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# guardtimes

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



# FROM THE LEADERSHIP

## Be ready to go Above and Beyond the Basics

I am Edwin Garris and I am proud to serve as the Command Sgt. Maj. for the New York Army National Guard, replacing Command Sgt. Maj. David Piwowarski on July 7, 2023.

During my career, I've had the opportunity to serve in the active Army and in organizations throughout our New York Army National Guard. I've been part of Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm, Operation Iraqi Freedom and I deployed with the 42nd Division to Kuwait in 2020.

I had the honor to serve as the Command Sgt. Maj. of the 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team before moving into this position. During my career, I've learned a few things which I think all members of the New York Military Forces should consider as they serve our state and nation.

In my experience, our personal success comes down to timing and persistence.

Life is very challenging and can sometimes seem tough, and timing is a huge factor in every aspect of our lives.

Gaining employment, getting a promotion and even starting a family can depend on other things going on outside of your control. One can make the argument that in their personal pursuit, it was a person or a circumstance, or even racial issues, that prevented them from success or failure.

But when you peel the onion back, when you examine all the reasons why something didn't happen, timing was a factor.

Your failures could have been success stories if the timing was different. Maybe you had a cold on the day of the job interview, or somebody else who took a test the same day you did, had a little higher score.

This is where persistence comes in.

Too many of us give up way too soon, or we let circumstance and people influence our pursuit of a goal.

I have found in my life that never giving up, never quitting and never letting the background noise of others stop me, works well. Never listen to the nay-sayers.

I have faced a lot of disappointments, let downs and disruption in my military career, and I have learned to focus on your own path and not that of others.

Never pay attention to the success of others, or what your peers are doing on your left and right. Their story is not yours and you don't know what they've gone through to deserve their achievements.

But persistence as you navigate your own path to achieve your goal will help drive the outcome. The career of Walt Disney and his

success is a story about timing and persistence.

Walt had pitched his idea for a cartoon mouse several times and gotten nowhere. But he finally pitched his idea to the right person and the timing was right.

His persistence paid off. He finally got the right person to buy into his idea, and the rest is history.

My success in my career really has had less to do with how talented I was as a Soldier or how well I performed. It was more about timing and persistence.

I had doors closed and opened, and a lot of failures and success. I felt I was ready for promotions and advancements, and a career full of success, but timing played a large roll in the outcome of my career.

You may be the most talented person on the team. You may be the only one qualified to get a



**Command Sgt. Maj.  
Edwin Garris**

particular thing done. And others may rave about your greatness.

But the opportunity for promotion or the position to promote into may not be there.

Be persistent. Don't be quick to give up. Wait for the right time. Because life is about timing and persistence.



### State Command Sgt. Maj. Receives Colors, Responsibilities

LATHAM, N.Y. -- Command Sgt. Maj. Edwin Garris receives the colors from Maj. Gen. Ray Shields during his change of responsibility ceremony at the Joint Force Headquarters in Latham, N.Y., July 7, 2023. During the ceremony, responsibility of the unit was transferred from Command Sgt. Maj. David Piwowarski to Garris. Photo by Staff Sgt. Matthew Gunther, Joint Force Headquarters.





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**Army National Guard Spc. Lenae Davis, left, and Pfc. Jaida Sheppard, culinary specialists assigned to the 42nd Infantry Division, prepare breakfast during a drill weekend at Fort Indiantown Gap, Penn., April 21, 2023. Photo by Sgt. Andrew Valenza, 42nd Infantry Division.**



Governor Kathy Hochul, COMMANDER IN CHIEF  
 Maj. Gen. Raymond Shields, THE ADJUTANT GENERAL  
 Eric Durr, DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS  
 Col. Richard Goldenberg, PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER  
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FRONT COVER: Army National Guard explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) technician Staff Sgt. Robert Contini secures a Mark 82 general purpose bomb with stakes and straps so it can be disarmed while competing in the All-Army EOD Team Competition at Fort Carson, Colorado on April 18, 2023. Contini represented the Army National Guard in the competition against four active Army EOD teams from April 17 to 19 (story on page 14). Photo by Staff Sgt. Apolonia Gaspar, 71st Ordnance Group.

BACK COVER: An HH-60 Pave Hawk helicopter from the 106th Rescue Wing provides air support during a training exercise at Warren Grove Bombing Range, Ocean County, New Jersey May 6, 2023. The Air Guard trained with Green Berets from the 20th Special Forces Group to hone expeditionary skills (story on page 27). Photo by Master Sgt. Patrick Espeut, 105th Airlift Wing.

# FACES of the FORCE

## 107<sup>th</sup> Member Named Air Force Airman of the Year

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

NIAGARA FALLS AIR RESERVE STATION, N.Y. — A 107th Attack Wing member has been named Airman of the Year for 2023 across the 500,000 member U.S. Air Force.

Senior Airman Dhruva Poluru, who joined in 2019, is assigned to the 222nd Command and Control Squadron, located in Rome.

Poluru, who lives in Herndon, Virginia, serves as a mission crew chief and is a full-time Guardsman working at the National Reconnaissance Office in Chantilly, Virginia.

He is responsible for orbital threat analysis and for the command and control of over 85 commercial data providers and orbital analysts who contribute to the United States Space Force's space protection and space defense missions.

Poluru also serves as the primary government representative to a team of 190 military, contractor, and international analysts geo-

graphically dispersed which provide space domain awareness support to the Commander, United States Space Command.

"We are incredibly proud of Poluru winning the Airman of the Year Award for the entire Air National Guard," said Col. Andrew Carlson, 107th Attack Wing commander.

"His demonstration of dedication, hard work, innovation, and ambassadorship is a great reflection of what the 107th Attack Wing is all about," Carlson said.

"The work that Poluru has done, the impact goes well outside the 222d Command and Control Squadron," he said

"His commitment to space operations tradecraft and overall professional development as an Airman is extremely motivating," said the 222nd Command Chief Master Sgt. Stephen Davies. "To see that the work that I do being recognized, even working remotely, and

leadership from all around the world seeing the results of my work means more than I can express," Poluru said. **gt**



Senior Airman Dhruva Poluru, assigned to the 222nd Command and Control Squadron, is the Air National Guard Airman of the Year. Poluru works with the National Reconnaissance office in Herndon, Va., where he tracks satellites, among other duties.

## Airman Retires After 41 Years of Service

*Story and photos by Master Sgt. Patrick Espeut, 105th Airlift Wing*

NEWBURGH, N.Y. — Senior Master Sgt. Denis Ritosa celebrated the end of 41 years of military service at a retirement ceremony at Stewart Air National Guard Base on April 2, 2023.

Ritosa was the last active unit member of the 105th Airlift Wing to have served when the unit was still stationed at Westchester County Airport, before making the move to its current location in Newburgh in 1983.

Enlisting in 1982, Ritosa started his career as an aerospace ground equipment apprentice and was responsible for maintaining and repairing the equipment that supplies electricity, hydraulic pressure and air pressure to the planes. Over the next four decades, Ritosa would go on to serve as a crew chief, flying crew chief, expeditor and finally production superintendent.

As the production superintendent, Ritosa was responsible for squadron maintenance production and directed the overall maintenance effort of the 105th.

Ritosa's career saw the 105th transition through several different aircraft, from the Cessna O-2 Skymaster to the C-5A Galaxy and finally the C-17A Globemaster III.

"The Stewart tail flash has been pumping in his blood for over 40 years. He has been the driving force behind maintenance at Stewart," said Lt. Col. Eric L. Durkins, II, commander of the 105th Maintenance Squadron, who presided over the ceremony.

"Your efforts directly contributed to every airlift operation this wing has been a part of for the last 40 years. Whether it's carrying service

trucks back to New York in the wake of Superstorm Sandy, to thousands of young Afghani children who have a better way of life because they flew on one of these planes," Durkins said.

The ceremony was attended by Maj. Gen. Denise Donnell, the commander of the New York Air National Guard, Brig. Gen. Gary R. Charlton II, commander of the 105th Airlift Wing, Col. Kristopher R. Geis, commander of the 105th Maintenance Group, as well as the many family and friends Ritosa has made during his well-established career.

Concluding the ceremony, Ritosa thanked his wife Mary, sons Nicholas and Logan, and daughter Sabrina for their support during his tenure at the 105th. He also thanked the men and women and that he served alongside during his many years of military service and left them with a parting message.

"Take pride in what you do, as I did," said Ritosa. "It wasn't just a job, I lived it day in and day out. I truly loved my job. It's tough to walk away but I know the chapter must close. So, with that I say to you aim high and Godspeed to all of you at the 105th." **gt**



Senior Master Sgt. Denis Ritosa renders a final salute during his retirement ceremony at Stewart Air National Guard Base, New York, April 2, 2023.

# Report on Stressful COVID-19 Mission

Story by Eric Durr, *Guard Times Staff*

music.

Eventually, 410 Soldiers and Airmen worked the mission daily over the course of four months.

Exposure to dead bodies is one of the most traumatic events for combat Soldiers, according to research conducted during Operation Iraqi Freedom. The New York Guardsmen were facing a

on the signals of overstress on troops.

The mental health teams worked to get home-cooked meals for the troops and brought in service dogs to provide some fun during down time.

They also reached out to Army Morale Welfare and Recreation, and the USO for support.

Senior leaders visited regularly, which also demonstrated the importance of the mission, Baker said.

And when personnel came off the mission, they went through a three-day workshop to decompress and learn how to monitor their mental health.

The teams also screened Soldiers and Airmen before they went on the mission, to ensure they could handle the mental stress involved, Southard said.

But rules designed to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus made it harder for personnel to destress by hanging out together, Baker and Southard said.

The Soldiers and Airmen were housed in single rooms in hotels with no where to hang out.

Members wound up calling family and friends on their phones to relax. That was very helpful, Baker said. Sitting alone playing video games really wasn't.

The efforts of the mental health teams addressed the immediate mental health needs of the Soldiers and Airmen, but these situations could cause stress months or years later, according to Baker and Southard.

The survey sent to the troops was designed to see how the Soldiers and Airmen were doing post-deployment, provide feedback to Guard leaders and to determine what coping strategies worked best, Baker said.

This kind of research has helped change federal law and policy so that the VA can now extend mental health services to Guardsmen who might have been in state or federal guard status, Baker and Southard pointed out.

The Military Psychology paper is the second scholarly work to look at the New York National Guard response to the COVID-19 pandemic. **gt**



Spc. Dylan Messina, assigned to the New York Army National Guard COVID-19 response, plays with Dakota, a Labrador retriever service dog provided by Puppies Behind Bars in New York City, April 21, 2020. Photo by Senior Airman Sean Madden, 106th Rescue Wing.

NEW YORK — Talking with other Guardsmen was the best way to relieve stress after retrieving the bodies of people who died as the COVID-19 pandemic hit New York City, according to a survey of 177 New York National Guard personnel who were part of that 2020 mission.

The paper is titled: "National Guard service members decedent recovery and processing operations during the COVID-19 pandemic in New York City."

It discusses the stresses 410 New York Army and Air Guardsmen dealt with while assisting New York City's Office of the Chief Medical Examiner in retrieving the remains of 2,882 New Yorkers from March to June 2022.

The paper was written by New York Army National Guard Capt. Matthew D. Baker and Maj. Matthew A. Southard, along with researchers from the Army Public Health Center and Walter Reed Medical Center.

The survey respondents were asked to rate 10 different stressors they were exposed to and to determine what were the most helpful ways to destress.

The top stresses of these missions, according to the survey, were unpleasant smells, handling decomposing bodies, seeing the deceased personal items and handling the remains of elderly decedents.

A key finding was that the most effective ways of coping with stress were talking with other Soldiers and Airmen, talking with family, talking with friends, exercising and listening to

similar issue in peacetime, in New York City, according to the study.

The Soldiers faced grieving relatives, deteriorating remains, unventilated apartments, and the tough physical work of manhandling a body through tight spaces out of a New York City apartment and down a stairwell.

Baker, a behavioral health officer in the 427th Brigade Support Battalion and a Veterans Administration clinical social worker in civilian life, led the behavioral health team working with these troops.

Seven New York National Guard behavioral health providers and two enlisted specialists took part in the OCME mission. At the peak of the response, five behavioral health providers were on duty.

