Volume 8, Number 2

Spring 2015

guardtimes

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

FROM THE LEADERSHIP

Stay Safe During Summer Activities

The summer months are busy for everyone, but especially for members of the Army and Air National Guard.

Travel increases for vacations and day-trips. Motorcycles and bicycles come out of the garage and go back out on the road. Families and children spend more time on the beaches and at the pools as temperatures reach into the 80s.

For members of the Army National Guard, summer typically also means Annual Training. It's our opportunity to train on more complex Soldier tasks.

Both fun of summer and training during summer months, are inherently more risky – many summer activities presents a greater risk of having an accident.

As Soldiers and Airmen we need to practice safety and risk management both on and off duty. Our families count on us and our military units depend on us. We have an obligation to mitigate the inherent risks in everything we do whether in or out of uniform.

One of the greatest risks Soldiers and Airmen face during the summer months is when they ride a motorcycle, according to Capt. Alicia Howard, our Army National Guard Safety Officer.

Motorcycle riding can be enjoyable on a wonderful summer day, but those who drive sometimes don't notice those who ride. Motorcycle riders need to be mindful of the cars around them and the risks they face out on the open road and locally riding in our communities. New York law dictates you must wear a helmet and common sense and Army and Air Force safety guidelines say you must wear other protective gear as well.

Most recently we lost an Army National Guard Soldier, Private Michael Mattice, a member of the 2nd Squadron 101st Cavalry in a motorcycle accident. His death was a tragic loss to his family as well as his unit.

Both the Army Safety Center and the Air Force Safety Center have good information about motorcycle safety that on their websites – well worth a read.

Army National Guard Soldiers can sign up for free motorcycle rider instruction at locations across the state by calling Sgt. 1st Class Chuck Austin at 518-786-6121.

Summer is also peak family travel season. You should approach a family road trip much like you do a military convoy.

I know this may seem simple and overstated, but worth saying again. Make sure your vehicle is in good repair before you travel with family. Make sure you are well rested before you drive. You should plan on regular stops for rest and relaxation and don't try to drive too much without getting sleep.

Use the Army Safety Center materials in all parts of your risk management. You can use its Travel Risk Planning System on the Safety Center website to explore ways to mitigate risks inherent in any road trip.

Barbecues can be a great way to spend a summer night or weekend afternoon.

Stop and think – before you have an additional beer, another glass of wine, or a harder drink make sure you have a designated driver or you have planned an alternative way home – one that does not put you behind the wheel or on the seat of a motorcycle. It is not enough to tell yourself you know when enough is enough and stop drinking. Getting a DUI ticket or getting into an accident in which you or somebody else can be hurt or killed is a terrible way to end your summer day.

And of course, make sure you don't get distracted by your phone while you drive. Pull over to send your text messages and don't talk on the phone while driving without a hands free device. Distracted driving is a killer and the statistics backup that fact.

Some summer weekends are still going to be taken up with military training.

When you head for the armory or the air base, make sure you build enough time into your drive in order to avoid speeding. Make sure you get enough sleep the night before and make sure you haven't had too much to drink before a drill weekend. We want you at training on time, ready to participate, but we also want you alive.

We recently lost a young and promising Army National Guard Soldier in an auto accident on his way to drill. One loss is too many.

As you depart for Annual Training, pay attention to the risks associated with the season. Protect yourself from over-exposure to the sun. Make sure you stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water. Take a break in the shade to keep from becoming a heat casualty.

Maj. Gen. Patrick Murphy

Check your personal equipment. Make sure your load-bearing equipment fits. Make certain your combat helmet is well fitted and protects your head. Wear ear protection on the range or when operating heavy equipment – wear a complete uniform and don't forget your eye protection.

Leaders must ensure their Soldiers and Airmen get enough sleep and rest. Rest cycles need to be built into the training plan. Leaders must be certain their troops have an opportunity to sleep before operating vehicles and conducting a road march.

Ensure preventative maintenance checks and services are done before any vehicle is moved and evaluate and mitigate the risks associated with every operation.

When you drive military vehicles on civilian roads, ensure you obey traffic laws – including speed limits and wear of seatbelts. Watch out for other drivers who may not know the capabilities of your humvee or LMTV. Always operate military vehicles with an assistant driver when possible so someone else can read the map and help you watch the road.

Have a fun and productive summer but stay safe. If you are a leader, you are responsible for the safety of your Soldiers and Airmen – they and their families are counting on you. gt

guardtimes

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Governor Andrew M. Cuomo, Commander in Chief
Maj. Gen. Patrick Murphy, The Adjutant General
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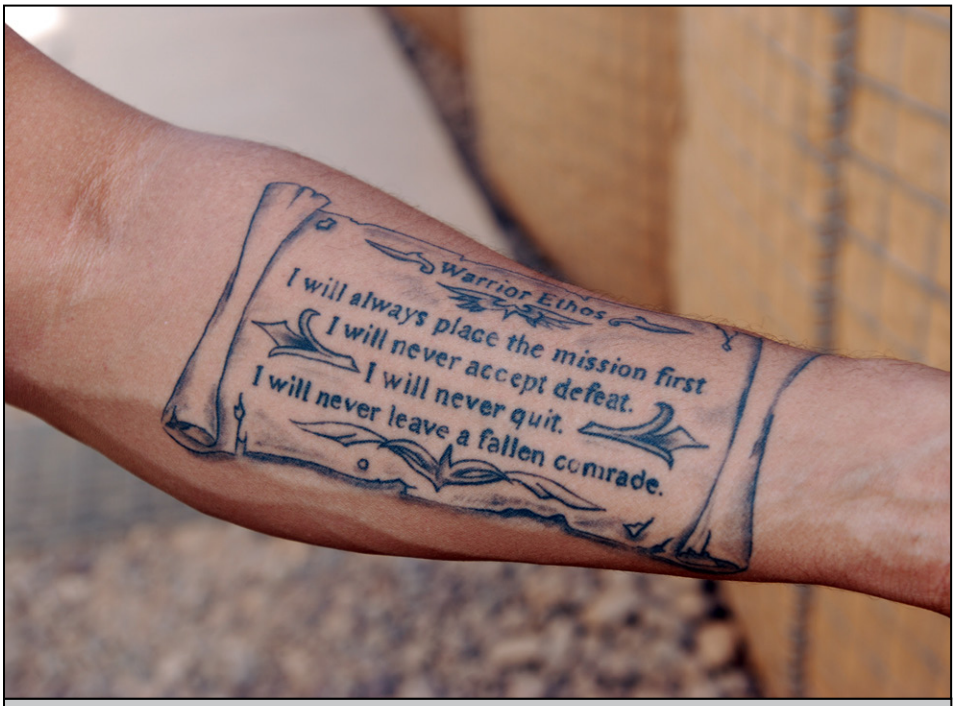
CORTLANDT MANOR -- New York Army National Guard Spc. Nelson Guzman (left) Capt. Charles Sanders and Staff Sgt. Thomas Garbarini report enemy activity using a SALUTE report back to headquarters as part of training at Camp Smith Training Site on March 1, 2015. The three are among 56 Soldiers from the 42nd Infantry Division preparing for a deployment to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Steven Petibone, 42nd Infantry Division.

FRONT COVER: Security Forces Squadron members of the 106th Rescue Wing conduct night-firing training at the Suffulk County Police Range in Westhampton Beach on May 7th. During this training, the airmen learned small-group tactics, how to use their night-vision gear and trained with visible and infrared designators. Photo by Staff Sgt. Christopher S Muncy, 106th Rescue Wing

BACK COVER: Members of Battery B, 1st Platoon, 258th Field Artillery perform pre-firing maintenance on one of eight M155 howitzers on May 1 at Fort Dix, N.J., a day before conducting live-fire exercises. The 258th is preparing their unit members to participate in Warfighter exercises at Joint Readiness Training Center, Fort Polk, La. in 2016.

Army Regulation 670-1 Updated Uniform Policy

By Ms. Lisa Ferdinando, ARNEWS



The Army published the revised uniform and appearance regulation, AR 670-1 and DA PAM 670-1, April 10. The new regulation lifts restrictions on the size and number of tattoos authorized for Soldiers, and changes the rules for the wear of the Army Combat Uniform during commercial travel. Photo by Staff Sgt. Stephanie van Geete.

WASHINGTON -- The Army published the revised uniform and appearance regulation, AR 670-1 and DA PAM 670-1, April 10.

The new regulation lifts restrictions on the size and number of tattoos authorized for Soldiers, and changes the rules for the wear of the Army Combat Uniform during commercial travel.

The new language allows Soldiers to have as many tattoos on their arms, legs and body as they want. Additionally, there are no longer any size restrictions on those tattoos.

However, Soldiers are still prohibited from having tattoos above the T-shirt neckline - meaning anywhere on the neck, face and head. Additionally, Soldiers are limited to no more than one "ring tattoo" on each hand, below the wrist line. What has not changed in the revised policy is the ban on extremist, indecent, sexist or racist tattoos.

An Army G-1 spokesperson said the change to Army tattoo policy is not tied to what is or is not visible while wearing any particular Army uniform. Instead, the policy spells out locations on the body where tattoos are prohibited.

The same Army spokesperson said the revision of Army policies "are not taken lightly." Such policies and regulations are under "perpetual review." The recent changes to AR 670-1 came after much feedback from the force and an extensive review of the September 2014 version of the regulation.

Army leadership wanted AR 670-1 to better represent the perspective of Soldiers, the spokesperson said. At the same time, revisions to the policy had to ensure that Soldiers maintain an appearance that is both professional and aligned with how the American taxpayer views their military

The changes in tattoo policy apply also to civilians, who want to enlist in the Army. Civilians contemplating an Army career will be held to the same standards regarding tattoos as Soldiers already in the Army.

OTHER UNIFORM UPDATES

Under the new AR 670-1, Soldiers traveling commercially on official business are authorized to wear the Army Combat Uniform, or ACU.

Previously, Soldiers were directed to wear their dress uniform during commercial travel. They could wear the ACU when deploying, on rest and recuperation leave to and from the combat theater, or if their commander authorized the wear for emergency leave or casualty assistance duties.

New language in AR 670-1 also clarifies the wear of Army uniforms at off-post establishments that sell alcohol. Soldiers wearing their uniform may enter a liquor store to purchase package liquor, for instance. They may not, however, wear their uniform while drinking in a bar.

The G-1 spokesperson said the new policy does not prevent a uniformed Soldier from having dinner with his family or lunch with his co-workers at a restaurant that also serves alcohol. But the policy does prevent that same uniformed Soldier from having a drink in an establishment whose primary business is selling alcohol.

"The intent of the policy is for Soldiers to not wear their uniform in an establishment where consumption of alcohol is the primary activity," the spokesperson said.

The revised AR 670-1 also updates wear-guidance of shoulder-sleeve insignia for wartime service during Operation Enduring Freedom; adds wear guidance of shoulder-sleeve insignia for former wartime service during Operation Inherent Resolve and Operation Freedom's Sentinel; updates wear guidance of overseas service bars for Operation Enduring Freedom; adds wear guidance of overseas service bars for Operation Inherent Resolve; adds wear guidance of overseas service bars for Operation Freedom's Sentinel; and clarifies approval of distinctive unit insignia.

The updated AR 670-1, DA PAM 670-1, and training package can be found online at: http://www.armyg1.army.mil/hr/uniform. gt

NATIONAL GUARD BENEFITS

KEEP THE DOOR TO YOUR MILITARY CAREER OPEN WHILE PURSUING YOUR COLLEGE DEGREE

- Retirement and health care benefit at 20 years of service (starting at age 60)
- Access to TRICARE Reserve Select for $51.68 per month (individual) or $204.29 (family)
- Maintain $400,000 of SGLI • Officer and Enlisted bonus for critical AOCs/MOSs
- Military Service Obligation (MSO) reduction up to 24 months
- Up to 24 months stabilization from deployments
- Federal Tuition Assistance • State Tuition Assistance (most states)
- Montgomery GI Bill (if ineligible for other GI Bills)
- The Patriot Express loan program (small business loan)
- Job protection under federal law
- Maintain Commissary, PX, and MWR privileges • Space A flights
- Discounted rates at major theme parks
- Service in your community, for your community
- Camaraderie, friendship, and networking

* National Guard programs and benefits are subject to change.

NEW YORK NATIONAL GUARD

NATIONALGUARD.com

Inspector General Corner

Retaliation Illegal-Uniform Code of Military Justice, 2014

By Col. Maureen Murphy, Inspector General

The Army and Air Force have released significant new guidance since June 2014 concerning retaliation for reporting a criminal offense.

Army Directive 2014-20 and Air Force Guidance Memorandum to AFI 36-2909, Professional and Unprofessional Relationships, both dated 19 June 2014, prohibit Soldiers and Airmen from retaliating against a victim, an alleged victim, or another member of the Armed Forces based on that individual's report of a criminal offense.

There are three different forms of retaliation identified in this guidance. The first type is Whistleblower Reprisal (WBR) which is a violation of 10 USC §1034 and DODD 7050.06, and defined as "taking or threatening to take an adverse or unfavorable personnel action, or withholding or threatening to withhold a favorable personnel action, with respect to a victim or other member of the Armed Forces because the individual reported a criminal offense or was believed to have reported a criminal offense."

The second form is ostracism, which is defined as "excluding from social acceptance, privilege or friendship a victim or other member of the Armed Forces because: (a) the individual reported a criminal offense; (b) the individual was believed to have reported a criminal offense; or (c) the ostracism was motivated by the intent to discourage reporting of a criminal offense or otherwise to discourage the due administration of justice.

The third type of reprisal is maltreatment which refers to acts of cruelty, oppression or maltreatment committed against a victim, an alleged victim or another member of the Armed Forces by peers or other persons, because the individual reported a criminal offense or was believed to have reported a criminal offense.

Allegations falling under the first form of retaliation, Whistleblower Reprisal (WBR), are always to be referred to and investigated by the Inspector General (IG). Regardless of whom a complainant makes an allegation of WBR retaliation to, the complainant should be referred to discuss their complaint with an IG. The burden is then on the complainant to determine whether they want to submit a statutory WBR complaint.

If a complainant makes a statutory WBR complaint to the IG, the IG may not refer these complaints to the command for resolution; only the IG may investigate allegations of retaliation in violation of 10 USC §1034 filed with the IG.

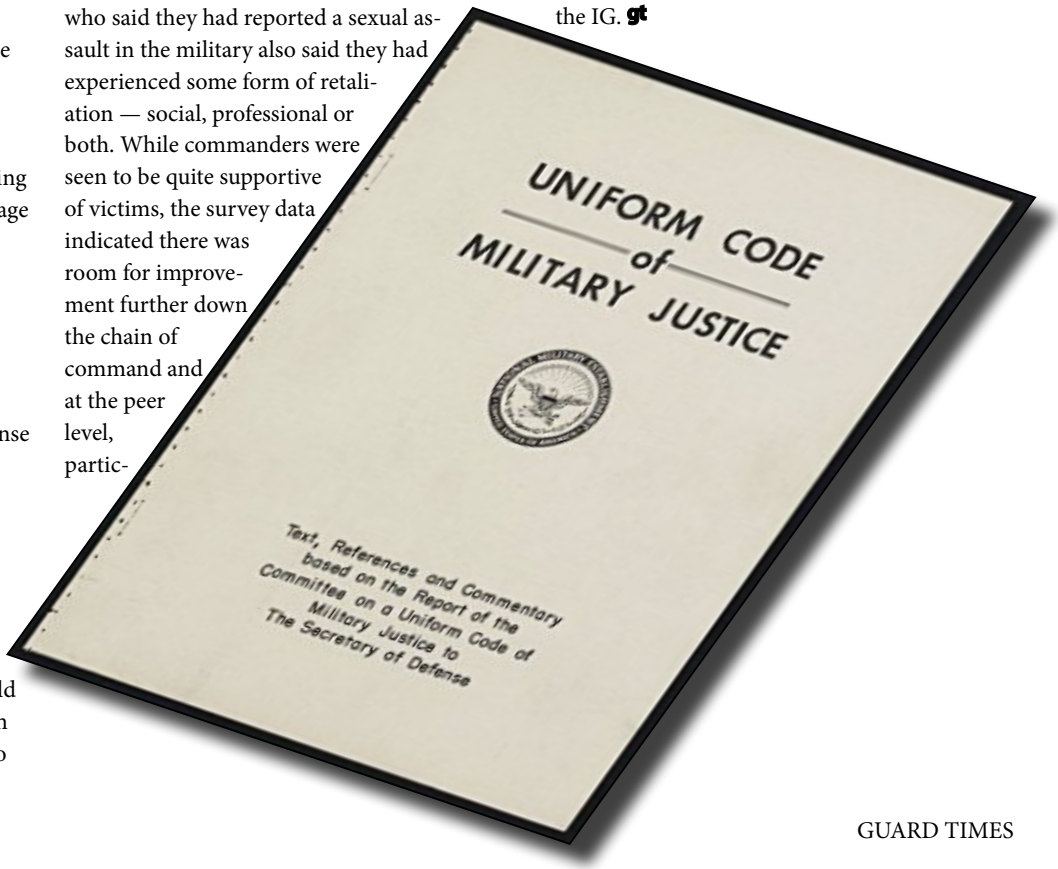
Conversely, allegations falling under the second and third forms of retaliation - ostracism and acts of cruelty, oppression or maltreatment - should primarily be referred to and investigated by the command, or a law enforcement organization.

A Rand Corporation report based on a broad anonymous survey of service members, a review of the military justice system, and a survey of 150 victims of sexual assault was released in late 2014. It indicated the number of sexual assaults in the military decreased and the percentage of victims who reported attacks increased from the previous year, likely reflecting growing confidence in the military's response to sexual assault.

However, it also indicated 62% of women who said they had reported a sexual assault in the military also said they had experienced some form of retaliation — social, professional or both. While commanders were seen to be quite supportive of victims, the survey data indicated there was room for improvement further down the chain of command and at the peer level, particularly with respect to retaliation.

Army Directive 2015-16 dated 4 March 2015 and Air Force Memorandum 27 February 2015 with Change 1 establish requirements on the command to engage to prevent retaliation occurring in relation to a sexual assault incident. Specifically, at every Army Sexual Assault Review Board (SARB) or Air Force Case Management Group (CMG) meeting, the chair will ask members if the victim, witnesses, bystanders (who intervened), Sexual Assault Response Coordinators, Victim Advocates, first responders or other parties to the incident have experienced any retaliation or reprisal. If any incidents are reported, the battalion or squadron commander of the victim of retaliation or reprisal will develop a plan to swiftly address the issue and provide the plan to the SARB or CMG chair.

All supervisors should be educated on the new guidance, remain attuned to indicators of retaliation in your units, and address it promptly and effectively should it be evident. If a Whistleblower Reprisal situation presents, immediately refer the member to the Office of the IG. **gt**



Safety Corner

Motorcycle Safety Courses 2015

Submitted by Sgt. 1st Class Charles Austin
Safety Specialist

The Basic Motorcycle Rider Course will be available at no cost for Soldiers of the New York Army National Guard as follows:

Basic Rider Course

18-19 July, 80 Vanderburgh Avenue, Troy, N.Y.

