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Volume 17 Number 2

# guardtimes

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



# FROM THE LEADERSHIP

## Our Guard Makes a Difference in NY State Missions

As I write this, the fourth of July, and the 248th anniversary of our Nation's Independence, has just passed.

This holiday gives us pause and a day to reflect on the blessings bestowed upon all of us and celebrate the freedoms and liberties this Nation provides. Our Nation's founders created a government of United States, by the people and for the people, protected by a collective militia to safeguard the United States.

Over the course of those 248 years, that militia construct has transformed itself to adapt to an ever-changing global and societal landscape.

Technological innovations in powered flight has led to many "firsts." These range from General Mitchell's advocacy for a separate Air Force, demonstrated by sinking battleships from the air in the early 1920's, to the power of air superiority in WWII, the advent of the jet age, and then putting a man on the moon.

Throughout that journey the Air National Guard and its Airmen, have also innovated and adapted.

The New York Air National Guard shares this proud history of innovation and change.

The transition from air defense in the 1980s to rapid global mobility-- including operations at the poles--to remotely piloted aircraft employed world-wide, space domain awareness, puts the New York Air National Guard on the leading edge of innovation.

The 105th Airlift Wing is supporting an aerodynamic C-17 fuel efficiency test project to improve fuel consumption fleet wide.

One C-17 has micro vanes installed on the tail which will save 1% fuel consumption.

sumed per year and equal \$10M in savings when installed on all nine of their C-17's.

The 105th also has the only C-17 in the Air Force fleet to be equipped with an Airlift Tanker Open Mission Systems (ATOMS), a satellite communication device providing the warfighter increased situational awareness.

The 106th Rescue Wing is leading efforts across the Air Force and Air National Guard to improve Aircraft Availability through supply improvement initiatives. The unit was competitively selected and awarded funding of \$1.2 million to increase Supply Chain Visibility and Resilience, for HH-60G, HC-130J, F-16, and KC-135 aircraft.

The Wing also developed and conducted the very first DoD sanctioned STEM camp program for an Air Guard unit. This summer the Wing will deliver an unparalleled STEM Camp experience to prepare local high school students.

The 107th Attack Wing has bolstered collaborative relationship building with State Partnership Program Nations and Allies. Relationship building continues to expand as our allies' interest in MQ-9, Tactical Control Party, and Space Operations expands.

They participated in events with Brazil, Poland, Hungary, and Sweden capitalizing on the technology, tactics, and leadership they offer in their operational areas of expertise.

The 109th Airlift Wing participated in Arctic Edge 24 in February, a U.S. Northern command-led homeland defense exercise demonstrating the U.S. military's capabilities in extreme cold weather.

More than 400 American and allied Special Forces personnel honed their skills in extreme cold weather operations. Participants came from multiple nations, including Norway, Denmark and the United Kingdom.

The 109th Medical Team was

selected to lead the DoDs Innovative Readiness Training in Kodiak, Alaska high in the arctic, where military technicians delivered vital medical care to underserved communities in Alaska's most remote regions.

The 109th is also well underway in advancing the recapitalization of it's current LC-130 fleet to the modern J- model airframe.

The 174th Attack Wing over the last two years has led the way in furthering the capabilities of the MQ-9 Reaper.

Utilizing hardware additions with their development of procedures, for the first time they were able to take off and land an MQ-9 at multiple airfields ranging from Rochester International Airport, to Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point.

The 224th Air Defense Group is improving mission readiness through the implementation of Agile Ops – a hardware management system integrated with technology upgrades. This effort will enable Airmen on the Battle Control Center operations floor to enable access to multiple systems



Brig. Gen. Michael Bank

using one hardware station and the fusion of data.

The Eastern Air Defense Sector is also in the second phase of design of a new operations facility to house their vital weapons system to meet the challenges of presented by great power competition.

We as a New York Air National Guard will continue to innovate and ensure our readiness.

It is what we have done over multiple decades in the spirit of the Air Pioneers and the airmen that laid the foundation of what we have today. I am proud to serve along side each and every one of you.



LATHAM, NY -- Brig. Gen. Isabel Smith and Command Sgt. Maj. Curtis Moss stand at attention next to the memorial as the names of the Service Members who have passed since 21 May 2023 were read. The Memorial Day ceremony was held at New York National Guard headquarters in Latham, New York, May 23, 2024. Photo by Stephanie Butler, Guard Times staff.



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**Met Museum Visits the Harlem Armory**

Governor Kathy Hochul, COMMANDER IN CHIEF  
 Maj. Gen. Raymond Shields, THE ADJUTANT GENERAL  
 Eric Durr, DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS  
 Lt. Col. Jean Kratzer, PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER  
 Stephanie Butler, GUARD TIMES STAFF

### About Guard Times

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

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

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

### Submissions

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

Guard Times  
 DMNA-MNPA  
 330 Old Niskayuna Road  
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FRONT COVER: A Mexican Marine fast ropes out of a New York Army National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter during a 7th Special Operation Group (Airborne) Fast Rope Insertion and Extraction System training event at TRADEWINDS 24 in Barbados, May 8, 2024. Photo by Sgt. Joshua Taeckens, U.S. Army South.

BACK COVER: Airmen assigned to the 274th Air Support Operations Squadron rappel from a New York Army National Guard CH-47 Chinook helicopter during a training exercise at Hancock Field Air National Guard Base in Syracuse. Photo by Tech Sgt. Alexander Rector, 174th Attack Wing.

## Soldiers Save Stabbing Victims Life

Story by Eric Durr, *Guard Times* staff

NEW YORK — Two quick-thinking, well-trained New York National Guard Soldiers helped save the life of a man stabbed at a Queens subway station on May 20, 2024.

Staff Sgt. Joel Strickland, and Spc. Desany Jacques, members of the New York Guard's New York City security force, used their medical skills, and trauma kits, to stop the bleeding and stabilize him.

Both men have military medical training and are volunteer first responders in civilian life. So, they were the right people to handle this emergency, according to Capt. Caleb Jean, their company commander in Joint Task Force-Empire Shield.

"These two Soldiers were able to react without hesitation," Jean said. "I am extremely impressed with how they handled the situation."

The incident began just after 2 p.m., when Strickland and Jacques reported to the security checkpoint site at the Suphin Blvd and Archer St. subway station.

Since March 6, at the direction of Gov. Kathy Hochul, members of the joint task force have been assisting the New York Police Department and Metropolitan Transit Authority Police Department. The Guard personnel backup the officers as their eyes, while the cops look inside backpacks and bags.

Strickland, a Manhattan resident, and medic assigned to the headquarters company of the 42nd Infantry Division, has served in Joint Task Force Empire Shield since 2020.

Jacques, who lives in Uniondale, and is assigned to the 102nd Military Police Company as a supply specialist, has served for eight months.

The two Soldiers were introducing themselves to the two police officers they would be supporting, when they heard a commotion, Strickland recalled. A shirtless man was coming down the stairs cursing and screaming.

**"I would definitely say, don't be complacent. Every day is something new on post for us."**

-- Spc. Desany Jacques, *Joint Task Force Empire Shield*

He jumped the turnstile and began fighting with two other civilians, Strickland said.

Police officers moved to break up the fight and get the men out of the subway, Strickland said. The officers got them headed out of the station, when the two men who had been attacked ran up to the two Soldiers and one of the cops.

"Specialist Jacques says, 'Are you okay?' One of the civilians turns around—he had a black hoodie on—and his entire hoodie was soaked in blood," Strickland said.

Strickland directed Jacques, who is trained as a combat lifesaver, to run up to their vehicle and retrieve the EMT bag inside.

He and the police got the victim on the ground, and pulled up the



Army National Guard Staff Sgt. Joel Strickland, left, and Spec. Desany Jacques, members of the New York National Guard security force in New York City, used their training and issued first aid packages to help save the life of a stabbing victim on May 20, 2024 while on duty in Queens, New York. The two Soldiers are assigned to Joint Task Force Empire Shield, a state active duty security force, and they were assigned to assist New York Police Department officers who were checking bags of subway riders. Photo by 1st Lt. Stephanie Sylvain, Joint Task Force Empire Shield.

hoodie, Strickland said.

The wound was on the upper right side of his back, was about the width of a nickel, and was four inches long, he recalled.

He had put on latex gloves and covered the wound to stop the bleeding.

Strickland needed a special trauma bandage from his medical kit, known as an IFAK-- short for Individual First Aid Kit.

Like the Quick Clot bandages carried in Iraq and Afghanistan, the gauze is impregnated with a material that makes blood clot. These newer bandages -- called CELOX--use material from the shells of shrimp, crabs, and lobsters to do the same thing.

He needed to begin packing the victim's wound with the bandage, he explained. But he didn't have a free hand. Fortunately, Jacques who is "kind of fast," was already back with the larger aid kit and ready to help, Strickland said.

The two Soldiers worked together to pack the lifesaving material into the hoodie-wearing man's wound. They packed the wound for four minutes until the bleeding stopped.

Jean, the two Soldiers' company commander, said that all members of the task force have been trained on how to perform emergency trauma care so they can aid civilians and each other.

New York National Guard leaders also made it a point to get the trauma kits for the task force members, Jean said.

"Having that package was extremely instrumental to what occurred at that post," he said. "A few years ago, we did not have it."

Soldiers and Airmen assigned to the task force have to be ready for something unusual or dangerous, like the stabbing, to happen any time, Jacques said.

"I would definitely say, don't be complacent," he said. "Every day is something new on post for us." **gt**

# Retired NCO Receives Bronze Star for Valor

Story by Eric Durr, *Guard Times* staff

LATHAM, N.Y. — A retired New York Army National Guard Soldier was recognized for his heroic actions 20 years ago in Iraq, during a ceremony at Division of Military and Naval Affairs headquarters in Latham on Thursday, June 27.

Master Sgt. Luis Barsallo, who retired in 2021, received the Bronze Star Medal with “V” device from Major General Ray Shields, the adjutant general of New York.

The V device designates that the award is for valor. When awarded for heroism in combat, the Bronze Star is the nation’s fourth highest military decoration for valor.

The award recognizes Barsallo’s actions in April and May of 2004, when his unit, the New York Army National Guard’s Company C, 2nd Battalion, 108th Infantry Regiment, was on duty in Samarra, Iraq as part of the 1st Infantry Division.

The April action, recorded by the Army as the Battle of Easter Sunday, resulted in the death of Pfc. Nathan Brown from South Glens Falls when the company’s 2nd platoon was ambushed.

Several members of the platoon were severely injured, but they survived thanks to Barsallo’s actions, Shields said.

“Luis saved lives by staying calm and directing fires on enemy positions,” Shields said.

Then he went back out into the ambush kill zone to reposition a five-ton truck so that the machine gun could fire on the enemy and so that evacuation vehicles could get to the wounded Soldiers, Shields added.

“He put himself in immediate and direct harm’s way to save his fellow Soldiers,” Shields said. “Luis was determined that others would not die that night.”

A Bronze Star awarded for heroism is a rare award, but in this case, it is well deserved, Shields said.

Barsallo should have received it earlier, but the New York battalion was attached to an active Army brigade, and the original paperwork

got lost, said Lt. Col. Katie Schin, the executive officer of the New York National Guard Recruiting and Retention Battalion.

