancing requirements made traditional Easter services a no-go on Easter Sunday, April 12 2020, but New York National Guard and active duty service members working at the COVID-19 alternate health care facility at New York City's Javits Convention Center still got a chance to receive Easter communion safely.

Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Jacob Marvel, the wing chaplain for the 109th Airlift Wing, made sure anybody who wanted to receive communion that day had the chance.

Members of the Unified Command at the hospital erected in the convention center, now called the Javits New York Medical Station, stopped by as their duties allowed, to mark the holiest day of the Christian calendar.

"My goal was to provide spiritual

support for people who needed it or wanted it", Marvel explained. "We are in the midst of Holy Days for several religions and our spirituality is an important part of how we stay balanced in this crisis."

"Communion is a reminder to Christians of the presence of God and Easter is our holiest day," said Marvel. "We had 140 people come and receive communion yesterday."

"We also had at least a dozen more stop in from different faiths – they came to light a candle or pick up matzo bread," he said.

The Easter services were held in a room set up to provide a respite from the demands of caring for COVID-19 patients or supporting the Javits operation, and dubbed the Gotham Resilience Center.

"It's a room set up for everyone at the Javits", explained Staff Sgt.

Nicholas Mancuso, a religious affairs Airman from the 109th Airlift Wing who is assigned to the Javits New York Medical Station.

"We provide a location where

service members and Defense supported civilian agencies can worship, find support for their religious needs, relax, meditate, or simply enjoy a cup of coffee," he said.



Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Jacob Marvel conducts Easter Mass for service members at the Javits Convention Center in New York City while following social distancing guidelines April 12, 2020. Photo by Maj. Patrick Cordova, 105th Airlift Wing.

107th NCO awarded Financial Manager of the Year

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

NIAGARA FALLS, N.Y. — New York Air National Guard Master Sgt. Jennifer DeWislepeare's passion for math and numbers, coupled with the satisfaction of helping solve problems and working with people has led to a National Guard Bureau award distinguishing her as a professional accountant and non-commissioned officer.

Each year the Air National Guard receives nominations for the Financial Management and Comptroller Award program. The Undersecretary of Defense (Comptroller) states "this award emphasizes our commitment to recognizing our many outstanding and talented financial managers. The awards program is designed to formally recognize the exceptional performance of deserving personnel who have contributed significantly to increasing the effectiveness of Air Force operations at a time when the nation is facing significant fiscal challenges."

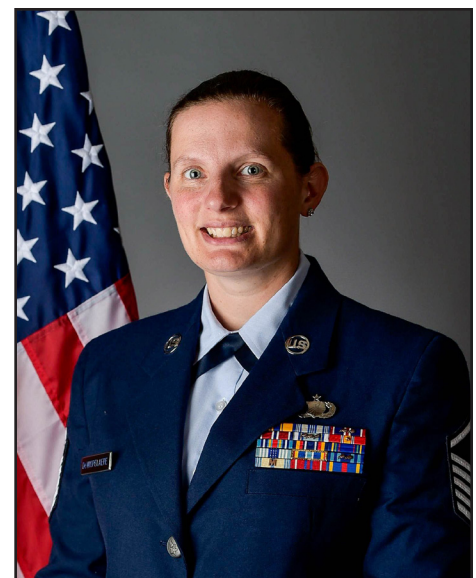
For 2019, 67 nominations from across the Air Guard were sent in. DeWislepeare, representing the 107th Comptroller Flight, 107th Attack Wing, was one of 11 nominated before ultimately receiving the Financial Management

Senior NCO of the Year for 2019.

"I feel very humbled and honored to be awarded the financial management senior non-commissioned officer of the Year for the ANG," DeWislepeare said. "I knew I was being submitted for the award but I did not think I would be selected because of all of the talent in the Guard. I knew I was competing against the best of the best so to win was a surprise but I am very grateful to have been selected."

Enlisting in 2007, DeWislepeare is a financial management craftsman and is the lead accountant for the 107th. Her current job responsibilities include overseeing all functions of vendor pay and travel disbursements, conducting multiple audits and assisting the budget office with end of year closeout.

"I love the satisfaction that comes from helping others solve a problem they are dealing with," DeWislepeare said. "I have always been self-motivated to excel not just in my job but anything I am doing. It sounds cliché but if you aren't going to give it 100% it is not worth doing."



Master Sgt. Jennifer DeWislepeare, a financial management craftsman assigned to the 107th Attack Wing, received the Financial Management Senior NCO of the year for 2019 from the Air National Guard. Photo courtesy of the 107th Attack Wing.

Soldier on third NYC Emergency in 20-Year Span

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

NEW YORK — For the third time in his career, New York Army National Guard Sgt. 1st Class Joseph Maloney, a Rochester resident, is back in New York City responding to an emergency.

In 2001, Maloney was one of the 3,000 New York National Guard members mobilized in response to the Sept. 11 attacks on the World Trade Center by airliners hijacked by terrorists.

In 2012, Maloney was back in New York City when 4,400 National Guard Soldiers and Airmen were mobilized after Superstorm Sandy slammed into the state on October 29.

Now Maloney is back in the Big Apple again, responding to the COVID-19 pandemic at Jacob Javits Convention Center in Manhattan as one of 3,600 New York National Guard members on duty for this emergency.

“Although each experience had their differences, my experiences were all the same, no matter my rank,” Maloney said. “We’re there to help the people of New York and answer their calls.”

Maloney, normally assigned to the 642nd Support Battalion in Rochester, is deployed to the city as the safety non-commissioned officer in charge (NCOIC) at the Javits Medical Station.

The Jacob Javits Conven-

tion Center, along the west side of Midtown Manhattan, was converted in late March by the National Guard and Army Corps of Engineers to an alternate treatment facility for the projected wave of COVID-19 patients across New York City.

He works in the Unified Command Post, the National Guard element that oversees the management and administration of the site to assist with the overall safety of the station. Maloney is part of a joint military team and expressed his appreciation for his other military counterparts.

“I worked closely with a team of five awesome, hardworking, Army and Air National Guard Soldiers, all working towards the same end goal,” he said.

In each deployment experience, Maloney made a different contribution, he said.

Following 9/11, Maloney worked at Ground Zero in one of the wash racks. He was responsible for clearing contaminants off the trucks removing the debris of the Twin Towers to prevent any contaminated dust from blowing off onto the streets of New York City.

After Super Storm Sandy struck New York City and Long Island, he was the battle staff non-commissioned officer for Joint Task Force Blackheart.

As a more experienced



Army National Guard Sgt. 1st Class Joseph Maloney at the Javits New York Medical Station in the Jacob Javits Convention Center in New York, on May 3, 2020 where he is serving as the safety non-commissioned officer in charge for safety. Maloney is on his third emergency deployment in New York. He responded to the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center, and to the response to Superstorm Sandy in 2012.

Soldier, he oversaw the staffing, dispatching and tracking of over 150 Soldiers that were going out on their respective missions in the community.

Now, at Javits Medical Station, he is responsible for the safety of those entering and exiting the convention center.

The common thread through all three deployments is providing service to his community, Maloney said.

“I joined the National Guard 20 years ago because I wanted to help the citizens of New York State during emergencies or natural disasters. I jump to the opportunity each

time; because I haven’t lost the reason I joined,” said Maloney.

While he never expected to be back in New York City three times in his career for such large scale events, he knows that the National Guard efforts are appreciated, Maloney said.

“The citizens of New York have always been appreciative when the National Guard shows up to help,” he said.

Maloney celebrated his 20 years of military service while in New York City and even had the honor of promoting a few of his Soldiers to mark the special date.

“I was honored and

humbled to have the opportunity to promote three Soldiers to specialist at the World Trade Center (Memorial), right at the same location I was promoted when I was down here during 9/11 for Operation Trade Center,” Maloney said.

“On top of that, it was also the same day as my 20th year anniversary when I raised my right hand to join the National Guard. It certainly was a day I’ll never forget,” said Maloney. **gt**



Army Warrant Officer Christopher Gallant, assigned to Bravo Company, 3rd Battalion, 142nd Aviation, served as safety officer at the Javits New York Medical Station in Manhattan, N.Y., April 21, 2020. Gallant tested positive for COVID-19 in March and made a full recovery before coming on duty and volunteering for an antibody test.

NEW YORK — Army National Guard Warrant Officer Christopher Gallant has seen both sides of the fight against COVID-19. After surviving the disease, Gallant is back on duty at the Javits New York Medical Station, where more than 1,090 COVID-19 patients have been treated.

Fresh from Warrant Officer Candidate School, by March 16 he was in self-quarantine with COVID symptoms. With body aches, persistent headaches and a fever, Gallant, a full-time Federal Aviation Administration air traffic controller from Amity Harbor, Long Island, knew there was a possibility he had the disease.

“Overall the symptoms were very mild but they completely fit with COVID symptoms,” said Gallant who is assigned to the New York Army National Guard’s Bravo Company, 3rd Battalion, 142nd Aviation. “By Wednesday, March 18 I still had the same conditions and called my doctor to get tested.”

The wait time for results was three days and,

Soldier Beats COVID; Joins the Fight

Story and photo by Maj. Patrick Cordova, 105th Airlift Wing

“The Guard is excellent at making quick work of large projects and does it well. We built something the world has never seen before,”

-- Warrant Officer Christopher Gallant, Javits Medical Station Safety Officer

in the meantime, he remained in quarantine and treated his symptoms with over-the-counter medication, which he explained was a great help.

“By Thursday, March 19 I was about 90% better and Friday, March 20 was back to normal,” Gallant said.

Gallant, who is waiting to attend Army Aviation Initial Entry Rotary Wing training in May to become a Black Hawk pilot, followed the Suffolk County Department of Health guidance on when he could return to work.

“While in recovery, I had put in a request to volunteer for state active duty to help the COVID-19 response,” Gallant said.

Gallant explained he had to wait 14 days from the onset of symptoms to ensure it was safe for him to back to work, so he scheduled another test to show he was COVID-19 negative.

“Although my symptoms were nonexistent for over a week, I still got a positive result after 14 days since the onset of symptoms,” Gallant said.

After further coordination with Army doctors, he was able to go on duty as of April 4, being assigned as the safety officer at the medical center that was setup in the Javits Center in Manhattan.

“On a daily basis I am constantly working with civilian agencies such as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, state fire and Northwell Health along with various military forces working at Javits,” Gallant said.

The corps of engineers have been handling most of the building projects while Northwell Health is a private company that was brought in by the governor to manage patient intake.

They also established a sick call for New York National Guardsmen working there as well as procedures on how to handle possible COVID-19 positive cases.

That’s where Gallant was approached by Army Maj. Robert Freed, the deputy commander for New York’s 24th Weapons of Mass

Destruction Civil Support Team (WMD-CST). As the officer in charge, Freed’s team is responsible for testing people for the COVID-19 virus.

“I had heard that Warrant Office Gallant had previously tested positive for COVID-19 while my team and I were training the doctors and nurses about decontamination techniques to help keep the same,” Freed said. He continued by explaining they had been shipped new antibody tests, which Gallant was a good candidate for before using them on a larger scale.”

This type of test looks for viral antibodies in the blood as opposed to an active presence in the back of your throat.

“If you’re actively sick, the polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests being used at the drive-thru sites are typically a better test since your body may not have developed antibodies at that point,” Freed said. “Basically, one test can help determine if you were sick and one test can help determine if you are sick.”

He explained the test is done through a small amount of blood with a buffer solution and results come back in 10-20 minutes.

The 24th CST is equipped with a mobile lab the team uses in the regular duties of finding, identifying and mitigating CBRNE materials.

“We were excited that the antibody test was able to confirm Warrant Officer Gallant had built-up antibodies for the COVID-19 virus,” Freed reported. “Having a tool that can help get Soldiers and Airmen back to duty is critical to maintaining our effectiveness as a force,” Freed continued. “It’s also critical that people like Gallant, who became ill, recovered and returned to the fight, are part of the New York National Guard’s COVID-19 response effort.”

“The Guard is excellent at making quick work of large projects and does it well,” Gallant said. “We built something the world has never seen before and it would not have been possible without the great teamwork and knowledge that everyone brought to the table.”

Editor’s Note: Ryan Campbell also contributed to this story.

Celebrating Memorial Day During the Pandemic

Story by Eric Durr, *Guard Times Staff*

LATHAM, N.Y. — Maj. Gen. Ray Shields, the adjutant general of New York, recognized Memorial Day 2020 on Friday, May 22, in a ceremony designed to comply with COVID-19 pandemic social distancing requirements.