18-19 July, 533 College Road, Selden, N.Y.

13-14 June, Learn2Ride, 2485 West Henrietta Road, Rochester, N.Y.

Soldiers attending the course will need, as a minimum, a New York State Motorcycle Learners Permit.

Motorcycles are provided for these courses. The following equipment will be furnished and worn by the Soldier during the course:

- DOT approved helmet
- Eye protection (or full face helmet)
- Full fingered gloves
- Long-legged trousers
- Long sleeved shirt or jacket
- Over the ankle shoes/boots
- High visibility reflective garment or device (PT belt is acceptable)

Soldiers are required to notify the Point of Contact listed below which course, location and date they would like to attend this training. Courses will be closed out 2 weeks prior to the start date of each class. Soldiers who already possess a motorcycle license should contact the POC below for enrollment in an experienced rider course.

Information on more classes for fiscal year 2015 may be distributed as more dates are confirmed. POC is Sgt. 1st Class Chuck Austin at 518-786-6121 or charles.b.austin2.mil@mail.mil

Lakehurst Training Resonates with Guard Members

Letters to the Editor

Dear Guard Times,
During the of week April 16-19, in a portion of the U.S. that has an impressive history, but is now almost forgotten, a group of Americans gathered to insure our country remains safe and a bastion of freedom. Members of The US Army, NY Air and Army National Guard, and local Emergency personnel met at an old zeppelin field in Lakehurst, N.J.

Their mission was to act as a joint team to respond to any disaster which could not be contained by local agencies. The training was intense, realistic, and at a level that few individuals out-side the military have ever witnessed.

The fact that the Hindenburg was destroyed on the same territory only added to the significance of the exercise. However, this endeavor was only the stage for the situation which prompts this narrative.

At the end of the day retreat, the act of lowering the colors, was played over the camp's loud speaker. Suddenly, what was only a moment ago, a field full of individuals working at a rapid pace, on multiple different tasks, became a solemn, hushed area of dignity and respect. Everyone spontaneously came to attention and faced the direction of the speakers. Hands rose in crisp salutes to a flag we all knew was flying just beyond our field of sight. We became a part of America that represented the best of mankind.

Soft breezes carried the notes of retreat through swaying pines. The fading afternoon sunlight glinted off our faces and equipment. Individuals from all walks of life joined together to acknowledge and honor the country we represented. White, Black, Brown and Yellow became one hue. Christian, Jew, and Muslim, became of one faith.

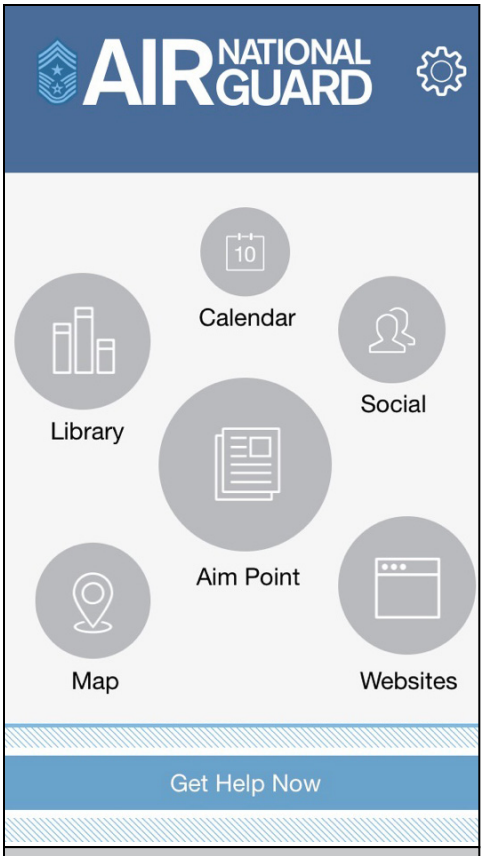
As the National Anthem was played the stances became stiffer, the salutes more rigid and the silence deafening. We were there to protect and defend our countrymen in a time of great uncertainty. Our mission was domestic, our intent only to serve those in need. What happened on that field during retreat was magical. It personified everything good about our nation and the men and women who defend its shores.

There was greatness in this gathering. There was pride, devotion to country, and a commitment to the people of this nation which echoed through each note of our anthem. At the end of the ceremony these individuals went back to tasks that would impress the hardest of critics. It was an ordinary day for anyone in uniform, but it was also a great occurrence that needs to be shared.

Respectfully submitted,
Lt. Col. Michael Fishkin
Medical Chief of Staff, 106th Rescue Wing
CBRN Task Force Medical Element. gt

Air National Guard Introduces Command Chief Mobile App

By Senior Master Sgt. Adrianne Schulz, Air National Guard



Air National Guard's new command chief app is now available for iOS and Android Systems (Photo by Air National Guard).

JOINT BASE ANDREWS, Md. - The office of the Air National Guard Command Chief, along with the Safety Directorate and Community Action Information Board, Thursday announced the launch of the ANG CCM Mobile App.

This application is available in the iTunes App Store (for iOS devices) and on Google Play (for Android devices).

It is expected to connect more than 90,000 ANG enlisted members directly to critical news and information from the ANG Command Chief's office.

"We created this resource to give all Airmen access to essential leadership tools at their fingertips," said Chief Master Sgt. James W. Hotaling, command chief master sergeant of the Air National Guard.

The mobile app's primary functions include:

1. Push notifications directly to the field with personalized information from Chief Hotaling
2. Access to the Chief's AimPoint and Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program info.
3. One Click National Suicide Prevention Lifeline or DoD Safe helpline
4. Geolocation tool to find nearby Air National Guard Wings for assistance
5. Interactive calendar showing upcoming Chief events and events at your unit
6. Extensive library of resources and links including the new Ready Airman app
7. All-in-one handy references including the Airmen "Brown" and "Blue" books
8. Live feeds via the Chief's Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Twitter

"Leadership advocacy is the key to promoting resilience, diversity, risk management, and readiness among our Airmen and their families," said Col. Edward Vaughan, executive director of the ANG Community Action Information Board. "Chief Hotaling is a crucial strategic voice and valuable partner in this effort."

Links to download the app free of charge:

App Store: https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/ang-ccm/id954868262?mt=8

Google Play: https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.ANG.nation&hl=en.

Retirement Reforms Considered for Guard

Guard Times Staff

WASHINGTON – The National Guard Association of the U.S. (NGAUS) and four other organizations that together represent 3 million service members and veterans asked the House and Senate committees on armed services April 21 to make major changes to the military retirement system.

The groups signed a letter asking the lawmakers to support recommendations made by the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission that would create a Thrift Savings Plan to provide military members with a financial package even if they leave the service before serving 20 years.

The plan would work like a 401(k) and would require a contribution by the service member. The government would also put money in the fund, which would be a boost to the 83 percent of service members who separate before spending 20 years in uniform.

"National Guardsmen nationwide applaud the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission for providing some innovative ideas and a real starting point to deliberate reform of the military's retirement and health-care systems," said retired Maj. Gen. Gus Hargett, the NGAUS president in a statement on Feb. 2.

"And we believe such reform is an imperative, not only because of the pressure today's spiraling personnel costs are putting on tomorrow's readiness, but because many of these antiquated programs have created divisive inequities."

The commission's recommendation also would offer a retirement payout to National Guard and Reserve retirees who reach the 20-year mark. Currently, they must wait until age 60 to receive a retirement check.

"We believe that the recommendation enhances the current retirement system and is a valuable recruiting tool for a new generation of warfighters," the five organizations wrote.

Besides NGAUS, the letter was signed by representatives from the Air Force Association, the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States, the Reserve Officers Association and the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

The letter also endorses the commission's recommendations that the military create a program to train its members in the benefits of good financial planning.

NEW REENLISTMENT BONUS

Effective 10 February 2015

* Up to $12,000 *

Reenlistment Periods:	Time from ETS Date
6 year	365-1 days $12,000
2 year	365-1 days $4,000

Criteria:

- Must be E7 or below
- Non DMOSQ Soldiers may only reenlist for 6 year option
- Must not exceed 13 years Time in Service(TIS) at time of current ETS
- Must reenlist/extend in an MTOE or Medical TDA Unit
- Must be primary position holder in Auth Grade and be DMOSQ for position for which reenlisting (cannot be excess)
- Must have passing APFT results within last 18 months
- Must have current PHA
- Must not be flagged for any reason
- Reenlistment Bonus Payments are the following:
  - 6 year $12,000 will be 50% when new contract begins and 50% on 4th year anniversary
  - 2 year $4,000 will be Lump Sum when new contract begins
- 1 period of AWOL will terminate bonus with recoupment
- Units have 90 days to correct erroneous "U" code

See Your Unit's Retention NCO for details

Military Personnel News: The MILPO Corner

Administrative News

Incentive Workshops. The New York National Guard Education Office in conjunction with Recruiting and Retention Battalion will conduct four "Incentive Workshops." Workshops will be held June 25 at the Farmingdale Reserve Center, Rm 2012, at the Rochester Armory at Patriot Way, Room 222 on July 30, in the auditorium of Building 500 at Camp Smith on August 27 and in Classroom 205 at the Joint Force Headquarters in Latham on September 17. All sessions run from 0900-1600.

The purpose of these Workshops is to train Full-time Manning Human Resource personnel on the Guard Incentive Management System (GIMS) and Retention Management System (RMS); and improve efficiency of the incentive process throughout the state. All FTM HR personnel are encouraged to attend the workshop closest to their duty location.

Protecting Personally Identifiable Information (PII). Recently, Mr. Michael E. Reheuser, Senior Army Official for Privacy, signed a memorandum emphasizing the need to be vigilant and to follow the requirements for collecting, maintaining, using, or disseminating personal information. Protecting personally identifiable information (PII) is of the utmost importance. It is also important that we maintain awareness of the need to protect PII. All Soldiers and organizations need to assist in maintaining awareness of our need to protect PII.

Soldier Support News

New Reenlistment Bonus. The bonus structure for reenlistment increased in February 2015 along with a new two-year extension bonus program. A six-year reenlistment within a year from ETS may qualify a Soldier for a $12,000 extension bonus. A two-year reenlistment within a year from ETS may qualify for a $4,000 extension bonus. See your local Recruiting and Retention NCO for more details on how to qualify.

New NCOER. The secretary of the Army approved the new Non-Commissioned Officer Evaluation Report. The new rating system is scheduled to take effect in September 2015, bringing evaluations for NCOs in line with those for commissioned officers and attempting to ensure that NCOs receive feedback in a timely fashion. The changes to the evaluation system will enable leaders to more clearly assess and identify the Army's best talent by eliminating inflation in the rating process and encouraging self-improvement. The goals behind the changes are to meet the Chief of Staff of the Army's strategic priority to develop adaptive Army leaders for a complex world. Training on the new NCOER will be conducted at all units before the September start date.

AKO Email Forwarding. AKO Email will be shut down this spring as part of the migration of email services to the DoD Enterprise Email. Mailboxes on AKO were shutdown on March 31, but AKO will continue to forward email to Soldiers until June 30. After July 1, AKO will stop forwarding email. Any messages addressed to accounts @us.army.mil will be bounced back to the sender as undeliverable. You may still see the "user@us.army.mil" identifier as your username when logging in to Army websites, but it will no longer be a valid email address.

Filing Tattoo Memorandums in Personnel Records. This is a follow up message in regards to the change in policy for filing tattoo memorandums and photos into the Army Military Human Resource Record (AMHRR) within iPERMS.

There is no longer a requirement for units to submit tattoo validation memos/photos to iPERMS. With the release of AR 670-1, dated April 10, 2015, only exceptions to policy (ETP) approved by the Director of Military Person-

Vietnam Veterans Oral History Display

SARATOGA SPRINGS - New York State Military Museum Director Courtney Burns (left), places the cover over a temporary exhibit of Vietnam Veteran oral history artifacts with Skidmore College student Summer Keith, April 28 at the New York State Military Museum and Veterans Research Center in Saratoga Springs. Keith and fellow Skidmore College students collected and prepared artifacts of more than a dozen Vietnam Veterans for the temporary exhibit which opened May 1 as part of the museum's efforts as a commemorative partner with the Department of Defense Vietnam War 50th anniversary. The effort was part of their college history course on the Vietnam War. Photo by Col. Richard Goldenberg, Joint Force Headquarters.

Memorial Day Tribute to Our Fallen

LATHAM --Major General Patrick Murphy the Adjutant General of New York speaks during a pre-Memorial Day ceremony held on Thursday May 21 at New York State Division of Military and Naval Affairs headquarters in Latham. New York National Guard members and Division of Military and Naval Affairs employees dedicated the new New York Military Forces Memorial commemorating fallen New York National Guard members of all wars and remembering the 33 New York National Guard members who died in Iraq and Afghanistan. Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Steven Petibone, 42nd Infantry Division.

nel Management, DCS, G-1, will be filed in the AMHRR. All previously filed tattoo validation memorandums and approved ETPs with photos will remain filed in the AMHRR until the Soldier separates from the Army.

Education News

Federal Tuition Assistance Guidance. The fiscal year Tuition Assistance (TA) policies, reissued on March 26, 2015, highlight eligibility requirements for Soldiers. These highlights include:

- Soldiers will be eligible for TA upon successfully completing one year of service following graduation from advanced individual training.

- Soldiers can use TA for a second, higher-level degree (Post Bachelor's) once they have 10 years of service, if any portion of the undergraduate degree was funded with TA. There is no 10-year requirement if TA did not fund any portion of undergraduate work.

- Soldiers may take up to 16 semester hours (SH) per fiscal year at the rate of $250/SH each year.

- Soldiers can use TA for 130 SH for a bachelor's degree and for 39 SH for a master's degree.

New MGIB-Select Reserve GI Bill Policy. Effective March 2015, the Education Incentive Operational Message (EIOM) 15-004 supersedes the Montgomery GI Bill-SR Policy, NGB-ARM #07-10, dated August 2007.

Highlights of key changes include:

- Eliminates separate eligibility requirements for Soldiers entering under the Civilian Acquired Skills Program and combines eligibility criteria for Non-Prior Service (NPS) enlistees, Prior Service (PS) accessions, and Officers (paragraph 7).

- Updates the Eligibility Start Date calculation for Prior Service Soldiers to match all Soldier categories (paragraph 8).

- Removes the requirement to have a High School Diploma or equivalent prior to completion of IADT (paragraph 7).

- Revises MGIB-SR eligibility upon receipt of a Dedicated Guard (Title 10 USC Section 2107) ROTC scholarship (paragraph 3e of Enclosure 1).

- Extends the time limit for extensions (when required) to 12 months when a SM re-affiliates after an authorized break in service (paragraph 4 of Enclosure 1).

- Prohibits the use of Federal Tuition Assistance (FTA) and the MGIB-SR for the same course per DoDI 1322.25 (paragraph 12b).

- Eliminates concurrent eligibility for MGIB-SR and Montgomery GI Bill - Active Duty (MGIB-AD) or Post-9/11 GI Bill (paragraph 13).

A copy of the attached policy as well as additional information on the MGIB-SR benefit is available on our AKO website at https://www.us.army.mil/suite/page/535774. Any question or concerns, please contact this office via email at ng.ny.nyarng.list.education-ny@mail.mil.

May: Month of the Military Child

Spc. Devon Carpenter, Company C, 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry assists Noelle Coon, daughter of Staff Sgt. Ed Coon with the repelling harness so another child can scale the rock climbing wall. Children of Soldiers and Airmen assigned to New York National Guard Joint Force Headquarters in Latham took part in a Month of the Military Child day-camp at headquarters on April 10. Thirty-five military kids participated in the event. Photo by Sgt. Maj. Corine Lombardo, Joint Force Headquarters.

Aviators Train with Air Guard Controllers at Fort Drum

By Sgt. Jonathan Monfileto, 42nd Combat Aviation Brigade

A member of the New York Air National Guard's 274th Air Support Operation Squadron watches as a CH-47F flown by Company B, 3rd Battalion, 126th Aviation comes in for a landing at Fort Drum on March 14. The two units conducted joint air assault training together. Photo by Air Guard Master Sgt. Eric Miller.

FORT DRUM – It was one team, one fight during a training exercise March 14 for the New York Army National Guard aviators of Company B, 3rd Battalion, 126th Aviation and the New York Air National Guard close air support specialists of the 274th Air Support Operations Squadron.

The joint training mission allowed the crews of two CH-47F helicopters flown by the Rochester-based Army unit to practice the skills involved in planning and executing an air assault, said Capt. Brendan M. Flansburg, the company commander.

The planning required to conduct an air assault puts stress on the crews that routine flying doesn't. When supporting another unit, there is a certain degree of pressure to perform," said Flansburg.

An air assault requires the helicopter crews to coordinate the pickup of ground troops, conduct a tactical approach to the landing zone, conduct a tactical off-load of the troops, and then quickly fly away, he explained. These are skills not tested in a routine flying mission, he added.

"A lot of training value can be derived by operating under pressure. This is what our Soldiers got out of the training: the required preparation, deliberate execution, and pressure to perform which is similar to the real deal," he added.

His company just transitioned to the latest model of the CH-47 'Chinook' and the Soldiers are looking for training opportunities to get to know the new aircraft better, Flansburg explained.

The training plan for the March 14 joint mission called for the Army Guard aircrews' to land at Hancock Field Air National Guard Base in Syracuse, pick up members of the 274th Air Support Operations Squadron, or ASOS, and move them to Fort Drum about 45 minutes flying time away.

The ASOS Airmen are Joint Terminal Attack Controllers, or JTACS, who specialize in calling in air support in support of troops on the ground.

The Airmen conducted a practice assault on the combat training village at Fort Drum to sharpen the combat skills they need to work with infantrymen and other Army units in the field.

Air Force Staff Sgt. Matthew Rossen, a JTAC with the 274th ASOS, played the part of the opposition force for the mission and explained why the mission was important for the 274th Airmen.

"We're going to be doing an air assault with our unit into an objective area up at Fort Drum with some blank firing and also some CAS work, close air support work, as well," Rossen said. "We'll have some aircraft up there simulating fighter aircraft to attack an objective with close air support."

Rossen said it was the first time the 274th and the 3-126th conducted an air assault training mission together. He noted it took place at a slower pace to allow Soldiers to get accustomed to the helicopters and Airmen to learn how to conduct such a mission and call in air support with instructors in a safe environment.

"We're basically starting at the crawl phase now to get our unit trained up, get their unit trained up because this is a new aircraft for them as well and they are getting used to it with all the upgraded systems in it," he said.

"We plan on ramping it up – more advanced air assault missions in the future. This is to get

our younger JTACs to learn how to integrate close air support with our air assault mission as well," he added.

With 10 people, plus pilot and crew, aboard each aircraft, the two helicopters took off from Hancock Field Saturday morning for the flight to Fort Drum.

Upon landing one at a time in knee-deep, snow-covered landing zones, the Chinooks dropped off two teams of Airmen and immediately took off, as the Soldiers aboard left the area to conduct a separate sling-loading exercise with the helicopters.

The Airmen formed up and began advancing on the village as they ruck marched through the snow along a road that led into the area. They reacted to enemy fire and communicated by radio as they pushed their way to the village.