She and some other admin experts decided to find the documents, and resubmit the award, Schin said. The hardest part was finding the officers who would have signed the awards form back in 2004; the battalion, brigade, and 1st Infantry Division commanders, she explained.

They stuck with it, because what Barsallo did

rocket-propelled grenades.

This was the ambush in which Brown was killed.

According to Army records, Barsallo quickly deployed his squad to respond to the attack. Then Barsallo left his covered position to drive a 5-ton truck out of the kill zone and positioned it to provide suppressive fire on the enemy, allowing six badly injured Soldiers to be evacuated.

Barsallo then led his squad in an assault on the enemy positions until the quick reaction force arrived to take over the fight.

NBC News Anchor Tom Brokaw interviewed some of these Soldiers after they returned from Iraq and featured them in a special report called “Tom Brokaw Reports: To War and Back” in 2005.

The second incident, according to Army records, took place on May 29, while Barsallo’s squad was attached to Company A of the 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment at a blocking position. The squad came under fire from enemy small arms and rocket-propelled grenades.

Exposing himself to enemy fire, Barsallo ran to a machine gun position. He took charge of

the machine gun crew and directed fire at the enemy, killing two insurgents and forcing the rest to withdraw.

“Barsallo’s strong leadership, unmatched personal courage, and strong situational awareness, successfully eliminated the enemy, allowing for the successful completion of the A Company mission,” the citation says.

Barsallo retired from the New York Army National Guard in May of 2020 after 29 years of service in the Army; eight years in the active Army and 21 years in the New York Army National Guard.

He currently works as a healthcare navigator for the Albany Housing Coalition which provides veterans housing services. 🇺🇸



Maj. Gen. Ray Shields, the adjutant general of New York, presents the Bronze Star Medal with “V” device to retired Master Sgt. Luis Barsallo during a ceremony at New York Division of Military and Naval Affairs headquarters in Latham, New York, on June 27, 2024. Barsallo was recognized for heroism during combat operations in Samarra, Iraq from in April and May 2004 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Barsallo retired from the New York National Guard in 2021. Photo by Stephanie Butler, *Guard Times* staff.

in 2004 deserved recognition, Schin said.

“It actually feels great to get this award,” Barsallo said. “Because of the group of people I had in Iraq, it’s because of them that I got this.”

The people he served with during his career in the active Army and Army Guard, helped him become a better leader, and bring the eight members of his squad back home, he said.

In 2004 the 2nd Battalion, 108th Infantry Regiment was deployed to north central Iraq as part of the Army’s 1st Infantry Division. The battalion’s Company C was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, which was responsible for the city of Samarra.

On Sunday, April 11, 2004, Barsallo’s platoon was ambushed by insurgents with IEDs and

## NY Army Guard Farewells 100-year old National Guard WWII Veteran of Pacific

Story by Eric Durr and Stephanie Butler, *Guard Times* Staff

WATERFORD, N.Y. — A hundred-year old New York National Guard, World War II veteran, who survived the Battle of Saipan in 1944, was honored by a New York Army National Guard Honor Guard team as he was laid to rest on May 7, 2024.

Cpl. Wilfred “Spike” Mailloux, who served in Company B of the 27th Infantry Division’s 105th Infantry Regiment, was a 20-year old Soldier on July 7, 1944, when the regiment’s 1st Battalion was overrun in the largest Japanese charge of World War II.

Mailloux, was one of the 512 Soldiers wounded when over 4,000 Japanese soldiers staged a “banzai” charge against the positions of the 1st and 2nd battalions towards the end of the month-long battle. Another 402 men were killed.

A Japanese officer stabbed Mailloux in the thigh with a knife and he lay in a ditch for hours. He survived because another Soldier from his Cohoes, New York-based company --Staff Sgt. John Sidur --went looking for survivors.

Providing funeral honors at Mailloux’s burial at St. Michael’s Cemetery in Waterford, was “a great honor,” said Sgt. Carlos Garcia, an infantryman who led the two-Soldier detail.

He and Spc. Samantha Bruce were aware of Mailloux’s history, and wanted to make sure the service they provided was perfect, he said.

“We try to be perfect,” he said. “For every family every service is special.”

Former Associated Press reporter Chris Carola, who got to know Mailloux in 2014,

described him as “a sweet old guy, always very cheerful, just a nice guy.”

“He always wore a ballcap with his regiment and division on it, or a ballcap with an American flag on it, said Carola.

Mailloux was the last survivor of the Company B Guardsmen who were mobilized in October of 1940 by President Franklin Roosevelt, after France fell to the Nazis.

He had enlisted in August of 1940—lying

Sisters Song, he added.

Mailloux told a story about how he was on Guard duty one night at Fort McClellan, Alabama when a fire broke out in the mess hall, Mailloux started bugling, Carola recalled.

“All the guys come charging out of the barracks in the middle of the night yelling what is that call, what is that call? Once they got outside, they realized there was a fire, so they put out the fire,” Carola said.

With Mailloux’s history as a bugler in mind, the Honor Guard found a real bugler—from Buglers Across America—to play taps instead of using an electronic bugle, which plays a recorded version.

While Mailloux was proud of his service, he didn’t like talking about Saipan, Carola said.

He was ready, though, to talk about it with Sidur who died in 2015 at 97, Carola added.

After leaving the Army, Mailloux came back to Cohoes, got married, and worked for General Electric as a systems analyst until 1986.

In January, Carola recalled, he told Mailloux story to New York Army National Guard recruiters



Army National Guard Sgt. Carlos Garcia, left, and Spc. Samantha Bruce, perform military funeral honors at the burial of Wilfred “Spike” Mailloux, a 100-year old New York National Guard veteran of the World War II Battle of Saipan at St. Michael’s Cemetery in Waterford, New York, May 7, 2024. Mailloux survived the war’s largest Japanese banzai attack, which killed 502 Soldiers in the New York National Guard’s 105th Infantry Regiment on July 7, 1944. Photo by Stephanie Butler, *Guard Times* staff.

about being older than his 16 years—so he could earn \$5 for drilling at the Cohoes Armory, according to Carola.

He was very proud to be Company B’s bugler, Carola said.

“He would practice in the basement of the Cohoes armory that way no one could hear his mistakes,” Carola said.

He was a real life “Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy of Company B”, just like in the 1941 Andrews

a Saratoga Springs restaurant.

“I asked the NCO in charge, do you mind if I get the guys to raise a toast in Spike’s honor?” Carola said.

The sergeant got everybody to be quiet, then he stood up and told Mailloux’s story, Carola recalled.

“I asked everyone to raise their glass, and they did. And then they did the Army Hooah!” Carola said. 🇺🇸

# 'Rainbow' Division Memorial Day Wreath Laying

GARDEN CITY, N.Y. — In the lower left, Col. Louis Dileo of the 11th New York Regiment USA-Volunteers, plays ceremonial TAPS. In the lower right, Bert Cunningham, 69th Regimental historian, Sgt. 1st Class Nicasio Velazquez of the 42nd Infantry Division, and Sgt. 1st Class Colin Stewart of Company B, 1-69th Regiment, stand at the wreath purchased by the 42nd Infantry Division Association at the division Association's annual pre-Memorial Day wreath-laying service commemorating the division's history and service during World War I on May 25. The service occurred at the division's World War I memorial in Garden City, New York, the former site of Camp Mills where the division trained before deploying overseas. The wreaths honor those who served and died while on duty with the 42nd Infantry Division. Photo by Mark Getman, 42nd Infantry Division Association.



# 105th Yellow Ribbon Event

STEWART AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, N.Y. — In the lower left, Airmen and family members attend yellow ribbon event. In the lower right, Air National Guard Col. Ryan Dannemann speaks during the event. The event included meals, briefings and resources for recently returned, first-time deployers and their families. Photos by Senior Airman Rebekah Wilson, 105th Airlift Wing.



# Mind, Body, and Soul: Air Guard Embraces Holistic Wellness

Story by Maj. Suzanne Jedrosko, 174th Attack Wing

HANCOCK FIELD AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, SYRACUSE, N.Y. —The 174th Attack Wing in Syracuse, NY has embraced a novel approach to holistic wellness focused on spiritual, physical, social, mental, and emotional fitness.

Utilizing mindfulness and self-care techniques, education, mutual support, empowerment, and building resilience through adversity, the approach aligns with the National Guard's Holistic Wellness Challenge.

The Challenge is a Chief of the National Guard Bureau initiative to enhance the wellness of National Guard members and their families by promoting healthy behaviors and preventing harm. Each month the National Guard releases information on a different wellness topic to include background information, tips, resources, and talking points.

Although there has historically been a stigma in the military about seeking help for mental health, the 174th Attack Wing has rewritten the narrative on seeking help by reinvigorating the role of the Director of Psychological Health (DPH). The DPH serves as a behavioral health consultant, subject matter expert, and advocate for psychological health for the wing.

“As an Air National Guard DPH, I believe in providing a place to be seen, heard, and understood,” said Marni Millet, Director of Psychological Health at the 174th Attack Wing.

Now, service members are encouraged to get the help they need.

Doing so allows the Airmen to build resilience, and the capacity to withstand more, by overcoming adversity. It creates an opportunity cost, enabling Guardsmen to be stronger and more resilient the next time they are challenged.

“Seeking treatment for mental health demonstrates the strength and sound judgment needed to maintain and enhance mission readiness,” said Millet said.

Taking care of people is at the forefront of 174th Attack Wing Commander Col. John O'Connor's leadership initiative. When Airmen have the resources and support that they need, they are better focused on the mission.

“Anxiety and excitement can feel like the same thing, although the messages are quite different,” said Millet. “I can help people learn about this and reduce anxiety in educational settings.”

Through her DPH role, Millet has begun to offer regular yoga sessions for the base community.



Airmen of the 174th Attack Wing practice yoga at Hancock Field Air National Guard Base in Syracuse, New York. The yoga sessions align with the National Guard's Holistic Wellness Challenge. Photo by Staff Sgt. Duane Morgan, 174th Attack Wing.

According to Millet, yoga provides many benefits for the mind, body, and soul. Yoga resets the nervous system and relieves anxiety, while also helping people be in the present moment. It also builds strength, flexibility, and dexterity. Through the practice of yoga, emotions and thoughts that might otherwise be suppressed show up on the mat, which increases resilience.

“In a passive manner, we learn to be a warrior on the mat while

sadness comes up, and we stand solid and strong in tree pose, while flexibly swaying our arm branches in the air,” Millet said. “This reminds us to be flexible while grounded and focused while being distracted.”

In addition to a focus on mental health awareness and support, the 174th Attack Wing has also hosted several events and initiatives aimed at improving emotional, social, physical, and spiritual wellness. **gt**

## Orion Soldiers Test Army's Newest Equipment

FORT DRUM, N.Y. — Army Spc. Johnny Pagan, an infantryman with the 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment, and a native of Manhattan, New York, controls a Soldier-borne sensor (SBS) unmanned aerial vehicle during a system familiarization training event at Fort Drum, New York, June 27, 2024. The SBS is a portable system that can be controlled by a single Soldier, allowing the drone to complete dangerous work Soldiers usually perform on their own. Photo by Master Sgt. Warren W. Wright Jr., 42nd Infantry Division Public Affairs.