The short ceremony featured a bugler, the singing of the national anthem, remarks from the adjutant general, and the placing of a wreath at the New York National Guard memorial to fallen Guardsmen at New York State Division of Military and Naval Affairs Headquarters in Latham, N.Y.

What was missing, though, was the crowd of 300 or so Soldiers, Airmen and civilian employees who normally show up in front of the headquarters building for the annual ceremony.

Instead, the Memorial Day ceremony was taped so it could be posted online, and the adjutant general and other participants wore protective facemasks.

The goal, Shields explained, was to continue to recognize the importance for Memorial Day—especially for military members—while still abiding by the health guidelines laid down by New York Governor Andrew M. Cuomo.

The governor has encouraged communities and groups to recognize Memorial Day, but he has also asked them to do so in groups no larger than ten people. The standard ceremony was redesigned to reflect those mandates.

Along with eliminating the audience, the moving parts of the traditional ceremony were changed so participants could stay six feet apart, explained Maj. Josh Heimroth, the executive officer to the adjutant general. The number of moving parts were kept to a minimum, he said.

Instead of marching the Color Guard into place, the flags were already in position when the ceremony started. Only the narrator, the adjutant general, and the chaplain had to move during the ceremony. The wreath presentation was also simplified.

“This is definitely a usual Memorial Day, one that we will not soon forget,” Shields said.

“Normally our annual remembrance of the men and women who gave their lives for our



Army Maj. Gen. Ray Shields, the Adjutant General for New York and Command Sgt. Maj. David Piwowski, the New York Army National Guard Senior Enlisted Advisor, present a wreath and render honors during a Memorial Day weekend remembrance ceremony to honor fallen members of the New York National Guard, May 22, 2020. Members conducted the ceremony with appropriate PPE and using social distancing measures. Photo by Col. Richard Goldenberg, Joint Forces Headquarters.

nation is an all hands on deck affair. Today, May 22, 2020, there are only a handful of us here to pay tribute to our fallen service members,” he said.

But it is important to remember what Memorial Day is about and so it is fitting that the New York National Guard’s leaders conduct a ceremony, Shields said.

Memorial Day weekend will not be the same either, he noted.

“There will be no parades, except maybe some vehicle parades. There will be no gatherings at cemeteries. There will be no big picnics, no concerts, and amusement parks and campgrounds statewide will remain closed,” Shields said.

What will continue, Shields said, is the sense of duty and need for mission accomplishment that motivates members of the New York National Guard.

There will still be 3,500 Soldiers and Airmen on duty across the state this weekend responding to the COVID 19 crisis, he added.

“Perhaps in an odd way, with everything closed on Monday, it will give us more time to reflect on the sacrifices made by so many to defend our country,” Shields said.

During the event, Soldiers and Airmen who have fallen in combat or those who have passed away here at home are recognized. This year seven Soldiers and Airmen who passed away here at home were recognized.

Since the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, 39 New York Army and Air National Guard Soldiers and Airmen—7 Airmen and 32 Soldiers— have lost their lives in Iraq and Afghanistan. The most recent casualties occurred in 2018 when a HH-60 Pave Hawk rescue helicopter flown by the 106th Rescue Wing crashed in Iraq.

The New York National Guard currently has around 800 personnel deployed overseas. Six hundred of those Soldiers and assigned to the headquarters of the 42nd Infantry Division which is commanding Army forces in the Middle East. **gt**

Honor Guard Provides Socially Distant Salutes

New rules for rendering final honors across the state

Story and photo by Capt. Avery Schneider, 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the New York Army National Guard's Military Funeral Honors Program continues to provide final salutes to veterans.

Traditional parts of the ceremony, including the detail leader kneeling before a family member and carefully handing them the flag, have been eliminated to ensure social distancing.

The changes comply with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's health guidance for controlling the coronavirus.

On a warm and cloudy morning on May 14, Sgt. Nikole Clark and Spc. Austin Dycha stepped out at Holy Cross Cemetery in Lackawanna, New York to conduct a ceremony under the new rules.

The two-member honor guard team surveyed the cemetery's granite-walled mausoleum and began preparations for the funeral of Raymond Kegler, an Army Air Forces corporal in World War II.

They donned jackets and service caps, brushed off lint, and pulled on white gloves.

Then they added the newest part of their uniforms: black cloth masks.

The masks are the primary protection against COVID-19, now required during funeral honors.

The funeral honors program was performing an average of 850 services per month, statewide, down to 350 since the pandemic hit New York.

"Although veterans are passing, some cemeteries are not allowing honors to be performed at the moment," explained 1st Lt. Melisa Rosario, the officer in charge of the program.

Two types of ceremonies would



Spc. Austin Dycha and Sgt. Nikole Clark, members of the National Guard Military Funeral Honors Team, remove the flag from the casket of Army Spc. Levelzo Lyles during his funeral in Lackawanna, New York, May 14. Dycha and Clark wore cloth face masks as part of precautions used during military funerals to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

normally be available: modified full honors for retirees or those who died while on active duty; or modified honors for Army veterans with an honorable discharge. Nine Soldiers, including a firing party, perform the modified full honors. Only two perform the modified honors.

Based on National Guard Bureau guidelines, a maximum of three soldiers are currently allowed, so New York's program is only offering modified honors.

Where they are permitted, each individual ceremony is directed by a detail leader like Clark, who has the duty of presenting the burial flag to the veteran's family.

"The detail leader will determine how safe they feel at the service and has the option to place the flag six feet from the next of kin, or on the casket," Rosario said.

Soldiers like Clark and Dycha are dealing with a lot of uncertainty as they perform the time-honored traditions of the final salute.

Small details like which way a funeral procession arrives at the cemetery are normally the same

each time, which meant they knew where to stand and how the ceremony would play out.

But new restrictions on which gates vehicles enter from, and caskets sometimes interred before a service begins, mean Clark and Dycha have to adjust quickly.

"We're trained to manage it and think on our feet. We make it work,

whatever we've got to," Clark said.

Limits on attendees at a service don't just apply to the honor guard. They impact the number of family members allowed to attend, too.

"We've done services where it's hundreds of people there, and now it's a handful of people," Clark said. "And once in a while you get them live-streaming, too. It's not really something you saw before."

She said not kneeling in front of the next of kin to present the burial flag took the most getting used to.

"Kneeling in front of someone and looking into their eyes, and presenting them a flag is kind of a worth-a-thousand-words kind of thing, a big gesture, a more powerful gesture," Clark explained.

Clark and Dycha say what they offer families during the pandemic is a sense of normalcy in a far-from-normal time.

"It's definitely less intimate," Clark said. "You just have to make do with it and still know that the family understands."



Memorial Wall Honors New York Fallen

CAMP SMITH -- New York Air National Guard Senior Master Sgt. Todd Lobraico Sr., a Gold Star father and member of the 105th Airlift Wing, views the memorial wall commemorating 39 New York Army and Air National Guard members who have died in Iraq and Afghanistan since 2001, unveiled at Camp Smith February 27. His son, Staff Sgt. Todd Lobraico Jr., who was killed in Afghanistan in 2013, is commemorated on the memorial wall. Photo by Sgt. Jonathan Pietrantonio, 138th Public Affairs Detachment.

THE JOINT FORCE

NY Responds to Coronavirus with 3,620 Troops

Story by Eric Durr, *Guard Times Staff*

LATHAM, N.Y. — Over 22.7 million meals delivered, 311,321 COVID-19 tests collected, 270,686 phone calls answered and 25,554 pallets of medical supplies warehoused and 6,394 distributed.

Those are some of the numbers that describe the New York National Guard response to the COVID-19 crisis from March to June of 2020.

Along the way, troops established four alternate care facilities - including one at the Jacob Javits Convention Center which treated 1,095 COVID-19 patients - and helped the Medical Examiner of New York City conduct the dignified recovery of 2,882 New Yorkers who died during the crisis.

What started as the deployment of several hundred troops to a “containment zone” placed around an outbreak in New Rochelle on March 10, grew to over 3,620 troops on duty by May.

There were 2,994 New York Army National Guard Soldiers and 470 New York Air National Guard Airmen on the mission on May 5, organized into six regional task forces and two mission specific teams.

There were 81 New York Guard and 84 New York Naval Militia members responding as well.

The National Guard, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo said, played a key role in the state’s pandemic response.

“You showed up when other people played it safe. You had the courage to show up,” Cuomo told members of the New York National Guard at the Jacob Javits Center on March 27. “You had the skill and the professionalism to make a difference and save lives.”

The response, Cuomo added, is historic.

“Ten years from now, you’ll be talking about today to your children or your grandchildren and you will shed a tear because you will remember the lives lost. You’ll remember the faces and you’ll remember the names and you’ll remember how hard we worked and that we still lost loved ones,” he said.

Initially, Soldiers and Airmen provided food to New Rochelle families who missed school meals, cleaned facilities, delivered hand sanitizer and established the first state-run COVID-19 drive-thru test site.

One unusual mission was staffing a call center established to answer questions from the public and schedule COVID-19 tests.

An executive order put New York on PAUSE March 22 and the mission grew. Testing sites were established on Long Island and New York City. Food distribution began in the city too.

Guard Soldiers turned the Javits Convention Center into the Javits New York Medical Station, staffed by active military medical personnel. The South Beach Psychiatric Center on Staten Island became another alternate care facility with Guard support.

Guard personnel assisted in controlling access to care facilities at Westchester Convention Center, SUNY Old Westbury and Stony Brook.

Soldiers and Airmen worked at warehousing the tons of medical supplies pouring in. They worked in four established sites such as the Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Services warehouse in Oriskany. Temporary warehouses were set up at Stewart Air National Guard Base and at the Javits Center.

A critical mission was assembling COVID-19 tests for the state Department of Health. Teams of 30 to 50 Airmen and Soldiers combined items into 1.6 million test kits.

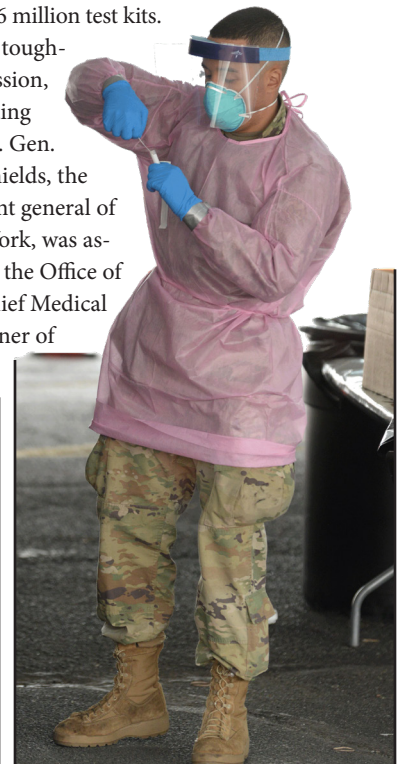
The toughest mission, according to Maj. Gen. Ray Shields, the adjutant general of New York, was assisting the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner of New



Pfc. Daijah Simins, assigned to the 1st Battalion, 258th Field Artillery, unloads meals from a pallet at the Staten Island food distribution site April 10. Meals are placed in waiting taxis for delivery. Photo by 1st Lt. Nate Sanders, 1st Battalion, 258th Field Artillery.



Spc. Gilliam-Gray Shawnese assigned to the 101st Signal Battalion, gives instructions to people in their vehicles at the COVID-19 Mobile Testing Center in Glenn Island Park, New Rochelle, April 8. Photo by Sgt. Jonathan Pietrantonio, 138th Public Affairs Detachment.



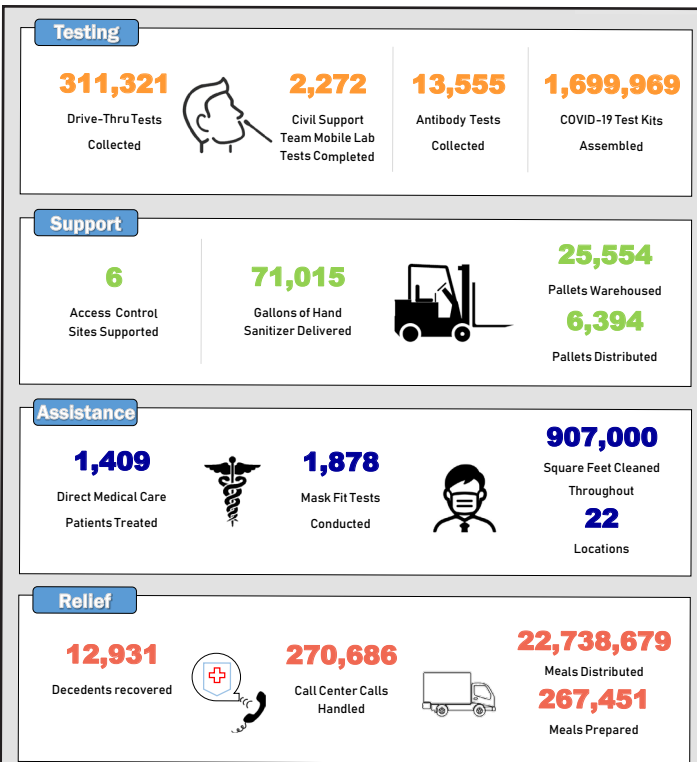
Pfc. Gian Zimnis, a 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry combat medic, secures a COVID-19 swab in Brooklyn, N.Y., April 20. Photo by Senior Airman Sean Madden, 106th Rescue Wing.