Once in the village, teams of Airmen assaulted each of the buildings in search of combatants. As well as reacting to direct and indirect fire, they also used simulated air support from a Civil Air Patrol airplane supporting the exercise to suppress the enemy.

After a little more than two hours of battling in the village, the Airmen fought off the enemy and marched further down the road. Within a few minutes, the Chinooks landed and picked up the Airmen for the trip back to Hancock Field.

For Rossen, the real-life scenario – even at a slower pace – helps Soldiers and Airmen alike gain familiarization and know what to do before they are presented with the real thing in combat.

"Better training you can do here equals better effects down range. The first time you see this stuff, you don't want to be getting shot at while you're seeing it," he said. "Muscle memory, that type of deal. The more realistic training we can do here, the more effective we're going to be down range."

And though it was the first time the two units trained together, Rossen said the joint exercise provides a realistic situation because the Army and Air Force would work together in similar fashion for air assault missions in combat.

"We support the Army, period! We support the ground force commander and his objectives," he said. "If we don't train with them, we're never going to get a full understanding of what they're looking for. This makes it as realistic as possible for us in the overall grand scheme of maneuvers."

(Contributions by Eric Durr, New York State Division of Military and Naval Affairs.) **gt**

FORT DRUM – Senior Airman Michael Sorensen and Staff Sgt. George Stratakos establish a perimeter during an exercise at Fort Drum on March 14. Thirty Airmen from the New York Air National Guard's 274th Air Support Operations Squadron (ASOS) participated in Close Air Support (CAS) training that enhances their ability to identify a target and neutralize a threat. The 274th mission is to advise U.S. Army commanders on how to best utilize U.S. and NATO assets for Close Air Support. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Eric Miller.

N.Y. and N.J. Troops Rehearse for Terror Attack Response

By Col. Richard Goldenberg, Joint Force Headquarters

Airmen with 107th Air Wing Medical group assemble gurneys during a full scale Homeland Response Force exercise involving units from the New Jersey and New York Army and Air National Guard at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J., April 17. From April 14-19, nearly 600 New Jersey and New York Army and Air National Guardsmen participated in the joint-training event with the New Jersey Office of Emergency Management and New Jersey State Police Task Force 1. The troops are part of a regional disaster response force trained to respond to a chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear incident. The National Guard Homeland Response Force is one of ten established by the Department of Defense. Photo by Master Sgt. Mark C. Olsen.

JOINT BASE MCGUIRE-DIX-LAKEHURST, N.J. – More than 800 Soldiers and Airmen from the New York and New Jersey National Guard tested their ability to respond to terrorist attacks during a four day exercise here, April 15-19.

The troops, trained to respond to chemical, nuclear, radiological, and biological (CBRN) incidents, are part of the federal Homeland Response Force, or HRF, for New York and New Jersey. This is one of ten teams established by the Department of Defense to support state and local governments.

The 27th established its tactical operations center, or TOC, at Fort Dix, about 20 miles from the HRF exercise incident site.

The exercise scenario revolved around multiple terrorist attacks using chemical weapons. Soldiers and Airmen practiced extracting victims from destroyed buildings, decontaminating them, providing immediate medical treatment, and securing the site.

The HRF commander is also the commander of the New York Army National Guard's 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, headquartered in Syracuse. The brigade headquarters coordinated the HRF movement and on-site missions.

"This (exercise) is really a blessing," explained brigade commander Col. Joe Biehler. "This (the HRF mission) is about resources and opportunities to train as a team," he said.

Operating the HRF command post is one of the most vital functions of the team, Biehler explained, because it allows for the quick expansion of the response forces, by plugging in additional National Guardsmen to whatever size is needed by civilian authorities.

It also, Biehler noted, provides similar training needed of any combat unit headquarters.

"This gives us the ability to set up the TOC and better prepare ourselves for the brigade warfighter," Biehler said. "We've done it now three times since last fall. The 27th is preparing for a warfighter combat simulation exercise this summer at Fort Drum, N.Y. in anticipation of a rotation to Fort Polk and the Joint Readiness Training Center, La. in 2016,

"HRF forced us to do that," Biehler said. "A brigade TOC is a brigade TOC, whether we are battle tracking tactical operations for combat or disaster response missions for the HRF. It really isn't all that different for our headquarters Soldiers."

What is very different for other members of the HRF are the demands of the exercise site, where Soldiers do their jobs while wearing hazardous material protective suits.

During the HRF exercise, members of the New Jersey State Police-Task Force One conducted their own training at the site, adding to the multi-agency response of the scenario. Members of the state police task force also provided technical advice and training to Army Guard engineers from New York's Company A, 27th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, based in Lockport.

"Most of our NCOs here served on HRF the first time," said engineer 1st Lt. Tucker Brown, referring to the prior rotation of the company for HRF duties. "So many of them have that prior experience with the team and the job. That really helps out with the training of our newer Soldiers," Tucker said.

The engineers, part of the search and extraction element, deployed a day earlier for proficiency training using their heavy equipment, designed to breach reinforced concrete at an incident to help rescue casualties.

"The interoperability we're training for here is fantastic," said Bob McDermott, a breaching and breaking instructor from New Jersey Task Force One. "I'm glad to be part of it."

Some 50 Soldiers from the search and extraction element donned protective gear, hard hats and knee pads to scour the training site rubble pile to help rescue casualties from the scenario CBRN event. A mix of mannequins and role-players with realistic moulage wounds added to the challenge of the extraction team working within the rubble.

"The pile is dangerous, but not deadly," said New Jersey Task Force One leader Kevin Stewart, observing the training of both his team and the National Guardsmen. "You have to stay sharp or face the risk of real injury here. This training will bite you if you don't take it seriously or let your guard down," he said.

The engineers worked quickly to assess

Sgt. Kyle Ortel, Company A, 27th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, New York Army National Guard, cuts a steel pipe with a petrogen torch during a full scale Homeland Response Force exercise involving units from the New Jersey and New York Army and Air National Guard at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J., April 16. Photo by Master Sgt. Mark C. Olsen.

casualties and move them away from the contaminated site to the main elements of New York's 2nd Squadron, 101st Cavalry headquarter's CBRN response task force. Here, some 75 Soldiers from Company D, 427th Brigade Support Battalion, based in Buffalo, established and operated the decontamination line, providing the life-saving decontamination of both ambulatory and litter casualties.

Once through the decon line, patients were assessed by another 50 medical personnel from across the New York Air National Guard's air wings, including Niagara Falls' 107th Airlift Wing and the Scotia-based 109th Airlift Wing, the 105th Airlift Wing in Newburgh and 106th Rescue Wing from Westhampton Beach on Long Island. These expert medical personnel provided triage and prepared casualties for transfer to civilian medical facilities.

Surrounding the decontamination site and providing the initial contact with potential casualties and other first responders were members of the New Jersey Army National Guard's 2nd Battalion, 113th Infantry from Riverdale, as the HRF's CBRN Assistance and Support Element.

From the HRF command post, Col. Biehler and his staff led both real-time forces of the HRF and hundreds more of simulated CBRN response forces arriving from other states in support of the incident, tracking the arrival of units and employing them according to the needs of civilian authorities.

The Soldiers are trained to work within the incident command framework and function as a supporting element to a civilian incident commander.

The HRF is designed to foster increased dialogue between regional first responders and other state and federal response agencies. The HRF plays an important role at the regional level in helping develop and build regional plans and in working with emergency managers to build a cohesive government response to CBRN incidents at the regional level.

"The HRF mission? It really has been fantastic for us," Biehler said. "It gave us training opportunities to bring the team together and that gave us a running start for the warfighter preparations this summer," Biehler said.

Biehler explained that when the brigade headquarters staff came together for the staff training seminar, the Soldiers were able to work through the military decision making process and prepare combat orders relatively quickly, since the group had worked together so closely for HRF missions throughout 2014. gt

Air Guard Medical Groups Participate in HRF

Master Sgt. Cheran Cambridge
106th Rescue Wing

Airmen from the New York Air National Guard's 105th Airlift Wing conduct triage and treatment of injured role players during a Homeland Response Force training exercise at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst on Apr. 17. Photo by Spc. Alexander Rector, 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team.

FORT DIX, N.J. - Air National Guard medical personnel from all of New York's five air wings participated in the first Homeland Response Force exercise held at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, Apr. 16-18.

They were part of the search and rescue extraction teams that include Army and Air National Guard members working closely together to save lives during natural disasters and any chemical, biological, or radiological, emergency as part of the Homeland Response Force, known as a HRF

"I guess you can call us the pararescue of the HRF , " said Master Sergeant Douglas Foy, a medical technician in the 106th Rescue Wing.

Foy, and Tech. Sgt. Phillip Travers, also from the 106th Rescue Wing; worked alongside the 174th Fighter Wing's Tech. Sergeant James Lantry, and 105th Airlift Wing's Staff Sergeant Rafael Quinonez, Tech. Sgt. Jime Thomason and Tech. Sgt. Mark Muniz.

The exercise scenario revolved around multiple terrorist attacks using chemical weapons in an urban area. The victims were contaminated, and injured, and some were trapped in rubble piles.

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"Being part of the search and extraction team, as a medical extractor we work alongside the Army engineers' extraction team. We go in and make a 360 degree sweep and look for any walking wounded which we take out immediately," Foy said.

"A second search team goes in and triages all of the victims that are not able to walk or are trapped. Then, multiple teams rotate in to stabilize and extract specific victims that may need to be extricated from underneath rubble, cars or hazardous areas," Foy explained.

The extraction team is trained to shore up collapsing structures, gain entry into confined spaces such as sewers and rubble piles. During this exercise, there were several derailed subway cars,a very large rubble pile and walls that needed to be shored up to simulate a large urban area rescue.

"Myself and other extraction medics go in, stabilize the patients where they are found, package them up for transport and get them out of the area," Foy said. " We then bring them to the hot zone triage, which is operated by additional Air National Guard medical personnel, where we hand them off for re-triage and then to the army where they can be decontaminated of chemical or biological hazards

Extraction team members learn to stabilize a structure quickly, move vehicles without causing more damage to the patient and basic stabilization in confined spaces.

"I love crawling into the rubble pile, finding the victim, getting them squared away and getting them out of there, I like to be in the mess, " Lantry said.

Members of the 105th Airlift Wing at Stewart Air National Guard Base; the 106th Rescue Wing at Gabreski Air National Guard Base; the 107th Airlift Wing at Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station; the 109th Airlift Wing at Stratton Air National Guard Base and the 174th Attack Wing from Hancock Field Air National Guard Base took part in the exercise.

"This is a really good opportunity for everyone to get together from all walks of military life. We come together, utilize our skills and education to serve one team, one force, one county, one God," explained Travers. gt

Civil Support Team Goes Underground

Members of the New York National Guard's 24th Civil Support Team train at the Fire Department of New York-Randall's Island in the subway to hone their skills in Weapons of Mass Destruction detection on Apr. 30. Photo by Kevin S. Abel.

Enlisted Association Recognizes Top Troops

Story and photo by Sgt. Maj. Corine Lombardo, Joint Force Headquarters

Fleet Master Chief Terrence I. Molidor (center), Command Senior Enlisted Leader for Headquarters, North American Aerospace Defense Command and United States Northern Command, Peterson Air Force Base, Colo. poses with New York Army and Air National Guard members during the Enlisted Association of the New York National Guard annual awards dinner, Apr. 25 in Clifton Park.

CLIFTON PARK – The accomplishments of eight New York National Guard Soldiers and Airmen were applauded by their peers during the Enlisted Association of the New York National Guard annual dinner, Apr. 25.

"Out of nearly 16,000 Soldiers and Airmen in the New York National Guard, these enlisted members have risen to the top and deserve to be recognized for these outstanding achievements," said Frank Wicks, Enlisted Association of the New York National Guard president.

Nearly 120 members of the Association joined Wicks in congratulating the honorees during the annual dinner.

The Guardsmen were also recognized by North American Aerospace Defense Command and United States Northern Command, Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado.

I am honored to be here to meet these exceptional Soldiers and Airmen," said Fleet Master Chief Terrence I. Molidor, the Command Senior Enlisted Leader. "NORTHCOM is tasked to defend the homeland and we rely on the National Guard to provide the support to our civil authorities. The bottom line is – when the American people are looking to someone in uniform to help them during an emergency - or shelter them in need, it's the National Guard they turn to," exclaimed Molidor during remarks to event attendees.

Service members recognized by the Enlisted Association are:

• Army Staff Sgt. Christian Hager, New York Army National Guard NCO of the Year, an infantry squad leader assigned to Company A, 2nd Battalion 108th Infantry, based in Geneseo;

• Army Spc. Michael Rowland, New York Army National Guard Soldier of the Year, a personnel specialist assigned to the 501st Explosives Ordnance Disposal Battalion based in Glenville;

• Air National Guard Master Sgt. Amy Taylor, New York Air National Guard Senior NCO of the Year, a Quality Assurance NCOIC, assigned to the Easter Air Defense Sector, Rome;

• Air National Guard Staff Sgt. Douglas Kechijian, New York Air National Guard NCO of the Year, a Guardian Angel Element Leader assigned to the 103rd Rescue Squadron, Westhampton Beach. Kechijian was also selected as the Air National Guard NCO of the Year;

• Air National Guard Master Sgt. Michael Lazzari, New York Air National Guard First Sergeant of the Year, he is assigned to the 109th Airlift Wing Mission Support Group, Scotia.

• Air National Guard Sr. Airman James Comstock, New York Air National Guard Airman of the Year, a supply technician assigned to the 109th Airlift Wing based in Scotia;

• Air National Guard Staff Sgt Richard Burns, New York Air National Guard Honor Guard Manager of the Year, a Radio Frequency Transmissions Craftsman assigned to the Easter Air Defense Sector, Rome and;

• Air National Guard Master Sgt. Eric Lent, New York Air National Guard Honor Guard Member of the Year, an Intelligence Operations Specialist assigned to the138th Attack Squadron, Syracuse.

The Enlisted Association, a non-profit organization, dedicated to promoting the status, welfare, and professionalism of all members of the State's organized militia also recognized their annual education award recipients during the dinner. The association grants cash awards to Association and family members to be used towards continued education. This year, the association presented a total of $7,000 to 5 recipients.

"Honoring our outstanding enlisted members and presenting our education awards is the highlight of the evening," said Wicks. "We get to recognize the exceptional achievements of our members and help the next generation achieve their dreams." gt

Staff Sgt. Luis Pagan, an instructor at the week-long Honor Guard Academy held at Camp Smith Training Site the week of Jan. 26-30, watches as Spc. Sebastian Rivera and Pfc. Alex Spencer begin folding the flag covering a casket during training on Jan. 29. The instructors watched every move the 15 students made during the academy and corrected errors on the spot.

Staff Sgt. Luis Pagan (back left), an instructor at the week-long Honor Guard Academy observes Honor Guard members practicing the three-man flag fold during training on Jan. 29. The instructors watched every move the 15 students made during the academy and corrected errors on the spot.

Spc. Kenval Small, and other members, prepare their weapons during practice firing party drills during Honor Guard Academy Training at Camp Smith Training Site on Jan. 29. Fifteen Honor Guard members attended the week-long training academy here the week of January 26-30.

New York Honor Guard Academy Demands Perfection

Story and photos by Eric Durr, Public Affairs Director

CAMP SMITH TRAINING SITE - Six New York Army National Guard Soldiers wearing Army Combat Uniform with white gloves march forward in three abreast formation and execute a right turn into two columns.

Staff Sgt. Kyle King is watching.

"Do it again," King tells them. "I said five steps then right."

They return to their starting point and repeat the movement.

"Stop. Do it again," King says.

Over on the other side of the drill hall, another team of Soldiers is doing the same thing, watched by other sets of expert eyes.

It's day four of the New York Army National Guard's five -day Honor Guard Academy class here. The 15 students have been practicing the three-man flag fold, firing party routines, and casket carries for military funerals for 36 hours.

Then they've spent time after hours making sure their Army Service Uniforms are spotless and reviewed what they learned that day.

The goal for King and the other three instructors, said Staff Sgt. Erwin Dominguez, the Honor Guard non-commissioned officer in charge, is nothing less than perfection when it comes to funeral duties.

"Everything gets fine-tuning. Everything is precise. Everything is perfect," Dominguez said.

"What we are really looking for in every funeral is perfection," he added. " We only have one time to do funerals and that time better count. It can't be anything less than perfect.

The New York Army National Guard's 27 full-time Honor Guard Soldiers, headquartered at eight locations around New York, provide military funeral honors for any American who ever served in the Army as mandated by federal law.

The ceremony must include the folding and presenting of the flag of the United States to the veteran's survivors and the playing of Taps. Two Soldiers provide this service.

In 2014 the New York Honor Guard's provided funeral services for 9,567 families, most of them the basic service.

In most cases these were two-Soldier funerals. But in the case of retired military members or Soldiers who died on active duty, then modified full military honors - which requires seven Soldiers and involves a firing party and casket carrying detail and three Soldiers folding the flag-is the standard.

The modified full honors funeral service, and the choreography involved in doing it well, is the core subject material taught during this five-day training period, said King, a member of the 2nd Battalion, 108th Infantry who works in the Honor Guard's Rochester office.

"They are here Monday through Friday and you have packed a lot of stuff into a five day week," King said.

The Honor Guard members work on the rituals of removing the casket from a hearse, folding the flag back from the end of the casket precisely as it is carried to the grave side, and keeping the casket level as six Soldiers carry it.

They learn how to assume their positions as bugler, firing party, and flag-folding detail seamlessly as the funeral unfolds.

"You have to have that eye for detail, attention to detailed small stuff is what is important here. If somebody makes the wrong movement it throws everything off," King said.

"Forty hours is not that long to accomplish the mission," said Sgt. James Barton, 222nd Military Police Company, and member of the Honor Guard for two years as he described the training.

By the time the Soldiers come to the Honor Guard Academy, they've already been through a week-long training period and have performed military funerals, Dominquez said.

Soldiers joining the Honor Guard program, either on a full-time or part-time basis, go through three days of training on the basic movements and requirements of the two-Soldier military funeral at their Honor Guard area office.

Then they spend two days assisting a seasoned instructor, before being sent out with another junior enlisted Soldiers to represent the U.S. Army at a funeral, Dominquez said.

All Soldiers learn basic drill and ceremonies in basic training, but the Honor Guard training is often about unlearning what the Soldiers already know, Dominquez said.

"We do things a little bit different than basic training," Dominquez said. " Their left face is different from our left face. So we try to get some of that muscle-memory out of them."

Honor Guard drill movements are more precise and more stylized than standard drill, he explained. The flag-folding ritual is also more precise, he added.

Spc. Dana Kelly, of the 442nd Military Police Company, who has been serving with the Long Island office since the spring of 2014, said she enjoyed refining the skills involved in the more complex funeral service.

"I'm a big hooah, hooah Honor Guard Person, " Kelly said. " I like knowing that they are going really hard on us to make sure we do it perfect, because we don't want to be out there messing up."

Pvt. Richard Blount, a member of D. Co. 3rd Battalion 142nd Aviation ,who also works in the Long Island office, said the class had helped him refine his skills as an Honor Guard member.