# Harlem Hell Fighters Qualify Weapons

FORT INDIANTOWN GAP, Penn. — Army National Guard Soldiers with the 369th Sustainment Brigade participate in a live-fire event with their assigned weapon during individual weapons qualification at Fort Indiantown Gap, Pa., June 21-22, 2024. This qualification event is the Army-standard record course of fire used to determine a Soldier's live-fire proficiency on an assigned weapon. It is the sixth, and final, table of the Integrated Weapons Training Strategy, or IWTS. Photo by Staff Sgt. Sebastian Rothwyn, 369th Sustainment Brigade.



# 106<sup>th</sup> Participates in 2024 Bethpage Air Show

JONES BEACH, N.Y. — An HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopter assigned to the 101st Rescue Squadron, flies over the beach as a part of the Bethpage Air Show at Jones Beach, Wantagh, New York, May 25, 2024. This year is the 20th Anniversary of the Bethpage Air Show. Photo by Capt. Cheran Campbell, 106th Rescue Wing.

# THE JOINT FORCE

## New York National Guard Signs State Partnership Program With Sweden

Story and photo by Stephanie Butler, Guard Times staff

NEW YORK — The New York National Guard and Swedish military entered into a joint training agreement on Friday, July 12, as part of the National Guard's State Partnership Program during a ceremony held at New York's Freedom Tower.

Maj. Gen. Raymond Shields, the adjutant general of New York and Marcos Soler, New York State's Deputy Secretary for Public Safety signed a document formalizing the agreement with Sweden's Minister for Defence Pal Jonson and Major General Johan Pekkari, Chief of the Swedish Defence Staff's Strategy Unit.

"We are ushering in a new partnership for the Empire State, welcoming the Kingdom of Sweden to the New York National Guard's State Partnership Program, New York Gov. Kathy Hochul said.

"Our shared values, focus and commitment to the partnership will build relationships and improve capabilities for both our military forces. I look forward to the opportunities ahead," she said.

New York National Guard and Sweden will conduct joint training missions and military exchanges to improve readiness within their respective forces under the agreement.

"On March 7, 2024, Sweden became the 32nd member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization – NATO," Shields said. "Allies, friends and partners are stronger together than they are individually – especially against those who want to destroy freedom and independence."

The partnership is part of the National Guard's State Partnership Program which pairs state National Guard's with the militaries of countries around the world in bilateral training and exchange partnerships.

"This partnership will not only enhance operational abilities it will also strengthen the bonds of friendship and a new understanding between our forces, and our countries," Jonson said.

"This is a big moment for us, and we are honored to be here. This partnership will be driven by the mutual need of capability developments,"



Leaders from the New York National Guard and Swedish military sign an agreement for joint training as part of the National Guard State Partnership Program at New York's Freedom Tower on July 12, 2024. Maj. Gen. Ray Shields, left, the adjutant general of New York; Pal Jonson, Sweden's Minister for Defence; Marcos Soler, Deputy Secretary for Public Safety for the State of New York; and Maj. Gen. Johan Pekkari, Sweden's Chief of Policy and Plans, sign the document. The State Partnership Program pairs state National Guard's with the militaries of countries around the world in bilateral training and exchange partnerships.

he added.

For more than 30 years, National Guardsmen have built enduring connections with foreign counterparts through the State Partnership Program, said General Daniel Hokanson, the Chief of the National Guard Bureau.

The program is one of the most productive, cost-effective security cooperation programs the United States has to offer, he said.

We are hoping that being a part of the State Partnership Program, that it will open doors to new venues that will benefit both of our militaries and civil defense authorities, said Maj. Gen. Pekkari.

States such as New York would be the ultimate choice for Sweden, as a result we could not be happier standing here today, Pekkari continued.

The program originally began after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Guard was chosen to help former Soviet states reform their militaries and move toward civilian control of

their armed forces as newly emerging democracies.

In 1993, the National Guard State Partnership Program started with Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania as they emerged from the breakup of the Soviet Union

Since then, the program has grown to 89 partnerships across 106 nations.

New York has maintained a State Partnership Program relationship with the South African National Defense Force since 2003 and Brazilian Ministry of Defense since 2019.

The New York National Guard and Israeli Defense Forces also initiated a formalized relationship in 2019 with a bilateral security cooperation agreement.

In 2023 the New York National Guard signed a statement of intent with Denmark in late 2023 to establish joint training and exchanges in Greenland with their Joint Arctic Command. **gt**

# New York Officer Cadets Train in Albania



**ALBANIA** — On the upper left, U.S. Army Officer Candidate Opeoluwa Taylor, a member of New York OCS Class 69, conducts water crossing familiarization training. On the upper right, U.S. Army Lt. Col. Magregoir Simeon, commander of the 2nd Battalion, 254th Regiment presents an award to Lt. Kostandin Taho, Albanian Armed Forces in Rreth-Greth, Albania, May 16, 2024. New Jersey and New York National Guard Soldiers traveled to Albania to complete Situational Tactical Exercise lanes as part of State OCS Phase 2 with cadets from the Albanian Military Academy. The New Jersey National Guard and Albanian Armed Forces have been partners for over 20 years in the U.S. Department of Defense State Partnership Program. Photos by Capt. Kenneth Meisner, 444th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment.

# 106<sup>th</sup> Benefits from Virtual Yellow Ribbon Event

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

**FRANCIS S. GABRESKI AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, N.Y.** — 106th Rescue Wing Airmen participated in a virtual Yellow Ribbon event hosted by the New York Army National Guard on May 4 and 5.

The Yellow Ribbon Program assists service members and their families in preparing for, enduring, and reintegrating after deployments.

Lisa D'Agostino, the 106th Family Readiness Group manager and the Yellow Ribbon coordinator, said the Air National Guard Yellow Ribbon Program contract was not renewed, therefore the Air Guard units had to find a cost-effective way to support Airmen and their families through deployment cycles.

"We had about 30 Airmen that were required to complete a post-Yellow Ribbon event," D'Agostino said. "I found out that the New York Army National Guard was hosting a virtual two-half-day event."

D'Agostino explained the practicality of the virtual event.

Airmen their drill duties in the morning and then participated in the workshops, she added.

D'Agostino emphasized the benefits of hosting events either on-station or virtually.



**Air Force Tech. Sgt. Neil Thaker (left) and Staff Sgt. Lauren Henderson (right), both Security Forces specialists with the 106th Rescue Wing, participate in a New York Army National Guard post-deployment virtual Yellow Ribbon event at F.S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base, Westhampton Beach, New York, on May 4, 2024. Photo by Capt. Cheran Campbell, 106th Rescue Wing.**

"In the past, Yellow Ribbon event costs would be astronomical and poorly attended," she said. "Having on-site events or virtual events... can provide less stress, better attendance, and possibly more family participation."

Senior Airman Raphael Tavares, a 106th Security Forces defender, said he had a positive

experience with both pre-deployment and post-deployment Yellow Ribbon workshops.

"The pre-deployment Yellow Ribbon workshops were great," Tavares said. "I enjoyed the extracurricular grants for kids, the information on finance and budgeting, and the emotional support for dealing with being separated from loved ones."

The information was useful, he said.

"The information from the New York State Department of Labor was useful," he said. "I used the kid's grant to put my 4-year-old daughter in gymnastics and swimming!"

By partnering with the Army National Guard for this virtual Yellow Ribbon event, the 106th Rescue Wing ensured its Airmen and families received essential resources and support throughout the deployment cycle, D'Agostino said. **gt**

# Counter Drug Task Force Wins Program of the Year

Story by Stephanie Butler, *Guard Times* staff

STEUBEN, N.Y. — The New York National Guard's Counterdrug Demand Reduction Program, has been named program of the year for 2023 by National Guard Bureau.

The Drug Demand Reduction Program, known as DDRO for short, is one of the programs run by the New York Counterdrug Task Force.

This is the third time the New York program has been recognized as the best in the 54 state and territorial National Guards.

The task force also provides specialized equipment to law enforcement, aviation support for drug suppression efforts, and analysts who work with law enforcement to track drug operations.

The DDRO program began in 2012 with 10 service members, it has now grown to over 20 enlisted servicemembers working across the state. These personnel work with local counter drug groups to help them perform more effectively, according to Col. William Murphy, New York counterdrug coordinator.

They provide thousands of hours of support to community-based organizations and law enforcement agencies, Murphy said.

The DDRO program reached over 60 counties supporting over 115 community-based and law enforcement engagements utilizing strategic evidence-based problem-solving framework methods, he added.

The civil operators, as they are known, helped create long lasting changes and impact, reducing the risk of substance use, misuse, and abuse among communities and over 6,000 of their youth in addition to helping community based anti-drug organizations secure hundreds of thousands of dollars in grant funding, according to Murphy.

"We help them identify issues and various problems in their communities, we help them come up with a plan on how to tackle those issues," explained 1st Sgt. David You, the Drug Demand Reduction Outreach program manager.

"We help them implement the interventions or incitive to help these communities and then we help them with evaluations and sustainability," he added.

National Guard Bureau makes 3 awards for the counterdrug programs each year. These are: program of the year, civil operator of the year and investigative analyst of the year.

"Winning this award, means a great deal to me because although we have always been recognized nationally as trailblazers for the DDRO program, we continue to find outside the box ways to support our com-

**"I'm very proud of our Civil Operators and Drug Demand Reduction Analysts that do the hard work to make this the best DDRO program in the nation,"**

*--1st Sgt. David You,  
Drug Demand Reduction Outreach program manager.*

munities through community-level engagement and law enforcement support," said Lt. Col Ashley FitzGibbon, Murphy's deputy.

Along with being named drug demand reduction program of the year three times, 4 individuals have been named the Civil Operator of the Year, Murphy said.



Staff Sgt. Stephanie Snyder joined the Opioid Task Force and Steuben County Sherriff's Department to host a prescription take back event and opioid education table at a local health fair in Steuben, New York.

"I'm very proud of our Civil Operators and Drug Demand Reduction Analysts that do the hard work to make this the best DDRO program in the nation," You said.

"Drug prevention is like military leadership, you know you're making a positive impact but are never quite sure you are doing the right thing, so the validation feels good," he added.

"The most rewarding part of the process is seeing the Drug Demand Reduction Outreach team come together to embrace change and continuing to grow and mentor community partners to create long-lasting impacts to reduce the risk of our youth using and abusing drugs," FitzGibbon said. **gt**

# 174<sup>th</sup> Holds Inaugural Lean In Circle

Story and photo by Alexander Rector, 174th Attack Wing

HANCOCK FIELD AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, SYRACUSE, N.Y. — The 174th Attack Wing hosted its first Lean In circle at Hancock Field Air National Guard Base on Saturday May 4. The event consisted of a guided discussion between U.S. Air Force Maj. Elise Schwartz McMillan, assistant flight commander, 138th Attack Squadron, and Brig. Gen. Michele Kilgore.

Kilgore, who currently serves as the U.S. Northern Command's deputy director of operations, is a former commander of the wing's 174th Operations Group and the first woman to command the New York Air National Guard's 109th Airlift Wing.