Staff Sgt. Zachary Heberlein, assigned to the 107th Attack Wing, holds up a sign he uses to communicate with residents at a drive-through COVID-19 testing site in Buffalo, N.Y., May 5. He is supporting state agencies at one of 15 test sites across New York. Photo by Capt. Avery Schneider, 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team.



Pfc. Kristoffshakur Larmond, assigned to the 1st Battalion, 258th Field Artillery, distributes boxes of produce and canned goods at a Brooklyn food pantry in Bushwick N.Y., May 27, 2020. Photo by 1st Lt. Kyle Kilner, 1st Battalion, 258th Field Artillery.



New York National Guard COVID-19 Response Statistics as of June 5, 2020.



The final patient is discharged from Javits New York Medical Station May 1. Javits, supported by a National Guard unified command post treated 1,095 patients. Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Kleyntia Mcknight, Joint Task Force NY / NJ.

York City with the dignified recovery of people who died in their homes.

Normally 25 people die at home in New York City each day. On some days, the 250 Soldiers and Airmen on the mission dealt with over 200 decedents.

“Your work makes a difference for families at a very critical time of need when their loss is

14 pararescue Airmen from the 106th Rescue Wing helped overwhelmed staff for four weeks.

The pararescue Airmen managed ventilator use and helped turn over patients to help them breath better. They were “force multipliers,” said Lt. Col. Stephen “Doc” Rush, the 106th Rescue Wing’s medical group commander.

“They were there to give staff support,” he said.


most personal,” Shields told members during an April 2 visit.

At Elmhurst Medical Center, a public city hospital the New York Times called the epicenter of the virus,

By June, Soldiers and Airmen were staffing 15 drive-up test sites and five coronavirus antibody testing sites.

While over 22 million meals were delivered in New York City, Soldiers also provided meals to Chenango County senior citizens and supported food drives in the Mohawk Valley.

As he crisscrossed the state, Shields said he has been continually pleased by how the force works together, he told leaders during a June 1 meeting. Things happen as they should, he said.

“Everyone should be proud of the work being done and the efforts of our total force to ease the suffering of our fellow New Yorkers,” Shields said in a May 14th email to troops and leaders. 

Guard Takes on Grim Job in NYC Pandemic Response

Story by Col. Richard Goldenberg, Joint Force Headquarters

NEW YORK — The toughest COVID-19 mission facing the New York National Guard fell on 255 Soldiers and Airmen supporting New York City’s Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, according to Army Maj. Gen. Ray Shields, the Adjutant General of New York.

The Medical Examiner’s officer is responsible for the dignified recovery of people who die outside of a hospital. The agency staff was overwhelmed at the spike in COVID-19 related deaths in the city of 8.5 million, so city officials turned to the New York National Guard for help.

In just two months of mission support, Guardsmen assisted in the recovery of 2,882 city residents.

Soldiers and Airmen responded around the clock in March, April and May to handle the dignified removal of remains.

“Your work makes a difference for families at a very critical time of need when their loss is most personal,” Shields said on April 2.

For the New York National Guard, the mission started March 23 when 13 Airmen of the 107th Attack Wing Fatality Search and Recovery Team (FSRT), based in Niagara Falls, reported for duty in New York City. They deployed to assist the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) to transport the anticipated high number of deaths.

“We arrived in New



Senior Master Sgt. Gary Fiorillo, left, and Senior Airman Paul Lambert assist the New York City Medical Examiner with deceased recovery in New York, May 2. Photo by Senior Airman Sean Madden, 106th Rescue Wing.

York City on Tuesday, touched down Wednesday morning for training with the OCME and Thursday we were out on the road,” described Air National Guard 1st Lt. Shawn Lavin, the commander of the 107th FSRT.

“The city hospitals are at or just about at their capacities,” Lavin said in March. And the second and third-order effect is the “downstream impact,” Lavin said, referring to morgues and funeral homes.

The National Guard assisted with the recovery of remains from deaths across city in private homes, hospitals and nursing homes.

From daily highs around 100 recoveries, Airmen and Soldiers worked in teams with medical examiners.

“Teams go out each day,” Lavin said. “We’ll dispatch with the OCME in their vehicle and our team in the

trail vehicle.”

As workload increased, an additional 220 Army Guard Soldiers, from the 101st Signal Battalion, the 152nd Brigade Engineer Battalion and 2nd Battalion, 108th Infantry, among other individual Soldiers, mobilized for duty.

The Air Guard also provided 28 additional Airmen to augment teams.

“Soldiers understand the mission, how important it is and that their help is greatly needed,” said Command Sgt. Maj. David Piwowski, the New York Army National Guard’s senior enlisted advisor following a visit April 12.

At the peak in the city April 7, two dozen people were dying every hour.

The teams operated across the city, supporting all five boroughs.

“The Medical Examiner handles the appropriate

processing steps and National

Guard personnel provide the manpower for removing and transporting those remains,” Lavin said.

“Everyone understands the gravity of the situation,” he explained, noting how unprepared his Airmen were to be in people’s homes to help remove decedents.

“It is a humbling experience. You see things you’d never thought you’d see in your military service,” he said. “It is a mentally taxing and physically taxing job.”

Every element received training from OCME staff. The training highlighted the unique personal protective requirements, interactions and procedures.

“The OCME, they do it day to day, so they have been excellent mentors,” Lavin said.

The National Guard also



Above, Senior Airman Anita Walter, assigned to the Fatality Search and Recovery Team, outside Bellevue Hospital in New York City, April 4. Below, 1st Lt. Shawn Lavin, the team commander, gives a morning briefing April 4. The Airmen are trained in the recovery of remains during disasters. Photo by Senior Airman Sean Madden, 106th Rescue Wing.



provided chaplains and behavioral health specialists to speak about stress.

The support is helpful because no amount of training or preparation readies you for the job, said Senior Airmen Anita Walter from the FSRT.

“Something about seeing the real thing just hits you a little different,” Walter said.

The toll was challenging, but the consensus was a commitment to the mission, knowing that it mattered, Shields said.

“Everybody feels like they are part of the solution here,” Lavin said. **gt**

Panoramas of the Pandemic



Spc. Dylan Messina of the 104th Military Police Battalion, plays with Dakota, a Labrador Retriever service dog from Puppies Behind Bars in Manhattan, April 21. Puppies Behind Bars is a nonprofit that trains prison inmates to raise service dogs. Photo by Senior Airman Sean Madden, 106th Rescue Wing.



Spc. Justin Farber, assigned to the 152nd Brigade Engineer Battalion, assembles COVID-19 test kits at the Department of Health Wadsworth Center in Albany, N.Y., April 4. Photo by Mike Wren, N.Y. State Department of Health.



Sgt. 1st Class Jonathan Morrison, a combat medic specialist assigned to 24th Civil Support Team, processes a COVID-19 test at a rapid mobile testing site located at the Javits N.Y. Medical Station in New York April 27. Photo by Sgt. Michael Bezares, 138th Public Affairs Detachment.



Sgt. Keyanna Joseph, left, and Spc. Francis Aquino, both assigned to the 1st Battalion, 258th Field Artillery, provide telephone registration to staff the Medical Readiness Corps at the Brooklyn Call Center March 27, 2020. The Soldiers assisted in registering volunteers into city medical care facilities during the pandemic. Photo by Command Sgt. Maj. Russell Gallo, 1st Battalion 258th Field Artillery.



Spc. Justin Lederhouse, assigned to Charlie Troop, 2nd Squadron, 101st Cavalry Regiment, welcomes Niagara County residents to a COVID-19 testing site in Sanborn, New York, Apr. 29, 2020. Photo by Capt. Avery Schneider, 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team.



Pvt. Mathew Burke, left, and Pfc. Janelle McKoy, assigned to the 104th Military Police Battalion, deliver COVID-19 tests to a nursing facility in the Bronx, N.Y., May 26. Photo by Senior Airman Sean Madden, 106th Rescue Wing.



Sgt. Christopher Conklin, left, assigned to Charlie Troop, 2nd Squadron, 101st Cavalry, speaks with Command Sgt. Maj. David Piwowarski and Maj. Gen. Ray Shields, the Adjutant General of New York, at a COVID-19 testing site in Sanborn, N.Y., May 5. Photo by Capt. Avery Schneider, 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team.



Master Sgt. Nicole Cafarelli, a member of the 106th Rescue Wing, dons protective gear at the COVID-19 testing site at Jones Beach, N.Y. on May 15. Photo by Staff Sgt. Christopher Muncy, U.S. Air Force Reserve.



Sgt. Sean Wedgwood, assigned to D Company, 427th Brigade Support Battalion, collects information from a New York State Police trooper at a COVID-19 antibody testing site in Williamsville, N.Y., May 5. Photo by Capt. Avery Schneider, 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team.

Joint Effort Turns Javits Center into Treatment Center

Story by Col. Richard Goldenberg, Joint Force Headquarters

NEW YORK — Anticipating a tidal wave of COVID-19 patients flooding New York City hospitals, the New York National Guard teamed up with the Army Corps of Engineers, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and dozens of state and city agencies and turned a convention center into an alternative treatment center.

New York established the facility in the expansive Jacob Javits Convention Center on the west side of Manhattan, utilizing its 1.8 million square feet of space, establishing its first 1,000 beds March 27.

"We are doing things we have never done before to find more hospital beds to ensure our healthcare system is not overwhelmed when the apex hits," said Governor Andrew M. Cuomo March 27 at the Javits Center.

"We are on a rescue mission to save lives, and I am proud to be on this mission with all the brave men and women of the National Guard, healthcare workers and first responders who are truly doing God's work," Cuomo said.

The New York National Guard's Dual Status Command was tasked with establishing the unified command post for the facility with what would be 2,700 staff.

A combined task force of Guard members, active duty and reserve medical forces and hundreds of officials from city, state and federal agencies equipped Javits with thousands of beds. Then, over two more weeks equipment and staffing were added to create a complete hospital center to care for coronavirus patients.

"That's been the biggest challenge, just getting everyone together," said Col. Dennis Deeley, the unified command post incident commander. "Once they're

together, you give them a problem and they're working, they do a fantastic job."

On March 19, Cuomo announced that the site would be for non-COVID-19 patients. The plan was to open bed space across city hospitals.

"It's been a very unique experience to come into this building when there was only 10 of us, to meet with the Army Corps of Engineers and to see it transform to the facility it is today," said Air National Guard Maj. Edward Roden, assigned to the 105th Airlift Wing and serving as the unified command post safety officer.

The sheer number of military and civilian agencies, each with a stake in the medical station, was overwhelming, Roden said.

Forces on site include Army and Air National Guard members, active Army forces, Navy representatives from the USNS Comfort, Marines, Coast Guard Sailors and hundreds of reservists from the Army, Air Force and Navy.

"To see all the units come together, different Army, Air Force, HHS (Health and Human Services), FEMA, for them to all work together. It's pretty impressive," Roden said.

City hospitals discharged as many non-COVID-19 patients as possible to clear bed space. So the decision was made to take on convalescing COVID-19 patients.

The change meant dramatic upgrades to equipment and staffing needs, Deeley explained. "The goal post kept moving," Deeley said. "We just had to keep moving the ball forward."

The Army's 44th Medical Brigade moved equipment into Javits and the state purchased other necessary patient care equipment.



National Guard Soldiers of the 133rd Composite Supply Company demonstrate assembling a cot at the Jacob Javits Convention Center in New York City March 26, 2020. A team of Soldiers and civilian employees would put in place thousands of potential hospital beds. Photo by Senior Airman Sean Madden, 106th Rescue Wing.

Meanwhile, the unified command went to work to redo the infrastructure needs, said Zachary Iscol, the center deputy director.