Blount, who's served with the Honor Guard program since November, 2014, said he joined because he liked the full-time military life style. He serves in the military full-time as an Honor Guard member and a drilling Guard Soldier, Blount said.

Serving on the Honor Guard is a privilege Blount said.

"It is not something everybody gets to say they have done in their Army career and to get to do it full time makes it that much better," he explained.

One of the things that really distinguishes the New York Army National Guard Honor Guard program is the amount of responsibility given to junior enlisted Soldiers, said Major Bryon Linnehan, the Honor Guard Officer-in-Charge. A funeral team normally consists of a sergeant or specialist and an private

"This is an opportunity for them to operate independently with very high expectations. They are successful and it is great to see them do that," Linnehan said.

Serving on the Honor Guard has been incredibly rewarding, Kelly said.

"I personally think, as a Soldier, that you should be there to recognize all those who have served, " she said. "I think it is the most honorable thing to be there and be part of the families last moments with their loved one."

69th Infantry Marks Deployment and Honors Fallen Comrades at 2015 Saint Patrick's Day Parade

"The 69th is always ready!"

By Eric Durr, Public Affairs Director

Photo by Staff Sgt. Patricia Austin, 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team

NEW YORK - The 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry, marked the 10th anniversary of the battalion's mobilization for combat in Iraq and salute the unit's fallen Soldiers, as they lead New York City's St. Patrick's Day Parade once again on March 17.

This was the 164th time the "Fighting 69th" has led the world's largest St. Patrick's Day Parade. The 69th Infantry first led the parade in 1851.

The unit mobilized for deployment to Iraq in 2004 and served in Baghdad in 2004/2005 and also sent Soldiers to Afghanistan in 2008 and 2012.

Nineteen Soldiers were killed in Iraq, including eight members of the Louisiana National Guard's Company C , 2nd Battalion, 156th Infantry which was assigned to the New York Battalion and four others lost their life in Afghanistan.

A horse without a rider, with boots reversed in the saddle's stirrups, traditionally signifies a fallen warrior. The horse is being provided for the parade by the Military District of Washington, said Lt. Col. Sean Flynn, the battalion's commander.

"This parade is significant because it is the 10th anniversary of the mobilization and the end of the formal combat mission in Afghanistan," Flynn said. "These occasions are important not only because it gives us the opportunity to remember the Soldiers and families who have given so much, but to leverage the experience we have gained to make our battalion better," he added.

The New York City St. Patrick's Day Parade Committee also honored the Soldiers of the 69th Infantry by dedicating this year's parade to the battalion's Gold Star families.

69th Veterans were invited to march in the parade with the Veterans Corps of the 69th, a group of former Soldiers who support the battalion's activities.

The 42nd Infantry Division Band will also participate in the parade along with Maj. Gen. Patrick Murphy, the adjutant general of New York, and other New York National Guard leaders.

The members of the 69th place a sprig of boxwood on their uniform as a reminder of the regiment's charge against Confederate lines at Mayre's Heights at the Battle of Fredericksburg, on December 13, 1862.

The bravery of 69th Soldiers at Fredericksburg reportedly led to the nickname, coined by Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee: "The Fighting 69th."

At 6:30 a.m., the regiment's honorary bagpiper Joe Brady leads the men out of the Lexington Avenue Armory and over to 51st Street for a special Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral. The Soldiers occupy the southern half of the church as the place of honor. The battalion commander traditionally joins the adjutant general of New York, the governor of New York and mayor of New York City in a front pew for the service and the blessing for the regiment's Soldiers. Following mass, the battalion marches to 44th Street and 5th Avenue, the official start of the parade. When the 11 a.m. start time for the parade arrives, a member of the Parade Committee will approach Flynn and ask him the traditional question: "Is the 69th ready?"At that point Flynn and his Soldiers will shout back "The 69th is always ready!" and step off on the parade route north up Fifth Avenue. At the end of the parade route, the Soldiers take a special subway train south to the station at 28th Street and march back to their armory. Once at the armory, the unit's officers line the front steps to honor their men as they pass by. St. Patrick's Day is the 69th Infantry's unit day and the history of the unit and the accomplishments of its Citizen-Soldiers are celebrated, along with awards and honors for the battalion's Soldiers of the year. Gen. Martin Dempsey, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, is an honorary member of the regiment and has attended St. Patrick's Day events. One time he led the Soldiers in singing "The Fighting 69th" a song commemorating the unit's Civil War history. gt

"Never were men so brave. They ennobled their race by their gallantry on that desperate occasion. Though totally routed, they reaped harvests of glory. Their brilliant, though hopeless, assaults on our lines excited the hearty applause of our officers and men."

Coined by Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee: "The Fighting 69th."

A 42nd Infantry Division Soldier stands at the firing line ready to fire his M9 pistol at Camp Smith Training Site while enduring some extreme cold weather on Mar. 5. Two platoons of Soldiers and a training detachment of 42nd Soldiers engaged in two weeks of pre-deployment annual training to certify the Guantanamo Bay, Cuba bound Soldiers. Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Steven Petibone, 42nd Infantry Division.

Wintery Training For a Caribbean Deployment

Story by Eric Durr, Public Affairs Director

CAMP SMITH TRAINING SITE - Fifty-six National Guard Soldiers from the 42nd Infantry Division prepared deploy to the Caribbean by training in sub-zero temperatures and two-foot high snow drifts at the New York National Guard's training camp here just north of Peekskill.

The team of enlisted Soldiers, non-commissioned officers and officers will staff the personnel, operations, logistics, and signals sections of Joint Task Force Guantanamo which is charged with overseeing detainee operations at Naval Station Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

Other members will support the Office of Military Commissions, the agency charged with trying some detainees at the base under the terms of the Military Commissions Act of 2009, and the Judge Advocate General's section.

Despite the fact that they'll be working in administrative tasks, miles from Afghanistan or Iraq, the Army standard requires all deploying Soldiers to go through the same basic combat refresher training, said Lt. Col. Todd Bookless, a Greenwhich, Conn. resident and officer-in-charge of the detachment.

The Guantanamo Bay-bound Soldiers waded through snow while conducting land navigation classes, and tossing practice grenades at targets covered by snowdrifts. They're also practicing convoy operations, learning how to cope with a vehicle rollover, and brushing up on hand-to-hand combat skills.

The 42nd Inf. Div. put together a pre-mobilization training team to help the Guantanamo bound Soldiers get through the training they needed to deploy at the end of March.

It does seem kind of silly to be training on combat skills in the snow, to deploy to a Caribbean island, Bookless admitted. But the team needs to get the training done, and this is the time, and Camp Smith is the place to make it happen, he said.

The training builds a team and "is also building confidence in individuals" as they learn new skills, Bookless said.

"Team building is crucial, " said Staff Sgt. Robert Jayne, a combat engineer from Binghamton "If the GTMO team can accomplish extreme weather training for a tropic deployment then we are better prepared to take on any mission."

The Guantanamo deployment is a "once in a lifetime opportunity" for the 42nd Infantry Division Soldiers to work alongside Air Force, Navy and Marine personnel, Bookless said.

Many of the detachment members have deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan or Kuwait and this latest deployment is going to be very different, he said.

> "If the GTMO team can accomplish extreme weather training for a tropic deployment, then we are better prepared to take on any mission."
>
> *-- Staff Sgt. Robert Jayne, deploying Soldier*

The training was good despite the subzero conditions, said Capt. Bryan Hoffman, from Ronkonkoma, "Everyone has done an excellent job."

For 1st Lt. Yvette Valle, a Buffalo resident who has already deployed twice, the training was a review of important skills.

She's done cold weather training before, Valle said, but never in weather this cold. "I've used most of the gear the New York National Guard issued me," she said.

While the team has gone through standard Army deployment training—dealing with IEDs and refreshing themselves on land navigation and basic tactics—they'll be leaving their "battle rattle" at home in the armory, Bookless said.

There will also be more opportunities for Soldiers to take leave and work regular hours, he said.

Still, all the members of the 42nd Infantry Division detachment are taking the assignment seriously and know this mission is important, Bookless said.

"Obviously this is a mission of national, strategic significance, and we want to do well," he said.

The New York Guard Soldiers are also looking forward to working with members of other services, since normally their missions and training are very Army-centric, Bookless added.

The 42nd Infantry Division is a headquarters unit whose personnel are trained to exercise mission command over three to five brigade elements of 3000 to 5000 Soldiers.

This is the fourth time New York Army National Guard Soldiers have deployed to serve as part of Joint Task Force Guantanamo.

- 50 Soldiers of the 102nd Military Police Battalion from Auburn, New York are currently serving at Guantanamo and are expected to return home this summer. They mobilized in July 2014.
- The 138th Public Affairs Detachment deployed to Guantanamo Bay Naval Base from August 2012 to July 2013. These eight Soldiers produced the Joint Task Force Guantanamo publication "The Wire" and assisted the task force public affairs officer.
- In June 2011 the 107th Military Police Company from Utica mobilized 170 Soldiers who served at Guantanamo Bay for ten months. The Soldiers provided the outer ring of security around the prisoner detention facility.
- Brig. Gen. James Lettko, since retired, served as deputy commander of Joint Task Force Guantanamo in 2011-2012.

And, in 2010, forty Airmen from the 106th Civil Engineering Squadron deployed for a traditional two-week training cycle at Guantanamo Bay. They supported earthquake relief efforts in Haiti for Operation Unified Response by providing repairs and maintenance for roads and other infrastructure.

In 2004 and 2005 the 42nd Inf. Div. deployed to Tikrit, Iraq where Maj. Gen. Joseph Taluto was responsible for more than 20,000 U.S. Army Soldiers in four brigades in three Iraqi Provinces.

The division was first organized during World War I when National Guard units from 26 states were brought together to deploy to France as quickly as possible. Then Col. Douglas McArthur, who was the division's chief of staff and later a commander said the unit stretched across America "like a rainbow." This gave the division its nickname as the Rainbow Division. During World War II, 42nd Infantry Division Soldiers freed inmates at the Dachau Concentration camp. gt

Spc. Nicholas Sheehan (left), an intelligence analyst with Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 42nd Infantry Division, uses yellow flags to demonstrate his knowledge of visual signal techniques during warrior task testing. Spc. Elizabeth Ramirez, a mental health specialist with Headquarters Company, 42nd Combat Aviation Brigade, engaged targets with the M9 pistol March 27, during the annual Best Warrior competition The pistol was added to the competition so Soldiers could earn the German Armed Forces Proficiency Badge, along with competing for Best Warrior. Spc. Adilia Murillo, a military police Soldier with the 107th MP Company, kicks off for the 100 meter swim in full uniform at the Arvin Gymnasium at West Point during the Best Warrior Competition, March 26. The swim is an event in the German army physical fitness test and was included in the best warrior competition this year. The Best Warrior competitors represent each of New York's brigades after winning competitions at the company, battalion and brigade levels. At the state level, they are tested on their physical fitness, military knowledge, endurance, marksmanship and land navigation skills. The two winners of the competition, one junior enlisted and one NCO, advance to compete at the regional level later this year. Photo by Sgt. Michael J. Davis, 138th Public Affairs Detachment.

Soldiers Compete for Best Warrior and German Badge Honors at the Same Time

Story by Sgt. Michael Davis, 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team

CAMP SMITH TRAINING SITE – Eleven New York Army National Guard Soldiers were the first to compete for both US and German awards during the New York Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition here, March 25-30.

During the hybrid five-day competition, Soldiers not only navigated difficult terrain and challenging temperatures, but adapted to new events that allowed them to earn the German Armed Forces Proficiency Badge, the only foreign badge allowed to be worn by US Army National Guard Soldiers.

"We seized the opportunity to conduct hybrid training to further recognize and reward Soldiers' efforts who were outside of the winners circle for Best Warrior," explained Maj. John B. McBride, New York Army National Guard Operations Officer for 53rd Troop Command. "This also provided junior Soldiers the ability to see firsthand how we work with our NATO partners."

The German proficiency badge is a military decoration of the Bundeswehr, the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Germany, which is awarded in gold, silver or bronze and is comprised of eight physically demanding events. Five events reflect varying levels of military training including a 100 meters swim in uniform, first aid, Nuclear Biological Chemical, pistol qualifications and a timed road march; and three events in basic fitness including 11 10m sprints, flexed arm hang and a 1000m run.

"I'm proud that New York is paving the way with the addition of the German Armed Forces Proficiency Badge to the Best Warrior Competition," said New York State Command Sgt. Maj. Louis E. Wilson who helped coordinate and run this year's competition.

During the closing remarks of the competition, Wilson emphasized how crucial year-over-year change and diversification in Army training is to the long-term success of our Soldiers. He noted that this class had more females and minorities than last year, and how we train is just as important as who completes the training.

"Diversity is what we're about; diversity is what it's all about," he said.

The Best Warrior Competition events, which also tested physical fitness, military knowledge, endurance, marksmanship and land navigation skills, yielded two winners who will advanced to the regional level, and awarded five out of the eleven competitors the German proficiency badge.

The winners, Staff Sgt. Christian Hager and Spc. Michael Rowland, continuously displayed their physical toughness and the drive required to outperform their peers throughout the competition, McBride said.

Both winners earned silver in the German proficiency badge and represented the New York Army National Guard at the Northeast Regional Best Warrior Competition held at Camp Edwards, Mass., May 12-15.

Hager, a resident of Batavia, who plans to attend Army Ranger School next year, is an infantry Soldier in Company A, 2nd Battalion 108th Infantry Regiment, and was selected as the Non-commissioned Officer of the year.

He has been in the National Guard for more than six years and credited his dedication to the military as well as his unit's strong leadership for helping him to achieve this level of success.

"My unit sets a high standard for training that challenges me to succeed, and that's helped me to focus and be prepared for any situation during the competition," Hager said. "I love to train and the National Guard pays me to do it – what could be better!"

Rowland, a resident of Glens Falls, New York and a human resources specialist with the 501st Ordinance Battalion, an explosive ordnance disposal unit, was recognized as the Junior Enlisted Soldier of the year.

Rowland, who has only served in the National Guard for 20 months, said he continually tries to maximize his time in the military by actively seeking out advice and jumping at the chance to take on additional challenges.

"I followed my mentor's advice: to stay focused on the current task and perform at the best of my ability," Rowland said. "I knew with this competition I needed to take it one day at a time, one event at a time."

Since the German fitness events are not mirrored in standard Army training, both Hager and Rowland had to adapt their current training regiments to be able to perform the German proficiency badge events at a high skill level.

Hager said this was an entirely new aspect of physical fitness for him that took time to build and has since made him a better overall Soldier.

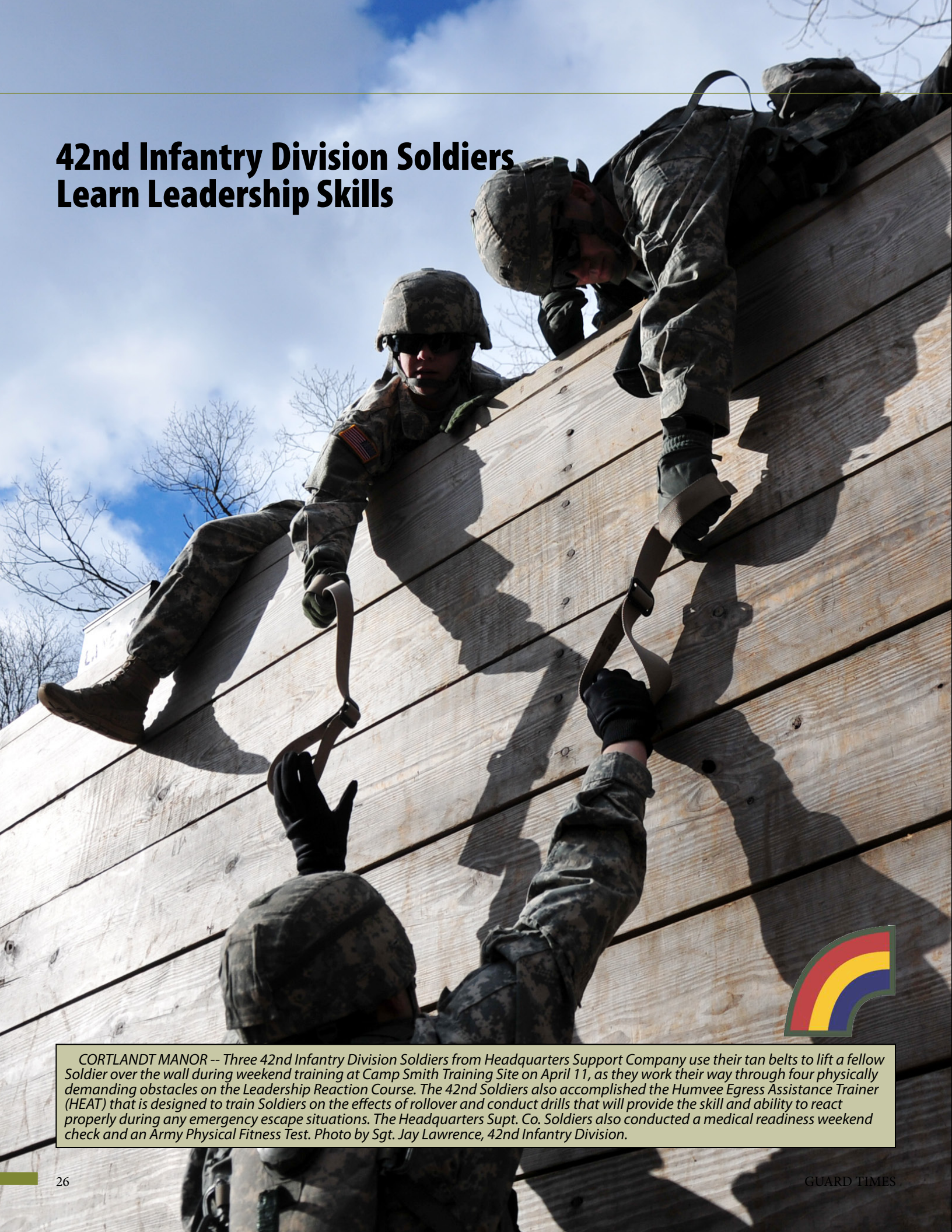
Rowland commented that earning silver was "bittersweet" since he missed gold by only one event, but he's extremely proud of the accomplishment and will continue to try and improve his scores to eventually retest for gold.

The positive effects of hybrid competitions reach far beyond the current event.

"Hybrid competitions allow us to provide a relatively low cost solution to providing high-value and high-reward training and competitions for our Soldiers," McBride said.

"The success of this year's competition will allow Soldiers to showcase their unique accomplishments in their formations, building both awareness and morale," he said. **gt**

42nd Infantry Division Soldiers Learn Leadership Skills



CORTLANDT MANOR -- Three 42nd Infantry Division Soldiers from Headquarters Support Company use their tan belts to lift a fellow Soldier over the wall during weekend training at Camp Smith Training Site on April 11, as they work their way through four physically demanding obstacles on the Leadership Reaction Course. The 42nd Soldiers also accomplished the Humvee Egress Assistance Trainer (HEAT) that is designed to train Soldiers on the effects of rollover and conduct drills that will provide the skill and ability to react properly during any emergency escape situations. The Headquarters Supt. Co. Soldiers also conducted a medical readiness weekend check and an Army Physical Fitness Test. Photo by Sgt. Jay Lawrence, 42nd Infantry Division.