Southard, who worked for the New York Police Department and was in the Individual Ready Reserve when the pandemic hit, returned to the Army Guard to take over the mission.

The Guard mental health workers consulted the literature on the subject and spoke with experts — including the American Psychology Association's Mortuary Affairs Panel — to improve support for the Soldiers and Airmen on the mission, Southard and Baker said.

Alongside military chaplains, they made themselves available around the clock. They went to mortuary sites, accompanied troops on retrieval missions and gave leaders a heads up

## National Guard Chief Recognizes Recruiters

Story by Col. Richard Goldenberg, Joint Force Headquarters

SARATOGA SPRINGS, N.Y. — Army Gen. Dan Hokanson, the top National Guard officer and a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, recognized six New York National Guard recruiters for their achievements at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Saratoga Springs on May 10, 2023.

The presentation followed a meeting with 14 adjutants general.

Hokanson was joined by his senior enlisted advisor, Air Force Command Chief Master Sgt. Tony Whitehead, to present military challenge coins for excellence.

He praised the five Soldiers and one Airman for their accomplishments in communities across the state.

“One of the great things that is most important is that they are the future of our organization,” Hokanson said. “They’re the ones out there in our communities each and every day, talking to those young men and women who want to serve their country.”

The New York Army National Guard was the only state Army National Guard to exceed its recruiting goals for the 2022 federal fiscal year which ended Sept. 30, 2022.

The Guard recruiters recognized were:

- Army Sgt. 1st Class Brandon Moseman, the Saratoga Springs Recruiting Station Commander, who has a 100% ship rate to initial active-duty training for every new Soldier he enlisted.
- Army Staff Sgt. William Bergin, the Middletown Recruiting Station Commander, with a 100% accuracy rate with his applicant packets from his recruiting team for acceptance at the Military Entrance Processing Station.
- Army Staff Sgt. Frank Ilowiecki, the Schenectady Recruiting Station Commander, whose commitment to excellence impacted his team’s ability to raise production by an impressive 202% from 2022 to 2023.
- Army Staff Sgt. Matthew Morales, a New York City Retention NCO, credited with 21 enlistments and leading the New York National Guard’s Recruiting Battalion with new Soldier accessions.
- Army Spc. Bo Wang, a New York City Recruiting and Retention NCO, who enlisted 12 new Soldiers within the first four months of

his hiring date; and

- Air Force Tech. Sgt. Taylor Ogden, the Force Support Squadron Production Recruiter at the 105th Airlift Wing, Stewart Air National Guard Base in Newburgh, who helped the wing achieve 110% of its authorized end strength.

The recruiters all said they were honored to be called to the event to be recognized for what they consider their everyday work, bringing in the next generation of citizen Soldiers and Airmen.

“I didn’t realize the big accomplishment until the end of the year,” Ogden said. “I was really able to overcome these obstacles and get these people into the military. When you’re enlisting somebody, those individuals are going to be helping out your neighbors and family members one day.”

The New York Army National Guard achieved 103% of its 2022 recruiting goal last year and as of May 2, New York had 10,823 Soldiers, or 106% of its 2023 authorized strength of 10,202.

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

Recognizing the recruiting force by the National Guard chief is a tremendous morale booster for the whole team, he said.

Hokanson previously served as the Director of the Army National Guard, as the 11th Vice Chief of the National Guard Bureau and as the adjutant general for the State of Oregon.

Bringing in the next generation of Soldiers and Airmen keeps the National Guard ready and responsive, he told the group.

“The hard work that they do to really link young men and women with opportunities in the National Guard gives our nation an incred-



Army Gen. Daniel Hokanson, Chief of the National Guard Bureau, presents a challenge coin for recruiting excellence to Sgt. 1st Class Brandon Moseman in Saratoga Springs, New York, May 10, 2023. Photo by Staff Sgt. Matthew Gunther, Joint Force Headquarters.

ible defense capability,” Hokanson said.

“The capabilities that we bring, not only to fight all of those missions that we do overseas as a primary combat reserve of the Army and Air Force, but then our ability to do all those things that we do in our communities, each and every day: wildfires, floods, hurricanes, snowstorms all those disasters,” he said.

“The great thing about the National Guard is that if anything happens in America, the National Guard is going to be there because we already live there,” the general said.

“That capability we provide would not be possible without our recruiters that help encourage and help those young men and women be part of our formation,” he added.

Recognizing excellence for the hard work and accomplishments out in the field was a great way to highlight the leadership discussions of the day, Whitehead said in his remarks to the Soldiers and Airmen.

“You have the opportunity to reach out in our communities, the way you do in your own unique way and bring in the forces that represent our community and that help us support our country,” Whitehead said to the group.

“Thank you for what you do, and you are doing it so well,” he said. **gt**



## State Headquarters Marks Memorial Day

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



Maj. Gen. Michel Natali and Command Chief Master Sgt. Michael Hewson, salute following the presentation of a wreath during a Memorial Day ceremony held at New York National Guard headquarters in Latham, New York, May 25, 2023.

LATHAM, N.Y. — The New York National Guard's headquarters staff marked Memorial Day with a short ceremony outside the Division of Military and Naval Affairs building in Latham on May 25, 2023.

Maj. Gen. Michel Natali, the assistant adjutant general, Army, marked the occasion by reminding his listeners that Memorial Day originated in New York.

On May 5, 1866, as the Civil War was ending, a pharmacist in the Finger Lakes village of Waterloo, led fellow citizens in commemorating local Soldiers who had been killed in the war by decorating their graves with flowers.

New York, Natali pointed out, contributed nearly a half-million men to the United States Army and Navy during the Civil War. The state

also sustained 52,993 military deaths during the war, more than any other state.

"All of our current military and national traditions date back to a transformative event in our nation's history," Natali said.

"The Memorial Day observance is one such tradition rooted squarely in New York and in the history of the military forces of New York dating back to the Civil War," he said.

Of the 467,047 New Yorkers who served in the United States Army in the Civil War, only 6,089 were in the Regular Army Natali said.

It was a war fought by volunteers, many of whom had been in the militia, the forerunners of the National Guard, Natali said.

Since the Civil War, the National Guard has served on battlefields around the world and

at home assisting in natural disasters or civil crises, Natali said.

"Our people: our Soldiers, families and civilian work force are at the center of everything," Natali said. "They are the most important component enabling us to continue writing future chapters in our collective history."

New York Assembly Member Philip Steck, an Albany-area representative, also spoke briefly during the ceremony.

Command Chief Master Sgt. Michael Hewson, the senior enlisted advisor for the New York Air National Guard, also read a list of 12 names of New York Military Forces members and civilian employees who have died since Memorial Day, 2022. **gt**

# THE JOINT FORCE

## More than 2,000 NY Troops on Migrant Mission

Story by Eric Durr, *Guard Times Staff*

NEW YORK — Over 2,000 New York State Military Forces members have taken part in Operation Asylum Seeker, the New York National Guard participation in the state's response to the migrant upsurge into New York City since the mission launched in October, 2022.

As of June 18, according to New York City Deputy Mayor Anne Williams-Isom, the head of the city's health and human services, New York City has taken in over 78,700 migrants since the spring of 2022. Many of these migrants have been bussed to the city by border state governors.

About 2,200 undocumented migrants had arrived in the city in the prior week, and 48,700 people were being housed in 174 sites, she said during a weekly briefing.

On Oct. 4, 2022, Governor Kathy Hochul announced that she was activating members of the New York National Guard to assist New York City officials dealing with the unexpected flow of migrants seeking asylum who were arriving in the city.

The initial order was for 100 personnel, but that quickly grew as more asylum seekers kept arriving by bus. By the end of October, 730 personnel were on duty.

As of June 27, after eight months of support, there were 1,581 personnel on the migrant response mission.

Since the start of the mission, 2,039 members of the New York Military Forces have committed 256,702 man-days to the effort.

A total of 1,414 Army Guard Soldiers, 168 Air Guard Airmen, 354 Naval Militia members and 103 members of the New York Guard have been on duty supporting the migrants.

The 1,581 people on duty at the end of June were supporting operations in 50 hotels and two humanitarian relief centers.

For many months, New York National Guard Soldiers played a very visible role in assisting migrants who arrived in the city at the Port Authority Bus Terminal.

The Soldiers would determine if the asylum seekers needed transportation to another location, required housing or were looking for

other family members. They would direct them to the proper city officials for support.

Now the Roosevelt Hotel on the east side of Midtown Manhattan serves that function and military personnel are doing the same things there, according to Lt. Col. Aaron Lefton, the commander of the asylum seeker task force.

At the hotels, the military personnel check residents in and out of the shelter, escort them to their rooms, conduct welfare checks and help to provide meals. Each hotel has a non-commissioned officer in charge who supervises three eight-hour shifts of personnel, according to Lefton.

New York City's Department of Homeless Services trains the military personnel on their responsibilities and how to help the migrants get assistance when required, Lefton said.

The New York National Guard is also staffing a humanitarian shelter at the Police Academy at East 21st Street. The service members check clients in and out of the shelters, distribute meals and perform other administrative tasks,

Lefton said.

The morale of the Soldiers, Airmen, Naval Militia and New York Guard members working the mission is good, Lefton said.

Sometimes, people don't see the immediate results of state active duty missions, he said.

In this case, the service members see how they are helping people, he said.

They greet people arriving in New York City. They treat them with dignity and compassion, and Spanish speakers are there to help answer their questions, Lefton explained.

"Our service members have built a rapport and trust with asylum seekers," he said.

"Many of them have had negative experiences with the military during their travels or in their country of origin. Our service members have shared consistent messaging that we are here to help them to overcome apprehension and distrust for military," he added.

"They have tried to create a warm, friendly and inclusive environment for these people," Lefton said. 🇺🇸



Spc. Maria Hurtado provides food to a migrant at the Port Authority Bus Terminal reception station in New York City on Dec. 20, 2022. Courtesy photo.





Army National Guard Capt. Stephanie Fernandez, commander of the 138th Public Affairs Detachment, speaks to a Paraguayan Army soldier during a planning conference for Operation Parana held in in Foz do Iguazu, Brazil, on May 3, 2023. Courtesy photo by Brazilian Army 1st Sgt. Lorencato and 2nd Sgt Yuri.

## Guard Leaders Plan Exercise with Brazil

*Story by Staff Sgt. Jonathan Pietrantonio 138th Public Affairs Detachment*  
 FOZ DO IGUAZU, Brazil — Two New York Army National Guard leaders traveled to Brazil from May 1 to May 5 to lay the groundwork for New York National Guard participation in a Brazilian disaster response exercise being held in August 2023.

Capt. Stephanie Fernandez, a staff officer with the 53rd Troop Command, and 1st Sgt. Amanda Eldred, the top enlisted leader for the 466th Medical Company, Area Support, took part in a logistics planning conference held in Foz do Iguazu.

The 466th will send 15 Soldiers to work with Brazilian medical personnel during Operation Parana, planned for August 12-19.

The 53rd Troop Command will also send two Soldiers from the 138th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment to cover the training.

New York Soldiers and Airmen have been conducting training

with Brazilian military personnel since 2019 when Brazil and the New York National Guard began a State Partnership Program agreement.

This will be the first time American Soldiers have taken part in the Brazilian disaster response exercise.

Twenty countries are expected to participate in the exercise, according to Brazilian Army Lt. Col. Homem Nelson.

“It will be one of the largest humanitarian aid exercises in the southern hemisphere in 2023,” Nelson said.

Brazil’s army has extensive experience in health support during international operations, Nelson said.

Brazil sent aid to Haiti when that country was hit by an earthquake in 2010,

he said. And the Brazilian military has experience conducting medical missions in some of Brazil’s isolated communities, he added.

“This opportunity to work together with another great army, the U.S. Army, represented by the New York Army National Guard, gives us the expectation of exchanging state-of-the-art knowledge and establishing friendships,” Nelson said.

“The fact that this operation is based in Brazil fills us with pride and will give us the opportunity to show the best of our land, our people and our army,” he said.

The Queensbury, New York-based 466th Medical Company, deployed to Iraq in 2006 and to Kuwait in 2020, and has participated in State Partnership Program exchanges with the South African National Defence Force.