"The team here immediately went to work identifying every possible way to increase our capabilities by sourcing medical equipment like x-rays, sonograms, EKGs, lab equipment, dialysis, and

methadone treatment in the hopes that by increasing the acuity of care that could be treated here, the hospitals would have more people to send us," Iscol said.

But in less than a week, the mission changed again.

Realizing that the coronavirus could rapidly overtake capacity at city hospitals, state officials deter-



National Guard Soldiers work to complete the initial 1,000-bed medical station at the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center in New York City March 26, 2020. The site, a unified effort between city, state and federal agencies, saw 1,095 patients in the effort to relieve COVID-19 patients across New York City hospitals. Photo by Grace Simoneau, Federal Emergency Management Agency.

“We are on a rescue mission to save lives, and I am proud to be on this mission with all the brave men and women of the National Guard, healthcare workers and first responders who are truly doing God's work,”

-- New York Governor Andrew M. Cuomo



Army Maj. Sean Shirley, assigned to the 9th Field Hospital, briefs medical staff at the Javits NY Medical Station. The combined effort of active military healthcare providers and National Guard facility staff saw 1,095 patients treated as an overflow for city hospitals. Photo by Chief Mass Communication Specialist Barry Riley, Joint Task Force NY/NJ.



133rd Composite Supply Company Soldiers warehouse shipments of a FEMA Field Hospital at the Jacob Javits Convention Center in New York City March 25, 2020. The Javits Center converted to a temporary medical facility to ease bed shortages during the COVID-19 outbreak. Photo by Senior Airman Sean Madden, 106th Rescue Wing.

mined Javits would become the relief valve for COVID-19 care.

The National Guard staff, Army medical leaders and government agencies again went back to work.

“We’ve been up and running, we’ve had three significant changes. We got through those, worked through them nights, weekends, everybody pulled together and got it done,” Deeley said.

Javits staff had to establish intensive care beds, isolation wards and all of the logistics, pharmaceutical supplies, staffing and medical needs for the needs of a comprehensive coronavirus care facility.

“In less than a week, the team here turned a medical shelter into one of the largest COVID hospitals in the city,” Iscol said.

Javits became that overflow relief valve, Deeley said.

The mission of keeping supplies and equipment flowing into the facility went to the Guardsmen of the 133rd Composite Supply Company. These Soldiers had also helped set up the facility.

The unified command post, run by the 104th Military Police Battalion, supported personnel tracking, operations, logistics, contracts, and building management.

Many of the National Guard Soldiers are city residents, and the mission took on special meaning for them, explained 1st Lt. James Rucinski, the command post Assistant Personnel Officer.

“I’m a Manhattanite, born and raised,” he said. “I’m proud to be mobilized in my hometown, the epicenter of the whole thing”

Staffing of the medical station comes from the 44th Medical Brigade based at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

The 531st Hospital Center from Fort Campbell, Kentucky and the 9th Hospital Center from Fort Hood, Texas had some 600 personnel on site, providing administration of the treatment floor.

Additional National Guard Soldiers conducted access control, monitoring the thousands of arriving staff each day. They also

assisted in monitoring the donning and removal of PPE for personnel working with COVID-19 patients.

“Javits is a very real success story and what the people here have accomplished in a short amount of time is nothing short of remarkable,” Iscol said.

The entire team rose to meet all sorts of challenges, ranging from backup power generation, N95 fit testing, fire evacuation plans, patient meal contracts, formulary management or fatality management plans, Deeley said.

The center was able to take in its first 45 patients April 6. The number of patients seen at the medical station grew to 1,095 patients.

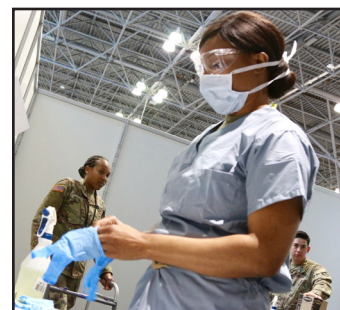
“Our job was to help alleviate the strain on New York City’s hospital system and to give our doctors and nurses a fighting chance,” Iscol said.

Hospitalizations in city hospitals reached a plateau of new admissions around April 9, meaning the capacity to provide care was stretched, but did not break.

“You see the flattening of the curve,” Cuomo said April 15. “Net change in hospitalizations, down.

That’s good news. ICU admissions is down, that’s good news.”

“The fears of overwhelming the health care system has not happened, thanks to the phenomenal front line workers,” Cuomo said, “thanks to all the additional capacity that the hospital system created; thanks to the work that our federal government did, Army Corps of Engineers, providing the beds at Javits and Comfort.” **gt**



Army Staff Sgt. Patricia Thomas, a surgical technician assigned to the 531st Hospital Center, Fort Campbell, Ky., dons exam gloves before heading onto the patient floor at Javits New York Medical Station, April 2. Soldiers began operating a temporary medical station March 30 in an effort to relieve the burden on local hospitals. Photo by Spc. Chafelmer Kroll, Army North.

Infantry Soldiers Deliver Meals to Rural Seniors

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

NORWICH, N.Y. — Soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 108th Infantry Regiment's Delta Company ensured senior citizens in one of New York's most rural areas, trapped inside by the COVID-19 pandemic, received the meals they greatly needed.

Soldiers, who drill in Ithaca, have delivered more than 12,750 meals in Chenango County for the Chenango County Area Agency on Aging since the mission began in late April.

The rural county is located northeast of Binghamton and south of Syracuse, and has a population of 50,000 people scattered across 899 square miles of rolling hills and valleys.

The Chenango County food delivery mission is one of many food distribution missions New York National Guard Soldiers and Airmen have been conducting since New York initiated its coronavirus pandemic response at the beginning of March.

The largest effort has been addressing food insecurity in New York City, where Soldiers have assisted local food distribution at key distribution centers with more than 22 million meals.

The distance and dispersion of people in the rural regions of the state makes getting food to people more demanding, local officials said.

The Chenango County Area Agency on Aging meal delivery program provided thousands of meals a week to residents across the county. The agency's meal delivery program has provided elderly residents with hot meals.

But the unique challenges presented by the COVID-19 global health pandemic caused county leaders to rethink how to implement the program during these uncertain times.

"Normally we have over 100 volunteers that volunteer for us," said Jackie Lisk, the nutritional services coordinator for the Chenango County Area Agency on Aging. "We used to send out hot meals every day, but now we are doing frozen and shelf stable."

While trying to sustain operations, Lisk was forced to find a way to keep the program running while keeping both the clients and volunteers safe.

"Several of our volunteers are aged 60 and above and are in the category that is most at risk," Lisk said. "We didn't want to expose them any more than they had to and we wanted to

keep the clients safe."

In an effort to protect volunteers and the program's clients, agency officials decided to suspend operations mid-April until a safer way to continue the program could be identified.

"We stopped regular daily meal deliveries on the 13th of April," Lisk said. "When we stopped on the 13th we had given them enough food to last until we restarted."

County officials then suggested the National Guard could alleviate some of the program's stress and help resume operations, Lisk said.

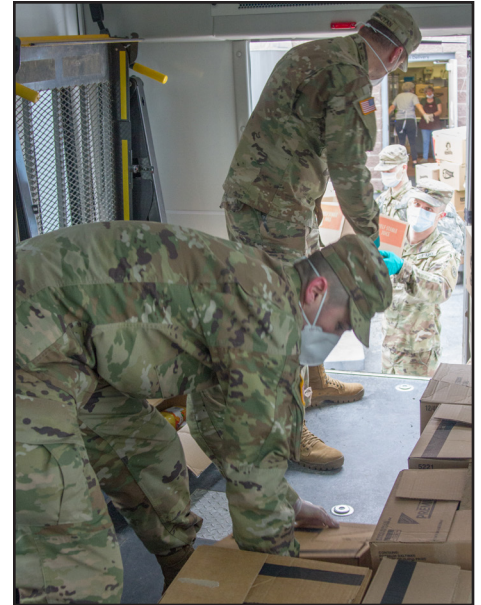
Soldiers began the mission April 21, using Chenango County Public Transit buses to deliver meals across the sprawling region. "They just showed up and started working," Lisk said. "I was impressed on how organized they were."

Though the Soldiers have an extensive involvement in the program, their involvement is only temporary, and they have far from taken over, they emphasized.

"The volunteers make all of the food and put it into the bags and boxes for us," said Spc. Ross Gillman, an infantryman assigned to Delta Company. "Then we go to the houses on the bus and deliver the boxes of non-perishable goods."

"It seems like everyone is happy to have us here," Gillman said, "All of the volunteers are extremely thankful and people are really happy to have us here."

"I remember the other day there was this little kid and he was so excited to see us," Gillman said. "He asked us, are you guys in the Army? Captain America is in the Army! 🇺🇸"



Above photos, Soldiers assigned to Delta Company, 2nd Battalion, 108th Infantry Regiment, conduct food distribution April 23, 2020. Since beginning the mission, Delta Company Soldiers have assisted the Chenango County Office of the Aging delivering more than 12,750 meals.

NY also Responds to Lake Ontario Flooding

Story by Mark Getman, New York Guard Headquarters

SYRACUSE, N.Y. — With water levels in Lake Ontario four feet higher than average, the New York National Guard put 46 personnel on state active duty to help control flooding this spring.

This is in addition to 3,600 personnel on duty as part of New York's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The New York Army National Guard Soldiers, along with a few members of the New York Guard and New York Naval Militia—both state only forces—installed several 250-foot lengths of water barriers and emplaced 9,324 sandbags to protect the Monroe County Sheriff boat launch since missions began on April 27.

Joint Task Force Ontario, based out of the Thompson Road Armory in Syracuse, worked with local agencies on missions identified by the New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services.

“It feels good to be on my first state active duty mission, where I am helping out,” said Pfc. Ameer Jumadeen, a member of the 1156th Engineer Company and a Queens, New York, resident. “This is why I enlisted.”

This is the fourth year that the New York National Guard has been tasked to control flooding on Lake Ontario.

In 2019, a total of 627 New York Military Forces members took part in flood control missions from May to September. At one point, 400 personnel were on duty.

Heavy rains throughout the Great Lakes region, combined with flooding rivers in Ontario and Quebec, resulted in higher than normal water levels in Lake Ontario, according to the International Joint Commission.

The commission regulates water levels in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River.

While water levels are higher than average on Lake Ontario, they are still six inches lower than they were in May, 2019, according to Air Force Command Chief Master Sgt. Shawn Peno, the New York National Guard's meteorologist.

Water levels currently continue to fall, and are expected to drop an additional inch over the next 30 days, Peno said.

However, he cautioned, heavy storms could result in higher water levels.

Meanwhile, the members of Joint Task Force Lake Ontario are inventorying supplies and getting ready for missions.

“I have been in the Army National Guard for four years and it's really great to directly help my community. I feel proud of the work that I'm doing here,” said Spc. Tom Biviano, an East Rochester resident assigned to the Headquarters and Service Company, 204th Engineer Battalion. **gt**



Soldiers assigned to JTF Ontario build a sandbag wall in Rochester near the Monroe County Sheriff Boat Launch on April 29, 2020. New York mobilized 46 members of the New York Army National Guard, the Naval Militia and New York Guard to respond to flooding along the Lake Ontario shore line. Photo by New York Guard Officer Candidate Michael Rehbaum.

“It feels good to be on my first state active duty mission, where I am helping out. This is why I enlisted,”

-- Pfc. Ameer Jumadeen, 1156th Engineer Company



Army Staff Sgt. Kevin Ward Ontario works a water pump on April 29, 2020. Soldiers assigned to JTF Ontario filled water bladders at the Monroe County Sheriff Boat Launch. Photo by New York Guard Officer Candidate Michael Rehbaum.

NY, Connecticut Aircrews Train for Wildfire Season

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

CAMP SMITH, Cortlandt Manor, N.Y. — UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter crews from the New York and Connecticut Army National Guards spent May 19 honing the skills needed to turn a helicopter into a fire-fighting machine at the Camp Smith Training Site.

Twelve Soldiers flew three UH-60s to practice scooping up, flying and dumping 2.8 tons of water onto a simulated fire using the Hudson River as both a water source and a target.

The purpose of water bucket training is to coordinate, train and recertify pilots between New York and Connecticut to assist with fighting wildfires.

Helicopter crews that may be needed to fight fires have to train with the buckets, a brand called Bambi Buckets, each spring.

“The most important thing about this mission is building relationships between states and in the future, if we are called upon to work together, we are able to work together seamlessly,” said Chief Warrant Officer 5 Peter Haack, a New York Army National Guard pilot from Southold, New York.