During the Lean In circle, Kilgore spoke on her experience transferring from the active-duty Air Force to the National Guard, her path to command of the 174th Operations Group, and the importance of finding a professional mentor.

"I really enjoy talking to airmen and this is kind of like coming home, said Kilgore, who was assigned to the 174th Attack Wing from 2004 to 2017. "It's great to come back to the roots I had in the guard and to be able to be a mentor and an approachable leader. The person I wish I had when I was coming up in the system."

The discussion, which was widely attended by senior leaders

and junior Airmen alike from across the wing, was also streamed remotely via Microsoft Teams, allowing service members from other organizations to tune in and hear Kilgore's words of wisdom.

"Everyone deep down has a reason why they serve," said Kilgore. "When you have these human connections like teamwork and camaraderie, that is why people stay. They don't stay for the promotions, and they don't stay for the money.

They stay for the people, and they stay for the mission." The concept of leaning in was popularized by former Meta executive Sheryl Sandberg in her best-selling book, "Lean In." The book highlights the fact that there's a disproportionately small number of women in executive leadership positions compared their male counterparts.

The book proposes forming

Lean In circles as a way for women to address this disparity. Lean In circles are small groups where women can come together for peer mentorship, collective learning, and support.

The inaugural event took months of planning and coordination and was made possible only through the dedication of Schwartz McMillan, who's relationship with Lean In goes back almost a decade.

York Air National Guard's 106th Rescue Wing. "I hosted a luncheon and gifted everybody a "Lean In" book with a personal inscription in it and then we brainstormed ideas for our first event."

During her tenure with the 106th, Schwartz McMillan coordinated four Lean In circles culminating in a discussion with retired FBI Special Agent and former Suffolk County Police Commissioner Geraldine Hart.

"I had met her at the New York FBI Field Office in New York City where I'm assigned as a civilian FBI agent," said Schwartz McMillan. "She was talking at a similar type of women's networking event I approached her and worked with her office to coordinate her coming to the 106th."

"The intent is to create opportunities, period. I'm not looking to create opportunities for a specific rank or specific gender. I want to include everyone in the conversation," said

Schwartz McMillan. "It's mission first, people always. We've got to take care of our people. I want them to gain an experience of a lifetime. Something they're always going to remember. Something that inspires them to continue to serve." 



Air Force Brig. Gen. Michele Kilgore, deputy director of operations for U.S. Northern Command, and Maj. Elise Schwartz McMillan, assistant flight commander, 138th Attack Squadron, pose for a photo after conducting a Lean In Circle discussion group, May 4. Lean In Circles, popularized by former Meta executive Sheryl Sandberg, allow women to come together for peer mentorship, collective learning, and support.

# Serving the Homeland When Tragedy Strikes: NY National Guard Sharpens Disaster Readiness Skills

Photos and story by Master Sgt. Warren Wright, 42nd Infantry Division



To the left, Army National Guard Soldiers from the 827th Engineer Company, 104th Military Police Battalion, lower a simulated casualty from the rubble while conducting search and extraction operations during a training exercise. Below to the right, Soldiers from the 222nd Chemical Company, 104th Military Police Battalion, transport a simulated casualty to a decontamination point during search and extraction operations during a training exercise. The training exercise was on Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey, April 17, 2024. The exercise was led by the 42nd Infantry Division, making up the Region II Homeland Response Force, the week-long exercise brought together elements from across the New York National Guard and others to test their capability to conduct casualty assistance, decontamination, medical triage, and fatality search and recovery to save lives and mitigate human suffering.

Below left photo, Soldiers from the 827th Engineer Company, part of the 204th Engineer Battalion, conduct search and extraction operations during a training exercise with the Homeland Response Force, April 17, 2024, at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey.



“The Army does a great job of making sure we're a professional organization that leads, trains, reevaluates who we are and what we do, and comes up with better solutions to implement that training so that our missions are successful”

-- Brig. Gen. Christopher Cronin,  
Commander of the 2nd HRF.



Army Sgt. Brandon Straite, a carpentry and masonry specialist with the 827th Engineer Company, 204th Engineer Battalion, and a native of Chadwicks, N.Y., is lowered into a shaft while conducting search and extraction operations, at joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey.

CAMP SMITH TRAINING SITE, N.Y. — Soldiers from the New York National Guard’s 42nd Infantry Division came together at Camp Smith Training Site near Peekskill, April 15 to 19 to hone their command and control capabilities as the Region II Homeland Response Force or HRF.

The exercise tested the citizen Soldiers’ ability to manage a simulated incident involving the detonation of an improvised nuclear device.

“It’s essential for us as an Army, especially in the New York National Guard, to make sure we are ready to be called upon in both a combat environment as well support our governor and our elected officials in a (defense support to civil authorities) role,” said Brig. Gen. Christopher R. Cronin, the commander of the 2nd HRF. “And the HRF exercises that role for us, where we get together to ensure we have the capability and capacity to assist our local authorities in the event there’s a disaster, whether it’s a natural disaster or a CBRN event.”

When directed by proper authority and upon consent of the governor, the HRF’s mission is to support the state response through casualty assistance, search and extraction, decontamination, and medical triage in order to save lives

and mitigate human suffering.

Throughout the week, the HRF team was hit with various scenarios as they managed the actions of simulated and real-life civil support teams (CST) and other National Guard specialists responding to the radioactive-affected area. Both real-world and simulated teams conducted search and extraction, decontamination, and other activities while supporting first responders and civil authorities.

The exercise ensured “our staff (is) ready to support our downrange units that will be deployed forward in support of the civil authorities,” Cronin said of the HRF command and control team. “In the Army, we’re continuously learning, where you train, you test, you evaluate, you reassess, and then you train again.”

In addition to managing the response, personnel, and equipment, the HRF also had to troubleshoot additional unique problems, such as a simulated vehicle accident requiring the hospitalization of National Guard Soldiers and a lack of personnel to cover affected areas as requested by civilian leadership.

“The Army does a great job of making sure we’re a professional organization that leads, trains, reevaluates who we are and what we do, and comes up with better solutions to implement that training so that our missions are successful,” Cronin said.

While the HRF command and control element worked to manage the response from a central location away from the simulated affected area, other Soldiers with various National Guard units from across the state exercised their capabilities in a realistic training environment at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey.

“We are training as part of the Homeland Response Force with a mission primarily for search and extraction of victims due to any kind of chemical, biological, radiation, (or) nuclear event,” said Capt. Christopher Monteferante, commander of the 827th Engineer Company and Putnam Valley, New York native. “A mission like this is the worst-case scenario. It’s going to be chaos; it’s thousands of victims and a lack of order. Being prepared for something like this allows us to try and save as many lives as we can and help the community recover from such a tragedy.”

During their portion of the training Soldiers and Airmen from the 827th Engineer Company, the 222nd Chemical Company, and vari-

ous other units combed through rubble piles of concrete and metal while in full protective suits to locate, extract, decontaminate and treat casualties, allowing them to train as close to reality as possible.

“We never know when tragedy is going to strike, and it’s always better to be prepared and not need this asset as opposed to needing this asset and not having it,” Monteferante said. “What stands out is actually getting on the pile, getting in the suits, and having the soldiers run through for real with everything set up. It gives a better sense of realism than we can accomplish in our home station armories.”

In the coming months, the New York National Guard’s 53rd Troop Command will take over the HRF mission for the region. While this is the last time the 42nd Infantry Division will lead the 2nd HRF, the lessons learned during this exercise and past training events will allow future HRF teams to continue the mission and grow the National Guard’s response capabilities.

“A lot of the Soldiers in the 53rd have been part and parcel over the past decade, two decades at the HRF, so it’s not anything new to them,” Cronin said. “We’ve just improved the process. We’ve incorporated some new technologies for tracking our support to our local civil authorities. So that’ll be a combat multiplier for them.”

“For the most part, we’ve done a great hand-off,” Cronin added. “They have the institutional knowledge to take what we have and what we’ve given them and take it to the next level.”



Army Spc. Jonathon Morse, a horizontal construction engineer with the 827th Engineer Company, 204th Engineer Battalion, and a native of Angelica, New York, saws a wood board during construction of wall support frames as part of search and extraction operations during a training exercise, April 17, 2024, at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey.

## New York Soldiers Take Winning Slots in Northeast Best Warrior Competition

Story by Sgt. 1st Class Jonathan Pietrantonio, 138th Public Affairs Detachment



Army National Guard Sgt. Peter Fillion, an infantryman assigned to Charlie Troop, 2nd Squadron, 101st Cavalry Regiment, lobs a simulation grenade during the 2024 Region I Best Warrior Competition at Camp Smith, New York, May 14, 2024. Soldiers threw grenades in six separate scenarios during the event, one of many taskings during the four-day competition. Photo by Staff Sgt. Matthew Gunther, Joint Force Headquarters.

CAMP SMITH TRAINING SITE, N.Y. — New York Army National Guard Sgt. Peter Fillion, was one of two Soldiers who won the Northeast Region Best Warrior Competition which wrapped up in lower Manhattan on Thursday, May 16.

Fillion, a member of C Troop of the 2nd Squadron, 101st Cavalry Regiment placed first in the enlisted Soldier category.

Connecticut National Guard Staff Sgt. Curtis Ruckey, an infantryman assigned to the 6th Recruiting and Retention Battalion, was named the winner of the Best Non-Commissioned Officer award.

Sixteen Soldiers from New York, New Jersey, and the six New England states, with eight Soldiers competing in the non-commissioned officer and eight in the junior enlisted categories, vied for a chance to represent the region in the national competition later this year in Vermont.

The competition was hosted by the New York National Guard for the first time in 10 years and took place at four different locations across New York State.

The Soldiers competed at Camp Smith Training Site in the Hudson Valley, ran a race on an island perched on the brink of Niagara Falls, called in mortar fire at Fort Drum, and then finished with a 12-mile forced march in New York City.

New York Army National Guard Command Sgt. Major Edwin Garriss said the goal was to create some excitement and keep the competitors on their toes.

“At the national competition there is always a surprise element where

they expose the competitors to something that they aren't familiar with such as moving them out of different training areas, so they don't get comfortable,” Garriss said. “That's why we move them around New York, to keep them moving because that's what it's going to be like at the next level.”

Fillion won his squadron and brigade and state Best Warrior Competitions before winning the chance to compete nationally. He originally competed as a specialist and was promoted later.

The other winner of the New York National Guard Best Warrior Competition, Sgt. 1st Class Travis Wood, who won in the Best Non-Commissioned Officer award, is also a member of the 2nd Squadron, 101st Cavalry.

Wood competed in the regional competi-



Army National Guard Sgt. Trevor Pietrowski, assigned to the 204th Engineer Battalion, prepares to fire an M249 squad automatic weapons during the stress shoot event conducted during the state Best Warrior Competition at Camp Smith, New York, on April 17, 2024. Photo by Spc. Jean Sanon, 138th Public Affairs Detachment.