This will be their first training exchange with the Brazilian Army.

The Soldiers, Eldred said, are looking forward to the August training mission.

“Working with our partner country is an amazing opportunity to share ideas and knowledge and practice the art of medicine,” Eldred said.

“We expect to find a vast number of similarities, but we hope to learn from the differences,” she added.

The unit’s Soldiers will be prepared to deal with a variety of simulated injuries and illnesses that would come during the disaster itself, Eldred said. The Soldiers will also be prepared to deal with the health issues that happen when people are displaced by a disaster, she added.

These can include near-drowning, hypothermia, trauma, medical issues stemming from insect bites, and contaminated water and food, Eldred added.

“We are very fortunate to be involved in a multi-national event. It’s a great opportunity to work and train in a large-scale civil support operation,” she said. **gt**



1st Sgt. Amanda Eldred, assigned to the 466th Area Support Medical Company, reviews a medical bag with Brazilian Army soldiers during a planning conference for Operation Parana held in in Foz do Iguazu, Brazil, on May 3, 2023. Courtesy photo by Brazilian Army 1st Sgt. Lorencato and 2nd Sgt Yuri.

# US, Albanian Officer Candidates Train Together

Story by Eric Durr, *Guard Times Staff*

DURRES, Albania — Five New York Army National Guard officer candidates spent April 10 to 24 in Albania, honing their leadership skills with their counterparts from the Albanian Armed Forces Academy.

“Training with the Albanian officer candidates was a really great experience,” said Officer Candidate Katherine Murrell. “There were challenges with communication. But they weren’t as big as I thought they would be.”

The training, said Officer Candidate Jason Frantz, “surpassed all my expectations.”

The five officer candidates enrolled in the 106th Regional Training Institute Officer Candidate School and six New York cadre members, were invited to Albania for the training by the New Jersey Army Guard OCS program.

Seventeen New Jersey officer candidates and six New Jersey OCS cadre participated in the training, which took place near the city of Durres on the Adriatic coast.

The New Jersey National Guard has a State Partnership Program relationship with Albania and New Jersey’s 1st Battalion, 254th Training Regiment, has been working with the Albanians to improve that nation’s officer training program, according to Lt. Col. Stuart Loy, the training regiment’s commander.

Sgt. 1st Class Everitt Speros, the New York OCS course manager, said he was pleasantly surprised by how good the training was.

“I thought it would be a little too much dog and pony,” Speros said. “I was worried that the training was going to be dumbed down and not as intensive and I was worried the candidates would not get a lot out of it.”

Instead, said the veteran of the 1st Battalion,

69th Infantry’s fight for Route Irish in Baghdad during the Iraq War, the training was excellent.

“Each candidate did close to 30 squad lanes in April. This is enormous and gives them a tremendous leg up,” he added.

They got plenty of chances to go through troop leading procedures, deliver an operations order and lead a squad, Speros said.

Murrell and Frantz both said that the repeated opportunities to run the tactical problems really helped them learn.

“It was a lot of fun when we started to figure out how to coordinate everything,” Frantz said.

came time to plan and execute training,” Ponce said.

The language barrier was a challenge, Murrell said, but both the Americans and Albanians managed to work things out.

Some Albanians spoke excellent English and could translate, she said, and others spoke enough to get by. And when it came time for the tactical exercises, they used signs to communicate as well, she said.

The training focused on five exercises, Speros said. The officer candidates and cadets had to conduct a movement to contact, conduct a

squad attack, knock out a bunker, set up an ambush and react to an ambush.

“They got a tremendous amount of reps and a tremendous amount of one-on-one attention,” Speros said.

The Albanian Armed Forces Academy commander and Albania’s Chief of Defence both visited the training to observe. This, Loy said, would be like having the head of the Army’s Training and Doctrine Command and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff visiting.

The Albanians, Speros said, “were thirsty to learn.”

The Albanian military was originally based on Russian models of command. Now they are trying to incorporate western military leadership styles, Loy explained.

Training with American National Guard troops helps them do that, he said.

“The dynamic cross talk and training between programs, adding the New York Army Guard perspective and experience to the New Jersey program proved a key part of the mission success,” Loy said.

“In all honesty, I believe that was the key to the training being so successful,” he added. **gt**



New York Army National Guard Officer Candidate Katherine Murrell briefs a squad plan to New York, New Jersey and Albanian trainee officers during a joint training exercise near Rrogozhine-Kryevidh, Albania, April 17, 2023. Photo by Capt. Edwin Ponce.

The opportunity to work with troops from another NATO country was also invaluable, said Capt. Edwin Ponce, one of the OCS training officers.

“It gave them a little bit of a taste of what they will be doing in the real world once they get commissioned as lieutenants,” Ponce said.

The New York and New Jersey National Guard officer candidates and 37 Albanian academy cadets in their second year of training, were integrated into squads together.

“It was a little challenging for them, in the sense of the language barrier, especially when it



## ADP Receives ESGR Patriot Award

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

New York City based company ADP and Usman Khan, the senior vice president of ADP Ventures are awarded the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) Patriot Award for their ongoing support to 1st Lt. Matthew Hofbauer, during a June 20, 2023 ceremony at the firm's Manhattan office.

NEW YORK — ADP Corporate Ventures, a New York City based private equity and venture capital company was recognized for their support of the New York National Guard by the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve program during a June 20, 2023, ceremony at the firm's Manhattan office.

The award recognized the company's ongoing support for 1st Lt. Matthew Hofbauer, who works for the firm's data processing department.

The company received the Patriot Award from New York Air National Guard Brig. Gen. Gary Charlton, the commander of the 105th Airlift Wing, and ESGR representative Greg Westmoreland.

The program works to help employers understand the importance of supporting their employees who serve in the National Guard and Reserve.

The award was presented to ADP Chief Executive Officer Maria Black and Usman Kahn, the senior vice president of ADP ventures.

Hofbauer said he nominated his company and Kahn, who hired him for his job, because of their support for his part-time military career.

Hofbauer serves as the executive officer for Charlie Company, 101st Expeditionary Signal Battalion and is due to deploy to Kuwait later this year.

"Mr. Khan ultimately hired me, and he knew about my obligations to the military he was very supportive from the start knowing I needed to take time for drill and training," Hofbauer said.

"He wanted to learn more about it and when this deployment came up, he made sure that the transition would be seamless."

"I'm very thankful to him and the whole company for their commitment to me," Hofbauer said.

ESGR is a Department of Defense program and was established in 1972 to promote cooperation and understanding between Reserve Component service members and their civilian employers. They assist by resolving conflicts that may arise from an employee's military commitment. The organization is supported by more than 3,600 volunteers in 54 committees located across all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam-CNMI (Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands), Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

ESGR helps develop and promote supportive work environments for Service members in the Guard and Reserve components. They do this through outreach, recognition, and educational opportunities that increase awareness of applicable laws.

To recognize employers who support their Guard and Reserve employees, ESGR grants a series of Department of Defense awards: Patriot Award, Spouse Patriot Award, Seven Seals Award, Above and Beyond Award, Pro Patria Award, Extraordinary Employer Support Award, and the highest honor is the Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award. 🇺🇸

## EOD Techs Represent Guard at Competition

Story by Eric Durr, *Guard Times Staff*

FORT CARSON, Colo. — Two New York Soldiers represented the Army National Guard at the All-Army Explosive Ordnance Disposal Team of the Year Competition, held April 16-19 at Fort Carson.

Sgt. 1st Class Robert Contini and Sgt. Michael Wing, members of the 1108th Ordnance Company competed against four active Army two-man explosive ordnance disposal teams representing Army commands around the world.

The team from the 734th Ordnance Company, based at Fort Bliss, Texas won the competition.

But just getting the chance to compete is “incredibly significant” for Contini and Wing and the 1108th, said 1108th 1st Sgt. Jeremy Blackie.

“The notoriety that they get, just from being at that level is huge,” Blackie said. “The amount of accolades they are getting is intense as well.”

Contini and Wing were selected to represent the Army Guard based on an assessment of all Army Guard EOD Soldier assessments, deployments and recommendations, Blackie explained.

Both Wing and Contini deployed with the 1108th to the Kuwait in the 2021. They wound up doing missions there dealing with unexploded ordnance, as well as in Iraq and Syria.

While both Wing and Contini said they were proud to represent the National Guard at the all-Army EOD event, they regretted not having more time to train together.

They both participated in a

Department of Homeland Security EOD training event and found three days before the contest to do some joint training.

But they were up against active-duty EOD technicians who do the mission regularly and “have every single day of the working week to prepare and practice and they have unlimited resources,” Contini said.

Twenty years of battling insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan has made it seem like the sole job for EOD Soldiers is dealing with improvised explosive devices, or IEDs, Contini said. But that is only one job among many EOD Soldiers have, he added.

“When you are going to school for 11 months, it is only about a month and a half that is focused on IEDs,” he said.

EOD Soldiers must know how to deal with unexploded submunitions left behind by anti-armor artillery shells, minefields, chemical and biological landmines, rounds stuck in artillery tubes, discarded grenades and ammunition left over from a war 20 or 50 years ago, Wing said.

The competition scenarios reflected the variety of challenges EOD Soldiers face, the two men said.

And after 20 years of low intensity conflict, the scenarios reflected major combat operations which the Army calls LSCO, for Large



Staff Sgt. Robert Contini and Sgt. Michael Wing, secures a Mk 82 general purpose bomb with stakes and straps so it can be disarmed while competing in the All Army EOD Team of the Year Competition at Fort Carson, Colorado on April 18, 2023. Photo by Staff Sgt. Apolonia Gaspar, 71st Ordnance Group.

Scale Combat Operations.

In one event, an M2 Bradley Fighting Vehicle had been disabled by a minefield. Their job was to clear a path to the Bradley, check the crewmen inside for injuries and treat them, download ammunition from the Bradley, and then recover the vehicle.

The rule of thumb is that where there is one landmine there are usually five more, Contini said, and in this case, there were 10 more. They also had to evaluate and treat the casualties and evacuate them.

In another event they faced an evolving scenario in which things kept happening, Contini said.

The situation began when the host nation militia dropped off what they thought might be a bomb in the EOD unit “soak yard.”

A soak yard, Contini explained, is an area near, but not too near the main camp where potential explosives can be watched.

Then there was a helicopter attack with explosions happening on a nearby hillside, with unexploded rounds which had to be dealt with.

Then the U.S. artillery which

was returning fire on enemy positions reported a stuck round inside a gun tube, and Wing and Contini had to respond to remove it.

Then it was back to the unexploded rounds from the enemy rocket attack and finally to check out the package left by the local militia. After X-raying it, they determine that it was full magazines for AK-47s inside and old Soviet-era chest ammo carrier.

“It was a very involved and realistic scenario,” Contini said.

While they didn’t win, both Wing and Contini said they were glad to be picked to participate.

They got to participate first rate and well-resourced training events and being evaluated just makes it better, Contini said.

“When there is an evaluation, you are able to see your strengths and weaknesses,” he said.

“This was essentially a free training event with really high-quality training and tools,” he added. **gt**

# Fort Polk Renamed for New York's Henry Johnson

Story by Eric Durr, *Guard Times Staff*

ALBANY, N.Y. — Fort Polk, Louisiana is now renamed for New York National Guard Sgt. Henry Johnson, a World War I hero, following a June 13 ceremony at the post.

The installation named for Confederate general Leonidas K. Polk, who was killed in combat in 1864, became Fort Johnson.

The fort is home to both the Joint Readiness Training Center and the 3rd Brigade Combat Team of the 10th Mountain Division.

Henry Johnson was working as a porter at Albany's Union Station when he enlisted in the New York National Guard's segregated 15th New York (Colored) Infantry Regiment on June 5, 1917, two months after the United States entered World War I.