Louisiana, New York Guardsmen Honor Fallen Ten Years Later

By Spc. Megan V. Zander, 241st Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

A Soldier lays a wreath in front of the memorial to fallen comrades marking the 10th anniversary of the Louisiana National Guard's Company C, 2nd Battalion, 156th Infantry Regiment, 256th Infantry Brigade Combat Team's 2004-2005 deployment to Iraq where eight of the unit's soldiers lost their lives soldiers during a ceremony in Houma, La. The unit was joined for the ceremony by their brethren from the New York Army National Guard's 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment, which was the unit's higher headquarters during the deployment. Photo by Spc. Joshua Barnett, 241st Mobile Public Affairs Detachment.

HOUMA, La. – The red, white, and blue flag stands tall in a room filled with current and former National Guardsmen and family members.

Posted under the words "Never Forget," are the photos of eight Louisiana Soldiers hanging proudly – Sgt. 1st Class Kurt Comeaux, Staff Sgt. Christopher Babin, Sgt. Bradley Bergeron, Sgt. Huey Fassbender, Sgt. Armand Frickey, Sgt. Warren Murphy, Sgt. Paul Heltzel and Sgt. 1st Class Peter Hahn.

Under each photo rests a pair of combat boots, helmets, dog tags and weapon.

"It's just an empty feeling being here without them. I still can't explain how I feel. It's hard," said Jonathan Boudreaux, who served as a machine gunner alongside Fassbender, and was at Heltzel's side when he died. "There's still a hole in our hearts for these guys. I know I'll never forget them – I can't."

These eight Soldiers of the Louisiana Army National Guard's Company C (aka the "Black-Sheep"), 2nd Battalion, 156th Infantry Regiment, 256th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, were killed in combat in 2005, while serving with the New York National Guard's 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment in Iraq.

"Hundreds of Soldiers sustained injuries warranting the Purple Heart and 36 Soldiers from the brigade paid the ultimate sacrifice and gave their lives," said Command Sgt. Maj. Clifford J. Ockman, who served as the Black Sheep's first sergeant during the deployment. "As we remember these Soldiers ten years after their passing, we can never forget what they sacrificed."

"Though we are separated by hundreds of miles, and though it has been ten years since we served together in war, the Soldiers of the 69th will never forget all of the Soldiers from the 'Tiger Brigade' that we have served with…but most especially, we'll never forget our closest and our greatest friends from the BlackSheep," said Lt. Col. Sean Flynn, current commander of the 69th.

Historically, however, these two units haven't always fought together on the battlefield.

During the Civil War, Louisiana's "Tigers" served under General "Stonewall" Jackson in the Valley campaign as well as in the famous battles of Manassas, Antietam, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg and Appomattox. Several engagements pitted them against New York's "Fighting 69th" of the Irish Brigade, particularly at the Battle of Malvern Hill in July of 1862.

In 2004-2005, the New York National Guard's 69th Infantry Battalion, still known as "The Fighting 69th," was attached to Louisiana's 256th Inf. Bde. Cmbt. Tm., aka "The Tiger Brigade." These two historic units, once bitter enemies in the nation's bloodiest war, found themselves fighting side-by-side against and insurgents in Iraq.

It was a dangerous mission, but the Soldiers knew that going in.

"My brother and I were outside talking before his deployment, and he reminded me that he could lose his life; he loved the military and this is something he wanted to do," said Shannon Murphy, sister of Sgt. Warren Murphy.

"Although it has been ten years, and that may seem like a long time, our feelings are not measured in days or years," remarked retired Maj. Gen. John Basilica Jr., commander of the 256th during the deployment. "Our feelings are permanently etched in our being, and we connect with these men in our own unique ways because we will never forget."

The ceremony was filled with emotion, some of it heartbreaking and some of it joyous.

"It's just amazing to get together again to see everybody and know that people still remember and still care," said Ann Comeaux, mother of Sgt. 1st Class Kurt Comeaux. "My son loved what he was doing, and he was with his guys. When he was not with us, this was his family." **gt**

Members of the New York Army National Guard's 3rd Battalion, 142nd Aviation Regiment assist in fighting a wildfire in Shawangunk Ridge State Forest near Summitville in Ulster County May 5. The two UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters and crewmembers are based at the Army Aviation Support Facility at Albany International Airport in Latham. The crews used water buckets, known by the trademarked name of Bambi Buckets, to scoop up water from nearby lakes or rivers and release the water over the wildfires.

Aircrews Train by Fighting Catskill Forest Fire

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

Maj. Paul Bailie reviews fire fighting plans and control measures with New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Forest Ranger Kevin Burns near Ellenville on May 5. Two UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters and crews assisted in fighting a forest fire in Shawangunk Ridge State Forest near Summitville in Ulster County. The aircraft and crewmembers are based at the Army Aviation Support Facility at Albany International Airport in Latham.

ELLENVILLE - A day of routine training to employ water buckets with military helicopters turned into a real world fire fighting mission for two UH-60 crews on May 5.

The ten Soldiers, based at Albany International Airport, planned to practice the use of water buckets by picking up water from a Saratoga County lake and then releasing it back into the lake. Instead, the pilots and crews were rerouted south to Sullivan and Ulster Counties where a wildfire was consuming more than 2,200 acres of Shawangunk Ridge State Forest to help put out a fire that started the previous day.

"Last night we must have had 30 fire companies working on the fire line," said Lt. Eric Benjamin from the Ulster County Sheriff's office. "Having you guys (the National Guard) show up today makes a real difference in their work."

By the end of the day, the Army National Guard aviators had flown 13 hours and dropped some 60 water bucket loads onto the fire- putting 660 gallons on the fire each time.

Some 30 homes were temporarily evacuated as a precaution Monday, May 4, and then allowed home again Tuesday as additional fire fighting resources were brought in to assist.

The pilots and crews joined the efforts of two New York State Police UH-1 "Huey" helicopters to create a sustained effort to douse water on the edge of the fire, drawing from the state park's Lake Maratanza.

"We need these drops to attack ahead of the fire," New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Forest Ranger Kevin Burns, told the crews. "You guys doing drops on the edge of the fire gives our guys a chance to work the ground."

Additional firefighters from Orange, Greene, Schoharie, Delaware and Broome counties arrived earlier to sustain the ground effort to make fire breaks or employ controlled burns to rob the wildfire of fuel and limit its spread.

"We want to keep the same boots on the ground, but hit it with fresh legs," Scherry said. "These firefighters, along with water drops from above, give the local fire department a breather to keep them in the fight."

Within an hour of arrival, the National Guard and State Police aircrews had coordinated their plan of attack with the forest rangers and firefighters to bring some 2,000 gallons of water onto the wildfire with each cycle.

The challenges for the training are greater than the airspace coordination and communication challenges of working with so many first responders. The flight conditions for operating the Bambi buckets, their trademark name, create unique demands on the entire air crew, said Chief Warrant Officer 5 Charles Rodda, the ground liaison officer for the mission and real-world experienced Blackhawk pilot in aerial fire fighting.

"Crews have to deal with the demands of that water bucket slung underneath the aircraft, the smoke and heat of the fire, communications with other ground and air assets and then putting their drop where it can do the most good for firefighters," Rodda explained.

The experience was demanding and rewarding said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Louis Malizia from the 142nd Aviation Regiment.

"I've been deployed twice and for me, this [mission] is definitely the better of the two," Malizia said. "Our federal mission is important for the country, but this here makes a real difference in people's lives right at home."

"Today was a great opportunity to conduct multi-agency collective training with the New York State Police and New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Forestry Service," said Maj. Paul Bailie from the New York National Guard Aviation Operations, Training and Standardization Branch. **gt**

Operation Orange Flag 2015

CAPE COD, Mass. - Staff Sgt. Bryan Dalere, a pararescue jumper with the 103rd Rescue Squadron, 106th Rescue Wing exit a US Coast Guard HC-144 Ocean Sentry during Operation Orange Flag 2015 at Cape Cod Air Station March 31. Operation Orange Flag 2015 is a multi-service, multi-national search and rescue exercise designed to allow various rescue personnel and assets to learn to seamlessly operate together under a variety of conditions.
Orange Flag featured multiple jumps out of U.S. Coast Guard, Air National Guard and Royal Canadian Air Force aircraft, including C-144's, C-130's, H-60's and HH-60's. Photo by Staff Sgt. Christopher S Muncy, 106th Rescue Wing.

The Air National Guard's Newest Cold Warriors

By Staff Sgt. Michael O'Halloran, 105th Airlift Wing Public Affairs

CAMBRIDGE BAY, NUNAVUT PROVINCE, Canada -- The air temperature on the ground was -25 degrees Celsius when New York Air National Guard Capt. James Cartica, a pilot with the 137th Airlift Squadron made his first rough field landing ever.

He "nailed it", landing a 105th Airlift Wing C-17 Globemaster III onto the compacted snow and gravel runway on Victoria Island here on March 23.

He made a semi-prepared runway operations (SPRO) landing well within the 500 foot landing zone of the 4,500ft runway and with surface conditions providing good traction and braking ability.

Cartica, and aircrew members Maj. Ryan Daugherty, Maj. Paul Jancsy, and Capt. Michael Rose, kept the engine running as loadmasters, Tech Sgt. Adam Croxton and Staff Sgt. Michael Segretti rapidly brought aboard their cargo: two pallets and six New York Air National Guardsmen of the 109th Airlift Squadron. Meanwhile flying Crew Chiefs, Master Sgt. Gregory Shaver and Staff Sgt. Joseph Fitzsimmons monitored a nose gear strut that had been leaking fluid during the first few days of the trip.

Total mission ground time; a mere 35 minutes.

This Arctic landing, Cartica's "best experience in the C-17 to date", was a first for the 105th. The National Guard Airmen were landing at a primitive runway in the Canadian High Arctic as part of the U.S. Military participation in Canadian Forces Operation NUNALIVUT 2015.

NUNALIVUT is a Canadian sovereignty exercise held annually since 2007 that exhibits the interoperability of Canadian, U.S. and other military allied forces along with additional Canadian government institutions in the High Arctic.

The New York Air National Guard's 109th Airlift Wing, which flies ski-equipped LC-130 Hercules "Ski birds" participated in the NUNALIVUT exercise in 2014 and is also part of NUNALVUT 2015. This year the 105th Airlift Wing took part as well.

The 105th became involved in this year's Arctic exercise because the 109th Airlift Wing needed support so they could participate in their second exercise with the Canadian Air Forces, Rose said.

The C-17 crew transported a landing zone survey team from the 109th and a full load of C-130 support equipment to Yellowknife, in Canada's Northern Territories, prior to landing at Cambridge Bay.

Of the eight man flight crew, only Daugherty and Rose had any SPRO landing experiences. "The particular type of airfield surface at Cambridge Bay was new for all of us," Rose said.

The 105th is no stranger to missions involving extremely cold weather.

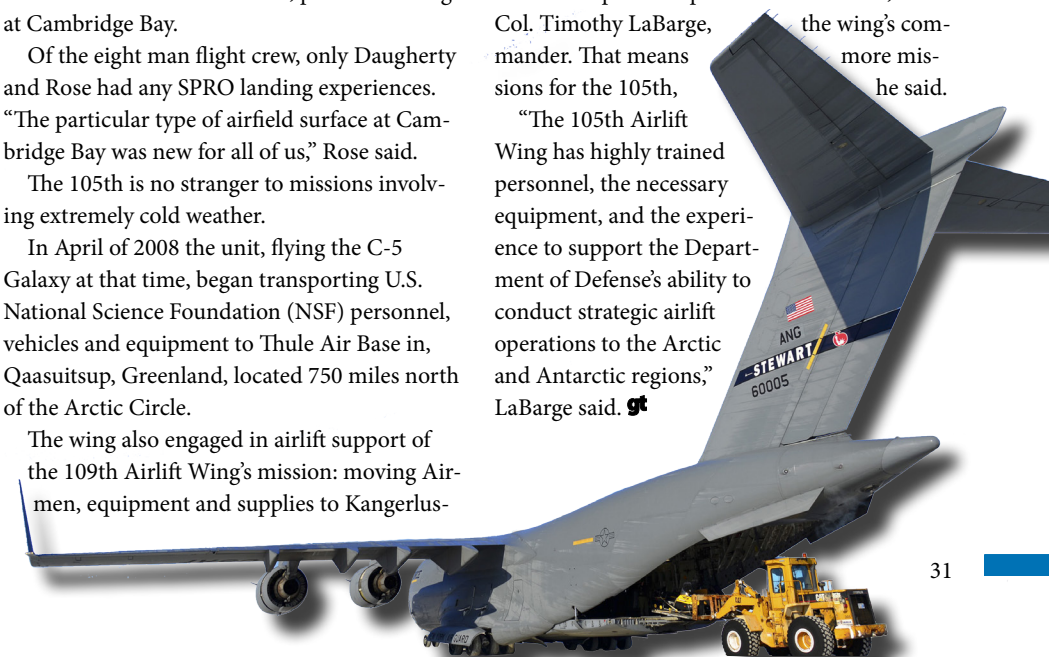
In April of 2008 the unit, flying the C-5 Galaxy at that time, began transporting U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF) personnel, vehicles and equipment to Thule Air Base in, Qaasuitsup, Greenland, located 750 miles north of the Arctic Circle.

The wing also engaged in airlift support of the 109th Airlift Wing's mission: moving Airmen, equipment and supplies to Kangerlussuaq, Greenland, the former site of Sondrestom Air Base, where they support the NSF and conduct real-world training in polar tactical airlift operations. Additionally, Stewart airlifters began transporting 109th Antarctic mission support personnel and cargo to Christchurch, New Zealand in 2008.

Most recently the 105th's home station which is located in the Mid-Hudson valley has experienced two brutally cold winters. Working in double digit below zero temperatures, the New York Air National Guardsmen maintained, launched and flew C-17s supporting Air Mobility Command mission taskings in bone chilling air brought down from the north by Polar Vortexes.

The wing of the Polar Regions has made a large part of the planet, once only accessible to a resilient native population and intrepid adventurers open to exploration and transit, said Col. Timothy LaBarge, the wing's commander. That means more missions for the 105th, he said.

"The 105th Airlift Wing has highly trained personnel, the necessary equipment, and the experience to support the Department of Defense's ability to conduct strategic airlift operations to the Arctic and Antarctic regions," LaBarge said. **gt**



109th Supports Canadian High Arctic Mission

By Tech. Sgt. Catharine Schmidt, 109th Airlift Wing

Airmen with the 109th Airlift Wing put together a reconnaissance team March 24, to determine if they would be able to prepare a ski-way for an LC-130 in the vicinity of Victoria Strait. A few weeks later, a team of seven 109th Airmen were able to groom a ski-way for LC-130 operation in support of Canada's annual Operation Nunalivut. Photo by Maj. Matthew Sala.

STRATTON AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE - On April 4, seven Airmen from the New York Air National Guard's 109th Airlift Wing were dropped off at a remote location in the vicinity of Victoria Strait in the High Arctic with a couple snowmobiles and only the bare essentials to set up a field camp.

Their mission: Prepare a ski-way for the two ski-equipped LC-130s that were supporting Canada's research of a recently discovered ship lost with the infamous Franklin Expedition more than 150 years ago.

This was only one facet of the 109th's support for the Canadian Forces annual Operation Nunalivut, an exercise the wing supported for a second time. Along with the campsite, operations were also taking place in Yellowknife and Cambridge Bay.

By the time the mission ended on April 19th, the 109th had flown 26 flights, transported 91,000 pounds of cargo and 49 passengers.

After setting up camp, the American Airmen hit the ground running the next day. They began building a landing area by dragging 4-feet by 8-feet wide slides behind the snowmobiles to act as groomers to build the ski-way.

"After our first real day of grooming, we only made it maybe 500 feet (because of the snow conditions)," said Maj. Matthew Sala, one of the seven Airmen who groomed the ski-way. "It was about 500 feet a day"

"Every day it was about 8-10 hours, sometimes more, of grooming," said Maj. Eric Wood, another member of the team. Temperatures got as low as -35 degrees Celsius with wind chill.

Ten days after their arrival, on April 14, the ski-way was ready, and the first LC-130 flight to their location arrived.

"The ski-way we made was 6,000 feet long by 200 feet wide," Sala said. "We put about 1,700 miles on those sleds on that small mile-long ski-way."

The campsite also housed Joint Ice Diving operations conducted by Parks Canada's underwater archeologists and Royal Canadian Navy divers. Their mission included a joint archeological effort over the site of the HMS Erebus, the flagship for British Admiral Sir John Franklin's Arctic voyage in 1846.

In September of 2014 Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper announced the discovery of the Erabus – one of the two ships belonging to the Franklin Expedition whose members were caught in the ice and eventually died of starvation exposure.

As part of Operation Nunalivut, Parks Canada and Royal Canadian Navy divers conducted intense ice diving and underwater archeology as part of historic research of the ship.

"One big difference from last year (2014) is that last year's exercise was simply just to see what our capability was," said Wood. "Even though it was an exercise, there was a goal the Canadians had which was to go to the site of the HMS Erabus -- the same ship that Mount Erabus in Antarctica is named after. This same ship that sunk at the site (we were located) was the same ship that was down to McMurdo."

Five hundred miles away from the camp at Yellowknife, thirty other 109th Airmen were maintaining the aircraft operations of the two LC-130s that made the trips to the remote location as well as to Cambridge Bay, transporting people and supplies in support of the exercise.

The LC-130s were able to provide up to 9,000 pounds of cargo per flight as opposed to the Canadians' Twin Otters which could only provide about 1,200 pounds.

A few weeks before the team of seven arrived, Sala along with Lt. Col. Clifford Souza, Maj. Matt Johnson, Tech. Sgt. David Rodriguez, and Senior Master Sgt. Ronald Jemmott went to the site as a reconnaissance team.

"We go out there and test the snow depth, the ice depth, the snow density and then water depth," said Sala.

The ski-landing area control officer looks at the conditions of where a ski-way will be prepared to see if it's even plausible to make a ski-way for a cargo aircraft to land and take off from, he explained.

"The point of the ski-landing area control officer (SLACO) is to be the last one who walks out there and says yes, I'll land here," he said.

"We use the SLACO process when we go to Antarctica and Greenland, too, when we go to camps that we've never been to before," said Wood. "The first person to go out in a twin otter is the SLACO to give us a thumbs-up or a thumbs-down on whether or not we think it's safe to bring a Herc in."

Continued on Page 39

Force on Force Training at Camp Smith Training Site

CORTLANDT MANOR - An HH-60 Pavehawk from the 101st Rescue Squadron lands to pick up "wounded" Airmen from the casualty collection point during the 106th Rescue Wing's Security Forces Squadron semi-annual "force on force" training at Camp Smith Training Site, Apr. 12. During the two-day long training event, security forces Airmen secured "enemy" held buildings, retrieved injured allied personnel, provided first aid to the wounded and worked with pararescue jumpers from the 103rd Rescue Squadron to evacuate them to a pair of inbound HH-60 Pavehawk helicopters. Photo by Staff Sgt. Christopher S Muncy, 106th Rescue Wing.