Army National Guard Sgt. 1st Class Travis Wood, assigned to C Troop, 2nd Squadron, 101st Cavalry Regiment, competes in the swimming portion of the 2024 New York State Best Warrior Competition hosted at the Sportsplex Aquatic Center in New Windsor, New York, April 19, 2024. Wood's went on to win the honors as top NCO and will compete in the northeast region Best Warrior Competition in May. Photo by Spc. Joseph Liggio, 138th Public Affairs Detachment.

tion as well.

The winners of the northeast region competition were announced at a formal dinner for the competitors, state sergeants' majors and others at the Thayer Hotel at the United States Military Academy at West Point.

Fillion said he enjoyed the competition and is looking forward to challenges of the next level.

"The competition was exceptional, and it was great to hone my skills and get higher level of training and get to call to fire on a live range was fun," Fillion said.

"The hardest thing was forgetting all the other competitors and focus on my game and the task at hand," Fillion said. "I really have to thank my wife and family for all the extra studying we did leading up to this competition."

The competition began with two days at Camp Smith, which is near Peekskill.

The Soldiers were tested on military knowledge, fired at simulated targets in the Engagement Skills Trainer, and conducted day and night land navigation.

They also engaged targets with the M-4 carbine, M-17 pistol and M-249 light machine gun.

After two days at Camp Smith, the Soldiers boarded a CH-47F Chinook helicopter flown by B Company of the 3rd Battalion, 126th Aviation, and traveled across the state to the Youngstown Training Area in western New York.

They spent the night there, woke up early,

and then ran a five-mile race at Niagara Falls State Park. The park is located on Goat Island which is at the brink of Niagara Falls sandwiched between the American and Canadian falls.

After more testing at the Youngstown training area, they were flown to Observation Point 5A at Fort Drum, the home of the 10th Mountain Division.

The 16 Soldiers were tested on their ability to direct the fire of 120-millimeter mortar rounds being fired by Soldiers from the 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team.

The competition ended with a 12-mile timed ruck march at the southern tip of Manhattan.

The Soldiers hoisted their packs and raced north along the Hudson River on the Empire State Trail bike path to U.S.S. Intrepid Museum. Then they turned around and headed back.

When everybody had finished, they went to the nearby 9/11 Memorial.

The national competition will be hosted by the Vermont National Guard in August at the Ethan Allen Firing Range. The winners of that event will compete in the Army-wide competition.

Garris said he was proud of the way New York National Guard Soldiers across the state pulled together to make the competition a



Command Sgt. Maj. Edwin Garris, the senior noncommissioned leader for the New York Army National Guard, presents the award for best Soldier to New York Army National Guard Sgt. Peter Fillion, an infantryman assigned to Charlie Troop, 2nd Squadron, 101st Cavalry Regiment, at the conclusion of the 2024 Region I Best Warrior Competition at West Point, New York, May 16, 2024. Fillion went up against seven other Soldiers for a spot in the national level competition later in the year. Photo by Spc. Joseph Liggio, 138th Public Affairs Detachment.

success.

"I'm very proud of New York hosting this year and challenging the best of the best that our region has to offer," said Garris. "I look forward to watching them all compete in the next round in Vermont." **gt**



Army National Guard Soldiers take off from the starting line of a 12-mile ruck march during the 2024 Region I Best Warrior Competition in Manhattan, New York, May 16, 2024. This year's competition, hosted by the New York Army National Guard, spanned four days and tested Soldiers on a variety of technical and tactical skills. Photo by Spc. Joseph Liggio, 138th Public Affairs Detachment.

# 442<sup>nd</sup> MP Company Named Best in the Guard

Story by Eric Durr, *Guard Times* staff

CAMP SMITH, N.Y. — The 442nd Military Police Company was recognized as the best in the Army National Guard for 2023 based on their training, individual Soldier accomplishments and state missions, during a March ceremony at Camp Smith Training Site.

Maj. Gen. Ray Shields, the adjutant general, presented the company with the Major General Harry H. Bandholtz Award, during the March 23 event.

The award, named after the general who created the modern Military Police Corps, is presented to the top MP units in the active Army, Army Reserve, and Army National Guard each year.

Along with evaluating training, maintenance and retention, the awards board also considers the history of the unit, community service and mission support, according to Capt. Keith Cohen, the company's commander.

During 2023 the company supported the response to a major Buffalo snowstorm in December and provided Soldiers to support the asylum mission, Cohen said. While handling

these state missions the unit deployed 16 Soldiers for Operational Atlantic Resolve and conducted collect training on three mission essential tasks, he said.

Seven Soldiers also distinguished themselves on May 23, 2023, when they rescued two people trapped in a car after a crash on the Long Island Expressway, while on the way to one of those training missions.

That action got noticed by Gen. Daniel Hokanson, the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, during the National Guard Association of the United States General Conference.

The application for the award submitted by the company, noted these facts, and pointed



Army National Guard Soldiers with the 442nd Military Police Company pose with the award they won for the Fiscal Year 2023 Major General Harry H. Bandholtz Competition during a recognition ceremony at Camp Smith Training Site, near Peekskill, New York, on March 23, 2024. The award was presented to the company for being the best MP unit in the U.S. Army National Guard. Photo by Staff Sgt. Sebastian Rothwyn, 369th Sustainment Brigade.

out the heritage of the 442nd Military Police Company that includes action in World War I, responding to the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, and deployments to Iraq, Cohen said.

Shields praised the company's Soldiers and leaders for their accomplishment during the ceremony. 

## Veteran Receives Medal

LATHAM, N.Y. — Maj. Gen. Ray Shields, the adjutant general of New York, presents the New York State Vietnam War Commemorative Medal to Raymond Manley, a retired first sergeant who served during the Vietnam War as an aircraft crew chief and who works as a civilian employee for the New York National Guard, held at New York National Guard headquarters in Latham, New York on June 14, 2024. The New York State Legislature recently enacted legislation to honor New York's Vietnam Veterans with this new commemorative medal. Photo by William Albrecht, *Guard Times* staff.



## Army's 249<sup>th</sup> Birthday



LATHAM, N.Y. — Army National Guard Col. Richard Goldenberg, left, joins Pvt. Charles Adams, in cutting the Army birthday cake during a June 14, 2024 Army Birthday ceremony held at New York National Guard headquarters in Latham, New York to mark the Army's 249th birthday. Adams,

who just turned 18 represented the future of the Army, while Goldenberg, who is 59, represented the history and traditions of the service. Photo by William Albrecht, *Guard Times* staff.

# 42<sup>nd</sup> Division Band plays for Dutch Royals

Story by Eric Durr, *Guard Times* staff

ALBANY, N.Y.— When the king and queen of the Netherlands visited New York Gov. Kathy Hochul in Albany, on June 12, the New York Army National Guard's 42nd Infantry Division Band was there to welcome the Royal Couple.

Fifteen bandsmen took part in the royal couple's formal welcome to the Executive Mansion— the governor's house on Albany's Eagle Street—and then performed during a reception at the mansion that evening.

"I think it was a really great opportunity for us to show what we can do," said Sgt. 1st Class Eric Cudworth, the band's readiness non-commissioned officer.

"We never really worked with the governor's office before," said Cudworth, who also plays trombone in the band. "It was our opportunity to get our foot in the door."

King Willem-Alexander and Queen Maxima were in New York's capitol on the third day of four-day visit to Georgia and New York. They had visited Savannah and Atlanta and then went to New York city after their Albany stop.

After being met at Albany International Airport by a delegation which included Major General Ray



Army National Guard Soldiers of the 42nd Infantry Division band, led by Spc. Steven Fonti, perform a march during a ceremony welcoming King Willem-Alexander and Queen Maxima of the Netherlands to the New York State Executive Mansion in Albany, New York on June 12, 2024. The Dutch royals visited New York's capital and were hosted by New York Gov. Kathy Hochul, on the third day of a four-day visit to the United States. Courtesy photo by Don Pollard, New York Executive Chamber.

Shields, the adjutant general of New York, the two motored to the mansion for a formal welcoming ceremony from Hochul and her husband William Hochul.

The band welcomed them with a performance of "Bravura" a march written by American composer Charles Double in 1918.

After visits to Albany Nanotech, where Dutch-made equipment is used to produce computer chips—and the historic Schuylar Mansion in Albany, the king and

queen returned to the executive mansion for a reception.

Spc. Matthew Lewis played tunes on the mansion's grand piano, and then the band's jazz ensemble performed background music.

The band's performance was well received by the Dutch royals and the governor's other guests, according to Brigadier General Gary Charlton, the New York National Guard's assistant adjutant general, air.

"The music was absolutely the correct mix for the venue and audiences."

-- Brig. Gen. Gary Charlton, Assistant Adjutant General, Air

Charlton represented the New York National Guard at the reception.

"The band was truly a hit among everyone," Charlton said. "The music was absolutely the correct mix for the venue and audiences."

It was obvious the musicians were having fun and that energy transferred to the guests, he added.

Last year the band traveled to Israel and performed for a July Fourth reception held by the U.S. ambassador to Israel.

Performing at high-profile events like that in Israel and for the governor, are good for morale, Cudworth said.

Later this summer the band will be holding a week of concerts in the Albany area as part of band's annual training tour, he added.

Band members perform during 42nd Infantry Division events and deploy with the division headquarters when required. **gt**



## 42<sup>nd</sup> Stands up Division Artillery

KINGSTON, N.Y. — Army National Guard Command Sgt. Major Curtis Moss, unfurls the colors of the 42nd Infantry Division Artillery, or DIVARTY, during a ceremony at the New York State Armory in Kingston, New York on June 9, 2024. From World War II until 2007 the DIVARTY was an integral part of all divisions, including the 42nd Infantry Division, which has elements across the northeast but is headquartered in New York.

The Army eliminated the headquarters during the Global War on Terror when the division brigades were designed so they could deploy independently for low-intensity combat. The June 9 ceremony marked the return of the DIVARTY to the 42nd Infantry Division, and Biehler's command. Courtesy Photo.

# Soldiers Strengthen Bond with Allies in Morocco

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

TANTAN, MOROCCO — More than 480 New York National Guard Soldiers trained alongside other U.S. troops and allies in the Moroccan desert from May 21 through 31, strengthening one of America's oldest international bonds.

The Guardsmen – assigned to 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team – played critical roles in the 20th edition of African Lion, U.S. Africa Command's premier exercise and the largest U.S. military training event conducted on the African continent.

This year's exercise integrated more than 8,100 participants across 27 nations and NATO, with live training events in Morocco, Tunisia, Ghana, and Senegal. The exercise is designed to enhance regional cooperation and security in North and West Africa while countering strategic competitors.

"African Lion presented a distinct opportunity for our citizen Soldiers to test their readiness to deploy, fight, and win alongside members of the joint force and our partners and allies," said Col. Bradley Frank, commander of the 27th brigade. "Our team's success during African Lion is a testament to the essential role the National Guard plays in national defense."

The 27th's presence in Morocco included an infantry battalion, a medical company, a combat engineer platoon, and a portion of the brigade's headquarters.

• More than 240 Soldiers from the Utica-based 2nd Battalion, 108th Infantry Regiment trained on individual skills and combined arms tactics, including the use of mortars, machine guns, Javelin anti-tank systems, TOW anti-tank missiles, and Carl Gustaf recoilless rifles.