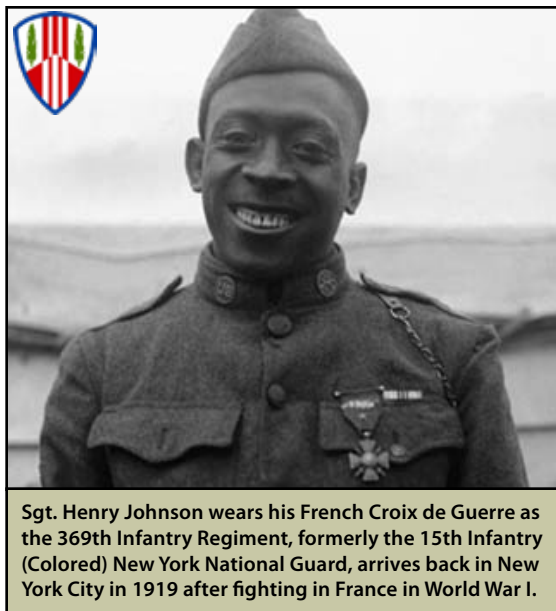
Johnson became a national hero after he fought off a German raiding party with a knife and saved fellow Soldier Needham Roberts from capture, on the night of May 15, 1918.

The 15th New York was renamed the 369th Infantry Regiment in March 1918 and continues its lineage today as the 369th Sustainment Brigade.

He was awarded the French Croix De Guerre for his actions by the French military.

But Johnson received no U.S. military recognition until after his death in 1929.

He was awarded the Medal of Honor in 2015,



Sgt. Henry Johnson wears his French Croix de Guerre as the 369th Infantry Regiment, formerly the 15th Infantry (Colored) New York National Guard, arrives back in New York City in 1919 after fighting in France in World War I.

**"The Soldiers who pass through these gates go forth with the spirit of Henry Johnson,"**

-- General Daniel Hokanson, Chief of the National Guard Bureau

which was accepted by New York Army National Guard Command Sgt. Maj. Louis Wilson on his behalf.

Brig. Gen. Isabel Rivera Smith, the New York National Guard's director of joint staff, represented the New York National Guard at the ceremony.

Wilson, now retired from the Army, also attended.

"As a former member of the 369th Harlem Hell-fighters myself, I could not be prouder to be part of this ceremony," Smith said.

"The Soldiers who pass through these gates go forth with the spirit of Henry Johnson," said Gen. Daniel Hokanson,

the Chief of the National Guard Bureau during the ceremony. "These are the values of the U.S. Army, and these are the values we are proud to fight for today. That's why I am proud that this place bears the name of a Guardsman."

Because Johnson had no descendants, the Medal of Honor accepted by Wilson is held by the New York State Military Museum.

The medal was loaned to Fort Johnson's command for the ceremony and will be displayed until August as part of a historical exhibition.

"Sgt. Henry Johnson embodied the warrior spirit, and we are deeply



Army Sgt. Garrett Paulson, left, the U.S. Army noncommissioned officer of the year and a combat medic assigned to Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital; Gen. Daniel Hokanson, center left, Chief of the National Guard Bureau; Brig. Gen. David Gardner, center, commanding general, Fort Johnson; Command Sgt. Maj. David Hanson, center right, post command sergeant major; and retired New York Army National Guard State Command Sgt. Maj. Louis Wilson, strike an anvil with a hammer at Warrior Field, June 13, 2023, designating Fort Johnson as the official name of the Army installation formerly known as Fort Polk. Fort Johnson was renamed after New York National Guardsman Sgt. Henry Johnson, a World War I hero and Medal of Honor recipient. Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Armando Vasquez, National Guard Bureau.

honored to bear his name at the Home of Heroes," said Brig. Gen. David Gardner, commanding general of the Joint Readiness Training Center in an installation announcement.

"If Sgt. Johnson doesn't exemplify the Warrior Spirit, then I don't know who does," Gardner said, referencing the installation motto, "Forging the Warrior Spirit."

Fort Johnson is among nine U.S. Army installa-

tions which will or have already shed their previous Confederate namesakes, most of which had initially been assigned during the U.S. Army's massive reorganization following World War II.

"The 'Home of Heroes' is now named after a Soldier who embodies the Warrior Spirit," Gardner said. **gt**

# Soldiers Train in SUAS

Story by Eric Durr, *Guard Times Staff*



Soldiers monitor the feed from a RQ-11B Raven at Camp Smith Training Site, New York, April 29, 2023. Courtesy photo.



Cpl. Matthew Mena, a field artillery tactical data specialist assigned to Charlie Battery, 1st Battalion, 258th Field Artillery Regiment, prepares an RQ-11B Raven unmanned aircraft for flight at Fort Drum, New York, July 2019. The Raven, a small hand-launched aircraft, is utilized to conduct short range reconnaissance. Photo by Sgt. Alexander Rector, 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team.

**CAMP SMITH TRAINING SITE, N.Y. — Eight New York Army National Guard officers and NCOs completed a unique weekend course on April 30, designed to teach them how to use, or defend against, small drones on the battlefield.**

What the Army officially calls small, unmanned aircraft systems, or SUAS, are a hot topic right now, according to Sgt. 1st Class Masami Yamakado, a master trainer on the use of the aircraft.

“You can go online or on social media and within minutes see that this stuff is all over the battlefield right now,” Yamakado said.

“The introduction of SUAS to the modern battlefield is as significant as the introduction of large scale use of machine guns in World War I,” he added.

To teach the use of these systems effectively, the 106th Regional Training Institute introduced what is officially called the SUAS Planner’s Course taught at the Camp Smith Training Site.

The class delivered what was promised, said Capt. Annmarie Allen, the intelligence officer for the 501st Explosive Ordnance Disposal Battalion.

“I think it gave us a little bit

of everything that the leadership needs to know,” she said.

“Knowing what these aircraft can and cannot do is important for staff officers and NCOs,” Allen said.

Sgt. 1st Class Michael Barker, operations NCO for the 2nd Battalion, 108th Infantry Regiment, another class participant, agreed with Allen.

“I learned a lot about the capabilities of our SUAS as well as the enemy’s that I was not aware of,” he said. “This allows me to advise the commander at a different level.”

“I think this is something the Army is behind on, and this subject definitely should be incorporated into training,” Barker said.

“We, as infantrymen, and generally as Soldiers, even at the highest levels, don’t understand all the capability we have at our disposal. This brings some clarity to that, as far as our SUAS and the enemies,” Barker said.

According to Col. Jeffrey Csoka, the commander of the 106th RTI, it’s the only course designed for company and battalion leaders on how to employ SUAS within the Army.

The Army has good systems, but

the doctrine and formal training on how to use them just isn’t there right now at the tactical level, Csoka said.

Yamakado was tapped to take the lead in creating the course.

He already teaches a 10-day Army course for RQ-11B Raven operators and wrote a paper on the importance of SUAS on the battlefield. This paper is used to train field grade officers at the Mission Command Center of Excellence at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

While the course discusses several unmanned aircraft systems, the focus was on employing the RQ-11B Raven SUAS.

“This system is widely available within the Army inventory and is the aircraft that company, and battalion staffs will likely have access to,” Yamakado said.

The goal was to tailor the class to what the students needed to know in their jobs, he explained. The three officers and five NCOs had backgrounds in intelligence, artillery, logistics and infantry.

The first day discussed unit level small aircraft use, focused primarily on the Raven, although other SUAS were discussed as well.

The Raven is battery powered

and hand launched with a speed of about 30 miles an hour. It has a range of 10 kilometers and flies for 60 to 90 minutes on a full charge.

The Raven provides video in color or infrared, high-definition photography, 10-digit grid coordinates of targets and even limited infrared illumination at night.

Each New York Army National Guard infantry company gets one Raven system, consisting of three aircraft, two ground control stations and associated equipment.

During the second day, with the assistance of military intelligence experts, the course covered SUAS mission staff planning.

There was also discussion on countering enemy SUAS, since this is a real concern for headquarters, logistics and artillery units behind the front lines, Yamakado said.

As an intelligence officer, learning more about the systems that collect intelligence is useful, Allen said. And she sees ways these systems can be incorporated into EOD missions, she added.

For example, while an EOD team is working on a device, a Raven or other SUAS could be working overhead, ensuring the team is not attacked, Allen said.

The 106th RTI is uniquely suited to offer this class, Yamakado said.

Some instructors have Federal Aviation Administration drone licenses and others fly them in civilian law enforcement.

Several instructors attended the Army’s Counter-Unmanned Aircraft Systems academy at Yuma Proving Grounds, Arizona, and one served at the SUAS Master Trainer school at the Maneuver Center of Excellence at Fort Moore, Georgia, he said.

“Our school teaches SUAS not as a system, but as a weapon,” Yamakado said. “We make it a point to discuss tactical applications, employment and survivability.”

# NY Honors Missing WWII Pilot after 80 years

Story by Eric Durr, *Guard Times Staff* and Staff Sgt. Matthew Gunther, *Joint Force Headquarters*

ROSE, N.Y. — New York Army National Guard Soldiers laid a World War II pilot declared missing in action in 1943 to rest on May 20 in the Rose Cemetery in this hamlet between Syracuse and Rochester.

A 10 Soldier detail from the Military Forces Honor Guard provided honors to Army Air Forces 1st Lt. John B. Thomas, following a funeral service at the Farnsworth-Keysor Funeral Home in nearby North Rose.

Thomas enlisted in the Army Air Corps in Rochester, but was a native of Rose, according to family members.

Thomas was killed on Aug. 1, 1943, during Operation Tidal Wave, a bombing attack on the oil fields in Ploiesti, Romania. His B-24 was one of 177 which took part in the raid and 55 which did not return.

The Honor Guard conducted 9,824 funeral services across the state in 2022, mostly for retired military personnel, said Sgt. 1st Class Charles Gabriel, the honor guard non-commissioned officer in charge.

But providing military funeral honors for a Soldier killed during World War II is unusual, Gabriel said.

“To conduct them for a service member who died in combat nearly 80 years ago is very unique, and we are lucky to be a part of it,” he added.

John Thomas was buried next to the grave of his twin brother George, who served in the Marines in World War II and survived the sinking of the aircraft carrier USS Wasp and service on Guadalcanal.

Col. Christopher Cronin, chief of the joint staff for the Joint Force Headquarters, presented the flag to the family.

“With a U.S. Army Air Corps World War II B-24 Liberator pilot and navigator also in my family’s lineage, it was a privilege and honor to be a part of the ceremony,” Cronin said.

In this instance, the New York National Guard also received the remains at the Frederick Douglas Greater Rochester International Airport and transported them to the funeral home in North Rose on May 12.

Thomas was 23 years old when his plane — nicknamed “Aire Lobo” — was shot down. He was one of 660 Airmen who died during the mission



Military Honor Guard Soldiers receive the remains of 1st Lt. John Thomas, a World War II Army Air Forces pilot, killed in 1943, at the Rose Cemetery in North Rose, New York, May 20, 2023. Photo by Staff Sgt. Matthew Gunther, Joint Force Headquarters.

and received the Distinguished Flying Cross posthumously for his actions in the raid.

His remains were interred by the Romanians, along with those of other unidentified Americans in the Hero section of the Civilian and Military Cemetery of Bolovan in Ploiesti.

At the end of World War II his remains were transferred to an American military cemetery in Belgium and his name was listed on the Tablets of the Missing at the Florence American Cemetery in Impruneta, Italy.

In 2017, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency began exhuming unknowns in Belgium in search of unaccounted for Airmen involved in Operation Tidal Wave and bringing them to the DPAA Laboratory at Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska, for examination and identification.

Using various methods, including dental, anthropological and DNA analysis of a sample provided by Thomas’s nephew Edwin Thomas in 2018, his remains were identified on September 30, 2022.

“It was something that most of our family never thought would happen,” Edwin Thomas said. “But the fact that the Army, the Department of Defense and all these other agencies made this extended effort to do so is very humbling.”

“For all these years, Uncle John has been a memory on the wall. Now, we finally have closure,” he said.

Seventy members of the extended Thomas family, along with veterans and community members, attended the memorial service on May 20, the birthday of both Thomas and his twin.

“This is the biggest and best family-reunion we’ve ever had, and it is fitting that Uncle John is the one who brought us together,” Edwin said during the service.

As the remains of Thomas began the journey to the cemetery, hundreds of Rose residents lined the streets to pay their respects as the procession passed through town. **gt**



Col. Christopher Cronin presents the flag from the coffin of 1st Lt. John Thomas, a World War II U.S. Army Air Forces pilot killed in a 1943 raid, to his niece Donna Bliss, following military funeral honors conducted at the Rose Cemetery in Rose, New York, May 20, 2023. Photo by Staff Sgt. Matthew Gunther, Joint Force Headquarters.