South African General Visits New York Air National Guard

By Eric Durr, New York State Division of Military and Naval Affairs

South African Maj. Gen. Wiseman Simo Mbambo learns about 106th Rescue Wing's HH-60 Pavehawk helicopter and Gau-2 Mini Gun. Mbambo and Brig. Gen. Mashoro Phala visited the 106th Rescue Wing in Westhampton Beach, as part of the South African National Defense Force's State Partnership Program relationship with the New York National Guard. Photo by Airman 1st Class Mark Weiss.

STEWART AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, Newburgh — One of the South African Air Force's top commanders got a close up look at how two of the New York Air National Guard's five wings do business during a four day visit, March 1-4.

Maj. Gen. Wiseman Mbambo, Chief of Air Staff Operations for the South African National Defence Force, visited the 105th Airlift Wing here and the 106th Rescue Wing, based at Gabreski Air National Guard Base at Westhampton Beach on Long Island.

Mbambo's goal was to look at the operations of each wing and determine whether or not there was an opportunity for exchange visits between counterparts, said Maj. John Sandefur, the New York National Guard's State Partnership Program coordinator.

The New York National Guard has had a State Partnership Program relationship with the Republic of South Africa's military since 2003.

The New York Army and Air National Guard have participated in South African air shows, shooting competitions and provided instructors for South African training programs. In 2012 the Chief of the South African reserve forces visited New York National Guard headquarters.

Mbambo was accompanied on his visit by Brig. Gen. Mashoro Phala, South Africa's Senior Defense Attaché to the United States and Canada.

During his visit to Stewart Air National Guard Base, where 105th Airlift Wing aircrews fly C-17's on logistics missions that span the globe, Mbomba got to try his hand at flying the state-of-the-art simulator that pilots train on.

The general also explored the cockpit of one of the wing's C-17's and visited a facility where 105th Airlift Wing mechanics rebuild the insides of massive C-5M transports. The 105th is charged by the Air Force with refurbishing the interior of C-5's being brought up to the latest C-5M standard.

At the 105th Mbomba spoke with maintenance and logistics leaders to explore joint training opportunities, Sandefur said.

At the 106th Rescue Wing, Mbomba examined the HH-60 Pavehawk rescue helicopters the wing flies. He also checked out the HC-130 search and rescue aircraft the wing operates.

The HC-130 version of the C-130 can refuel HH-60s in flight and are also used to drop para-rescue jumpers and their equipment on land or into the sea from high and low altitudes.

The para-rescue jumpers also showed the general the weapons and other equipment they use in conducting their mission, Sandefur said.

When he spoke with Col. Tom Owens, the commander of the 106th Rescue Wing, Mbomba expressed an interest in trying to organize joint training opportunities between the 106th Rescue Wing's para-rescue jumpers and South African special forces Soldiers and Airmen, Sandefur said.

106th Rescue Wing Airmen have rotated repeatedly into and out of Afghanistan over the last few years. Six members of the wing were awarded a Bronze Star for Valor for their role in a Dec. 2012 rescue mission under fire.

The 109th Airlift Wing flies ski-equipped LC-130 aircraft to support science missions in the Antarctic and Arctic while the 174th Attack Wing operates MQ-9 remotely piloted aircraft in missions in the Central Command area while also conducting instruction for MQ-9 pilots and sensor operators and mechanics.

The 107th Airlift Wing at Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station is in the process of transitioning to an MQ-9 operating unit. New York Air National Guard members also man the Eastern Air Defense Sector, a North American Aerospace Defense Command component responsible for U.S. airspace east of the Mississippi. gt

Band of the Northeast Plays for Hancock Field

SYRACUSE - The Air National Guard Band of the Northeast played for members of Hancock Field Air National Guard Base on March 18. The mission of the Air National Guard Band of the Northeast is to provide music to military and civilian communities in order to instill patriotism, maintain tradition, represent the militia heritage at its finest, and to promote pride in oneself, one's unit, and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Photo by Technical Sgt. Jeremy Call, 174th Attack Wing.

Training Rodeo at 109th Airlift Wing

SCOTIA -- Volunteers demonstrate Self-Aid Buddy Care in a combat situation during a briefing as part of the 109th Airlift Wing's first ancillary training rodeo Apr. 18. More than 200 Airmen went through the training which also included hands-on S-ABC as well as hands-on chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear training. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Catharine Schmidt, 109th Airlift Wing.

Virtual Flag War Game Hones Skills of 152nd Airmen

By Maj. Sandra Stoquert, 174th Attack Wing

Airmen of the New York Air National Guard's 152nd Air Operations Group man their stations during Virtual Flag, a computer wargame the unit participated in Feb. 18-26 from Hancock Field Air National Guard Base. The computer hookup allowed the air war planners of the 152nd to interact with other Air Force units around the country and in Europe. Photo by Master Sgt. Eric Miller, 174th Attack Wing.

SYRACUSE - New York Air National Guard members of the 152nd Air Operations Group (AOG) spent nine days honing their warfighting skills while participating in the first ever Virtual Flag exercise at Hancock Air National Guard Base, Feb. 18-26.

Exercise Virtual Flag allowed members of the 152nd AOG, whose members are trained to plan and execute air operations plans, to work with other units using computer link ups and a shared virtual training environment. The exercise played an important role in supporting the unit's combat mission readiness while also giving airmen the opportunity to train alongside their active duty counterparts, said Col. Michael Comella, the commander of the 152nd.

"We capitalized on this "distributed operations" training event to hone our skills and to practice tactics, techniques, and procedures," Comella said. "We were able to host the Air Operations Center (AOC), which provides operational-level command and control or air, space, and cyberspace operations, from Hancock Field while also being connected to other exercise elements across three continents."

The exercise was a total force and joint training experience in which airmen from Hancock Field interacted with their active duty partners from the 603rd AOC at Ramstein Air Base, Germany as well as a variety of Air Force Reserve Command, Air National Guard and U.S. Army personnel from across the United States.

"This training is extremely important as it opens a dialogue with other components and allows us to understand how all of the "pieces" fit together," said Col. Brian Van Kouwenberg, director of operations for the 152nd. "It also facilitates brainstorming in a joint environment to minimize degraded operations."

Virtual Flag was not only a learning opportunity for new airmen of the 152nd but also a great learning opportunity for the entire operations groups, Van Kouwenberg said.

"It is important for our airmen to understand how the other components, divisions work and contribute to the success of an operation," Van Kouwenberg said. "The exercise gave us the ability to ask questions, come up with creative solutions and cement techniques, tactics and procedures with those we will go to combat with."

A large part of the exercise's setup and management was supported by the Air Force's Distributed Mission Operations Center (DMOC). The center is located at Kirtland Air Force Base, N.M. and it distributes combat training exercises and testing. Airmen can practice tactics and procedures under realistic threat scenarios through input received from the center's integrated and constructed simulations. The most exciting part of the exercise is that the 152nd members, who are in charge of executing the air battle plan, are working with real flight crew members who are 'flying' the mission in a simulator from their home base, Comella, said. For Staff Sgt. Daniel Hereth, the exercise was "a great opportunity for me to gain real world experience and observe how different units are able to interact with each other."

Hereth said that during the exercise he was able trouble shoot connectivity issues between the 152nd and the Air Force's DMOC and systems on the combat operations floor. As a result of this capability, the combat operations personnel involved in the exercise were able to gain a better sense of the training scenario. gt

Eastern Air Defense Sector Airman Wins CONR Award

By Tim Jones, Public Affairs Office

Staff Sgt. Marie Coar, Eastern Air Defense Sector.

ROME, N.Y. -- A New York Air National Guardsmen assigned to the Eastern Air Defense Sector has been recognized as an outstanding performer by the Continental U.S. North American Aerospace Defense Command Region (CONR).

Staff Sgt. Marie Coar was named the CONR's 2014 Command and Control Warrior of the Year in the enlisted category. An identification technician at EADS, Coar was recognized for her technical expertise and operational excellence. An outstanding instructor hand-picked to serve as the training NCO for her flight, she managed training requirements for 43 personnel. Coar provided noteworthy contributions on national-level exercises and to the Joint Land Attack Cruise Missile Defense Elevated Net Sensor testing program, for which she earned the Army Commendation Medal. Coar also won EADS Ironwoman Award, awarded to the female member with the highest score on the annual physical fitness test, for the fifth consecutive year.

"On behalf of the entire unit, I want to publicly congratulate Staff Sgt. Coar for winning this prestigious award," said Col. Michael J. Norton, EADS Commander. "Winning an award in an organization as large as CONR is an impressive accomplishment and highlights the quality of Airmen we have serving at EADS."

The Eastern Air Defense Sector is headquartered at Griffiss Business and Technology Park in Rome. Staffed by active-duty New York Air National Guardsmen and a Canadian Forces detachment, the unit executes the North American Aerospace Defense Command's (NORAD) integrated warning and attack assessment mission and the U.S. Northern Command's (USNORTHCOM) homeland defense mission. EADS is responsible for air sovereignty and counter-air operations over the eastern United States and directs a variety of assets to defend one million square miles of land and sea. gt

New Training Facility in Honor of Former Wing Commander

By Maj. Sandra Stoquert, 174th Attack Wing

Family members of Maj. Gen. Robert Knauff cut ribbon on the newly renovated building named in his honor located on Hancock Airfield on May 3. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Justin Huett.

HANCOCK FIELD AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, Syracuse -- The 108th Attack Squadron officially opened its newly renovated $3.5 million Formal Training Unit facility on May 3 at Hancock Field where it will train MQ-9 sensor operators, pilots and mission coordinators.

The building is to be named in honor of the late Maj. Gen. Robert A. Knauff, who served as the 174th Wing Commander from 1996 to 2003. Knauff is credited with initiating the wings transition from the F-16 Fighting Falcon to the remotely piloted MQ-9 Reaper.

"Major General Knauff's bold vision and courageous leadership brought the MQ-9 mission to Hancock Field and the men and women of the 108th Attack Squadron are honored to have established and now operate the Air National Guard's first-ever MQ-9 schoolhouse from this beautiful facility," said Lt. Col. John Knutsen, 108th squadron commander.

Prior to his retirement in 2009, Knauff served as the Commander of the New York Air National Guard. He commanded the 6,000-member New York Air National Guard and served as deputy commander of the 17,000 men and women of the New York Army and Air National Guard.

He was a combat veteran with more than 3,900 flying hours while piloting a variety of aircraft including the F-106 Delta Dagger, F-15 Eagle, F-16 Falcon and OV-10 observation aircraft.

A 1975 graduate of the United States Air Force Academy, Gen. Knauff completed undergraduate pilot training in 1976. In the years following, he undertook a series of flying and command assignments culminating with his duty at the New York State Division of Military and Naval Affairs in Latham. gt

Air National Guardsman Awarded Posthumous Bronze Star

By Staff Sgt. Michael O'Halloran, 105 Airlift Wing

Col. Timothy J. LaBarge, commander of the 105th Airlift Wing, New York Air National Guard, fastens the Bronze Star Medal with Valor onto Lt. Col Linda Rohatsch's lapel during the posthumous award on behalf of her son, Staff Sgt. Todd "T.J." Lobraico, at a ceremony held in a hangar on Stewart Air National Guard Base April 11. Todd Lobraico Jr., a member of the 105th Airlift Wing, was killed in action in Afghanistan on Sept. 5, 2013. Photo by Staff Sgt. Michael OHalloran, 105th Airlift Wing.

STEWART AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, Newburgh - Staff Sgt. Todd "T.J." Lobraico, a member of the 105th Airlift Wing who was killed in action in Afghanistan on September 5, 2013, was honored April 11 with a posthumous award of the Bronze Star Medal with Valor.

Staff Sgt. Todd "T.J." Lobraico

Lobraico died in a "hellish barrage of rocket, grenade and small arms fire" as he maneuvered against a Taliban ambush and bought time for the other members of his squad to react during a mission outside Bagram Airfield.

Lobraico had deployed to Afghanistan at the end of June 2013 as part of a team of 105th Base Defense Squadron Airmen whose mission is to secure air bases and fight much like Army infantry. He had also served in Iraq in 2010/2011.

His Bronze Star and citation were presented to his parents, Lt. Col. Linda Rohatsch and Master Sgt. Todd Lobraico Sr., both members of the 105th Airlift Wing like their son, during a ceremony here by Col. Timothy LaBarge, the commander of the wing.

Nicknamed "T.J." - short for Todd James - Lobraico was the first and so far only member of the New York Air National Guard killed in action in Afghanistan or Iraq.

According to his medal citation, on Sept. 5, 2013, Lobraico volunteered to establish a listening and observation post eight miles outside the Bagram Airfield perimeter. Lobraico took the point position on the mission, scouting ahead and providing security for his fire team.

While moving, he discovered an insurgent force setting up an ambush with rocket-propelled grenades, small arms and an improvised explosive device.

"With total disregard for his own safety he placed himself directly between his fire team and the insurgents who unleashed a hellish barrage of rocket, grenade, and small arms fire," the citation says. "Sergeant Lobraico took immediate and decisive actions while braving this intense enemy fire, and was mortally wounded while directing the maneuver of his fire team to covered positions from which they could effectively defend themselves and return fire on the enemy positions."

"His actions were instrumental in gaining fire superiority and the survival of his team," the citation says.

LaBarge praised Lobraico for his courage and said that his death had an impact throughout the wing.

"The impact of his death was immediate, profound, and specific, and we will feel it for a long time; however, this does not mitigate the amount of pride we feel for "T.J." and the Lobraico families." LaBarge said.

Tech Sgt. Michael Pacenza, Lobraico's squad leader, remembered him as a person who was always smiling; always volunteering for stuff.

"T.J." is our hero; he gave his life for us that dark night outside of Bagram Airfield," Pacenza said.

Lobraico was a "great NCO," said Staff Sgt. Juan Ospina. He was "upbeat and he always made you laugh when you were down."

"He saved his team; he saved a lot of lives that night. He sacrificed himself; put himself in harm's way, a selfless act. It makes me proud to have known him as a person and fellow NCO. He was awesome." Ospina said. gt

Afghanistan Through the Eyes of an E1

Remembrance of deployment to Bagram Airfield

Commentary by Airman 1st Class Gerald Mesick, 109th Logistics Readiness Squadron

Airman Gerald Mesick (second row, third from left) was among this group of 109th Airlift Wing Airmen who deployed to Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan on February 28, 2014. Photo by Senior Master Sgt. Gary J. Rihn.

SCOTIA - As a traditional Guardsman, it is very rare to walk out of Basic Military Training with anything less than two stripes.

Unfortunately, this was the predicament I had fallen into. I was often questioned whether or not I messed up in tech school, and when I explained it was in my contract to enlist as an airman basic, I was often met with disbelief. From the start of my career as a Guardsman, I felt I had to prove to others I was not a mess-up.

Shortly after returning home, the opportunity to deploy to Bagram, Afghanistan, fell into my lap. A short three months after my return home I was on my way overseas.

It was my first experience outside the country, and I was both nervous and excited. I was far from experienced in foreign cultures, active duty military and my own Air Force Specialty Code.

Within my first 30 minutes at Bagram, we were hit with an IDF (indirect fire) attack. I hit the deck with my hands over my head, shaking with nerves, and asking myself what the hell I got myself into.

Not only did I have to worry about my lack of experience as an Airman, I now realized I had to worry about this real-world scenario I had only heard about on the news since I was 9 years old.

I was naturally looked at by some of my co-workers a liability. They saw my rank and underestimated my ability to work hard and learn fast. My team chiefs assigned me the most brain-dead and meaningless tasks.

I was assigned solely to the task of chocking vehicles as they pulled up to the aircraft ramps. I didn't mind at first. I often second guessed myself, and I couldn't blame my supervisors for doing the same.

On top of that, we were getting IDFs frequently. I didn't want the stress of messing up during work while stressing over the next attack.

But I grew bored with my meaningless tasks, and gradually asked for more responsibility.

At first, this was hard to achieve, I was an E-1 and a Guardsman. Active duty personnel didn't want to train me and only saw me as dead weight. Not only did I have to prove to myself that I could handle the high-paced, deployed environment, but I had to prove that to co-workers.

Luckily, I deployed with a great group of people, and many were quick to help.

While some NCOs seemed annoyed by the idea of training me, there were plenty more NCOs and Airmen to help me out. I quickly learned a lot about my AFSC, what to do, what not to do, and the difference between home station and deployed location.

It was a great confidence boost, and much of the stress I initially experienced within my first few weeks overseas quickly faded away. I no longer questioned myself, and I could focus on the rest of the craziness around me, my state of mind and my family.

After two months in Bagram, I was promoted, then we got a new rotation. I was now someone to watch and learn from as opposed to someone to watch and worry about. gt

Continued from pg. 32

A 109th Airlift Wing LC-130 lands at the remote location in the vicinity of Victoria Strait, Canada, for the first time Apr. 14. A group of seven Airmen spent 10 days grooming the ski-way. The aircraft and Airmen were supporting Canada's annual Operation Nunalivut. Photo by Maj. Matthew Sala.

On April 15, the original seven Airmen who set up camp and prepared the ski-way were replaced by five other 109th Airmen who continued to maintain the ski-way and camp through April 19.

Jemmotts, an instructor for the 109th Airlift Wing's Kool School held each year in Greenland, said the techniques taught there helped make the mission a success.

"For us it's the people that make it," he said.

"You're in small quarters, working long hours. There's no running water, there's no shower -- it's true field conditions. We try to do the work rest cycle, you wear the cold weather gear, you hydrate, but if it wasn't for the people you're with, it'd be easy to say, 'I'm done here.'" Jemmott said.

"We all worked together very well. A good attitude is key. When putting together teams, I sometimes overthink things, but to me I think it pays off in making a successful team," he said.

Operation Nunalivut is a sovereignty operation conducted annually since 2007 in Canada's North. According to the Joint Task Force-North website, it provides an opportunity for the Canadian Armed Forces to assert Canada's sovereignty over the northernmost regions; demonstrate the ability to operate in the harsh winter environment in remote areas of the High Arctic and enhance its capability to respond to any situation in Canada's North.

This year's operation took place in and around the Cambridge Bay from April 1-22. gt

Volunteers Learn Emergency Debris Removal

By Capt. Mark Getman, New York Guard

New York Guard 1st Sgt. Robert Rathbun demonstrates how to employ various chainsaw cuts to remove downed trees during training at Camp Smith on Apr. 14. Photo by Pvt. Vincenzo Carciofolo, 102nd Emergency Response Battalion, New York Guard.

CAMP SMITH TRAINING SITE, Cortlandt Manor – Winter's final gasp of arctic air and snow blew across New York State in mid-March and volunteers of the New York Guard brought out chainsaws and cold weather clothing to take full advantage it.

Two separate groups of Guard volunteers conducted chainsaw training in the difficult, snowy conditions to better prepare themselves for emergency debris removal.