The joint exercise was the result of an agreement between New York Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and Connecticut Governor Edward Lamont announced in August 2019 for both states to work together as part of a new Emergency Management Interstate Compact. The



A UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter maneuvers to drop water from a 660 gallon Bambi Bucket into the Hudson River during fire bucket training conducted by aviators from the New York and Connecticut Army National Guards on Tuesday, May 19 in Cortlandt Manor. Photo by Staff Sgt. Jonathan Pietrantonio, 138th Public Affairs Detachment.

agreement called for the two states National Guards to exercise together.

The governors announced that the states had agreed to conduct an exercise to test their response to a brush fire that crosses state lines.



The last time New York deployed National Guard helicopters on a fire-fighting mission was in July 2018. Two UH-60 helicopters were called to a forest fire in Flat Rock State Forest where the aircrews dropped 126,000 gallons of water on the 526-acre fire over a three day period.

The 660-gallon Bambi Bucket weighs over 250 pounds with no water. It takes at least two people to open the bucket for operational use.

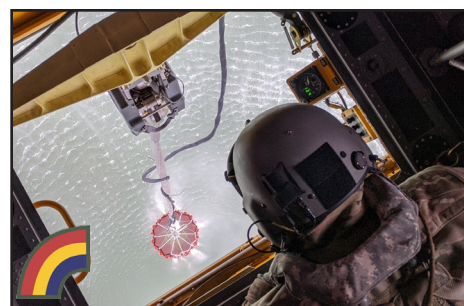
The Bambi Bucket is attached to a cargo hook on the aircraft and then an electrical connection is made to operate the bucket. This is completed prior to pre-fighting the aircraft.

Using an electrical actuator, the switch is engaged to open the bladder of the Bambi Bucket and dispense the water over a designated area.

For this training exercise, the Blackhawks followed a route over the Hudson River, just below the Bear Mountain Bridge, with the Bambi Bucket slung below the aircraft. The Bambi Bucket was lowered into the river, filled up, and the water was dispensed using a manual release at the target location.

This equipment is used to put out wildfires, structure fires and to even set up additional water sources, Haack said.

Haack has completed this training several times over the course of his career.



Above, a crew member aboard a CH-47 Chinook helicopter stares down into Lake Ontario, helping coordinate dumping 2,000 gallons of water near Hamlin, New York, May 6. Far left, CH-47 crew members help direct water bucket drops during the training. The Chinook's pilots and crew were practicing scooping and dumping the water out of Lake Ontario using a "Bambi Bucket" in preparation for firefighting missions. Photos by Capt. Avery Schneider, 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team.



For pilots that have never done this, the May 19 training gave them the opportunity to learn from more seasoned pilots and become trained up on the water bucket missions.

The training exercise was especially valuable because many of the Connecticut aviators are in the same unit the New Yorkers are, the 3rd

Battalion 142nd Aviation, Haack explained.

The battalion's Charlie Company is part of the Connecticut Army National Guard.

"They are our sister company. So, we get to achieve commonality working between the units, face time and partnership between both units," Haack said.

Now, that they are able to partner with Connecticut, they are able to learn their differences and work toward becoming a more efficient, cohesive unit, he added.

Connecticut Army National Guard Chief Warrant Officer 2 Jonathan Behuniak, a member of Detachment 2, Charlie Company, 3rd Battalion, 126th Aviation Regiment, was one of the pilots conducting the fire bucket training for the first time.

Behuniak, a facility instructor pilot based at Bradley International Airport, said that because a full Bambi Bucket can weigh between 4,000

and 6,000

pounds the pilot needs a heightened sense of awareness and coordinate with all members of the crew.

"I just want to do the best job that I can, it is a new mission I have never done," Behuniak said.

Although, Haack and Behuniak are from two different states, they both agreed that there are no differences in their standard operating procedures.

The goal, Behuniak said, is to be able to respond to a fire within four hours to a fire in the northeast.

"This enhanced response time and training really helps everyone out. You have qualified crews on both sides of the border," Behuniak said.

"When it comes to it, we take a really deep self-pride in being able to help everyone out, our neighbors, our friends, our loved ones," Behuniak said. **gt**



Soldiers prepare a 660 gallon Bambi Bucket for use under a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter during fire bucket training conducted by aviators from the New York and Connecticut Army National Guards May 19 at Camp Smith. Photo by Staff Sgt. Jonathan Pietrantonio, 138th Public Affairs Detachment.

Aviator's Final Flight After 34 Years of Service

Story and photo by Eric Durr, *Guard Times Staff*

LATHAM, N.Y. — New York Army National Guard Col. Mark Slusar took his traditional final flight on Thursday, May 21, as he wraps up a military career that began in 1985.

During his career, Slusar commanded a detachment of the 3rd Battalion, 142nd Aviation Regiment during a deployment to Bosnia-Herzegovina in 2002-03, and commanded a detachment of the 369th Sustainment Brigade in Kuwait in 2012.

Taking a final flight as a military pilot is traditional for those approaching retirement. The occasion

is a chance for the pilot's colleagues and family to salute and recognize him.

"Throughout my career I had the privilege of working with a lot of incredible people, most of which are fellow New Yorkers. I was also fortunate to have an opportunity to see different parts of the United States and the world and fly in many of them," Slusar said.

"However, I am most thankful for the friends and my family that supported me throughout my career. It was an outstanding 34 plus year run," Slusar added.

Slusar landed back at the

New York Army National Guard aviation facility at Albany International Airport at 2:30 on Thursday, May 21 after a half hour flight out over Columbia County and back. When the UH-60 returned it passed under the cross water jets of two airport fire fighting trucks as a salute.

Slusar was greeted by his family and well-wishers, to include Maj. Gen. Ray Shields, the adjutant general of New York.

Slusar enlisted in the Army in 1985 and joined the New York Army National Guard in 1988. He attended Officer Candidate

School and was commissioned in 1990. **gt**



Col. Mark Slusar is greeted by his wife, Sandra, and daughters Abigail and Camryn, following his final flight at the Latham Aviation Support Facility hanger on May 21, 2020, in Latham.

Scouts Sharpen Recon Skills

Story and photo by Ryan Campbell, Guard Times Staff

BEAVER HOLLOW, N.Y. — More than 40 Soldiers from New York National Guard's Charlie Troop, 2nd Squadron, 101st Cavalry Regiment spent the weekend training at a private campground, Beaver Hollow, March 13 and 14, 2020.

The heavily wooded area provided the setting for teams of dismounted cavalrymen to conduct patrols in the face of a simulated enemy. Fellow C Troop members acted as opposing force, waiting to be encountered during the day as well as at night with the use of thermal vision.

"We're going to be conducting zone reconnaissance and screen to meet squadron mission essential tasks," said Capt. Patrick Cassidy, commander of C Troop. "Beaver Hollow is privately held and they have been so good to us to allow us to train out here."

Cassidy continued by explaining the importance of finding new training areas for his unit to train it as different terrain will always provide new and different training scenarios they can utilize.

"Once you've seen the ground before and used it once or twice it becomes second nature," Cassidy said. "So in order to maintain proficiency on our reconnaissance tasks we need to see different terrain."

When C Troop doesn't need to be at their home station at the Mastin

Avenue armory in Buffalo, Cassidy said they are always looking to get out for field training as much as possible.

"We try not to stay at home station too much," Cassidy said.

Over the course of the weekend, there were day and night tasks to complete. What might seem simple during the day can suddenly seem daunting at night.

"You can go through a scenario during the day but then at night it will seem completely different," Cassidy said. "So we will be really focusing on those tasks."

Some of those tasks Cassidy explained, are area and route reconnaissance.

At night they train with their night and thermal vision equipment. Proficiency gained here will payoff should C Troop be deployed, Cassidy said.

"Big picture, the squadron is the eyes and ears of the brigade commander," Cassidy said. "We can go to areas where the mounted troops can't, primarily restrictive terrain, urban terrain and we can get in there and learn about the area and be undetected."

Most of the 101st Cavalry is mounted, meaning they conduct their operations in the Humvee vehicles assigned to them. However, C Troop is dismounted and gets by on foot, requiring this extra training, Cassidy said.



"It's awesome being part of Charlie Troop," Cassidy said. "It's every officers

dream to be in a command position and I'm more than ecstatic to be here." **gt**



Above photos, Soldiers assigned to Charlie Troop, 2nd Squadron, 101st Cavalry Regiment from Buffalo, enter the woods at Beaver Hollow, N.Y., for training on various types of day and night reconnaissance, March 13, 2020.

Taking Command via Teleconference

Story by Capt Avery Schneider, 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team

BUFFALO, N.Y. — New York Army National Guard Col. Jamey Barcomb, an Iraq War veteran and Amherst resident, took command of the 153rd Troop Command in a virtual ceremony on May 3.

Barcomb took over from Col. Michael Fowler who headed the brigade since 2017 and is retiring after 30 years of military service.

The 153rd Troop Command, with a strength of 1,600 Soldiers is headquartered at the historic Connecticut Street Armory in Buffalo and is the higher headquarters for the 102nd Military Police Battalion in Auburn, the 204th Engineer Battalion in Binghamton and the 501st Explosive Ordnance Disposal Battalion in Schenectady.

Normally, a change of command would involve a formation of troops with battalion commanders and their flags present. The incoming and outgoing commanders would transfer the 153rd Troop Command's colors to signify the transfer of authority.

The Sunday ceremony made history by being the first for the New York Army National Guard to be conducted virtually. Because of current social distancing requirements, the traditional ceremony was replaced with a teleconference.

Senior military leaders, friends and family members called in and followed along with a slide presentation narrated by the brigade's personnel officer.

Barcomb and Fowler spoke from offices in the armory, while Brig. Gen. Jack James, commander of the 53rd Troop Command,

presided over the ceremony from his home.

In his remarks, Barcomb noted that 300 of the troop command soldiers were deployed in support of the New York National Guard's COVID-19 response.

"These are unprecedented times, but the National Guard's responses to times like these are not unprecedented," Barcomb said. "Throughout our history, as an organization, we have stood strong, remained ready and answered the call when needed."

The 153rd Troop Command is currently responsible for overseeing National Guard emergency response operations in Western New York in conjunction with the 107th Attack Wing of the New York Air National Guard.

James called the day bittersweet as he bid farewell to Fowler.

"You led American Soldiers both in harm's way and on numerous state active duty missions over 30 years," James said to Fowler.

The 153rd Troop Command supported multiple civil support operations and relief efforts during Fowler's command, including Snowstorm Stella, and Hurricanes Irma and Maria.

Under his leadership, the command's Soldiers mobilized and moved millions of dollars of equipment to Puerto Rico and



Col. Jamey Barcomb gives his first address as commander of the 153rd Troop Command in Buffalo, N.Y., May 3 during a virtual change of command ceremony conducted by teleconference. Courtesy photo.

the Virgin Islands in less than 72 hours. It was the fastest overseas response time for New York Army National Guard elements in New York State history.

In his final address to his soldiers, Fowler said he wondered throughout his career if he was making a difference, but found there were key times when he knew he was.

"The most difference came from working alongside some of the best men and women in America," Fowler said. "People that share the commitment and dedication to make a difference. When a team like that comes together you can accomplish so much and it creates a legacy you can be proud of."

In welcoming him to the role of brigade commander, James lauded Barcomb's diverse professional

experience.

"I look forward to him taking charge of the 153rd Troop Command at a critical time for our country and our community," James said.

Barcomb, who grew up in Albany, has served for more than 27 years in the active duty, Army Reserve and the National Guard.

Barcomb deployed to Iraq in 2004 with the 98th Training Division as a Military Transition Team Leader embedded with an Iraqi infantry battalion.

He participated in overseas training exercises in Japan in 2008 and South Korea in 2017 and was mobilized in response to hurricanes Irene in 2011 and Sandy in 2012, as well as in response to Western New York's winter storm in 2019. **gt**

"These are unprecedented times, but the National Guard's responses to times like these are not unprecedented. Throughout our history, as an organization, we have stood strong, remained ready and answered the call when needed,"

-- Col. Jamey Barcomb, Commander, 153rd Troop Command



Spc. Guadalupe Lopez, an M249 SAW gunner, practices taking out enemy targets during training at F.S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base in Westhampton Beach, N.Y., on January, 11, 2020. Soldiers of the 69th Infantry conducted ground combat-focused field exercises at the 106th Rescue Wing base as part of their monthly training. Photo by Airman 1st Class Kevin J. Donaldson, 106th Rescue Wing.

Troops Turn Travel Time to Training Time in January

Story by Airman 1st Class Kevin Donaldson, 106th Rescue Wing

WESTHAMPTON BEACH, N.Y. — Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry's Bravo Company spent more time training and less time traveling, when they conducted basic tactics training at Grabreski Air National Guard Base here during their January drill weekend.