Soldiers assigned to Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment, and deployed to Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa as Task Force Wolfhound, conduct a small arms range in the vicinity of Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti, Jan. 10, 2023 with counterparts from the Japan Self-Defense Forces. More than 1,200 Soldiers completed their deployment to Djibouti, Kenya, and Somalia with a transfer of authority on June 3, 2023. Photo by Staff Sgt. Alexander Rector, Task Force Wolfhound.



# Soldiers Complete Horn of Africa Deployment

Story by Staff Sgt. Alexander Rector, 69th Infantry Regiment

CAMP LEMONNIER, Djibouti — The 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment celebrated a successful nine-month overseas deployment during a transfer of authority ceremony at Camp Lemonnier on June 3, 2023.

During the ceremony, the unit, dubbed Task Force Wolfhound, turned over control of an East Africa security mission in support of Combined Joint Task Force — Horn of Africa, to Task Force Tomahawk, a roughly 1,100 Soldier task force.

The core of Task Force Tomahawk's Soldiers are assigned to the Oklahoma Army National Guard's 1st Battalion, 179th Infantry Regiment.

Task Force Wolfhound deployed to the Horn of Africa in September 2022 and conducted security operations at U.S. installations in Djibouti, Kenya and Somalia.

Soldiers from Alpha and Charlie Company from the 2nd Battalion, 108th Infantry Regiment, and Alpha Troop of the 2nd Squadron, 101st Cavalry Regiment, were also assigned to the task force.

Lt. Col. Shawn Tabankin, the commander of Task Force Wolfhound, praised the New Yorkers for their efforts during the mission.

"You've secured United States interests and facilities and you've worked with our allies and African partners, to be their partner of choice," Tabankin said.

"You were prepared and responded to crises. And you have worked by, with and through our African partners to achieve our common goals," he added.

During the deployment Task Force Wolfhound provided 24-hour perimeter security for five U.S. installations across three African countries.



1st Lt. Peter Clark, a member of Delta Company, 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment, reviews defense plans with the Kenyan Defense Force during a base defense drill on Camp Simba, Kenya, May 18, 2023. Photo by Staff Sgt. William Rio Rosado.

Working alongside international forces, Task Force Wolfhound conducted more than 450 mounted and dismounted patrols to protect U.S. interests abroad.

The task force also staffed the East Africa Response Force.

Founded in the wake of the 2012 attack in Benghazi, the EARF consists of a specially trained and equipped rifle company postured to respond at short notice to a broad range of military operations, such as crisis response, security augmentation of U.S. embassies and facilities, and military-assisted departure or non-combatant evacuation operations.

During the deployment, the EARF conducted multiple emergency deployment readiness exercises to maintain their skills and hone their mission set.

Maj. Gen. Jami Shawley, the commander of Combined Joint Task Force — Horn of Africa, said the men and women of Task Force Wolfhound had carried out that

mission well.

"You conducted monthly training exercises and drills to ensure the EARF's readiness to respond to any crisis within Sub-Saharan Africa," Shawley said.

"You accomplished your mission with a level of competence and proficiency indicative of your storied history," she added.

The planning and skills of the EARF was put to the test during the April 2023 crisis in Sudan which saw the shuttering of the U.S. Embassy in Khartoum and the evacuation of U.S. diplomats and their families.

Though the EARF did not deploy to Sudan, their planning and crisis response skills proved invaluable during the successful evacuation of U.S. citizens from the area of hostilities.

In addition to the EARF, Task Force Wolfhound led the Camp Lemonnier quick reaction force and was tasked with providing security support for multiple U.S.

flagged vessels during port calls at the nearby Port of Djibouti.

During the deployment, Task Force Wolfhound Soldiers trained alongside international partners from Djibouti, France, Italy, Japan and Spain.

They also participated in Exercise Bull Shark 2022, a twice-yearly Spanish-led personnel recovery exercise and Exercise Wakri 2023, a French exercise designed to reinforce combat capabilities and partner interoperability.

"These joint training exercises included ranges using U.S. military and partner weaponry, combatives training, tactical combat casualty care, and the exercising of joint movement and tactical combat operations," Shawley said.

Task Force Wolfhound Soldiers also completed the French Desert Commando Course, while 15 Soldiers became United States citizens during a special ceremony held at the U.S. embassy in Djibouti.

The task force also conducted a Best Warrior Competition open to members of all services in April.

During the unit's final days in the Horn of Africa, many of the unit's members received military awards in recognition of their hard work and dedication during the deployment.

"I'm proud to have served with each and every one of you," said Tabankin. "You deserve these accolades and all those surely to come, as well as a safe and speedy return home." 🇺🇸

# Soldiers Compete at National Shooting Match

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



Spc. Denver Degroff of the 152nd Engineer Support Company, 204th Engineer Battalion, aims downrange during a practice shoot on the first day of the 52nd Winston P. Wilson Small Arms Championship, Camp Robinson, Arkansas, April 30, 2023.

CAMP ROBINSON, Ark. — Four members of the New York Army National Guard went head-to-head against top shooters from across the world at the 52nd Winston P. Wilson Small Arms Championship, hosted from April 30 through May 5, 2023 in North Little Rock.

Run by the National Guard Marksmanship Training Center, the annual competition is designed to promote rifle and pistol marksmanship fundamentals, while fostering camaraderie between states, all within a battle-focused, physically active environment.

The New York team was comprised of Staff Sgt. Adam Crist of 2nd Squadron, 101st Cavalry Regiment, Sgt. Sean Brosnan of 1st Battalion, 258th Field Artillery and Sgt. Craig Rowell and Spc. Denver Degroff of the 152nd Engineer Support Company, 204th Engineer Battalion.

Established in 1971 by Maj. Gen. Winston P. Wilson, former Chief of the National Guard Bureau, the championship has grown considerably in scope to the present day. This year, over 50 four-man teams representing soldiers from across 43 states and territories, as well as the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, took part in the competition.

“We’re having a lot of fun and doing a lot of things we normally don’t get to do — we’re shooting out to 600 yards, which is pretty uncommon,” said Crist, who led the group as team captain. “We’re learning a lot of stuff we can bring back to the state to make our program a little better.”

All four were selected based on performances at prior competitions, including New York’s “TAG” Match and the Marksmanship Advisory Council Regional Match held in Vermont last year. Yet the Winston P. Wilson Championship provided all four soldiers with their first opportunity to shoot at a national level.

The New York team competed in over a dozen fast-paced, intensive marksmanship lanes centered on the M4A1 carbine and

M17 pistol weapons systems, including close quarter battle scenarios, infantry team matches and reflexive fire events.

Throughout the week, the Soldiers had to contend with an unfamiliar Arkansas climate, with strong winds and harsh, direct sunlight impacting their accuracy on targets downrange throughout the week.

“You have to account everything: wind, temperature and range obviously,” said Degroff. “Before coming here, we never really took those things into consideration and it really shows, but now that we know, we have shown that we’ve improved.”

In the end, the Texas “Alpha” team took home the 1st place title of Overall Team Champions, followed by the Arkansas and South Dakota state teams in 2nd and 3rd places, respectively.

While the New York team did not place, each team member acknowledged that the weeklong competition gave them much opportunity to learn from their fellow Guardsmen and to hone their own skills, returning back to the east coast as more experienced competitors.

“It’s a great opportunity to be out here, to be amongst the best shooters in the nation — for me to sit here and compete at this level is an honor to me,” said Rowell. “We can learn everything from each other and take this stuff back to home, and I can teach my Soldiers, my joes and even my civilian buddies to help us all become better marksmen.”



Soldiers from the New York Army National Guard prepare for competition at the 52nd Winston P. Wilson Small Arms Championship, Camp Robinson, Arkansas, April 30, 2023.



Spc. Alexander Bazhenov, a CBRN specialist with the 222nd Chemical Company, celebrates a successful iteration on the M17 pistol lane during the 2023 State Best Warrior Competition at Camp Smith, New York, April 5, 2023. Photo by Spc. Joseph Liggio.

## Cavalry Troopers Win NY's Best Warrior Competition

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

CAMP SMITH TRAINING SITE, N.Y. — Two Soldiers assigned to the 2nd Squadron, 101st Cavalry Regiment won the annual New York Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition held at Camp Smith Training from April 14 to 16, 2023.

Sgt. Adam Crist, an assistant personnel sergeant, won in the NCO category, while Spc. Philip Stevenson, an information specialist, was tops in the enlisted category.

Stevenson said he was grateful to have won, because doing so honored his family history of military service.

"It feels amazing," Stevenson said.

"I've been out of training for, it'll be a year this month, so getting all this happening within a year of getting out of training, it's a great opportunity," he said.

It feels great, honoring my family's heritage in the military and I'm going to keep moving forward to the next level, he said.

Crist said he enjoyed the sense of camarade-

**"It feels pretty great. It's nice to get out here and be with these guys, they're all great competition,"**

-- Sgt. Adam Crist, NCO Best Warrior  
during the competition.

"It feels pretty great," Crist said. "It's nice to get out here and be with these guys, they're all great competition."

Maj. Doug Berinstein, the competitions' officer in charge praised the two winners.

"These are our best in the state and now we want to have them represent New York as best in the country," he said.

The road to the regional level was no walk in the woods, though it did include a race through them, as the Soldiers conducted a 12-mile forced march with pack and weapons around Camp Smith.

The participants also competed for the best score in the Army Combat Fitness Test, demonstrated their proficiency in selected Soldier tasks and appeared before senior enlisted leaders to answer questions in a formal board.

The Soldiers also tested their marksmanship skills with the M17 pistol and the M249 Squad Automatic Weapon.

There was also a swimming event where the Soldiers had to jump into a pool in full uniform and were timed on their performance.

This event also allowed them to earn the German Armed Forces Badge for Military Proficiency at the same time they were competing for the Best Warrior title.

New York State Command Sgt. Maj. David Piwowarski said he encourages Soldiers to compete in the event because it is a way to test their skills.

"This is a chance for an individual Soldier to demonstrate I am the best or I can go with the best," he said. **gt**



## MPs Aid Car Crash Victims

Story by Eric Durr, Guard Times Staff & Staff Sgt. Jonathan Pietrantonio 138th Public Affairs Detachment

Soldiers assigned to the 442nd Military Police Company work with civilian emergency medical technicians to stabilize a vehicle driver badly injured in a two-car collision in Manorville, New York, May 20, 2023. Courtesy photo.



The car accident that seven New York Army National Guard Soldiers assigned to the 442nd Military Police Company responded to on May 20, 2023. Courtesy photo.

MANORVILLE, N.Y. — Seven MPs worked together to pull two badly injured civilians from their car and then treat them after a May 20, 2023 car wreck on Long Island’s Sunrise Highway in Manorville.

The Soldiers, assigned to the 442nd Military Police Company, were in a three-vehicle convoy heading to F.S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base in Westhampton Beach for a weekend training exercise when they spotted the two-vehicle accident, according to Sgt. Andre Anderson, the convoy commander.

A Ford F-150 had smashed into a Dodge Charger. Two people in the pick-up were out and walking around. Two people in the sedan were trapped in the car.

Anderson, a trained emergency medical technician, pulled the convoy — consisting of two Humvees and an LMTV — over and hopped out of the LMTV and headed for the car.

“I immediately ran over, grabbed my knife, cut the airbag and seatbelt off. But the individual wasn’t responsive to painful stimuli,” Anderson said.

Realizing that the car’s driver was in shock and that he would need help, Anderson, a 10-year veteran of the Guard and a New York City corrections officer, called for help.

“My only objective was getting [the occupants] away from the vehicle and to safe location and make sure their airway, breathing and circulation were intact,” Anderson recalled.

“We noticed smoke coming of the vehicle and we didn’t know if the fire department was on the way, so we knew that we had to react fast,” he added.

“I immediately signaled for the rest of the Soldiers to come out of the vehicles to assist,” he said.

Spc. Tamika McCallum, an EMT with emergency room experience

and a medical student, helped Anderson and Spc. Arleny Germosen get the passengers out of the car.

“We cut the airbags and maintained C-spine stabilization,” she said, referring to the driver’s neck area.