• More than 60 Soldiers from the Buffalo-based Charlie Company, 427th Brigade Support Battalion provided care and support for U.S. servicemembers and NATO allies with a fully operational Role II medical facility. The unit also conducted training and knowledge exchanges with joint forces and members of the Moroccan Royal Armed Forces.

• More than 30 Soldiers from the Lockport-based Bravo Company, 152nd Brigade Engineer Battalion provided engineer support to the 2-108th Infantry, as well as training for the Moroccan Royal Armed Forces alongside the U.S. Marine Corps Forces Reserve's 6th Engineer Support Battalion, 4th Marine Logistics Group.

In addition to overseeing its own Soldiers, the 27th IBCT headquarters served as the command-and-control element for more than 130 active duty and reserve members of U.S. joint forces, and more than 40 members of the Italian Armed Forces' Joint Force Headquarters.

After becoming one of the first countries to recognize the newly-independent United States, Morocco formally recognized the U.S. with a treaty of peace and friendship in 1786. It is the longest unbroken relationship in U.S. history.

Today, Morocco and the U.S. share common concerns and consult closely on security, political, and economic issues and sustainable development. The country was designated a "Major Non-NATO Ally" in 2004, the same year African Lion began.

And while 2024 marks the 20th year of African Lion, it also marks the first time New York National Guardsmen have participated in



Army National Guard Soldiers assigned to the 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team boards a Boeing 767 airplane while preparing to deploy to Africa for Exercise African Lion 2024, in Syracuse, New York, May 21. Soldiers from the brigade will spend several weeks in Tunisia and Morocco while participating in the multinational training event before returning home next month. Photo by Tech Sgt. Alexander Rector, 174th Attack Wing.

the exercise, adding to the U.S. and Morocco's longstanding security relationship.

"Morocco is one of our closest and oldest allies, with a friendship dating back to the founding of the United States," said Lt. Col. Frank Engle, commander of the 2-108th Infantry. "Being part of this training gave every Soldier the opportunity to experience the depth and strength of that relationship, while playing a personal role in continuing to build it."

As part of the Department of Defense's State Partnership Program, New York and South Africa developed the first state partnership relationship on the continent in 2003, and have sustained the rela-

tionship with annual exchanges and training opportunities in both countries.

1,100 Soldiers from the 27th IBCT's 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment – known as the "Fighting 69th" – conducted security



Army Maj. Ryan Marquette, an infantry officer assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, speaks to members of the U.S. military and the Moroccan Royal Armed Forces outside the Cap Draa Observatory during Exercise African Lion in Tan-Tan, Morocco, May 24, 2024. African Lion 2024 marks the 20th anniversary of U.S. Africa Command's premier joint exercise led by U.S. Army Southern European Task Force, Africa (SETAF-AF), running from April 19 to May 31 across Ghana, Morocco, Senegal, and Tunisia, with over 9,100 participants from 27 nations and NATO contingents. Photo by Maj. Avery Schneider, 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team.



U.S. Marine Corps Gen. Michael Langley, commander of United States Africa Command, Moroccan Royal Armed Forces Général de corps d'armée Mohammed Berrid, inspector general of the Royal Moroccan Armed Forces and commander of its Southern Military Zone, U.S. Army Gen. Darryl Williams, commander of U.S. Army Europe and Africa, and other U.S. and Moroccan military members pose for a photo with U.S. Soldiers assigned to the 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, New York Army National Guard following a joint, combined live fire exercise with the Moroccan Royal Armed Forces during exercise African Lion in Tantan, Morocco, May 31, 2024. African Lion 2024 marks the 20th anniversary of U.S. Africa Command's premier joint exercise led by U.S. Army Southern European Task Force, Africa (SETAF-AF), running from April 19 to May 31 across Ghana, Morocco, Senegal, and Tunisia, with over 9,100 participants from 27 nations and NATO contingents. Photo by Maj. Avery Schneider, 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team.

operations at U.S. installations in Djibouti, Kenya and Somalia during a nine-month deployment from 2022 through 2023.

African Lion offered the kind of "Army life" experience some New Yorkers only get in the National Guard. For a select few, the mission to Morocco served as a celebration of their first time ever traveling overseas.

"I was a little scared at first just because I've never done it before. But it wasn't so bad," said Spc. Frances Burnett, a unit supply specialist assigned to 2-108's headquarters company and full-time health science student at the State University of New York at Binghamton. "I'm really happy the military let me experience this."

Burnett and her fellow Soldiers got firsthand exposure to training with all ranks of the Moroccan Royal Armed Forces in their desert camps, experienced the welcoming Moroccan culture, sampled

local cuisine in and out of military settings, and explored life in the

Atlantic beachside city of Agadir. The culminating events of

African Lion for the 27th were two brigade-level joint, combined live-fire exercises in front of senior officials from the U.S. and Moroccan militaries, as well as representatives from partner and allied nations across Europe and Africa.

The exercises incorporated air power demonstrations by Moroccan F-16 fighter jets and U.S. Apache helicopters, ground maneuver with Humvees, trucks, tanks, and tracked artillery firing machine guns and anti-tank missiles, a ground-to-air medical evacuation, heavy equipment recovery, and a finale launch of rockets from a High Mobility Artillery Rocket System.

"Training like this strengthens the bond between the U.S. and Morocco, giving each of our militaries and their Soldiers the repetitions and familiarity they need to fight and win together on the battlefield," Frank said. **gt**



Soldiers assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 108th Infantry Regiment, 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, New York Army National Guard, operate an M121 120mm mortar system at a range where Soldiers from the battalion trained alongside Moroccan Royal Armed Forces soldiers during exercise African Lion in Tantan, Morocco, May 28, 2024. African Lion 2024 marks the 20th anniversary of U.S. Africa Command's premier joint exercise led by U.S. Army Southern European Task Force, Africa (SETAF-AF), running from April 19 to May 31 across Ghana, Morocco, Senegal, and Tunisia, with over 9,100 participants from 27 nations and NATO contingents. Photo by Maj. Avery Schneider, 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team.

## Aeromed Squadron Wins Top Award



Story by Master Sgt. Jamie Spaulding

Airmen from the 139th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron and medics from the Royal Canadian Armed Forces receive quick response training in a de Havilland Canada CC-138 "Twin Otter" aircraft from the 440 Transport Squadron, Royal Canadian Armed Forces in Resolute Bay, Nunavut, Canada, 26 Feb 2023. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Madison Scaringe, 109th Airlift Wing.



STRATTON AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, SCOTIA, N.Y. — The New York Air National Guard's 139th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, a part of the 109th Airlift Wing, was named the best in the Air National Guard for 2024.

This is the second time the 139th has been named the best of the Air National Guard's nine aeromedical evacuation squadrons. The award was presented to the 139th in 2023 as well.

Aeromedical evacuation units are responsible

for the in-flight care of patients being transported to the United States or Germany on board Military Airlift Command aircraft.

"It's an honor to be recognized with such a prestigious award twice now" said Lt. Col. Robert Huhn, the commander of the 139th.

The 139th Aeromedical Squadron, based at Stratton Air National Guard Base in Scotia, New York, was selected for the award based on its accomplishments during 2023.

These included:

- Participating in Canada's Exercise Gurrer Nordique in the Arctic and conducting training with their Canadian counterparts.

- Participating in training with Brazilian Airmen as part of the National Guard's State Partnership Program.

- Deploying 22 Airmen to Antarctica in support of Operation Deep Freeze, the Department of Defense support for Antarctic research.

- Took part in Angel of the Andes exercise and trained Colombian aeromedical evacuation personnel.

- Taking part in exercise Ultimate Caduceus, which tested Defense Health Agency readiness.

- Pioneering training in local hospital for aeromedical evacuation personnel to improve skills.

- 35 Airmen taking part in real-world medical evacuation missions.

Huhn praised the members of the squadron for their commitment to the mission.

The Airmen of the 139th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron continue to impress and astound me with their contributions to, not only the squadrons mission, vision, and values, but to the entire enroute care enterprise and enlisted aviator community" Huhn said.

The diverse backgrounds and experiences of unit members undoubtedly contribute to their success in delivering medical expertise, even in challenging in-flight environments, Huhn added.

He predicted that the squadron is likely to win the award for a third time.

"Watch out next year for the 'three-peat'," Huhn added. **gt**

## 274<sup>th</sup> Support Squadron Airmen Hone Rappelling Skills



SYRACUSE, N.Y.— Airmen assigned to the 274th Air Support Operations Squadron, 107th Attack Wing, conduct CH-47 rappel training with Soldiers from the 42nd Expeditionary Combat Aviation Brigade, during a training exercise at Hancock Field Air National Guard Base in Syracuse, New York, June 25. The Special Warfare Airmen from the 274th provide advice, guidance, and planning considerations on the integration of air assets to the 42nd Infantry Division and its subordinate units. Photo by Tech Sgt. Alexander Rector, 174th Attack Wing.



# Senator Calls to Replace Aging NY Skibirds

Story by Eric Durr, *Guard Times* staff

STRATTON AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, New York — New York Senator Charles Schumer, the Senate Majority Leader, called on the Air Force to finance the construction of new ski-equipped C-130s to replace the aging aircraft being flown by the New York Air National Guard's 109th Airlift Wing.

Schumer made the remarks during an April 22 visit to Stratton Air National Guard Base.

The 109th Airlift Wing flies the LC-130H, the largest ski-equipped aircraft in the world, and support U.S. science efforts in both Antarctica and Greenland annually.

Schumer's remarks came as he stood in front of an aircraft which was constructed in 1976 and was under repair.

The age of the aircraft makes it harder to keep them flying, Schumer said. He urged the Air Force to allocate almost \$300 million to purchase two new J series aircraft.

Keeping these aircraft flying is in the interest of every American because they enable researchers to conduct critical climate science, provide the U.S. military with the ability to reach anywhere in the Arctic, and are vital for rescue operations in polar regions, Schumer said.

"I am calling on the Air Force to say that replacing Stratton's aging polar airplanes must be a top priority," Schumer said.

"The time has come, in fact it is overdue, to start securing the new aircraft so that these important polar missions can continue," he added.

As the world's leading economic and military power, the U.S. must have the ability to compete in the Arctic and Antarctic, the senator said.

However, because of the age of the aircraft, only half the ten LC-130s



New York Senator Charles Schumer, the Senate Majority Leader, exits an LC-130H ski-equipped Hercules aircraft flown by the 109th Airlift Wing during a visit to Stratton Air National Guard Base outside Schenectady, New York, April 22, 2024. To his left is Col. Robert Donaldson, the wing commander. Schumer is calling on the Air Force to finance new versions of the planes, the largest in the world which can land on ice and snow, to replace the fleet which are 30-50 years old. Photo by Master Sgt. Jamie Spaulding, 109th Airlift Wing.

assigned to the 109th Airlift Wing are normally operable, Schumer said.

Schumer flew to Stratton Air National Guard Base from Fort Drum, near Watertown, New York, and met with the wing commander, Col. Robert Donaldson and toured one of the wing's LC-130s.

In a March 19, 2024, letter to Air Force Secretary Frank Kendall, Schumer, and New York Sen. Kristin Gillibrand, called on the Air Force to finance the construction of C-130J models that could be converted into ski-equipped versions.