The Farmingdale, N.Y.-based infantry company — one of four maneuver companies in the 69th Infantry — is two hours away from training areas at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, and over 90 minutes away, on a good traffic day, from Camp Smith in the Hudson Valley.

And the ranges and maneuver areas at Fort Drum are a six hour ride.

But the Air Guard Base at Westhampton Beach is less than an hour's drive from the Armed Forces Reserve Center in Farmingdale.

That means the company's limited weekend training time can be spent in the field and not on the bus, said Bravo Company 1st Sgt. Timothy Boyle.

In addition, there's less overhead involved in using the training areas the Air Guard maintains at Gabreski than at Camp Smith or Fort Dix, Boyle said.

Francis S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base is the home of the 106th Rescue Wing. The wing conducts search and rescue operations with special aircraft and highly trained pararescue jumpers.

"Training at the 106th is great because of the proximity to our home station," Boyle said. "We can spend more time training as opposed to commuting and preparing to train. This training site is perfect for the platoon or company size."

The combined Gabreski Air Guard Base and Suffolk County Airport complex encompasses 1,451 acres, so there is enough room to run small unit infantry training.

It was the first time the company had used the location.

On January 10-12, the 85 Soldiers focused on basic squad tactics of fire and maneuver, explained Capt Matthew Calvo, the company commander.

"Company leadership gave classes on attack drills, then the platoon used the 106th terrain and ran attack lanes by squads," Calvo said. "The Soldiers ran these drills repeatedly until the morning of the 12th."

In each training lane the squad leaders practiced maneuvering one fire team against an enemy, while the other fire team laid down a base of fire. Infantry squads practice this kind of leapfrog attack until it becomes second nature, Boyle explained.

"This type of training enables us both to identify as well as deal with possible weaknesses and also communication concerns in a low-level environment," Boyle said.

The terrain at Gabreski, located on the eastern end of Long Island, is perfect to practice light infantry tactics, he said.

The fact that it is so close to the company's home base allowed them to really maximize their time, Boyle added.

"We had a successful weekend training, the 106th was an ideal training site, and we would like to continue training here," Calvo said.

He was pleasantly surprised at how helpful the wing leadership was in making the training happen, Calvo added.

Command Chief Master Sgt. Michael Hewson, the 106th's command chief, said that the wing was happy to help Soldiers train.

"The joint Army and Air Guard coordination and collaboration are important to meeting our state and federal mission," Hewson said. "It was a pleasure to assist the 69th Infantry with our resources here at the 106th." **gt**

Army Conducts 'Virtual Drills' Due to COVID-19

Story by Eric Durr, Guard Times Staff, and Capt. Avery Schneider, 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team

SYRACUSE, N.Y. — Sgt. Heather Hiltbrand spent her April 25 drill weekend at home with her cat, Kevin, rather than at the Thompson Road Armory.

Hiltbrand, a signal support systems specialist in the Headquarters and Headquarters Company of the 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, wasn't AWOL. She was drilling virtually because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Instead of leading hands-on training, Hiltbrand spent the weekend doing online training and calling her Soldiers, and moving her cat off the computer.

Her commander, Capt. Dan Krug, said leaders made a "good call" in having a virtual drill.

The goal was to comply with the governor's social distancing directives and still give Soldiers credit for drill, explained Col. Steve Rowe, the New York Army National Guard chief of staff.

The last normal drill for the New York Army National Guard occurred March 14-15.

On March 15, Maj. Gen. Ray Shields, the adjutant general, directed all nonessential drills be performed as a MUTA-2, a one-day drill instead of the traditional MUTA-4 weekend drill.

Soldiers were to stagger their attendance at the drill and large formations were to be avoided. The goal, Rowe said, was to mitigate any risks of transmitting the virus.

The 27th Brigade's Headquarters Company had half the unit report in at a time and avoided formations.

With the number of COVID-19 cases in New York growing, mainly downstate, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo put in place a "New York State on Pause" order that closed non-essential businesses and banned large gatherings of people. It took effect March 22.

Although more and more Soldiers were being mobilized for the COVID-19 response, with almost 3,000 at one point, that still left at least 6,000 Soldiers who needed to drill.

The goal, Rowe explained, was to keep them connected to their units and give them a "good" month toward their overall yearly training requirement. Leaders also wanted to ensure Soldiers earned a paycheck for the month, since



While conducting a "virtual drill" with Headquarters and Headquarters Company of the 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team from her home in Syracuse, N.Y. on April 18, 2020, Sgt. Heather Hiltbrand faced some unusual challenges. Her cat Kevin kept climbing on her computer keyboard. Photo by Sgt. Heather Hiltbrand, 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team.

many count on it.

Hiltbrand spent her April drill on her couch, in her Syracuse home, in civilian clothes.

"I was pretty much working out of my living room, trying to get as comfy as possible, answering phones and emails all day," Hiltbrand said.

She joked that her new kitten helped keep

track of her Soldiers' progress when he wasn't sitting on her keyboard to keep warm.

"Every single time I took him off the computer, he went right back on," Hiltbrand said.

Along with completing online training in cyber security, anti-terrorism and hazardous materials awareness, the drill also involved digital records reviews, individual counseling and evaluations, and a check of the company's phone alert roster.

At a time when Soldiers can't be together, senior leaders have been stressing the importance of communication. So Hiltbrand used less-traditional means of keeping in touch.

"I faceted a couple of my Soldiers," Hiltbrand said. "It was a little bit easier to see what was on their computer so I could help them out."

Drill weekends were not the only training that changed. Enlisted Soldiers who would have attended the Basic Leader Course at Fort Dix, New Jersey in May were instructed to switch to an entirely-online class.

As the state "opens up" after almost 90 days of social isolation, the New York Army National Guard conducted hybrid drills in June, Rowe said. Soldiers attended drill in person for three hours at a time during the weekend and commanders ensured that only 25% of a unit was present at any time.

Soldiers wore facemasks and other personal protective equipment and practice social distancing, and large groups remain limited, Rowe said.

Some Soldiers had not been at drill in person in 80 days and so it was important to stay connected, he emphasized.

While he looks forward to the next time he can see his Soldiers in-person, Krug sees drilling "virtually" as a viable alternative for keeping companies trained.

"At the back of their minds, every commander from now on should have a contingency plan," Krug said.

His advice to fellow leaders: get familiar with technology for video conferencing and online training now so it's effective when needed again.

"You don't have to wait for a quarantine situation like this to use it," Krug said. **gt**



Sgt. Jeffrey Heeder, a member of Headquarters and Support Company, 642nd Aviation Battalion; and Pfc. Catalina Munoz, assigned to Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion, 142nd Aviation, work in the 42nd Combat Aviation Brigade command section in Latham, N.Y. on May 20 while wearing protective masks and practicing social distancing. For March, April and May, Soldiers not on duty as part of the COVID-19 response participated in "virtual drills" where they undertake training at home. Photo by Eric Durr, Guard Times Staff.

Rainbow Soldiers Commemorate Dachau Liberation

Story by Maj. Jean Kratzer, 42nd Infantry Division

CAMP ARIFJAN, KUWAIT

-- The COVID-19 lockdown stopped 42nd Infantry Division veterans who liberated the Nazi's Dachau concentration camp in World War II from being back in Germany for the 75th anniversary of that event.

Instead, the eight veterans who are now in their 90s, marked the anniversary on April 29, by speaking with the commander of the New York Army National Guard's 42nd Infantry Division, Maj. Gen. Steven Ferrari in Kuwait, where he currently commands the Army's Task Force Spartan about their experiences that day.

The commemorative event at Dachau, which is now a historic

site, was to include veterans, survivors, families and members of the 42nd ID. The 42nd, along with the 45th Infantry and 20th Armored Divisions are credited with liberating Nazi Germany's first concentration camp.

Ferrari took the phone call from a conference room with his Deputy Command General for Sustainment, Brig. Gen. Thomas Spencer, and Division Command Sgt. Maj. Corey Cush. Other members of the division staff listened in.

The veterans that joined the call were Dee Eberhart, Frank Burns, Hilbert Margol, Elbert Dobbs, Gerald Eaton, Chester Pettey, Russel Fielding and Fidel Mendoza.

Their service spanned all elements of the World War II division.

The group availability was coordinated through the efforts of the Rainbow Division Veterans' Foundation, the legacy organization of the division veterans association charged with preserving the history of the division.

Each man recounted their unique memories from liberation day at Dachau, ranging from being part of the lead combat elements to the Soldiers who came by afterwards and saw the consequences of Nazi Germany's Final Solution.

"I want to thank all the veterans on the call today thank you for your service," Ferrari said after hearing the veteran's accounts. "After every meeting we say, 'Rainbow, never forget!' and we will never forget the history of this division."

The 42nd is known as the "Rainbow Division" for its service in World War I as a multi-state National Guard division that was said to span the country like a rainbow.

Elbert Dobbs, a sergeant in the 222nd Infantry Regiment, was with the leading units of the division arriving at Dachau on that Sunday afternoon in 1945.

"When our convoy arrived and opened the gate, we were able to look into the camp," Dobbs said. "We were looking at a large open area. Several prisoners walking slowly, doing what looked like policing the grounds and what looked like flat cars stacked high with bodies in front of low buildings."

Dobbs, now 99 years old in Peachtree City, Georgia, said he'd never forget the image of those victims.

The 42nd Division deputy commander, Brig. Gen. Henning

Linden, accepted the surrender of the concentration camp.

The 45th "Thunderbird" Division also had forces arrive at Dachau on April 29, approaching the camp from another direction and fighting through an adjoining Waffen-SS training compound.

The 20th Armored Division had its combat commands in support of both infantry divisions.

The liberating Americans discovered more than 32,000 prisoners in a camp originally intended for only 5,000.

Just a day before liberation, in their haste to evacuate prisoners from other camps, a train with about 40 railway cars arrived. It had left Buchenwald concentration camp filled with 5,000 prisoners. 2,310 of them died on the train's three-week journey to Dachau.

With the 222nd Infantry Regiment arriving and seeing the rail cars was Lt. Russel Fielding, the anti-tank platoon leader.

"When we arrived at Dachau there was corpses in each car," Fielding recalled. "It was cold, but they did not have clothes to cover them. They they died of cold and malnutrition."

The lengthy rail transport to Dachau was intended to eliminate as many prisoners as possible from exposure or starvation.

"What is the complaint about man's inhumanity to man?" said Fielding, now 99 years old in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Nearly every Soldier of the 42nd Division arriving at the camp passed by what has become known as the "Death Train," said Pfc.

Chester Petty, a driver and radio operator for the commander of the 2nd Battalion, 232nd Infantry.

"I noticed a lot of gaunt, hollow-eyed and starving people walking



Maj. Gen. Steven Ferrari, commander of the 42nd Infantry Division, speaks via teleconference from his deployed headquarters at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait with eight World War II division veterans, April 29, 2020 to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the liberation of the Dachau Concentration Camp in 1945. The ceremony, scheduled in Dachau, was canceled due to social distancing needs of the coronavirus pandemic. Photo by Sgt. Trevor Cullen, 42nd Infantry Division.

75th Anniversary with Conference Call from Kuwait

around in prison garb. There was an over-powering odor in the air, and I wanted to find out where it was coming from,” Petty said.

“I followed it and came to the rail yard. I saw the box cars with corpses piled in and hanging out of the doors. That memory has stayed with me the rest of my life,” said Petty, now 94 and living in Abita Springs, Louisiana.

Petty stayed in the Army and retired as a lieutenant colonel after 26 years, including additional service in Korea and Vietnam.

The 42nd Division liberation of Dachau was completed within a matter of hours, and the division

continued its advance towards Munich, the birthplace of Nazism.

“The next morning, we were on our way to Munich,” Fielding said. “As we approached Munich, we found balconies and doorways covered with the white sheets of surrender. Perhaps not officially, but the war was over, and Dachau would never be forgotten,” he said.

“We thank you for all that you did,” Ferrari told the group. “We thank your families for supporting you, and again I want to say thank you for your service.”

“We take it upon ourselves to be good stewards of our Army profession and the history of this division



An American Soldier greets survivors at the Dachau Concentration Camp, April 29, 1945. Soldiers of the 7th Army, including the 42nd and 45th Infantry and 20th Armored Divisions, liberated the camp. Photo courtesy of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.

and to make sure that we continue it and make sure the Soldiers, past

and future, will know the sacrifices you made,” Ferrari said. **gt**

Cooks Compete to be Army's Best

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

CAMP SMITH, CORTLANDT MANOR, N.Y. — The lunch prepared by the mess section of Fox Company, 427th Brigade Support Battalion March 8 included lentil vegetable soup, baked stuffed pork chops, and cottage fried potatoes, cream onion gravy, southern green beans, fresh cornbread and carrot cake.