Then she and Anderson “did a “1-2-3” to kind of twist the patient into the back seat and get him out of the car,” McCallum said.

The first patient was not doing well, she said, he was unconscious, and his body was stiff. That meant sudden movements could hurt him badly, McCallum explained.

Then those three, and Spc. Kalifa Johnson and Sgt. Christopher Allen, worked together to help the passenger out of the car and then went back to aid the driver, McCallum said.

Anderson sent Allen to grab a heat blanket out of his rucksack to keep the driver warm, while McCallum put a cervical collar on the driver while Johnson supported his neck.

Then they worked to keep his airway clear while waiting for the local EMT to respond.

The other Soldiers, Spc. Joshua Steinkamp and Sgt. Daren Brijmohan, secured the vehicles and ran over medical supplies as needed.

When the EMTs were on site and ready to leave, the MPs helped get the patients onto a stretcher.

Everybody worked together perfectly, McCallum said.

“I’m proud of everyone with our quick response time and being able to work together, to trust one another, to lift and carry these people out of the car, put them on the ground, check them and get them on a stretcher is amazing,” she said.

Capt. Keith Cohen, the commander of the 442nd MP Company, praised the Soldiers for their quick reaction.

“They acted just as they were conditioned to act in those types of situations,” he said. “What they did was a hybrid of their military and civilian training. They were EMTs and a medical student and police officers and they responded.”

Anderson is being recommended for the Soldiers Medal, a recognition of life saving action during peacetime, for his quick reaction and leadership, Cohen said.

But every one of the seven MPs on the scene did the right thing, he said.

“The majority of the 442nd would have acted the same way this detail acted,” Cohen said. “We are a unit made up mostly of first responders.” **gt**



# MCP-OD Leaves for Eastern Europe Deployment

Story and photos by Sgt. 1st Class Warren Wright, 10th Mountain Division MCP-OD

Soldiers with the 10th Mountain Division (LI) Main Command Post-Operational Detachment stand in formation during a farewell gathering at Fort Drum, New York, June 9, 2023.

FORT DRUM, N.Y. — Thirty-five New York Army National Guard Soldiers marked the beginning of their deployment to Eastern Europe June 9, 2023, following weeks of training and fulfilling readiness requirements at Fort Drum.

The Soldiers from the 10th Mountain Division (LI) Main Command Post-Operational Detachment, based at the Hancock Field Air National Guard Base in Syracuse, boarded a plane on June 10 bound for Romania and Poland. Once in country, the MCP-OD Soldiers will join their active duty counterparts of the 10th Mtn. Div. headquarters, already in Europe, to provide expanded capabilities, enhancing the division's mission as part of NATO's commitment to security and stability in the region.

"I'm absolutely proud of everyone in the MCP-OD," said Lt. Col. Alvin D. Phillips, the MCP-OD's commander. "That includes the support staff, as well as the Soldiers who answered the call to serve and preserve what I feel is a real world mission."

Most of the deploying Soldiers volunteered to support the mission, including multiple Soldiers from other units across the state, as the

10th Mtn. Div. had specific requirements for which MOS' they required.

The mobilization occurred on an accelerated timeline, according to Capt. Darren Hagen, the detachment's executive officer. MCP-OD Soldiers had limited time compared to other National Guard mobilizations to prepare for and meet all the deployment requirements, including weapons qualifications, medical clearances, physical fitness tests and more.

"The MCP-OD is trained, they're equipped, and they're well integrated within the 10th Mtn. Div. headquarters," Phillips said. "This is what they've trained for. They understand their mission, they understand their capabilities and they're prepared to go."

Prior to mobilizing, Brig. Gen. Joseph Biehler, the commanding general of the 53rd

Troop Command, and Command Sgt. Maj. David Piwowarski, the NYARNG's senior enlisted leader, bid farewell to the MCP-OD Soldiers during an informal gathering.

Biehler spoke to the deploying Soldiers about the uniqueness of the detachment's mission and the immense value each Soldier will add to the 10th Mtn. Div.'s mission in Eastern Europe.

"I wish you all the best," he said. "You're going to come back with a lot of great experience (working with a division headquarters). Take that experience, come back, feel good about yourself, be confident and look to the horizon."

The detachment will serve approximately six months in Europe as part of the United States' commitment to provide a robust deterrent and defensive posture alongside allies across the continent. 🇺🇸

**"This is what they've trained for. They understand their mission, they understand their capabilities and they're prepared to go."**

-- Lt. Col. Al Phillips, 10th MCP-OD Commander

# 160 MPs Deploy to Poland for Baltic Mission

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

ROCHESTER, N.Y. – One hundred and sixty Soldiers assigned to the 222nd Military Police Company said goodbye to their friends and family during a deployment ceremony at Monroe Community College on May 16 as they prepared to deploy to Poland.

After the brief ceremony, the Soldiers headed to Fort Bliss, Texas, for post-mobilization training.

The 160 Soldiers will deploy to Poland in support of U.S. and NATO forces in the Baltic states and Eastern Europe. They are expected to return home in the spring of 2024.

Staff Sgt. Kirk Moon said he would miss his family but was looking forward to the mission.

“I’m excited to deploy,” Moon said. “It’s been over 10 years since the ‘Triple Deuce’ last deployed.”

Moon said he was most excited about having the opportunity to share his knowledge with the unit’s junior enlisted Soldiers, the company’s newest members.

“This will be my first deployment with the unit and I’m looking forward to using MP skills,” he said.

Spc. Piotr Czajkowski said he was excited about the upcoming mission and the challenges that the deployment might bring.

“I’m just excited for the new adventure and the new opportunity provided with a chance to serve my country,” Czajkowski said. “I’m excited to get a chance to see Europe a little bit, if we get the chance.”

Brig. Gen. Joseph Biehler, the commander of the 53rd Troop Command, thanked the Soldiers’ families for the support they provide to the deploying men and women.

“You are also answering the call of duty,” Biehler said. “Our country is forever grateful for your sacrifice as you make the sacrifice to take up the slack while your loved one is deployed.”

Capt. Jorge Medina, commander of the 222nd, said his Soldiers have been training hard for the mission and they are excited about it.

“We’re a combat support company, so going in and doing a law enforcement task in multiple countries with our partners is an experience that doesn’t come along too often,” Medina said.


Medina said he believes in the importance in staying ready to answer the call of duty whenever it may come.

“To a new Soldier who is maybe looking to get deployed, keep striving to improve your tactics, your skills and proficiencies, because most of the time it’s a matter of when and whether that’s a state mobilization or federal mobiliza-

tion. We just have to be ready to answer the call,” he said.

Following 30 days of training at Fort Bliss, the 222nd Soldiers will deploy to Poland and will provide military police detachments to support NATO forces stationed in the three Baltic states on NATO’s eastern border with Russian.

The deployment is part of the European Deterrence Initiative which supports NATO and American forces in order to bolster and increase the security and capacity of U.S. allies and partners.”

The company will serve about 10 months in Europe before returning to the United States. 



Capt. Jorge Medina, the commander of the 222nd Military Police Company cases the unit’s colors during a farewell ceremony at Monroe Community College, Rochester, New York, May 16, 2023.



Soldiers assigned to the 222d Military Police Company say goodbye to their families during a farewell ceremony at Monroe Community College, Rochester, New York, May 16, 2023.



## Commissioning New Leaders

HEMPSTEAD, N.Y. -- Army Lt. Gen. Paul Calvert, the Deputy Commanding General for Forces Command, joins Lt. Col. Hounq Lee, the Hofstra University Professor of Military Science, in commissioning new 2nd Lt. Haoyu Li during the ROTC commissioning ceremony at Hofstra University May 20, 2023. Li will serve in the New York Army National Guard as a Quartermaster Officer. Photo by Capt. Mark Getman, New York Guard.



## 4<sup>TH</sup> Finance Detachment Mobilizes

NEW YORK -- Army Sgt. 1st Class Vuthy In, the senior noncommissioned officer of the 14th Finance Detachment, cases the colors during the unit farewell ceremony held June 2, 2023 at the Edward M. McKee American Legion Post 131 in Whitestone, Queens. The detachment's 18 Soldiers will deploy to the Middle East in support of U.S. military operations. The Soldiers will train at Fort Bliss, Texas, before deploying overseas. They are expected to return home in April 2024. Courtesy photo.

# Aviators Killed in 2021 Crash Honored with Memorial

Story by Eric Durr, *Guard Times Staff*

MENDON, N.Y. — Forty-five aviation Soldiers were in formation June 11 as officials from the Town of Mendon unveiled a memorial dedicated to three of their fellow members who died in a helicopter crash in the town on Jan. 20, 2021.

It was important for the men and women of Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 171st General Support Aviation Battalion to be present as the monument to three medevac pilots was formally dedicated at the town's Semmel Road Park, according to Maj. Michael Jamieson, the company commander.

"The Town of Mendon has done all this work to make a memorial for three of our Soldiers," he said. "They didn't ask us for any help. They didn't ask us for any money."

"Mendon is not a very big town," Jamieson said. "The amount of effort they put into this was pretty amazing."

The monument, created by a local artist, depicts three geese flying. Plaques with the biographies of the three pilots who died in the crash are part of the memorial erected by the town.

The three men, based at the Army Aviation Support Facility at Rochester International Airport, were killed during what was supposed

to be a routine night-vision training flight. They were:

- Chief Warrant Officer 5 Steve Skoda, 54, of Rochester, served for 35 years and was an experienced flight instructor.
- Chief Warrant Officer 2 Daniel Prial, 30, of Rochester, was a former Army captain who graduated from West Point and flew combat missions in Afghanistan.
- Chief Warrant Officer 4 Christian Koch, 39, of Honeoye Falls, served for 20 years and was a pilot with New York State Police aviation.

"It was pretty emotional," Jamieson said about the dedication ceremony.

"We have been through a lot of these memorials. But now, to actually see something with the permanence of a memorial, it was very emotional for everyone," Jamieson added.

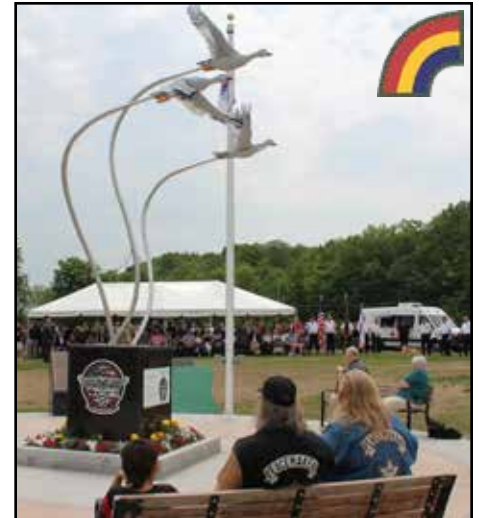
It was especially important to be there because "about a third of the company never knew these three men," Jamieson said. "It was important for them to know what we've been going through."

Events like this remind the Soldiers that flying medical evacuation helicopters is dangerous, even in peacetime, he added.

Maj. Gen. Ray Shields, the adjutant general of New York, praised the town for creating a

"magnificent memorial" during his remarks.

"No words can heal the grief that everyone feels for Steve, Christian, and Dan," Shields said. "But this memorial is a beautiful tribute to each of them." **gt**



The memorial created by the Town of Mendon, New York to honor three New York Army National Guard aviators killed in a January 20, 2021 crash in the town is pictured during the June 11, 2023 dedicated ceremony in the town of Mendon's Semmel Road Park. Courtesy photo.

## NY and Brazil Call In Air Support Together

Story and photo by Staff Sgt. Mike Janker, 107th Attack Wing



Members of the 274th Air Support Operations Squadron partner with six Joint Terminal Air Controllers from the Brazilian Para-Search and Rescue squadron to take part in a close air support exercise and remotely piloted aircraft subject matter expert exchange on Hancock Field and Fort Drum, New York, March 28-30, 2023. Courtesy photo.

FORT DRUM, N.Y. — Members of the 274th Air Support Operations Squadron of the 107th Attack Wing, partnered with six joint terminal attack controllers from the Brazilian Para-SAR squadron to take part in a close air support exercise and remotely piloted aircraft subject matter expert exchange on Hancock Field and Ft. Drum March 28-30.