The C-130 J models feature a longer fuselage, more powerful engines, digital rather than analog avionics systems, and improved computers.

The 109th Airlift Wing has been conducting missions to support National Science Foundation research in Antarctica and Greenland for 30 years.

Replacing the LC-130s, the 109th Airlift wing current flies has "widespread support," Schumer said.

Northern Command supports new airplanes because of their essential Arctic airlift mission, Schumer said.

"It's no secret that both Russia and China want to dominate the Arctic, and one of the best things we have to prevent that from happening is the planes behind us," the senator said.

And the National Science Foundation supports getting new planes because of the critical research they support, he added.

"Learning the secrets of what's going on down there, and up there in the north and south poles, is vital to understanding climate change," Schumer said. "Without these planes, much of that could not get done."

## President Biden Visits 105<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing



NEWBURGH, N.Y. — President Joseph Biden visits Stewart Air National Guard Base, New York, before delivering the Commencement Address at the U.S. Military Academy May 25, 2024. Airmen with the 105th Airlift Wing greeted Biden and took photos during his visit. Photo by 1st Lt. Briana Ross, 105th Airlift Wing.

# NY Air National Guard Gets New Commander

Story by Eric Durr, *Guard Times* staff

LATHAM, N.Y. — New York Air National Guard Brig. Gen. Michael Bank, a Darien Center resident, took command of the 5,800-member New York Air National Guard during a ceremony at New York National Guard headquarters in Latham on Monday, June 3.

Bank is replacing Major General Denise Donnell, a resident of Clifton Park, who has led the nation's largest Air Guard component since 2022. Donnell is retiring after 31 years of service: nine in the Navy and 22 in the New York Air National Guard.

Major General Ray Shields, the adjutant general of New York, praised both Bank and Donnell in his remarks.

Shields, who commands the 16,000 members of the New York National Guard, said that Donnell had done a tremendous job leading the New York Air Guard.

"The capabilities and responsibility of the New York Air National Guard are amazing," Shields said.

New York's Air Guard men and women, who operate in five flying wings, the Eastern Air Defense Sector, and two remote air defense units in the Washington, D.C. area, conduct missions around the world, around the clock," he said.

"We know you are the right leader to follow Denise's highly successful command tour," Shields told Bank, who entered the Air Force in 1994.

"You are assuming command of a very vigor-

ous, busy, and capable organization, he added.

Bank, who entered the Air Force in 1988 and transferred to the Air National Guard in 1994, said he was "deeply honored and humbled" to have the opportunity to lead the New York Air Guard.

"Major General Shields, thank you for entrusting to me lead these fine service members if the ranks of the New York Air National Guard," Banks said.

He thanked his family for their support during his 36-year military career, as well as the Airmen and officers he has served with over the years.

"Our Airmen, and their families, are our foundation, the reason we exist as an organization," Bank said. "We don't have a mission without them."

"We will continue to relentlessly strive and fill our ranks," he added.

Bank earned his commission in the Air Force through the Reserve Officer Training Corps program at Florida State University.

He joined the Active Air Force in 1988 and served as a B-52 bomber navigator until 1994, when he transferred to the New York Air National Guard's 107th Refueling Wing in Niagara Falls, New York.

In 1999, he qualified as a pilot and then served in a number of positions in the 107th as it transitioned to an airlift wing.

From 2015 to 2020, he served as the commander of the 106th Res-



Brigadier General Michael Bank, right, a Darien Center resident, accepts the flag of the New York Air National Guard headquarters from Major General Ray Shields, the adjutant general of New York, during change of command ceremony at the New York National Guard headquarters in Latham, New York, on June 3, 2024. Photo by Stephanie Butler, *Guard Times* staff.



Air National Guard Senior Airman Rebekah Wilson and Staff Sgt. Christen Mills sing the National Anthem at the New York Air National Guard change of command ceremony held at the National Guard Headquarters in Latham, New York. Photo by Stephanie Butler, *Guard Times* staff.



New York Air National Guard Commander, Brigadier General Michael Bank speaks at the New York Air National Guard change of command ceremony held at the New York National Guard Headquarters building in Latham, New York. Photo by Stephanie Butler, *Guard Times* staff.

cue Wing, based at F.S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base in Westhampton Beach on Long Island.

Since 2020 he has served as an assistant adjutant general for the New York Air National Guard, while also serving as Air National Guard Assistant to the Commander of the U.S., Air Force Expeditionary Center, at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst in New Jersey. **gt**



An architect's rendering of the completely renovated 107th Attack Wing headquarters, west-southwest corner perspective, April 19 2024. The project will bring the existing structure down to the studs and bare concrete, and slated for completion in October 2025. New York Air National Guard courtesy photo illustration.

## 107<sup>th</sup> HQs Finally Gets a Facelift

*Photo and story provided by 1st Lt. Jason Carr, 107th Attack Wing*

NIAGARA FALLS AIR RESERVE STATION, N.Y. — After 61 years, the 107th Attack Wing's headquarters building is getting a rebuild.

A \$19.4 million project to gut and rebuild the structure kicked off on April 16. The work is slated to be done in October of 2025.

"The building will be taken down to the structural steel and concrete foundation," said Lieutenant Colonel Matthew Heinsler, the 107th Civil Engineering Squadron commander and project manager for this renovation project.

The finished construction includes all new building HVAC, electrical and lighting systems, all new walls, windows floors, and roof, Heinsler said.

The renovation will also include a four-level elevator which will provide all visitors access to the entire facility, which was lacking in the original design, he said.

The headquarters building was originally built in 1963. While it may have gone through some style and code updates, it has never seen a comprehensive renovation.

According to CE assessments on the building, the HVAC system was in extremely poor condition, nor did it even provide adequate control; the cooling tower nearly fell off and had to be propped up under a brand new I beam because the original

one had corroded so badly. The roof is over 23 years old, and many windows and doors share the same vintage.

The list of "things gone wrong" continued to grow to include failing interior finishes, mission and

work center reconfigurations, fire and generator systems not meeting standards, and even a missing elevator.

It's a project that was first initiated over 16 years ago in 2008, and originally estimated to cost

\$10.4 million.

"I picked the project up as the Deputy Base Civil Engineer in November of 2017, when I came to the 107th, I'm uncertain why it was delayed for so many years" said Heinsler.

"When we restarted the design efforts with the archi-

tect and engineers, we quickly realized that \$10.4 million was not going to be a large enough program to meet the facilities renovation needs."

The renovation being "taken down

to the studs" isn't an exaggeration.

"You'll literally be able to see through the building, east to west, north to south," said Heinsler.

Airmen will temporarily occupy a facility across the construction zone, which used to belong to the 107th when they flew the F-16 Fighting Falcon in the early 90's.

While moving all the necessary equipment and furniture to a new location was an inconvenience, it was a necessary change for future 107th operations.

"It's long overdue," said Heinsler. "You look at the damaged exterior, the failing systems, the overall poor shape, this had to happen." 

## Air National Guard Hosts Senior Enlisted Symposium



SYRACUSE, N.Y. — Air National Guard senior leaders pose for a photo while attending a senior enlisted symposium at the National Veterans Resource Center at Syracuse University, May 29, 2024. During the event attendees conducted breakout sessions and panel discussions focusing on recruitment, retention, and organizational management. Photo by Tech Sgt. Alexander Rector, 174th Attack Wing.

# Air Guard Visits Sikorsky Aircraft Headquarters

Story by Senior Airman Sarah McKernan, 106th Rescue Wing

STRATFORD, Conn.— Leaders of the New York Air National Guard’s 106th Rescue Wing got a first-hand look at a new rescue helicopter being built for the wing at the Sikorsky Aircraft plant in Stratford, Connecticut on May 15.

Col. Shawn Fitzgerald, the 106th’s commander, led the delegations that

helicopter.

U.S. Air Force Major General Denise Donnell, Assistant Adjutant General and commander of the New York Air National Guard, and Command Chief Master Sgt. Michael Hewson, a former member of the 106th Rescue Wing and the New York Air Guard senior enlisted advisor, also took part in

sky and the New York Air National Guard receive from this visit is the familiarization of the aircraft that they are going to get,” said Greg Hames, Sikorsky director of Army and Air Force programs.

“It’s important that they know exactly what they are getting and when they are getting it so that it can be incorporated into the next training schedule,” he said.

Following the briefing, the officers and non-commissioned officers were given a tour of the two-million-square-foot production facility. They walked through the entire process of building an aircraft.

Command Chief Master Sergeant Edward Rittberg, 106th Rescue Wing senior enlisted leader and Colonel Jeff Cannet, the 106th Operations Group commander, also had the opportuni-



Air Force Major Gen. Denise Donnell, Assistant Adjutant General and Commander of the New York Air National Guard stands beside aircraft #53, an HH-60W Jolly Green II search and rescue aircraft currently in production at Sikorsky Aircraft Headquarters, Stratford, Conn., May 15, 2024. Aircraft #53 is being produced for the 106th Rescue Wing at F.S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base, and will be complete in August. Photo courtesy of Sikorsky Aircraft.



Chief Master Sergeant Michael Hewson, Command Chief of the New York Air National Guard, and Major General Denise Donnell, Assistant Adjutant General and Commander of the New York Air National Guard, sign the inside of an HH-60W Jolly Green II search and rescue helicopter at Sikorsky Aircraft Headquarters, Stratford, Conn., May 15, 2024. Hewson and Donnell attended a tour of the Sikorsky Headquarters facility to view the new HH-60W aircraft on final assembly. Photo courtesy of Sikorsky Aircraft.

got a chance to sign their names inside an HH-60W “Jolly Green II” search and rescue helicopter that will be delivered to the wing’s home at F.S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base in Westhampton Beach in August.

The wing currently operates the HH-60G version of the Pave Hawk rescue

the visit.

The Air National Guard leaders received a briefing about the capabilities of the new HH-60W helicopter. They also learned how the aircraft is manufactured and tested before delivery to the wing.

“I think the most important thing that both Sikor-



Col. Shawn Fitzgerald, 106th Rescue Wing Commander, and Chief Master Sergeant Edward Rittberg, 106th Rescue Wing Command Chief, attend a tour of Sikorsky Aircraft Headquarters in Stratford, Conn. Photo courtesy of Sikorsky Aircraft.

ty to sign Aircraft #53, the HH-60W currently under construction.

“I think this visit was extremely beneficial on both ends because Sikorsky was able to hear from us, the end user. And for us, it was important to come up and see a lot of the safety and quality that goes into the building of these aircraft,” Fitzgerald said.

“We were able to see the first aircraft that is going to

be delivered to us while it is in production, which is a unique and great experience for us,” he said.

The 106th Rescue Wing is home to a special warfare squadron with para-rescuemen and combat rescue officers, specializing in rescue and recovery, and deploys for domestic and overseas operations. **gt**

# 109<sup>th</sup> Begins Greenland Missions for Scientific Research

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

STRATTON AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, N.Y. — Four LC-130 “Skibirds” and 75 Airmen from the New York Air National Guard’s 109th Airlift Wing kicked off the annual Greenland season at the end of April to support National Science Foundation and their research efforts there.