Staff Sgt. Eli Solis, the food service manager, was hoping his nine culinary Soldiers would also cook up victory in the Army's annual food service competition, along with a great lunch.

The lunch prepared at Camp Smith was the final test in their effort to beat out three other mess sections for the title of best cooks in the Army National Guard.

The New Yorkers were competing in the Army's Connelly Food Service Competition against three other Army Guard units from Nebraska, Virginia and Iowa.

The New York culinary specialists previously won their regional competition during annual training at Fort Drum, N.Y. in July 2019.

The Phillip A. Connelly Program, named for a food industry icon, recognizes outstanding cooks and culinary teams in the Army.

The Fox Company team, which drills in Queens and supports the the 1st Battalion, 258th Field Artillery, set up their Containerized

Kitchen in the woods at Camp Smith near to replicate field conditions.

Evaluators from Fort Lee, Virginia, watched every step of the process, checking service schedules of vehicles and equipment, receipts for food and supplies by their supply section, and any other planning and support.

While Iowa would win, Solis said he wanted his Soldiers to grow from the experience of being in the competition.

“Most of these Soldiers are new to the Army, straight from their initial training,” he said.

“In preparation for this event I have had to teach them basic cooking principles like knife skills and following recipes. There are other things that are harder to teach: teamwork, attention to detail, and overcoming adversity, all skills required for this competition as well as the real world,” explained Solis, who is a professional chef in civilian life.

Spc. Erica Bishop, a senior cook, said the team improved a lot between July and the March 8 evaluation.

“We really took the feedback that we received to heart and tried to strengthen any weak areas we had,” Bishop said.

“Additionally we needed to bring our new Soldiers into step with us and make them feel

like a part of the team,” she added.

Some of the Soldiers who cooked on March 8 were still in school when the mess section competed in 2019.

One of those new Soldiers, Pfc. Gisselle Acosta, said she never felt left out.

“If I ever seemed lost, anyone on the team would drop what they were doing and walk me through it. We like to have fun, but the competitiveness and teamwork is always apparent,” Acosta said. **gt**



Spc. Rose Bishop, assigned to the culinary section of Company F, 427th Brigade Support Battalion, prepares a meal March 8 at Camp Smith for the Army's cooking competition.

109th Airlift Wing Completes Season on South Pole

Story by Master Sgt. Christine Wood, 109th Airlift Wing



Above, an LC-130 "Skibird" assigned to the 109th Airlift Wing sits at on the skiway at Williams Field, Antarctica, on Feb. 6, 2020. Below, a penguin observes operations at the field. The Wing flies ski-equipped aircraft for Antarctic research. Photo above by Lt. Joshua Bowers and below by Tech. Sgt. Gabriel Enders, 109th Airlift Wing.

STRATTON AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, SCOTIA, N.Y. — The New York Air National Guard's 109th Airlift Wing wrapped up its 32nd season of support for American research in Antarctica as Airmen and aircraft began returning home from McMurdo Station, Antarctica, on February 28.

From October through February, five LC-130s and 328 Airmen provided support to the United States Antarctic research efforts, as part of Operation Deep Freeze, the military's support to the National Science Foundation's Antarctic Program.

The unit completed more than 200 missions within Antarctica by flying 2,097 passengers to include distinguished visitors, researchers and support staff, 2,986,036 pounds of cargo and more than 640,000 pounds of fuel to research stations across the continent.

Col. Cliff Souza, a LC-130 pilot and the

commander of the 109th Airlift Wing's 109th Operations Group said the wing succeeded in everything they had to do.

The wing's Airmen accomplished all of their tasked missions, despite being restricted to using only five LC-130s and flying no more than 1,500 hours, he said.

"We worked closely with Joint Task Force Support Forces Antarctica the Antarctic Support Contractor and the National Science Foundation to optimize LC-130 flight hours and missions to ensure that scientists and their supplies got where they needed to be when they needed to be there," Souza said.

Col. Michele Kilgore, 109th Airlift Wing commander, deployed as 13th Air Expeditionary Group Commander. This entailed over-seeing the daily flights flown around the continent and operational flow of the 109th's operations.

"This was the 60th anniversary of the Ant-

arctic Treaty and the 32nd year that the 109th Airlift Wing has supported this Antarctic mission. We take a lot of pride in continuing our tradition of innovation and readiness operating in the harshest conditions on Earth, all while safely meeting mission requirements and exceeding expectations." Kilgore said.

Among the VIPs the 109th Airmen flew this year was General Joseph Lengyel, the Chief of the National Guard Bureau.

Operation Deep Freeze, the military component of the U.S. Antarctic Program, is managed by the National Science Foundation. The unique capabilities of the ski-equipped LC-130 aircraft make it the only one of its kind in the U.S. military, able to land on snow and ice.

The LC-130 is the largest ski-equipped aircraft in the world which can land on ice and snow. **gt**



Attack Wing Welcomes New Commander in Syracuse

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

SYRACUSE, N.Y. — Colonel William McCrink III, a 24-year Air Force veteran, took command of the 174th Attack Wing during a ceremony at Hancock Field Air National Guard Base on May 3.

McCrink replaced Col. Michael Smith, who commanded the wing since 2016. Smith will be retiring and working as a contractor with the 174th Flying Training Unit.

Because of the social distancing requirements, the change of command did not take place before the traditional massed formation.

Only key participants-commanders and a few staff members-took part in the event. The participants wore facemasks and observed social distancing rules during the event, remaining as far apart as possible.

Army National Guard Major General Ray Shields, the Adjutant General of New York, presided over the ceremony.

The change of command

traditionally involves the transfer of the wing flag, from the outgoing to the incoming commander. This tradition still took place, but the participants made sure not to touch while transferring the flag.

In his remarks, Smith praised the Airmen of the 174th for their service.

"As I look back as the commander of the 174th Attack Wing, I really just want to say thank you to all the Airmen. It's been an honor to serve as your commander and it's been inspiring and I've learned so much from everybody and all the Airmen," Smith said.

McCrink also praised the members of the 174th Attack Wing in his remarks.

"You are an awesome family of professionals and patriots that I am proud to be part of put your country and your state ahead of yourselves and I am proud to serve alongside of you," he said.

"As Colonel Smith pointed out



Col. William J. McCrink, 174th Attack Wing Commander, unveils his nametape for the symbolic commander's name change on a wing aircraft during his change of command at Hancock Field Air National Guard Base, May 3. Photo by Staff Sgt. Duane Morgan, 174th Attack Wing.

the wing has a long list of accomplishments, a lot of first's and a lot of milestones over the last four years but what stands with me the most is the resiliency of our Airmen," McCrink added

"You are no strangers to change," he said. "But you have

shown that you are always able to quickly adapt."

The wing's members have adapted to the requirements of the COVID-19 pandemic while continuing to accomplish the wing mission and maintain readiness, McCrink said. **gt**

Three Officers Assume New Commands at EADS

Story and photo by Tim Jones, Eastern Air Defense Sector

ROME, N.Y. — Three Air National Guard officers assumed new command positions at the Eastern Air Defense Sector in May.

Col. Paul M. Bishop took command of the Eastern Air Defense Sector on May 21 with an official first day of command May 28.

Col. Joseph F. Roos took command of the 224th Air Defense Group May 28.

Finally, Lt. Col. Steven H. Rathmell took over command of the 224th Air Defense Squadron from Roos on May 27.

Due to the COVID-19 health restrictions, all three change-of-command ceremonies were conducted virtually with attendance limited to immediate family and ceremonial participants.

The Eastern Air Defense Sector change-of-command ceremony between Bishop and Col. Emil J. Filkorn, the outgoing commander, was filmed and distributed to unit Airmen,

Lt. Gen Marc H. Sasseville, Commander of the Continental U.S. North American Aerospace Defense Region-1st Air Force, was the presiding officer. Sasseville participated via video teleconference.

Filkorn is transferring to Air Force Headquarters in Washington, D.C., as the 1st Air Force representative with the Chief Architect, Advanced Battle Management System.

"EADS defends more than 180 million Americans all day, every day, and it is an honor to become the Commander," Bishop said. "I am profoundly grateful for this opportunity and look forward to working with our outstanding Airmen to overcome the difficult challenges we currently face."

Bishop is a life-long resident of nearby Oriskany, and has served at EADS for 26 years. **gt**



Col. Paul Bishop, right, salutes Lt. Gen. Marc Sasseville, the presiding officer during the guidon exchange at the Eastern Air Defense Sector's virtual change of command ceremony on May 21. Sasseville presided over the ceremony via video teleconference. At left is Chief Master Sgt. Tammy Weber, 224th Air Defense Group Senior Enlisted Leader.

Air Guard Flyovers Salute Pandemic Responders

Story by Eric Durr, Guard Times Staff



Members of the 106th Rescue Wing, joined by members of the New York Army National Guard and New York Naval Militia watch as an HC-130J and pair of HH-60 aircraft fly formation over a COVID-19 testing site at the Theodore Roosevelt Nature Center at Jones Beach, N.Y. on May 15. Photo by Staff Sgt. Christopher S. Muncy, U.S. Air Force Reserve.

SCOTIA, N.Y. — The 109th Airlift Wing and 106th Rescue Wing took part in the Air Force nationwide salute to medical professionals, first responders and essential workers during Operation American Resolve in May.

The two New York Air National Guard wings conducted regional flyovers as part of the Air Force Salute effort that saw Active, Air Guard, and Air Force Reserve units conducting morale boosting flyovers.

The effort started April 28 with a combined Navy Blue Angels and Air Force Thunderbirds flyover above New York City and Long Island.

The 109th Airlift Wing conducted a 12-city flyover that covered the Capital Region, the Mohawk Valley and Glens Falls on May 12. Skier 95, and LC-130, launched at 11 a.m. and passed over hospitals across the region, as well as the New York State Capitol.

First responders across the region turned out at hospitals to be part of the event.

"This flyover is a way for the men and women of the 109th Airlift Wing, and the New York Air National Guard, to say "thanks" to the essential workers, medical personnel and first responders who are there for all New Yorkers during

this time," said Col. Michele Kilgore, the commander of the 109th Airlift Wing.

The 106th Rescue Wing conducted a multi-aircraft circuit of Long Island on May 15. An HC-130J search and rescue aircraft, accompanied by two HH-60G Pave Hawk rescue helicopters, flew above Long Island hospitals.

The three aircraft launched at noon and concluded the counterclockwise flight over more than two dozen hospitals by 2 p.m.

"We hope that when our first responders, friends and neighbors, all across Long Island look up in the sky and see their hometown 106th Rescue Wing flying overhead, they will know we appreciate all they are doing in this tough fight against COVID-19," Col. Michael Bank, the wing commander, said prior to the flight. "We are in one of the hardest hit areas in the nation. This is our aerial salute to you all."

In Western New York, the Air Force Reserve's 914th Refueling Wing, which shares Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station with the 107th Attack Wing, teamed up with Vermont's 158th Fighter Wing for a flyover on May 12 with a KC-135 and F-35s flying in formation.

Jeremy Essman, a retired Air National Guard

Major who now works as Senior Director of Clinical Operations at Buffalo General Hospital said the flyovers were appreciated.

"It's really exciting when you see the military support the frontline workers here," Essman said. **gt**



An LC-130 assigned to the 109th Airlift Wing passes by an American flag erected on a fire truck ladder during a flyover at St. Mary's Hospital in Amsterdam N.Y. on May 12. Photo by Senior Master Sgt. William Gizarra, 109th Airlift Wing.

Combat Rescue Officer Leads 106th Rescue Wing

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

WESTHAMPTON BEACH, N.Y. -- New York Air National Guard Col. Shawn Fitzgerald, a graduate of the United States Air Force Academy, and an Army combat veteran, took command of the 106th Rescue Wing June 5, during a ceremony at F.S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base.

Fitzgerald replaced Col. Michael Bank who has led the wing since 2006.

He is the first non-pilot and the first Combat Rescue Officer to command the 106th Rescue Wing. He is the second Combat Rescue Officer to command an Air Force wing.

Combat Rescue Officers are responsible for coordinating and commanding rescue missions.

Bank was promoted to brigadier general during the ceremony and will be undertaking a new assignment at New York Air National Guard headquarters in Latham, New York.