A-10 Thunderbolt IIs from the 175th Wing, Baltimore, Maryland, and a B-52 from the 20th Bomb Squadron, Barksdale, Louisiana, aided the exercise on Ft. Drum by coordinating both live fire and inert air to ground strikes with the 274th and Brazilians.

"The purpose of this exercise was to discuss tactics, techniques, and procedures for conducting close air support and to identify areas to improve abilities and conduct operations," said Capt. Michael Meegan, a TACP assigned to

the 274th.

The ongoing relationship between the 274th and the Brazilians is part of New York's State Partnership Program. The SPP maintains a standing relationship between the 274th ASOS and the Para-SAR squadron and is designed to increase interoperability between U.S. and Brazilian forces.

Along with having the ability to develop a relationship with Brazilian JTACs, the State Partnership Program is valuable because it allows us to see how Brazil conducts close air support and understand the environment they must operate in, said Meegan.

"This is an exchange," said Maj. Padriac Meehan, State Partnership Program coordinator.

Meehan explained that both units provide and share information that is extremely valu-

able to the ever changing expectations of their missions.

"These units have a lot of experience working together," said Meehan.

However, he continued, this is the first time the Brazilian JTACs have come to the U.S. for a close air support exercise with the 274th. The past two years members of the 274th have traveled to Brazil to take part in exercise Tapio, a recurring Brazilian close air support and combat search and rescue exercise, he said.

Both units plan to continue to work together to improve their operations and joint partnership. Members of the 274th are scheduled to go back to Brazil later this year to participate in exercise Tapio as well as other training opportunities with the Brazilian JTACs. **gt**



# 105<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing Plays Role in Air Defender 23

*Story and photos by Master Sgt. Patrick Espeut, 105th Airlift Wing*

STEWART AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, NEWBURGH, N.Y. — Fifty Airmen assigned to the 105th Airlift Wing based at Stewart Air National Guard Base in Newburgh, supported the largest NATO air forces deployment exercise ever held.

Air Defender 2023, organized by the German Bundeswehr, involved 10,000 military personnel and 250 aircraft from 25 nations. The exercise began on June 12 and ran through June 23.

The 105th Airlift Wing, which dedicated four C-17 Globemaster III strategic airlifters to the operation, began flying missions in support of the exercise on May 29, Memorial Day.

The wing flew 10 missions moving Airmen from the Kentucky, Massachusetts, Illinois, Texas, Vermont, Oregon and Pennsylvania National Guards, along with supplies, to Europe.

The 105th provided more airlift support for American units participating in Air Defender, than any other airlift wing.

105th Airmen flew more missions moving people and equipment from Europe back to the United States after the exercise ended and concluded those missions before July 4th.

The 105th Base Defense Squadron and the 105th Maintenance Squadron deployed Airmen in support of the exercise.



**A New York Air National Guard C-17 Globemaster III aircraft with the 105th Airlift Wing prepares to taxi after dropping off cargo during Air Defender 2023 at Wunstorf Air Base, Wunstorf, Germany, June 2, 2023. Photo by Master Sgt. Caila Arahood, 165th Airlift Wing.**

Stewart Air National Guard Base also served as a staging location for Air Force planes from across the country before they headed to Germany. Aircrews flew to Stewart and stayed overnight before continuing across the Atlantic.

The Air Force deployed 100 aircraft from 42 states, most of them assigned to the Air

National Guard. Around 2,000 National Guard Airmen were part of the exercise.

The aircraft ranged from KC-46 tankers to F-16, F-15, and F-35 fighters, to C-17 and C-130 transports.

The scenario called for NATO air forces to react to an attack on a NATO member. **gt**

# 106<sup>th</sup> Medics Partner With LI Hospital

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

WEST ISLIP, N.Y. — Members of the 106th Medical Group from F.S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base, partnered with Good Samaritan University Hospital in West Islip for two weeks of training from April 10 to April 24.

“The purpose of the training is to have the medics maintain their competencies in the skills that they use for basic medical care and resuscitation,” said Col. Sanjay Shetty, the 106th Medical Group chief of aerospace medicine.

The clinical training was the first of an ongoing partnership between the 106th and Good Samaritan. Participants rotated in skills such as splinting, drawing blood, IV placement, basic wound care and hemorrhage control. The tasks satisfied the medics’ Comprehensive Medical Readiness Program and Tactical Combat Casualty Care requirements, making sure they

are practiced in their medical skills.

“We were very happy and excited to welcome the 106th Rescue Wing,” said Christopher Raio, Good Samaritan Hospital’s chairman of emer-



**Medics from the 106th Rescue Wing Medical Group participated in a training exercise at Good Samaritan University Hospital in West Islip, New York, April 10, 2023.**

gency medicine. “We’re a newly designated level 1 trauma center and we think the education and training is going to be great for the individuals rotating with us.”

According to the New York State Department of Health, a level 1 trauma center is a facility that has been verified by the American College of Surgeons Committee on Trauma and is designated by the Department as a facility that provides the highest level of trauma care to critically ill or injured patients.

“For us, it’s especially important, because when you work in a clinic doing operational medicine, it’s geared more towards a trauma-type scenario,” said Airman 1st Class David Mangiameli, a aerospace medical technician. “When you are exposed to these traumas, it prepares you for deployment scenarios, so for us, trauma aptitudes are incredibly important.” **gt**

# NY Chaplain Named Tops for the Air Force

Story by Eric Durr, Guard Times Staff

NIAGARA FALLS AIR RESERVE STATION, N.Y. — Chaplain (Major) Jeffery Bartz, who serves as the head pastor of Batavia’s Grace Baptist Church in civilian life, has been named the top chaplain in the 100,000-member Air National Guard.

Bartz received the Air National Guard’s Samuel Stone Award, which is presented to the outstanding Air Guard chaplain each year, during a June 3 ceremony at Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station.

The award was presented by Col. Leah Boling, the director of the Air National Guard Chaplain Corps, while 100 Airmen and members of Bartz’s Batavia congregation looked on.

The Samuel Stone Award takes its name from a puritan minister who helped found Hartford, Connecticut and served as a chaplain to colonial militia troops fighting against New England’s Pequot tribe in 1637.

Receiving this award made him feel “very humbled and undeserving,” Bartz said.

“An award of this caliber is just a reflection of the caliber of my team. I didn’t do this on my own,” he said.

Col. Andrew Carlson, the commander of the 107th, who nominated Bartz for the award, praised him for his service to the wing’s Airmen and families.

“He epitomizes the selfless dedication required of our service and represents the very best of the United States Air Force Chaplain Corps,” Carlson said.

Bartz, who has been associated with the Grace Baptist Church for 16 years, joined the New York Air National Guard’s 107th Attack

Wing in 2017 as the senior protestant chaplain at age 37.

He had wanted to serve in the military, but put it off to become a pastor, Bartz said. When he was approached and asked to serve in the Guard, he decided this was a way to do both, he explained.

In 2020 he became the wing chaplain, overseeing a team of two other chaplains and four religious affairs Airmen.

As wing chaplain, Bartz created programs to assist the MQ-9 operators in coping with the stresses of their jobs. He also implemented a program to visit the remote units and provide pastoral care and counseling to their Airmen.

He made himself available to counsel wing members and family members as required and oversaw “Yellow Ribbon” programs to help families and Airmen reintegrate following deployments.

From March to June 2020, Bartz served as the chaplain for the New York National Guard forces staffing COVID-19 vaccination sites and testing locations across western New York.

He also played a key role when the wing responded to the Buffalo Christmas Blizzard in



Chaplain (Major) Jeffery Bartz, the chaplain for the 107th Attack Wing, speaks to the audience during the ceremony at which he received the Samuel Stone Award at at Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station, June 3, 2023.

2022. He worked with the wing’s Fatality Search and Recovery Team as they went about the grim business of assisting the city in recovering the remains of people who died during the storm.

In his civilian role, Bartz mobilized his Grace Baptist Church congregation to aid travelers stranded in Batavia from December 23-26 due to the blizzard. They provided housing and food, and a Christmas worship service, to people from around the world who were stranded when the roads closed.

Bartz holds a Bachelor of Science in Bible from Clarks Summit University in Clarks Summit, Pennsylvania; and a Master of Divinity from Baptist Bible Seminary, which is also in Clarks Summit. And he holds a Doctor of Ministry from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. **gt**



## New Commander for the 152<sup>nd</sup> Combat Ops Squadron

SYRACUSE, N.Y. — Lt. Col. Nicholas D. Welly took command of the 152nd Combat Operations Squadron, part of the 152nd Air Operations Group, in a ceremony on Hancock Field Air National Guard Base on June 3, 2023.

“I want to thank you for the opportunities that you gave me, all the mentoring and the examples that you’ve set,” said Welly. “I recognize while being in this position that I’m standing on the shoulders of giants and I’m grateful.”

Welly replaced Col. Doreen Chemotti who had commanded the squadron since June 5, 2022.

Photo by Staff Sgt. Duane Morgan, 174th Attack Wing.

# 105<sup>th</sup> Airmen Train With Green Berets

Story and photo by Master Sgt. Patrick Espeut, 105th Airlift Wing



Airmen from the 105th Base Defense Squadron hold an after action debrief during a training exercise at Warren Grove Bombing Range, Ocean County, New Jersey, May 6, 2023.

WARREN GROVE RANGE, N.J. — The 105th Base Defense Squadron from Stewart Air National Guard Base, Newburgh, New York, teamed up with the 106th Rescue Wing and an Operational Detachment Alpha from the Army National Guard's 20th Special Forces Group to hone their expeditionary skills during a training exercise at Warren Grove Bombing Range, May 5-7, 2023.

Over the course of three days, Airmen and Soldiers were thrust into scenarios designed to recreate some of the missions military members might be tasked with in a hostile deployed environment.

Everything from conducting ground assaults on a forward operating base to repelling an enemy force from defensive fighting positions was included in the exercise.

105th members also got an opportunity to work alongside Joint Terminal Attack Controllers and request close-air support from HH-60 Pave Hawk helicopters flown by the 106th.

Throughout the training, debriefs were held between base defenders and the special warfare operators to highlight tactics that were well executed and to identify areas that could use

enhancement.

"We are trying to train in a slowed down tempo of deployments so we can work on certain skills rather than having to pick them back up when we are tasked to go out the door," said Tech. Sgt. Nicholas O'Brien, a BDS member who acted as an advisor to the acting troop commander for the exercise.

"I am ensuring that adequate notes are taken for the appropriate after action report, so we can bring the notes back to the squadron and identify certain deficiencies within the teams. Our team performed very well, but there is always room for improvement," said O'Brien.

In addition to the 28 BDS members, six support members from intel, vehicle maintenance and supply participated in the exercise. In a real-world deployment, Airmen from these career fields would be embedded with the base defense force to provide intelligence reports and repair vehicles as necessary.


This is the second time that the 105th has conducted a joint training with Army green berets from the 20th SFG. The budding partnership was made possible by 1st Lt. Al Romano, a 105th member who also works at the NYPD's

Emergency Services Unit with one of the green berets.

"The Air Force is looking for innovative ways to breed multi-capable Airmen. What better unit to look to then a battle tested ODA whom we can learn so much from," said Romano. "These Special Forces units can greatly enhance our war fighting and ground base defense capabilities so that we are able to better prepare for near peer adversaries."

This unique partnership aims to help both groups become a more lethal fighting force by learning from each other's techniques and experiences.

"I hope we continue this relationship with the 20th and the 106th Rescue Wing," said Master Sgt. Aljamien Gamble, the acting troop commander who coordinated the events of the exercise along with other members from BDS.

"This training is beneficial to facilitate the wing's vision which is 'Always Ready,'" said Gamble. "That means working in an austere environment, alone and unafraid, and getting ourselves ready for anything that comes up in the future." 

# 174<sup>th</sup> Welcomes New Wing Commander

Story by Eric Durr, *Guard Times Staff*

SYRACUSE, N.Y. — Col. John O'Connor took command of the 174th Attack Wing during a June 4 ceremony at Hancock Field Air National Guard Base.

O'Connor previously served as the vice commander of the 107th Attack Wing at Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station.

He replaced Col. William J. McCrink III, who took command of the wing in 2020. McCrink will be retiring after a 27-year career in the Air Force.