More than a dozen New York Guard members of the 21st Emergency Response Battalion in Ransomville trained alongside the New York Army National Guard's 152nd Engineer Company March 7 at the Youngstown Training Area while another group of 15 New York Guard volunteers from the 102nd Emergency Response Battalion conducted similar chainsaw operator training at Camp Smith March 14.

The Camp Smith training was led by 1st Sgt. Robert Rathbun, from the battalion engineers, joined by members of the Syracuse-based 2nd Emergency Response Battalion. Together, the team worked through the wintry conditions of mid-March to maintain proficiency training in their equipment.

"This is why we train in this weather, it may not always be the perfect conditions given in training," Rathbun said.

In Ransomville, the mission for the Army National Guard and New York Guard troops was to conduct clearing operations to widen the roads in Training Area 3. The units from the New York Guard supplied manpower for the chainsaw and clearing operations. The 152nd Engineers provided equipment operators to clear snow from around the trees that needed to be cut down.

At Camp Smith, Rathbun demonstrated a number of emergency chainsaw cutting techniques, along with operator maintenance tips such as replacing the chain, that assist New York Guard engineers if called upon for debris removal during a state emergency mission.

"This is an advanced cut but sometimes needed in an emergency," Rathbun said to the group while demonstrating a "plunge cut," also known as a boring cut, during the training.

The technique allows the engineers to bore cut into large logs, using the lower quadrant of the chainsaw tip and then cutting down and through the lower portion of a downed tree. This prevents pinching of the log against the chainsaw, assisting the engineers in rapidly clearing downed trees.

The Ransomville training was a benefit for both New York Guard volunteers and the Army Guard engineers, explained officer candidate John Schmidt, acting executive officer of the 65th Brigade.

"This support mission helped the members of the 21st and 65th keep their skills with chainsaws current," Schmidt said. "This was a very important training evolution for the 21st and 65th because it gave them the opportunity to work with the National Guard, so all the units can work together. This facilitates a positive relationship with the units to ensure the seamless integration of the National Guard and the New York Guard. The more times that the New York Guard can work with the National Guard the better it is for all members involved." gt

New York Guardsmen Receive Educational Benefits through Partnership with Mercy College

Story and photo by Chief Warrant Officer 5 Daniel Griffin, New York Guard

CAMP SMITH TRAINING SITE, Cortlandt Manor – The New York Guard partnered with Mercy College to provide specialized training under the Enactus Operation Employment program at no cost to the New York Guard in 2015.

Prof. Charles Garcia, from Mercy College School of Business, and former Marketing Director at Bloomberg conducted the training on leadership and communications. Anthony Sicuranza, CEO and student of Mercy Enactus, and Col. Glenn Marchi, Deputy Commander of 12th Regimental Training Institute, were the program coordinators for the start of the training program in November, 2014.

"I am very excited about this program and the opportunities to continue to enhance our soldiers' personal and professional lives," stated Brig. Gen. Stephen Bucaria, commander of the New York Guard.

Enactus is a community of student, academic, and business leaders committed to using the power of entrepreneurial action to transform lives and shape a more sustainable world. The vision statement for Operation Employment is to enhance the lives of military veterans and service members by providing marketable job skill training through collaboration and mentorship with corporations, small businesses, and non-profit organizations.

"The training taught me the importance to believe in myself." stated Command Sgt. Maj. Pamela Parker, 12th Regional Training Institute during the 2014 session.

November 2014 was the inaugural session of what is expected to become a long-term educational partnership between Mercy College and the New York Guard with several future training sessions planned. gt

New York Guard Member Receives Valor Medal

By Capt. Mark Getman, New York Guard

Col. Martin Ingram, New York Guard

CAMP SMITH TRAINING SITE - Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo awarded the New York State Medal of Valor, the state's highest military award for heroism to New York Guard Col. Martin Ingram. Ingram has been a member of the New York Guard since 2004 and currently serves as commander of the New York Guard's 88th Brigade, headquartered at Lexington Avenue Armory.

Ingram was recognized on March 14 for his heroism while serving as fire chief of the Breezy Point Volunteer Fire Department on October 29, 2012 as Hurricane Sandy flooded the ocean front community, and fire destroyed many of the areas structures. Ingram led the efforts to evacuate citizens from rising flood waters, entered a burning building to save a stranded resident and extinguish the fire—saving other buildings from being destroyed—and rallied other members of his fire department by his personal example.

Ingram, 64, received the Medal of Valor from New York Guard Brig. Gen. Stephen Bucaria, the commander of the New York Guard.

On Oct. 28, 2012, Ingram led his volunteer fire department in preparing to shelter area residents from Hurricane Sandy when it made landfill. At his direction the Breezy Point Volunteer Fire Department firehouse was manned around the clock, fire-fighting equipment was checked and prepared and food, cots, lights and generators were gathered for an extended rescue and shelter operation.

As the storm hit on Oct. 29, though, the storm surge was higher than expected and at 7 p.m. the fire house began flooding. Ingram led his volunteers and the residents sheltering at the fire station to an alternate location at the Point Breeze Association clubhouse.

That location began to flood as well and, at the same time, a fire had broken out in small wooden homes built close together. The clubhouse the fire fighters and evacuees were sheltering was downwind of that fire, which was moving closer and closer to Ingram's location.

Ingram determined that the group had to move once again and led the evacuation. Heedless of his personal safety, he dove into five feet deep water to start two fire trucks needed to move volunteer fire fighters and rescued residents to yet another shelter location.

Through the night, Ingram led his firefighters on missions to preserve people, property and equipment.

"All this was achieved under the most challenging of circumstances, with great risk to his own personal safety," his citation reads. gt

New York Naval Militia

New York Naval Militia Steel Worker 1st Class Jeffrey Alexander aims the LRAD 300X system used by Naval Militia boat crews to contact other vessels and people on shore during training aboard Patrol Boat 400 on the Hudson River near Peekskill on April 24. Photo courtesy New York Naval Militia.

Training with High-Tech Hailer System on the Hudson

By Eric Durr, Public Affairs Director

CAMP SMITH--New York Naval Militia members teamed up with members of the New York Air National Guard, New York State Police and New York Police Department to train on the latest loud speakers here on April 23 and April 24.

Nine members of the Naval Militia, and ten police officers, and six Air National Guardsmen spent two days learning how to use the LRAD high-tech loud speaker system in a training class funded by the New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services.

The Long Range Acoustic Device, also known as a sound cannon, is an acoustic hailing device and sonic weapon developed by LRAD Corporation to send messages, warnings, and harmful, pain-inducing tones over longer distances than normal loudspeakers.

The system is made by the LRAD Corporation of San Diego, California and designed to allow Naval Militia patrol boats to communicate with other vessels or people on shore more effectively than traditional bull horns or speaker systems.

The system can transmit intelligible speech for more than a kilometer. The Naval Militia has a LRAD 300X system which can be mounted on its nine patrol boats as required.

The training took place in two phases.

In phase one, participants trained at one of Camp Smith's classrooms on how to operate the LRAD 300X.

The more interesting phase of the training took place on the Hudson River in the vicinity of Peekskill and Verplanck on Apr. 24.

The Naval Militia members and other students practiced using the LRAD 300 system mounted on Naval Militia Patrol Boat 400.

Naval Militia members on duty may need to communicate with other vessels or people on shore, Commander Don McKnight, the officer in charge of the Military Emergency Boat Service, said. The LRAD system allows them to do that with more clarity than a conventional speaker system.

The trainees went through drills testing their ability to employ the LRAD system while mounted on board the boat.

LRAD systems are in use by both the Navy and Coast Guard. **gt**

Naval Militia Leader Receives State Awards

LATHAM - Maj. Gen. Patrick Murphy, the Adjutant General of New York, presents the New York State Conspicuous Service Cross and New York State Conspicuous Service Star to Marine Corps Reserve Master Gunnery Sgt. Salvatore Rignola, a member of the New York Naval Militia, on Jan. 30.

He is a twenty-six year member of the New York City Fire Department (FDNY) and currently serves as Commanding Officer of the Bureau of Fire Investigation's Auto Fraud Squad and Special Investigation Unit.

Rignola served thirty honorable years in the United States Marine Corps Reserve. He was deployed three times oversees (combat tours).

He retired in 2010 and is currently serving in the New York State Naval Militia.

Rignola, the senior enlisted leader in the New York Naval Militia's Southern Command Region, received the awards in recognition of awards he received while on Federal duty. Both the Conspicuous Service Star and Conspicuous Service Cross medals are awarded to New Yorkers who have earned specific federal awards.

Photo by Katharine Keller.

Evolution of Honor

109th Base Honor Guard has Tradition of Dedication

By Master Sgt. Allen P. Moon,109th Base Honor Guard Superintendent

The 109th Base Honor Guard full-time staff at the Gerald B.H. Solomon Saratoga National Cemetery on Feb. 17. From left are Tech. Sgt. Michael Ignecia, Staff Sgt. Megan Lane, Master Sgt. Jennifer Dippo, Senior Airman Nicholas Chakurmanian and Staff Sgt. Carl Williams. Photo courtesy of the 109th Base Honor Guard.

STRATTON AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE -- **The 109th Airlift Wing is best known for its "Skibirds". Since 1988 the orange-tailed LC-130 aircraft have flown to Antarctica and Greenland, in support of the National Science Foundation's Operation Deep Freeze.**

But the 109th Base Honor Guard has been rendering military funeral honors even longer than its Airmen have been traveling to the ice.

The Honor Guard got started in the early 1980s when members of the 109th Maintenance Squadron noticed there were no dedicated personnel rendering honors to veterans in the area. There were a few American Legion and VFW posts that had color guards, but nothing in the way of a uniformed and structured military team.

So, some of the maintenance squadron Airmen began volunteering to perform funeral honors to fill that void.

During the late 1990s the team—which now included volunteers from other 109th elements-- received funding for full-time positions, guidance and training. The Stratton Honor Guard began providing funeral honors for Air Force veterans in the region that Hanscom Air Force Base is responsible.

In the area served by Hanscom Air Force Base, Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve Airmen render 79 percent of the military funeral honors.

The team is routinely responsible for rendering honors over an 11,000-square-mile area, covering 21 counties in New York, Vermont and Massachusetts. In 2014, the team traveled over 22,000 miles to render 293 Military Funeral Honors and is the second most cost effective team in the Hanscom area.

Ceremonial Guardsmen perfect all movements, maintain ceremonial uniforms and exhibit professionalism to the highest standards. They speak, on behalf of the President of the United States and a grateful nation, faithfully reminding family and loved ones that we have not forgotten our brothers and sisters.

> Rendering honors is a 24/7/365 endeavor that involves long days, weekend duty and road trips that often result in missing time with family and work. This calling is not done for reward or recognition, but a deep devotion to honor the memory of each and every veteran.
>
> *--109th Base Honor Guard*

Committing to honor our nation's fallen, as representatives of the Air Force, also means standing sharp, crisp and motionless in all weather and conditions.

Stratton Base Honor Guard members are trained to alter, tailor and maintain their ceremonial uniforms. This creative option alleviates the need to send uniforms to an expensive contract tailor.

Each team is supposed to have a bugler. In addition to maintaining contact with several local buglers, members of the Stratton Honor Guard have taken it upon themselves to learn how to play the trumpet/bugle. With the help of a local bugler generously donating lessons, the team currently boasts four live buglers.

Today, the Stratton Base Honor Guard is manned by five full-time Ceremonial Guardsmen and 15 volunteers.

The full-time staff's priority is the completion of military funerals, as well as training, equipping and managing the volunteer corps, to develop relations with the local community. The full-time staff must also satisfy their regular training.

Rendering honors is a 24/7/365 endeavor that involves long days, weekend duty and road trips that often result in missing time with family and work. This calling is not done for reward or recognition, but a deep devotion to honor the memory of each and every veteran. **gt**

Death March Participant Goes the Distance

By Eric Durr, Public Affairs Director

WHITE SANDS, N.M. — When he finished the 26.2 mile course he was blistered and bleeding. Then he passed out.

But, 12 hours, 16 minutes and 22 seconds after starting the 26th Annual Bataan Memorial Death March here on March 22, 53 year old New York Army National Guard Sgt. 1st Class Walter Meshenberg had accomplished the goal he set for himself in October.

He was one of 3,626 people to complete the full course. It was, Meshenberg said, one of the hardest things he's ever done.

He'd broken in new boots to ensure that he didn't get a blister, but developed one at about 18 miles.

He learned that walking 20 miles on the flat roads of Long Island just above sea level was very different from hiking at 4,235 feet in the mountains of New Mexico.

"It was heck. It kicked my butt," he said.

He'd also gone to a sporting goods store to find just the right under pants to wear under his ACUs, so he wouldn't chafe. That didn't work out so well after all either, he said.

"They chaffed and I was bleeding all over my groin area. The friction was unbelievable," Meshenberg recalled.

The course medics wanted to pull him out of the march, but Meshenberg refused. There were badly wounded Soldiers taking part in the march, including a triple amputee, he said.

"I said if they can do this, I will be damned if I can't do this. They motivated me even more,"

So he finished the course and crossed the end point at about 8:30 p.m., finishing 3558 in the field, but finishing.

"As soon as I passed the course I passed out because I had a mild case of heat stroke," he said.

Still, Meshenberg said he plans on doing it all again next year.

The Bataan Memorial March began in 1989 when an Army Reserve Officers' Training Corps unit sponsored the event to commemorate the Soldiers who surrendered to the Japanese in April 1942 during the invasion of the Philippines, then an American possession.

The 60,000 Americans and Filipinos that surrendered on the Bataan Peninsula were marched 80 miles to prisoner of war camps. The Soldiers were not fed, denied water and hundreds were beaten and shot out of hand. Nearly 2,000 New Mexico Army National Guard Soldiers were among those captured.

In 1992 the march moved to White Sands Missile Range. The route goes from flat desert to high mountains.

Meshenberg, the safety NCO for the 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team and a member of the brigade's aviation section, is a technician at the Army flight facility in Ronkonkoma. He got interested in participating in the march because Chief Warrant Officer John Seeger had done it in 2014 and talked it up.

He started training in November, far less than the year of training march organizers recommend. But he was working out regularly, did well in his physical fitness test and had lost weight, Meshenberg said.

"Every other day I was on the treadmill walking three to five miles. On Saturday I would do three to four miles and then 17 miles and worked up to 20 miles," Meshenberg said.

Meshenberg competed in the "heavy" march category which meant carrying a pack weighing at least 35 pounds. The marchers carried nonperishable foods to be donated to a local food pantry. Meshenberg carried rice.

"When it was raining and snowing I was out there on the roads in Masten Beach (Long Island) walking on the roads. It was horrible," he remembered.

That nasty Long Island weather almost delayed his trip to New Mexico, Meshenberg said. More than four inches of snow fell in the area as he flew out of JFK on March 20.

He got in late to Albuquerque, got a compact rental car and drove the 227 miles to White Sands. He slept in the car, and hit the course with about four hours of sleep, Meshenberg remembered.

But he got to meet wounded warriors taking part in the event, as well as the last few survivors of the actual Death March, and they inspired him to keep going, Meshenberg said.

"What these gentlemen went through. What our military went through. We need to remember this," he said.

That is why he plans to be back in White Sands next year for the 27th annual march. **gt**

Photo courtesy of Sgt. 1st Class Walter Meshenberg

I Absolutely, Totally, Crushed It!

Rochester Based Maintenance Pilot Recounts His First Boston Marathon

By Chief Warrant Officer 4 Thomas Grove, 126th Aviation

Chief Warrant Officer 4 Thomas Grove waits at the starting line in Hopkinton, Mass. before the start of the 119th running of the Boston Marathon. Courtesy Photo.

ROCHESTER - On April 20 at 10:25 I was in Corral 1 of Wave 2 at the starting line of the Boston Marathon!

The Boston Marathon is the world's oldest annual marathon. It's been held on every Patriots Day, the third Monday in April, since 1897. When it was first run there was no standard marathon course distance, Boston was about 24.5 miles, but since the 1908 Olympic Games the official marathon distance has been set at 26 miles.

Being the world's oldest annual marathon it grew into a very popular event. This year's race had about 30,000 participants and 500,000 spectators. This literally became a big problem because the starting line is in the tiny town of Hopkinton, Mass. Because of the logistics of a big race in a small town, the Boston Athletic Association required participants to qualify for the race to limit the field size. Running a Boston Qualifying time or a BQ has become my goal, dream...a complete obsession; (just ask my family, friends, colleagues or anyone who would listen). The qualification standards are based on gender/age groups and about the top ten percent of marathon runners in each group qualify.

In the summer of 2007, I transitioned from Active Duty to an Active Guard and Reserve job with the New York Army National Guard. I was in the worst condition of my life. I was 20 pounds heavier than I am now and could barely pass the two-mile run portion of the Army Physical Fitness Test in the required 17:42. I'd just gotten my dream job, but could barely meet the fitness requirement necessary to keep it. Reluctantly, I started running but soon realized I didn't mind running when nobody was making me do it; dare I say I almost enjoyed it.

By the summer of 2008, I'd made it to the point of running seven miles without walking. Around this time, I started thinking maybe someday I could run a marathon. One of my most memorable runs was the first time I ran eight miles. It hurt so bad I knew I'd never be able to run a marathon.

By 2009, I could complete ten-mile runs and decided to run 25 in a week, which lead to 100 in a month, then 1,200 in a year. This goal was much harder than running my first marathon because it took so long to complete and it's pretty hard to get in miles during the Rochester winter.

In May of 2009, I scored my first of many 300 APFT scores. In 2010 I had every intention to run the Rochester Marathon as my first and last marathon. I used the Hal Higdon novice training plan which I found for free online. I had read running a marathon as your first race wasn't a good idea so a couple of months prior, I ran my first 5-kilometer and placed 2nd in my age group. Although it was a small home town race of only about 200 runners, I was surprised how nervous I was at the starting line and how placing was such a great confidence booster.

Armed with my shiny 5K 2nd place medal I decided I didn't only want to complete my first marathon, I wanted to do it in less than 4 hours which is a fairly common goal, and I even questioned if a 3:45 would be possible. At this point I may have known my BQ time was 3:15:59 but I wasn't even considering it. I had a great race with a very emotional finish. Astonishingly I ran a 3:25:08, missing a BQ by only about 10 minutes.

My family wasn't even at the finish line because I'd told them there was no way I'd break 3:30:00. Later that day, while extremely sore, I started looking for my next Marathon.

I spent the next five years working on a plan: 2011 Buffalo Marathon - 3:21:48, missed the BQ by 6 min.

2012 Mississauga (Toronto) Marathon, Canada 3:18:37 missed BQ'ing by 8:37. (Because of the amount of qualifying runners the BAA dropped all BQ times by 5:59 making my new BQ time 3:10:00).

2013 Ottawa Marathon, Canada 3:13:16 missed BQ'ing by 3:16.

2014 Buffalo Marathon 3:12:26. BQ'ed by 2:34 (my BQ time increased to 3:15 because I went up into the 40 year old age group).