Because of the social distancing requirements currently in place during the COVID-19 pandemic, the ceremony did not take place before the traditional massed formation of wing Airmen. Only key participants-commanders and a few staff members-took part in the event. The participants wore facemasks and observed social distancing rules during the event, remaining as far apart as possible.

The change of command was videotaped and made available to wing members and the public on YouTube.

Army National Guard Maj. Gen. Ray Shields, the Adjutant General of New York, presided over the ceremony.

In his remarks Shields praised both Bank and Fitzgerald and the Airmen of the 106th Rescue Wing.

"I'm very proud of the wing and

can't thank the Airmen enough. They can always be counted on to deliver first class mission support when required" Shields said.

In his remarks, Bank also praised the Airmen of the 106th for their service during his time as commander.

"I am extremely proud and honored to serve with and for these great Airmen that make up the 106th Rescue Wing. God's speed to all of you and your families," Bank said.

Fitzgerald said he was looking forward to leading the wing.

Fitzgerald has served in the 106th Rescue Wing since he transferred from the Army to the Air National Guard in 2006.

"I'm honored to be selected as the next wing commander of the 106th Rescue Wing. I've had the good fortune and pleasure to be a part of this wing and I look forward to continuing to work with this great team of selfless Airmen," Fitzgerald said.

"The 106th Rescue Wing has been home to my family and I for the past 14 years. I am proud of the great work done by the men and women of this amazing team. I know we will continue to lead the way through this challenging time," Fitzgerald added.

Fitzgerald graduated from the Air Force Academy in 1996 and joined the Army first instead of the Air Force. He said that was because his father and grandfather had served in the Army. He served in the Army from 1997 until 2006.

"I was able to see firsthand the work of Air Force rescue in Afghanistan," Fitzgerald said, explaining why he decided to join the Air Force. "Watching their professionalism and ability to accomplish the mission made me



Air National Guard Brig. Gen. Michael Bank, right, the former commander of the 106th Rescue Wing applauds his successor, Col. Shawn Fitzgerald, during the wing socially distant change-of-command ceremony at F.S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base June 5, 2020. Photo by Senior Airman Daniel H. Farrell, 106th Rescue Wing.

want to be a part of that team."

During his time in the Army when he served as the brigade assistant operations officer, he was part of Operation Northern Delay, a combat parachute jump staged by 1,000 soldiers of the 173rd Airborne Brigade to seize the Basha Airfield in Erbil during the coalition invasion of Iraq in March 2003. He played a part in planning the mission, which was the largest airborne combat jump into one drop zone since World War II.

Fitzgerald transferred to the 106th Rescue Wing where served in a variety of positions, including director of operations for the 103rd Rescue Squadron, commander of the 106th Operations Support Squadron, commander of the 103rd Rescue Squadron, 106th Mission Support Group Commander and wing vice commander.

The 106th supports Air Force personnel recovery operations,

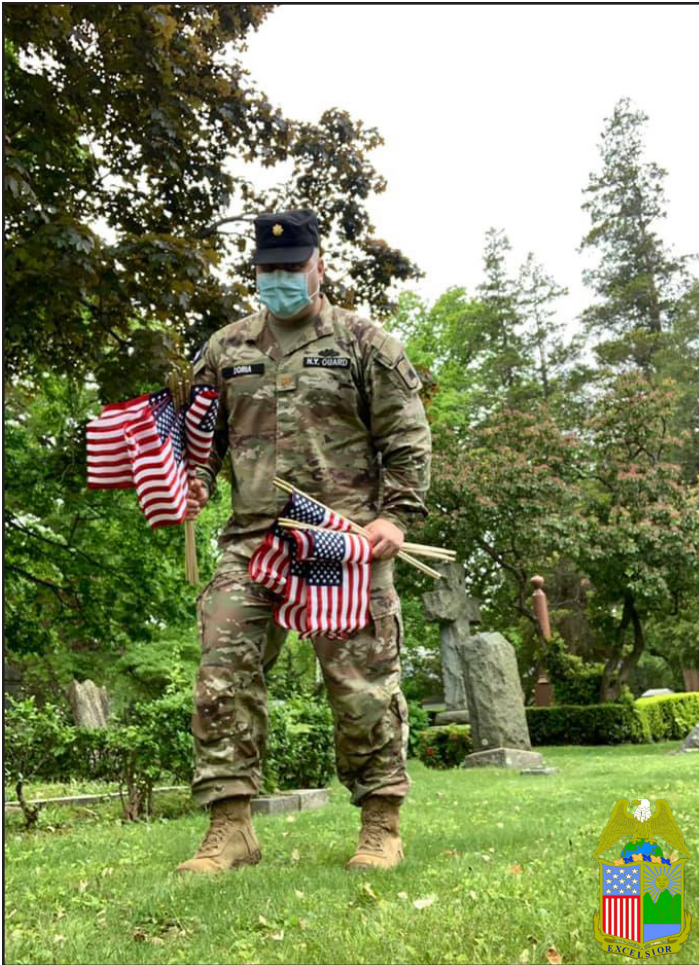
performs civil search and rescue missions, and assists state emergency response and disaster relief efforts as directed by the Governor of New York.

More than 150 members of the wing have been mobilized in support of the state's COVID-19 pandemic response. **gt**



Col. Shawn Fitzgerald is the first non-rated Air Force officer to lead the wing. Photo by Airman 1st Class Kevin J. Donaldson, 106th Rescue Wing.

New York Guard

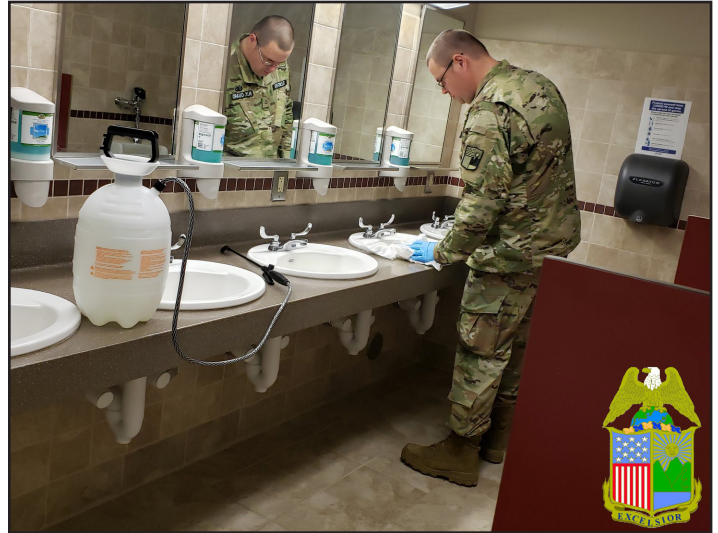


Laying Wreaths During Pandemic

NEW ROCHELLE, N.Y. — "While on state active duty, aside from my behavioral health duties with the Soldiers and Airmen of the National Guard assigned to the N.Y. Office of Medical Examiner mission, today I had the privilege in joining members of the local veterans community, county veterans organization, the county executive and other volunteers to lay flags at veterans' graves in New Rochelle Sunday morning, to honor those who put their lives on the line for our country. It was extra special for me to lay the flag to their final resting place to two special World War II veterans, both of my grandfathers (USN and USCG) and especially to my dad who served (U.S. Army) in Vietnam and died in 2004 as result of his Agent Orange exposure during his time served over there." Photo by Maj. Michael Doria, New York Guard.

Guard Commander Visits NYC

NEW YORK — New York Guard Commander Brig. Gen. David Warager, right, and Command Sgt. Maj. David Roger III, visited state defense force members on state active duty for the COVID-19 pandemic response in New York City, May 22, 2020. They visited Guard members working at the Javits Medical Station in Mahattan as well as at Staten Island locations. Photo by Warrant Officer Stephen Johnson, New York Guard Headquarters.



Keeping Members Healthy

CAMP SMITH TRAINING SITE, N.Y. -- Members of the New York sanitize facilities at that are used by hundreds of service members at Camp Smith twice a day to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. The Guard is also working on the coordination of water supplies coming into Camp Smith. As of May, 97 members of the New York Guard were placed on state active duty as part of the state's response to the COVID-19 pandemic across the state. Most have been assigned to the Camp Smith Garrison Command, while others were assigned to Joint Task Force 2's warehousing mission that conducts daily distributions across downstate of bulk hand sanitizer. Along with overseeing the barracks and the upkeep of facilities, they helped to ensure the nearly 400 service members of JTF 2 could stay healthy in clean and supplied facilities. Courtesy photo.



New York Naval Militia

USS Flusser Bell Rings Again After 100 Years

Story by Eric Durr, *Guard Times Staff*

LATHAM, N.Y. — A 100 year old ship's bell was re-dedicated by the New York Naval Militia during a ceremony at New York State Division of Military and Naval Affairs headquarters on Tuesday, Feb. 25.

The 40-pound bell once signaled the time on the U.S.S. Flusser, a destroyer used to train naval reservists in the 1920s, including members of the New York Naval Militia.

"The bell before you is the only remaining piece of the U.S.S. Flusser," noted Commander Don McKnight of the New York Naval Militia in his introductory remarks at the ceremony.

"It has been nearly 90 years since this bell last performed its official functions onboard the naval combatant before the Flusser was decommissioned."

Since the 15th century, bells aboard ships were used to signal the time of day so sailors knew when to go on duty. They were also used to indicate the ship's location in fog and are rung to mark the moment when a captain or high ranking officer boards or leaves a ship.

Ships' bells play a key role in many naval ceremonies.

The refurbished bell has been mounted in a new black walnut wood frame and will be used during New York Naval Militia ceremonies and will be displayed in the Division of Military and Naval Affairs building lobby.

The bell was rededicated 100 years to the day the U.S.S. Flusser, the ship it was mounted, was commissioned in Squantum, Massachusetts at the Bethlehem Shipbuilding Yard in 1920.

"A ship's bell, foremost, establishes the rhythm of a ship," said Rear Admiral Warren Smith, commander of the New York Naval Militia. "It is used for many purposes, but it is a reference point for life aboard ship."

New York Maj. Gen. Timothy LaBarge, commander of the New York Air National Guard and the senior officer present at the ceremony, remarked on the history of the Flusser.

"The Flusser only lasted for 10 years, reflecting the advances of technology at the time."

"She is a connection to our naval history," LaBarge said. "She connects our Naval Militia to the great ships of our Navy history and heritage, to our naval traditions, a fascinating culture."

The Naval Militia traces its history back to

1889 when a Provisional Naval Battalion was organized. The unit was mustered into state service in 1891.

One year later the Naval Militia was called to duty to protect steam ship passengers during the 1892 cholera quarantine at Fire Island.

Naval Militia members served in the Spanish American War and the conflicts since.

The U.S.S. Flusser bell was mounted on the destroyer USS Flusser (DD-289), built in 1919 by Bethlehem Shipbuilding in Massachusetts and commissioned February 25, 1920.

The Flusser was armed with torpedoes and 4.5 inch guns. The ship was 314 feet long, had a crew of 114 men and a speed of 35 knots. It was the third ship to bear that name.

The ship's namesake was a Civil War naval officer, Lt. Cmdr. Charles W. Flusser, who was killed in action on April 19, 1864 when his ship, the U.S.S. Miami, was in combat with the Confederate vessel Albemarle near Plymouth, North Carolina.

In 1930 the ship was decommissioned and then scrapped in order to comply with an international treaty limiting naval armaments.

"The Flusser served in the Roaring 20s," a time of great prosperity, optimism and technological innovation," LaBarge said, noting that her decommissioning marked the end of the decade before the challenges of the Great Depression.

"The Flusser and her bell keep that connection to a time of optimism and her legacy of affluence and prosperity," he said.

Somehow the bell of the Flusser made its way to New York. The bell wound up in the New York State Armory in Oswego, New York, probably because at one time there was a Naval



New York Naval Militia Senior Chief Boatswain's Mate Elizebeth Spain sounds four bells on the refurbished bell of the U.S.S. Flusser at the New York National Guard State Headquarters in Latham, N.Y., February 25, 2020. Below, New York Air National Guard Maj. Gen. Timothy LaBarge, commander of the New York Air National Guard, left, and Naval Militia Rear Admiral Warren Smith, commander of the New York Naval Militia, unveil the refurbished bell. The bell served on the Flusser 100 years ago, a training platform for Naval Militia Sailors. Photo by William Albrecht, *Guard Times Staff*.



Militia unit located there. When the Oswego Armory closed the bell was transferred to the New York State Military Museum in Saratoga.

And with the striking of four bells at 2 p.m., the bell of the U.S.S. Flusser once again chimed in its official duties a century after decommissioning. **gt**