O'Connor, served in the 174th from 1999 to 2019 before a three year tour as principal deputy director of logistics, engineering and force protection at Air National Guard headquarters which he completed in June 2022.

In his remarks, O'Connor said he was proud to serve in the 174th once again.

"The 174th has a rich history of dedication, innovation and excellence in combat operations, training and support," O'Connor said.

"Looking to the future, everyone in this hangar knows we face incredible challenges ahead."

But, O'Connor said, he is confident that the wing's Airmen can meet those challenges.

In his remarks, McCrink praised the men and women of the wing.

"I could not have wished for a better command. Could not have wished for a better way to end my Air Force career," McCrink said. **gt**



New York Air National Guard Col. John O'Connor receives the 174th Attack Wing Flag from Maj. Gen. Denise Donnell, New York Air National Guard commander, during a Change of Command ceremony at Hancock Field Air National Guard Base, Syracuse, New York, June 4, 2023. Photo by Staff Sgt. Duane Morgan, 174th Attack Wing.

# Father, Son Train Together in 174<sup>th</sup> Attack Wing

Story by Airman Tiffany Scofield, *174th Attack Wing*

SYRACUSE, N.Y. — 174th Attack Wing father and son duo, Senior Master Sgt. Anthony Scuderi from Emergency Management, and Airman 1st Class Elijah Scuderi, from client systems of the 174th Communications Squadron, participated in a Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear exercise alongside other military members at Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania, April 18 to 21, 2023.

The goal of this training event was to build upon previous training and to conduct a smooth and well orchestrated event in order to maintain proficiency on all CBRN operations.

This exercise was Elijah's first off-base exercise and he said he was excited yet nervous as he was not sure of what to expect.

During the exercise, Airmen conducted realistic training in field and garrison environments, with joint operations supported by outside enabler units to increase their proficiency.

Over 200 Airmen and Soldiers came together to successfully complete this in-depth exercise and train for situations that could be disastrous.

"The best part about these exercises is we get to work with our Army counterparts and learn from each other," said Anthony. "If something were to happen in our region in New York, we already have relationships built which makes the response much easier." **gt**



174th Attack Wing Senior Master Sgt. Anthony Scuderi stands with his son, Airman 1st Class Elijah Scuderi before participating in an exercise at Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania, April 18, 2023. Photo by Master Sgt. Barbara Olney, 174th Attack Wing.

# 106<sup>th</sup> Aids Search for Titanic Submersible

Story and photos by Capt. Cheran Campbell, 106<sup>th</sup> Rescue Wing



An HC-130J Combat King II stands by for take off June 21, 2023 at F.S Gabreski Air National Guard Base to assist the Coast Guard in the search for a missing submersible lost while diving near the wreck of the Titanic. The wing flew three search missions over three days.

F.S. GABRESKI AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, Westhampton Beach, N.Y. — Thirty-eight Airmen assigned to the 106<sup>th</sup> Rescue Wing were part of the effort to locate the commercial submersible Titan, which sank while diving on the wreck of the RMS Titanic on June 19.

The wing launched three search missions 900 miles out over the North Atlantic on June 19, 20 and 21 at the request of the U.S. Coast Guard from their base on the eastern tip of Long Island.

The Coast Guard's Sector Boston was responsible for coordinating the search and rescue mission when the 22-foot long, 8-foot-wide vessel lost contact with its mother ship.

On June 22, the Coast Guard announced that the Titan had imploded and the five people aboard had been killed on Sunday, June 18.

But that was not known when the 106<sup>th</sup> launched its first search on Monday, June 19 at 3:18 in the afternoon.

Most wing members were celebrating the Juneteenth holiday, but when the word went out that a rescue was underway, Airmen responded, according to Maj. Patrick Harding, the mission coordinator for the search operations.

"Every time we get a phone call for a mission, everyone at the base is eager to participate," Harding said.

The HC-130J Combat King II search and rescue launched with 13 people on board. This included six aircrew, two maintenance personnel and five pararescue jumpers.

According to Col. Jeffery Cannet, 106<sup>th</sup> Operation Group commander, the pararescuemen were on the mission, along with rescue supplies, in case the submersible was spotted bobbing on

the surface. The plan would be to jump from the aircraft and to provide aid as needed.

The maintenance personnel were along in case the aircraft had to be diverted to another airport instead of returning home to Long Island. They also helped look out onto the sea for the missing craft, Cannet said.

The first search mission returned to base at 2 a.m.

It was a challenging mission, said Capt. Christopher Colewell, one of the pilots.

"We didn't have a lot of illumination. It was very, very difficult to conduct a search," he said.

Given the complexities of the task, the crew members were assigned specific roles to optimize the search, Harding explained.

The "scanners" on the long missions looked out all of the aircraft's ports as the plane flew its search grid, he said.

The flights launched on June 20 and 21 did not include pararescuemen.

The rescue wing asked for volunteers to serve as scanners for those 10 hour flights. There were 13 Airmen on the June 20 flight and 12 on the June 21 mission.

Tech. Sgt. Wendy Carranza, a medical technician in the wing's 106<sup>th</sup> Medical Group, said she was happy to volunteer to help.

"As an aerospace medical technician, we rely on all of our senses to help others in any situation that may arise to the best of our ability," she said.

"Using my eyesight against the current and with the current was an experience I will never forget," Carranza said.

Tech. Sgt. Roberta Farris, NCOIC Command and Control Operations, was another scanner and was able to appreciate the complexity of the sea.

"Being a part of the mission was quite the experience, one I'm grateful for," Farris said.


"You don't realize how vast the ocean is until you are looking out the window of the C-130 searching for a white capsule amongst the many whitecaps."

Col. Shawn Fitzgerald, the 106<sup>th</sup> Rescue Wing commander applauded the 106<sup>th</sup> Airmen for their efforts.

"The Airmen of the 106<sup>th</sup> prove time and time again that they are ready to respond in any situation and this situation is no different," Fitzgerald said.

"We would have loved for a better outcome, but I'm proud of our Airmen and their ability to quickly aid in this search. My condolences to the family members of the lost, our thoughts are with you."

In a press release issued June 20, New York Governor Kathy Hochul praised the men and women of the 106<sup>th</sup> for their quick response to the request for help.

"The women and men of New York's Air National Guard are always ready to lend a helping hand," Hochul said. "I commend the members of the 106<sup>th</sup> Rescue Wing for their efforts to assist." 



Tech. Sgt. Steven Benza, a loadmaster assigned to the 106<sup>th</sup> Rescue Wing prepares to load a C-130J Combat King II heading out to search for a submersible lost while diving on the wreck of the Titanic at F.S Gabreski Air National Guard Base, Westhampton Beach, New York, June 21, 2023

## Ceremony Honors WWI Water Supply Defenders

Story by Capt. Mark Getman, New York Guard

SLEEPY HOLLOW CEMETERY, N.Y. — On May 7, the 105th Aqueduct Defense Memorial Service took place at Sleepy Hollow Cemetery, paying tribute to the New York Guard members who made the ultimate sacrifice protecting New York City’s water supply during World War I.

Among the attendees were distinguished leaders and members of the New York Guard and the New York City Department of Environmental Protection Police.

The memorial ceremony honored the memory of 37 members from the 1st Provisional Regiment of the NYG who succumbed to the 1918 influenza pandemic while safeguarding the city’s aqueducts against sabotage attempts from 1917 to 1918.

Additionally, three other members lost their lives in accidents. The ceremony centered around a poignant marker constructed from a boulder generously donated by the Rockefeller family.

over a century, the Aqueduct Defense Memorial Service marked its 105th year of commemoration.

The current New York Guard traces its origins back to the formation of the 1st Provisional Regiment, a unit created to protect the critical aqueduct system.

Comprising citizen volunteers who patrolled day and night, the regiment demonstrated unwavering commitment to ensuring the uninterrupted flow of water to the city.

Col. Glenn Marchi, commander of the 56th Area Command, expressed profound admiration for the New York Guard’s pivotal role in safeguarding vital infrastructure.

He remarked, “The New York Guard service members who protected the aqueduct during World War I deserve unwavering recognition for their commitment and sacrifice. Their extraordinary dedication serves as an enduring inspiration to us all.”



Members of the New York Guard and New York City police present a wreath during the 105th Annual 1st Provisional Regiment Aqueduct Defense Memorial Service, Sleepy Hollow, New York, May 7, 2023. Photo by Sgt. Richard Mayfield.

The lingering threat to New York City’s water supply was underscored by the infamous Black Tom bombing in 1916, orchestrated by German saboteurs.

The devastating explosion resulted in extensive damage, including to the Statue of Liberty, amplifying the need for heightened protection and vigilance.

Col. Stephen Ryan, deputy com-

Guard, underscored the historical significance of their mission.

He emphasized, “The Guard was established with the express purpose of safeguarding the water supply, a duty we carried out with unwavering determination. Today, we remain steadfast in our commitment to protect vital infrastructure.” **gt**



Members of the New York Guard speak during the 105th Annual 1st Provisional Regiment Aqueduct Defense Memorial Service, Sleepy Hollow, New York, May 7, 2023. Photo by Sgt. Richard Mayfield.



Members of the New York Guard conduct a firing party during the 105th Annual 1st Provisional Regiment Aqueduct Defense Memorial Service, Sleepy Hollow, New York, May 7, 2023. Photo by Sgt. Richard Mayfield.

# New York Naval Militia

## Naval Militia Trains on the Hudson River

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

HUDSON, N.Y. — Thirty members of the Naval Militia's Military Emergency Boat Service got ready for the 2023 mission season with two days of training on the Hudson River on April 29 and 30, 2023.

The annual training allows the boat crews to get reacquainted with their equipment after the winter, explained Capt. Don McKnight, the commander of the Military Emergency Boat Service.

The boat service operates a fleet of 10 patrol boats which are based across the state during summer months.

In the winter, the smaller boats are stored on trailers at the New York State Armory in Leeds which is near Hudson.

"This is our annual kickoff event, where we bring together key MEBS personnel and provide training on new initiatives," McKnight said. "Then we refresh our skillset by conducting some hands on training with our watercraft before deploying it around the state for operations the rest of the year."

The crews based out of the Hudson Power Boat Association marina and operate on the river between that location and the Rip Van Winkle Bridge three and a half miles south.

The massive bridge links Columbia and Greene counties.

On Saturday, the boats conducted a movement in formation from the marine to the bridge before they broke off and conducted individual training. This included search and rescue exercises, man overboard drills, towing, patrol operations and beach landings.

The New York Naval Militia is by far the largest element of its kind in the country, with

2,850 members, and roots going back to 1891. The next biggest naval militia belongs to Ohio, with 25 members, according to McKnight.

The militia is mostly made up of Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard reservists and retirees, and is a volunteer force. The governor can call them into service to support state elements.

The militia falls under the umbrella of the Division of Naval and Military Affairs based in Latham, under the command of Maj. Gen. Ray Shields, the adjutant general of New York.

Rear Adm. Larry Weill, commander of the New York Naval Militia, emphasized the importance of the diversity of the training.

"Our mission is all encompassing. At the direction of the governor, we can augment state forces in a multitude of different scenarios and bring an immense amount of experience and expertise to the table," Weill said.

"This event is critical to assess our equipment and familiarize ourselves with it after the winter season."


The Naval Militia's boat fleet includes two large patrol boats which operate on the Hudson River and in New York Harbor and Long Island Sound, two landing craft which can deliver people and supplies on short notice in an emergency, and smaller craft which are trailered out



New York Naval Militia members drive a patrol boat on the Hudson River during an exercise in Hudson, New York, April 29, 2023.

agencies across the state.

Other members of the Naval Militia provide trained personnel to assist in state missions as required.

The 30 Naval Militia members training over the weekend also got a chance to visit the Hudson-Athens Lighthouse, a historic site that is a major landmark on the river. 



New York Naval Militia members conducting boat training exercises on the Hudson River near Hudson, New York, on April 29, 2023.

to operate on the Finger Lakes, Lake Champlain and Lakes Erie and Ontario.

New York Naval Militia boat crews work with the U.S. Coast Guard, the Border Patrol and local law enforcement



New York Naval Militia boats docked at the Hudson Power Boat Association in Hudson, New York, April 29, 2023.