2015 Boston Marathon 3:08:23. Beating my personal record by over 4 min, BQ by over 6:30

I'm still obnoxiously happy about my time. It isn't a course record, it's not even close to an age group placing, but it's mine and for me, a personal goal accomplishment is what running's all about. gt

Going a Few Rounds for the Kids

By Sgt. 1st Class Steven Petibone, 42nd Infantry Division

Staff Sgt. Kenneth Geib does mitts with Nikki Albert at the Boy's and Girl's Club in Troy on April 2. About a dozen kids, aged 7-16 from the Capital region took boxing lessons from Gieb and other New York National Guardsmen who volunteered to teach them via a State funded program called 'Mission Ringside', a boxing initiative involving youth and Veterans. Courtesy photo.

LATHAM -- Seeking alternatives to alcohol abuse and life struggles after war, two-time Iraq war veteran Staff Sgt. Kenneth Geib found something to turn into a positive action -- boxing.

Since 2012, he has been in the gym at Millhouse Boxing in Cohoes six days a week, training with the founder and professional boxer, Shawn Miller.

"When I first started, I wanted to get in shape, then later, I added more goals, like winning some bouts." Currently, he has fought 16 bouts and won 13 of them. He stated that it was just the thing he was looking for, to get him away from alcoholism.

He joined Millhouse boxing after his friend Sgt. Freddy Ruiz encouraged him to join. At later dates, Geib recruited Staff Sgt. James Brann and Sgt. Kris Suprenant into the world of boxing at Millhouse as well as the Heroes at Home program. A typical day at Millhouse consists of getting his hands wrapped, a warm up, breaking into groups for circuit training, calisthenics, heavy bags, jump ropes and mitts.

In early 2014, the Commission on Economic Opportunity in Troy awarded a Seeds for Success $3000 State grant to Heroes at Home, a nonprofit organization to provide peer support as a mean of stress relief, increased physical activity and meaning and purpose as veterans and their families in Rensselaer County cope with the challenges of reintegration. Together with the Troy Boys and Girls Club, the two organizations developed 'Mission Ringside' a boxing initiative involving local youth and veterans.

When Geib heard from his trainer that the 'Mission Ringside' program was attending the USA Boxing Coaches Class to look for some sponsorship, Geib called Heroes at Home and volunteered to get the ball rolling with the Troy Boys and Girls Club. He helped organize the training and provided a list of equipment that would be needed.

According to Maj. Joel Abelove, 42nd Infantry Division Staff Judge Advocate and Rensselaer County District Attorney, he and Amy Molloy formed Heroes at Home. He transitioned his role with them to a position on their advisory board when his term began as District Attorney on January 1, 2015.

Mission Ringside began as an idea to help engage veterans with neighborhood youth who could benefit from some mentoring and structure. He reached out to the Hillside North Neighborhood Association to solicit their involvement, and was then able to apply for, and receive, a grant from CEO in Troy to fund the project. Since most of the equipment that was purchased can be reused, he hopes the program can continue with minimal financial impact.

"Joel and I were working to develop and implement Heroes at Home, and we heard about the Seeds for Success grant. We were trying to think of a way to empower Veterans to make a difference in the lives of disadvantaged youth and Joel came up with this idea." said Molloy.

The program came to a close on April 23 with a catered dinner, along with dog tags being presented by Geib and a set of gym shirts and shorts by Molloy. Geib urged the young program participants to pursue boxing as a way to be healthy and stay in shape or to make a secondary career out of it. gt

Staff Sgt. Kenneth Geib hands a dog tag and chain to Mario Johnson during the final evening of boxing lessons sponsored by the Heroes at Home program. Geib was instrumental in using his experience to get the program equipped and functioning. Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Steven Petibone, 42nd Infantry Division.

Airmen Look into Professional Career Resources

Story and photo by Senior Master Sgt. Ray Lloyd, 107th Airlift Wing

Airmen from the 107th Airlift Wing receive information from local colleges as part of a recruiting and retention education fair at the Niagara Falls Reserve Station March 21. Photo by Senior Master Sgt. Ray Lloyd, 107th Airlift Wing.

NIAGARA FALLS AIR RESERVE STATION -- **The 107th Airlift Wing hosted more than 15 colleges and organizations here March 21 for a Recruiting and Retention Education Fair.**

The education fair was organized by the Recruiting and Retention team of the 107th. It was an opportunity for members to enhance their personal and professional skills for the next step in their career. This event was also open to family members and friends who have an interest in joining the New York Air National Guard.

"My job as the Wing Career Counselor is to provide the resources and opportunity for our members to improve their professional development through higher education and increased awareness of the programs available to them," said Master Sgt. Krystalore Stegner, 107th retention office manager. "Having the schools and organizations in attendance at this event provided our members the opportunity to see what programs they have to offer. One of the benefits of being in the Air National Guard is financial assistance for college," said Stegner.

The colleges and organizations came to showcase programs they offer veterans.

"We are a big supporter of the military and we believe you should continue your education while serving," said Mary Sue Gressley, Assistant Director of Graduate Admissions at D'Youville College, Buffalo.

Many unit members attended the fair to see what college program would improve their career path in the National Guard. The new MQ-9 Reaper mission at the 107th is highly technical as the remotely piloted aircraft uses complex computer and satellite technology. Also, a new mandate for promotion to senior enlisted ranks requires a minimum of a two-year degree, making education a priority.

"You always need to continue your education and improve your skills," said Staff Sgt. Damon Mancuso from the 107th Civil Engineering Squadron.

"This is a great opportunity for us," said Eric Bridges, Recruitment and Outreach Specialist and Multicultural Advisor for Empire State College at Buffalo, New York. "We get to come to the base and explain our program to the military, to help continue their education," he said.

Air National Guardsmen have a diverse range of skills that they bring to the table. Full-time students, police officers, engineers, teachers, and small business owners. This is what makes the Guard unique with its members having those outside skills coming into the unit. They work in the community and serve their state and country at the same time. Some have careers that relate to their Air Force specialty, while others have two distinct careers. Airman 1st Class Cory Hammond works in the operation group but has a separate civilian goal.

"My plan when I return from Air Force Technical School is to go to college and study animal biology," said Hammond. He attended the fair to gather information about schools that offer his intended major.

The 107th is currently recruiting for positions in the unit. The new MQ-9 Reaper mission will be operational in 2017. Individuals interested in a career with the New York Air National Guard can contact recruiters at 1-800-247-2902. gt

Providing Venues for Students to Test their Industry Skills

By Tech. Sgt. Catharine Schmidt, 109th Airlift Wing

Students from Capital Region BOCES (Board of Cooperative Educational Services), Questar III, Washington-Saratoga-Warren-Hamilton-Essex BOCES and beyond were at Stratton Air National Guard Base, March 18 to compete in the regional SkillsUSA competition. The students tested their skills in carpentry, vehicle maintenance, heavy equipment operation, welding, nursing and more. They first took a written test on their general knowledge of their specialized subject, and then went on to the hands-on portion of the competition. Photo by Master Sgt. William Gizara.

STRATTON AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE -- **Hundreds of students were here March 18 to test their skills in carpentry, vehicle maintenance, heavy equipment operation, welding, nursing and more as part of the regional SkillsUSA competition.**

Nearly 300 students from Capital Region BOCES (Board of Cooperative Educational Services), Questar III, Washington-Saratoga-Warren-Hamilton-Essex BOCES and beyond competed at the base, Schenectady County Community College and the Albany Career and Technical Education Center. The base has served as a venue for this event for more than 10 years.

Not only are we helping out the local educators in the area, but this is also great for us as it brings community awareness to the 109th Airlift Wing and the Air National Guard," said Master Sgt. John Blackburn, 109th Airlift Wing recruiter.

"We are proud to once again be part of SkillsUSA," said Col. Shawn Clouthier, 109th commander. "SkillsUSA is a proven program that gives the youth of our community a foundation to build upon for a successful future. This is also a great way for our community and local students to see first-hand what our Airmen do each and every day."

"(Stratton) has bent over backwards over the years to help our students in the Albany area," said Bruce Botter, Skills USA state director, in an interview with the media.

Business and industry leaders throughout the area served as judges for the event. Students first took a written test on their general knowledge of their specialized subject, and then went on to the hands-on portion of the competition. Students said that this experience was more than just about a competition.

"It's not about coming here and winning a prize," said Caleb Hendricks, Cobleskill-Richmondville senior, in an interview with the media. "It's about coming here and seeing new people who have the same interest as you and learning different things and making contacts that you can use in the future."

The winners of the competition went on to compete at the state level held in Syracuse in April.

SkillsUSA is a national organization for career and technical education students, and competitions are held annually at the regional, state and national levels. At Capital Region BOCES Career and Technical Center (CTE), SkillsUSA members are school leaders and good citizens. They organize campus-wide events such as holiday food and fund drives, community service projects and blood drives. gt

Rocky's Raiders

Niagara Falls Guard Airman Saw Combat in Vietnam War

By Eric Durr, Division of Military and Naval Affairs

They called themselves " Rocky's Raiders" when they flew combat missions in Vietnam in 1968 and 1969.

The 350 men—and they were all men then— and 20 aircraft of the New York Air National Guard's 136th Tactical Fighter Squadron took the name from New York's long-serving governor Nelson Rockefeller.

They were also the only unit of the New York National Guard to see combat during the Vietnam War.

The squadron was part of the 107th Tactical Fighter Group based at Niagara Falls International Airport. They flew F-100 Super Sabre fighters.

The Airman of the 136th Tactical Fighter Squadron, based at Niagara Falls International Airport, flew F-100's like this plane in combat mission supporting troops in Vietnam in 1968-69. Photo courtesy of New York State Military Museum.

Today the unit is the 107th Airlift Wing and is transitioning to the remotely piloted aircraft mission.

On Jan. 26 1968, following the seizure of the U.S.S. Pueblo, a Navy spy ship, by North Korean forces three days before, the 107th was mobilized by President Lyndon Johnson as part of a call-up 14,600 reservists and National Guardsmen in response to the incident. The president's order mobilized 2,000 Air Guardsmen.

By June of 1968 the 136th Fighter Squadron and its supporting elements were on their way to Tuy Hoa Air Base in South Vietnam. For the pilots of the F-100s—a supersonic, single seat fighter-bomber nicknamed the "Hun"-- that meant a 12,000 mile flight from Niagara Falls, across the United States and the Pacific Ocean with 13 air-to-air refueling sorties.

At the time this was the longest distance ever flown by Air National Guard pilots.

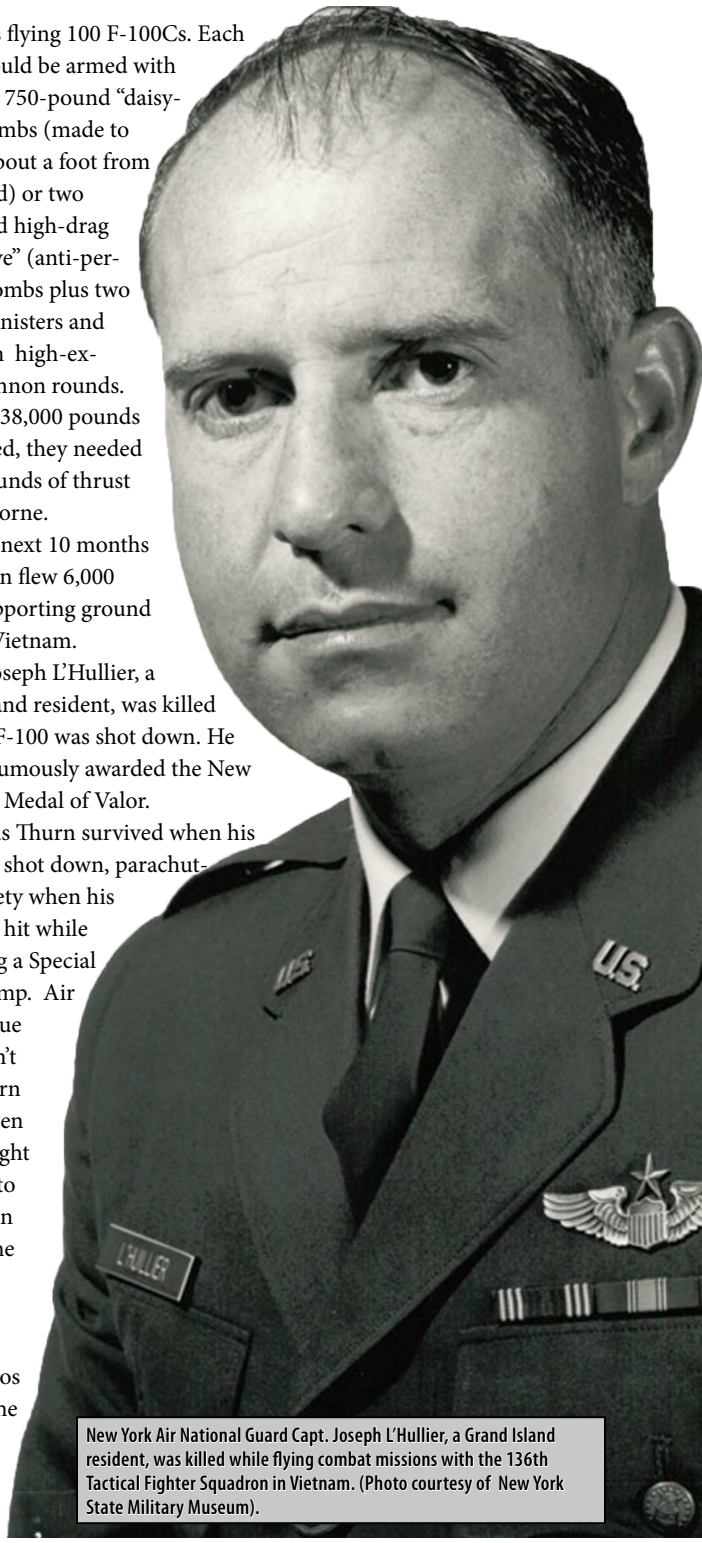
Once in Vietnam the New York Air National Guardsmen plugged into the 31st Tactical Fighter Wing, which comprised five squadrons flying 100 F-100Cs. Each F-100C could be armed with either two 750-pound "daisy-cutter" bombs (made to explode about a foot from the ground) or two 500-pound high-drag "Snakeye" (anti-personnel) bombs plus two napalm canisters and 800 20mm high-explosive cannon rounds. Weighing 38,000 pounds fully loaded, they needed 16,500 pounds of thrust to get airborne.

For the next 10 months the Airmen flew 6,000 sorties supporting ground forces in Vietnam.

Capt. Joseph L'Hullier, a Grand Island resident, was killed when his F-100 was shot down. He was posthumously awarded the New York State Medal of Valor.

Lt. Julius Thurn survived when his F-100 was shot down, parachuting to safety when his F-100 was hit while supporting a Special Forces Camp. Air Force rescue crews didn't get to Thurn so the Green Berets fought their way to his location to make the pick-up.

When Viet Cong commandos attacked the Tuy Hoa base on July 29,



New York Air National Guard Capt. Joseph L'Hullier, a Grand Island resident, was killed while flying combat missions with the 136th Tactical Fighter Squadron in Vietnam. (Photo courtesy of New York State Military Museum).

1968 Tech Sgt. Gary McDonald and Sgt. Ron Senowech, were wounded. The attack cost the unit one F-100 destroyed on the ground.

An additional two aircraft were lost to ground fire and one crashed due to mechanical problems.

Prior to deploying to Vietnam the unit also suffered casualties as it trained to go to war.

1st Lieutenants Raymond Reader and Robert Wolf were killed in March 1968 during a mid-air collision as they trained in their F-100s, according to the annual Adjutant General's report for 1968. Maj. Richard Dye was killed during air to ground combat training in April.

By the time Rocky's Raiders returned to New York at the end of May, 1969 the Airmen had been awarded three Purple Hearts, 25 Distinguished Flying Crosses, 30 Bronze Stars, 156 Air Medals, 325 Commendation Medals, and 5 Vietnamese Gallantry Crosses.

In testimony to Congress in 1973, Air Force Gen. George S. Brown, who commanded Air Force elements in Vietnam, said that the five best Super Saber units in Vietnam were the four Air National Guard fighter squadrons mobilized in 1968- -which included the 136th—and an Air Force squadron manned mostly by Air Guard pilots.

While the 136th was fighting in Vietnam the other members of the 800-strong 107th served in South Korea or at other American air bases around the world.

While Rocky's Raiders saw combat in Vietnam, other New York Air National Guard units provided logistical support to the troops in Vietnam.

The 106th Air Transport Wing of the New York Air National Guard composed of the 106th Military Airlift Group in Brooklyn, the 105th Military Airlift Wing based in White Plains and the 109th Military Airlift Group outside Schenectady, flew supplies from the United States to Vietnam on board C-97 Stratofreighters.

Today those units are the 106th Rescue Wing, the 105th Airlift Wing and the 109th Airlift Wing.

The Stratofreighter, based on the airframe of the same B-29 bomber which dropped the first atomic bomb at the end of World War 11, could carry 18 tons of cargo or 134 troops for 4,900 miles before refueling.

In 1965 the New York Air National Guard supported "Operation Christmas Star" an effort to provide gifts and packages to Soldiers in Vietnam. The Airmen flew 2.1 million miles supporting those missions and carried an average of 15,000 pounds of cargo on each flight, according to the Division of Military and Naval Affairs annual report for that year.

The New York Air National Guard air crews were tasked to carry high priority cargo to Vietnam from 1966 through 1969, much as members of the 105th Airlift Wing carried supplies into Afghanistan and Iraq during the wars in those countries.

During that three year period the Air National Guardsmen flew 222 missions totaling 18,531 flying hours carrying supplies to troops in Vietnam.

Recognizing the historical role of the New York National Guard in the Vietnam War is part of the nation's 50-year commemoration of the war.

New York State and the New York National Guard are official partners of the U.S. Department of Defense 50-year Vietnam War Commemoration, providing events and activities to recognize Vietnam Veterans and their families' service, valor, and sacrifice.

Events supporting the DOD commemoration have included:

- The April 2013 public exhibit opening that highlights the service of Vietnam Veterans at the New York State Vietnam Memorial Gallery in Albany entitled, "Welcome Home: The 50 Year Commemoration of the Vietnam War, 1962-1975;"
- A recreation to honor a 1960's Bob Hope USO tour entitled "Good Afternoon, Vietnam" held June 2013 at the New York State Military Museum in Saratoga Springs.
- The March 2014 commemoration program at the New York State Military Museum in Saratoga Springs entitled "Vietnam War Commemoration: Honoring Vietnam Veterans." The event was a joint program with the Association of the U.S. Army Capital Region Chapter and included Vietnam Veteran and Medal of Honor recipient Army Sergeant Gary Beikirch of Rochester, New York.
- A "Veterans Roundtable" held in January 2015 to recognize the service and sacrifice of veterans across generations.

New York National Guard opportunities to commemorate the history of New Yorkers in the Vietnam War include support to record oral histories of Vietnam veterans in conjunction with Skidmore College students of the class "Vietnam and American Memory" and the development of a historical exhibit at the New York State Military Museum in the spring of 2015. gt

A C-97 Stratofreighter assigned to the 109th Airlift Group of the New York Air National Guard loading cargo in the 1960's. Aircraft like these manned by New York Air National Guard Airmen flew supplies and passengers during the Vietnam War. Photo courtesy 109th Airlift Wing.