The 109th flies the largest ski-equipped aircraft in the world which are capable of landing on snow and ice and conduct resupply missions for American scientific research in Antarctica when it is winter in New York and in Greenland during the summer months.

In 2023, the wing’s Airmen carried 2.4 million pounds of cargo, 86,000 gallons of fuel and delivered 1300 passengers to science stations in Greenland. They flew a total of 721 hours.

The aircraft and Airmen are currently in the second of six rotations of 75 to 100 Airmen and four aircraft scheduled throughout the summer support season. The season is slated to end in August.

The Airmen fly from Stratton Air National Guard Base in Scotia, near Schenectady, New York, to Kangerlussuaq International Airport in Greenland, which serves as their operating base.

This year, the main focus is training Airmen from the 109th and supporting ongoing construction at Summit Station which is operated by the National Science Foundation.

Summit Station is the only high altitude, high latitude, inland, year-round observing station in the Arctic.

“The Greenland season is a critical opportunity for us to support the National Science Foundation’s efforts, particularly with the rebuilding of Summit Station,” said Colonel Robert Donaldson, commander of the 109th Airlift Wing.

“Our Greenland deployments, which take us to some of the most austere polar environments on earth, also demonstrate the wing’s power projection capabilities with the LC-130 and our remarkable Airmen making it happen,” he said.

According to the National Science Foundation, Summit Station is



Staff Sgt. Skyler Buyce, a loadmaster with the 109th Airlift Wing, conducts post flight checks in Kangerlussuaq Greenland May 13th 2024. Photo by Master Sgt. Jamie Spaulding, 109th Airlift Wing.

especially important for monitoring the atmosphere and conducting astronomy and astrophysical science.

It is located at the apex of the Greenland ice sheet and is staffed in the winter by a team of five people.

The foundation has decided to rebuild the 30-year old station so it can be elevated above snow drifts on platforms that are easy to lift and level.

The new Summit Station will also be energy efficient and will incorporate renewable energy and autonomous systems where possible, according to the National Science Foundation.

“The LC-130 is the only aircraft capable of carrying such a substantial amount of cargo to these remote camps, thanks to its unique ski-equipped design. This capability is crucial for the rebuilding of Summit Station,” Donaldson said.

The LC-130’s flown by the 109th Airlift Wing are the largest aircraft in the world which can land on snow and ice using skis.

The unique capabilities of the ski-equipped LC-130 aircraft make it the only one of its kind in the U.S. military, able to land on snow and ice. **gt**



Air National Guard Airman First Class Riley Redman conducts post flight maintenance checks on an LC-130 Skibird at Kangerlussuaq, Greenland May 13, 2024. Photo by Master Sgt. Jamie Spaulding, 109th Airlift Wing.



A 109th Airlift Wing LC-130 conducts ski landings and takeoffs at Camp Raven in Greenland May 12, 2024. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Madison Scaringe, 109th Airlift Wing.

# 106<sup>th</sup> Maintenance Group Recognized by Air National Guard for Effectiveness

Story and photo by Tech. Sgt. Daniel Farrell, 106th Rescue Wing

FRANCIS S. GABRESKI AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, WESTHAMPTON BEACH, N.Y. —The 106th Rescue Wing's Maintenance Group earned the Air Guard's "Maintenance Effectiveness Award" for 2023 in the small aircraft maintenance category.

"What you do every day is amazing," former New York Air National Guard Commander Denis Donnell told the group's Airmen during a May 3 ceremony. "It is absolutely deserved."

The award, which will be formally presented in August at the National Guard Bureau Commander's Conference, has three criteria – Mission Accomplishment, Innovative and Effective Use of Resources, and Personnel Quality of Life.

The small maintenance category is defined as an Air Guard maintenance unit with 25-300 personnel.

"The Maintenance Effectiveness Award recognizes the 106th Maintenance Group's culture of excellence in planning, precision, professionalism, and the Airmen's ability to pivot based on executing the mission in a dynamic environment," said Col. Neil Theisen, 106th Maintenance Group commander.

The group succeeded in the category of Mission Accomplishment by keeping the aircraft flying, Theisen said. In 2023 the wing recorded the highest number of flying hours in 25 years, according to Theisen. This is as far back as the recorded data goes, he added.

Additionally, the maintainers generated 67% more flying hours

than the previous 5-years, Theisen said.

"Every day you face different challenges that, as a group, you have to overcome," said Tech. Sgt. James Cassela, a 106th Maintenance Group crew chief. "The adaptation that we all face on a daily basis is the main driving factor for us achieving the historical flying hours."

touch points for rescue, and then on the way home being prepared to support a hurricane response."

"That's what it is all about," Donnell continued. "Being ready so that when the time comes, and the call comes in, the aircraft, our Airmen, are ready to respond."

The group accomplished the category of Innovative Effective Use of Resources by incorporating

prioritizing resources toward alleviating that bottleneck and then moving to the next bottleneck, Theisen said.

These techniques allowed the maintenance Airmen to accomplish more than they would have otherwise, Theisen said.

The group created a Multi-Capable Airman program through a planned and deliberate training process, expanding their skillset above their traditional job focus, Theisen said.

Theisen said an HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopter crew chief cross-training to learn how to tow and launch a C-130J Combat King II search and rescue aircraft as an example.

Personnel quality of life benchmark was reached by putting in place a four-day work week, Theisen said.

The group also put in place a Safety Spot Inspection program and worked to certify CPR and Tactical Causality Combat Care instructors.

"The amount of work that goes into receiving this award is immeasurable," Cassela said. "It is a testament to our team's commitment, effectiveness and knowledge of upholding standards. Everyone played an important and specific role which we are all proud of."

This award is very important, Theisen said.

"This is about recognizing the pursuit of the warfighter readiness while pushing to operate beyond the traditional boundaries of what it means to be an Air Force Maintainer," Theisen said." **gt**



Airmen from the 106th Maintenance Group, assigned to the New York Air National Guard 106th Rescue Wing, stand at-ease during a group formation at F.S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base, Westhampton Beach, New York, May 3, 2024. The formation addressed the 106th Maintenance Group earning the Air National Guard's Maintenance Effectiveness Award for 2023.

During the wing's participation in Operation Tapio in Brazil in August of 2023, the wing generated 66 flight hours and 22 sorties.

"Imagine the strategic geopolitical impact at that moment if we 'broke,'" said Theisen.

Donnell also praised the maintainers for their accomplishments during the Brazilian exercise.

"I saw firsthand at Tapio a couple of years ago," Donnell said. "Exercising, engaging on many different levels...and the different

virtual reality technology for training, Theisen said.

The virtual reality trainer enables maintainers in the engine shop to get realistic and detailed hands-on engine system related experience without taking an aircraft out of service for training purposes, he added.

The group also adopted a management method called Theory of Constraints, which focuses on identifying the most critical bottlenecks in the maintenance shop,

## New York Air Guard Commander Retires

STEWART AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, NEWBURGH, N.Y. — New York Army National Guard Lt. Gen. Raymond Shields, the 54th Adjutant General for the State of New York, shakes hands with New York Air National Guard Maj. Gen. Denise Donnell, the Assistant Adjutant General and Commander of the New York Air National Guard, at her retirement ceremony at Stewart Air National Guard Base, May 23, 2024. Donnell's retirement ceremony included a display of all New York Air National Guard aircraft assets. Photo by Master Sgt. Daniel Hotter, 105th Airlift Wing.



## 106<sup>th</sup> Rescue Wing Receives First HH-60W

F.S. GABRESKI AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, WESTAMPTON BEACH, N.Y. — Airmen from the 106th Rescue Wing look at the 106th's first HH-60W Jolly Green II combat search and rescue helicopter to arrive at Francis S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base, June 20, 2024. The helicopter was flown by the 41st Rescue Squadron at Moody Air Force Base, Georgia, and marks the beginning of a new era as the 106th officially begins its transition from the HH-60G Pave Hawk to the HH-60W model. Photo by Senior Airman Sarah McKernan, 106th Rescue Wing.



## New York Guard Participates in Statewide Military Emergency Radio Network Exercise

Story by 1st Lt. Ed Shevlin and Sgt. Richard Mayfield, New York Guard Headquarters

GARDEN CITY, N.Y. — The 56th, 65th, and 88th Companies of the New York Guard participated in a statewide Military Emergency Radio Network Exercise, or MERNEX on July 13, 2024.

New York Guard Deputy communications officer, Warrant Officer 1, Richard Martino and his team from the 88th Company served as Net Control from their station at the 1st Marine Corps District headquarters in Garden City.

The New York Guard stood up three of the thirteen stations that now operate under the umbrella of the New York State Department of Homeland Security Share Resources Program, known as SHARES.

“The SHARES high frequency radio program facilitates interoperability with all New York state agencies and is the proper medium for our Civil Support Operations. Additionally, all other State Defense Forces across the country are now using the SHARES network,” Martino said.

While elements of the three companies were deeply engaged in the MERNEX, other training also took place across the state.

The 56th Company took the opportunity to give their personnel the FEMA course on points of distribution, which was followed by an exam. Points of distribution, or POD for short, are locations at which relief supplies are provided during emergencies.

The course simulated flooding in the Hudson Valley area.

As the scenario unfolded, the New York

Guardsmen were tested on the appropriate methods of acknowledging local emergency management requests, proper signage, spacing, and site selection for a POD, as well as staffing.

The distribution phase was tested with ser-

vice members required to respond to situations where members of the public would be seeking food, water, and medical supplies while dealing with the weather.

their upcoming Initial Entry Training (IET) at Camp Smith Training Site in September. Staff Sergeant Leo Sciortino shared his expertise with a large group of recruits preparing to attend the training.



New York Guard 1st Lt. Frank Marcigliano and Staff Sgt. John Schmotolocha look at the plan of distribution while Pvt. Joel Almonte waits for instruction during the statewide Military Emergency Radio Network Exercise on July 13, 2024, in Garden City, New York. Photo by Sgt. Richard Mayfield, New York Guard Headquarters.

vice members required to respond to situations where members of the public would be seeking food, water, and medical supplies while dealing with the weather.

“This exercise once again demonstrates that the New York Guard is ready, willing and able to serve the needs of all New Yorkers during domestic emergencies,” said 1st Lt. Frank Marcigliano, the company executive officer.

Meanwhile, 88th Company provided network Control for the network, and continued preparing their junior enlisted personnel for

Sciortino taught them how to wear their uniforms properly, military customs and courtesy and what to pack for the training.

Specialist Rashad Lyston wrapped up the day’s training with by teaching drill and ceremony. 



# New York Naval Militia

## New York Naval Militia Celebrates the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Athens Lighthouse



HUDSON, N.Y. — New York Naval Militia crewmembers of patrol boats PB 300 and LC350, above, lead the line of boats during a nautical parade in celebration of the 150th anniversary of the Athens Lighthouse, Hudson, N.Y., June 1, 2024. Below center, PB 300 participates in the celebration. Courtesy photos.



### Naval Militia Supports NYC Fleet Week

NEW YORK -- New York Naval Militia Boatswains Mate Chief Mike Nilsen helms PB 440 during Operation Clear Channel in New York Harbor, far left photo, supporting the parade of ships for Fleet Week 2024. At right, PB 440 receives spring maintenance for the summer. Courtesy photos.





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