

# LONG ISLAND'S 106<sup>TH</sup> RESCUE WING: AMERICA'S OLDEST AIR NATIONAL GUARD UNIT

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*The story of the nation's oldest Air National Guard Unit reflects Long Island's central role in the history of air flight and the development of military technology. Charles Howlett provides a comprehensive account of this unit's history.*

In the fall of 2003 members of an elite Air National Guard search-and-rescue unit based on the eastern end of Long Island conducted a dramatic mission in Iraq. A CH-47 Chinook helicopter had been shot down killing sixteen soldiers. Outside the city of Fallujah, two American soldiers remained trapped in the burning wreckage when rescuers from the 106<sup>th</sup> swooped in aboard their own HH-60G "Pave Hawks" (helicopters) and used the "jaws of life" to pry open the destroyed chopper and pull out the injured soldiers. A dangerous hot zone, the pararescuer jumpers (PJs) carried out their mission successfully. In the words of the unit's commander, Colonel Mike Canders, "that's what we train for. That's what we do."<sup>1</sup>

The 106<sup>th</sup> Rescue Group, along with its 102<sup>nd</sup> Rescue Squadron, is the oldest flying unit in the Air National Guard. It is part of the 106<sup>th</sup> Rescue Wing (RQW) currently located at Frances S. Gabreski Airport in Westhampton Beach Long Island. Throughout its long and distinguished history, the group has played a pivotal role in serving the state and nation.<sup>2</sup>

## **Early History**

It was during World War One, prior to American military intervention in Europe, that the Dick Acts of 1903 and 1908 – which established an effective National Guard – and the Army reorganization of 1916 cemented the relationship between the Guard and the U.S. Army.<sup>3</sup> From that point on, the Guard would play an increasingly important role in defending the nation while continuing to fulfill its traditional role of responding to natural disasters, emergency relief and homeland defense within the separate states. During the Great War, moreover, the initial use of air reconnaissance as a military intelligence factor aside from aerial bombing, played an important role in combat operations. Pilots from the New York National Guard performed their part in serving the nation overseas. Thus, it was in New York State that the first Air National Guard unit in U.S. history was created.<sup>4</sup>

According to military records, “when the U.S. Army’s 1<sup>st</sup> Provisional Aero Squadron was formed in 1913, Company A Signal Corps, New York National Guard had been in the air for five years.”<sup>5</sup> The actual airborne unit, the 102<sup>nd</sup>, dates back to an “aeronautical corps” interested in learning ballooning from the Park Avenue Armory in New York City in April 1908. Company A began flying on May 1, 1908. The pilots were from New York’s 71<sup>st</sup> regiment. Two years later, the Company “had funded its own \$500 home built copy of a Farman aircraft.”<sup>6</sup> Now flying “heavier-than-air craft,” the plane, along with its pilot, Private (later Major) Philip W. Wilcox, traveled to Pine Camp (now Fort Drum) for what was then referred to as the Field Instruction Period.<sup>7</sup> The beginnings of a modern military air force, though far from actual combat deployment, had begun with Wilcox’s training in upstate New York.

The first official pilot of the Air National Guard, however, was not Wilcox, but Private Beckwith Havens. In 1911, when the Curtiss Airplane Company worked jointly with the New York State Militia it had a “sizable ‘stable of exhibition pilots and planes which barnstormed the Country.’” Havens, holder of Flight Certificate 127, participated in the first aerial observations that were coordinated with ground maneuvers. It was August 1912, and it constituted the first war game using airplanes in American history.

According to a published report in the *New York Times*, some 20,000 soldiers participated. During one maneuver, Havens, flying a Curtiss biplane, “dived toward the ground and struck a Burgess-Wright biplane while landing at the far end of a meadow.” No injuries were reported and the game continued, along with the use of airplanes. The success of the aerial reconnaissance missions, as well as the combined large scale aerial-land maneuver, resulted in the creation of the 1<sup>st</sup> Company Signal Corps, New York Guard.<sup>8</sup>

On November 1, 1915, when the 1<sup>st</sup> Aero Company, Signal Corps, New York National Guard was established, the unit officially became an Aviation Detachment.<sup>9</sup> The company was composed of four officers and forty men. It had five “airplanes costing [a total of] \$29,500 furnished by the National Aeroplane Fund.” Flight training was conducted at the Mineola Aviation Field, later re-designated as Mitchel Field in honor of the former New York City mayor, John Purroy Mitchel (killed in a flight training accident in Louisiana in the summer of 1918). When the United States entered World War I Mitchel Field became a major storage facility for the distribution of war materials until the Armistice was signed on November 11, 1918. The 1<sup>st</sup> Aero Company’s attachment to Mitchel Field represents the earliest recorded documentation of the unit’s long history with Long Island.<sup>10</sup>

Prior to American military involvement in World War I, the 1<sup>st</sup> Aero Company became the first National Guard aviation unit activated for federal service on July 13, 1916. The unit was activated during the campaign against Pancho Villa in northern Mexico. The company was mustered into federal service at Mineola and trained under the command of Lieutenant (later Colonel) Raynal C. Bolling. Most importantly, on November 18, 1916, aviators of the 1<sup>st</sup> Aero Company conducted the first National Guard cross country formation flight from Mineola, New York to Princeton, New Jersey. Seven Curtiss JN<sup>4</sup>s, under the command of recently promoted Captain Ray Bolling, successfully carried out the mission.<sup>11</sup>

Although the War Department ordered that there would be no National Guard air units during the Great War, nearly all the members of the 1<sup>st</sup> Aero Company were commissioned in the Air Services. The 1<sup>st</sup> Aero Squadron was the first to report for flying duty in the American Expeditionary Force. Members of the squadron served with distinction on every front in France from Chateau Thierry to the Argonne.

Two highly decorated members of that unit, Colonel Bolling and Major James E. Miller were killed in action. Bolling, a Connecticut native and member of the Harvard class of 1900 and Harvard Law 1902, was named General Solicitor of U.S. Steel in 1913. In 1917 he was appointed Assistant Chief of the Air Service and headed the Bolling Mission to Europe. On March 26, 1918 Bolling was the first high-ranking U.S. officer to be killed in action. He was ambushed by German troops near the front lines on the Amiens-Saint-Quentin road during the Somme offensive. He was posthumously awarded the Cross of the Legion of Honor and the Distinguished Service Medal.

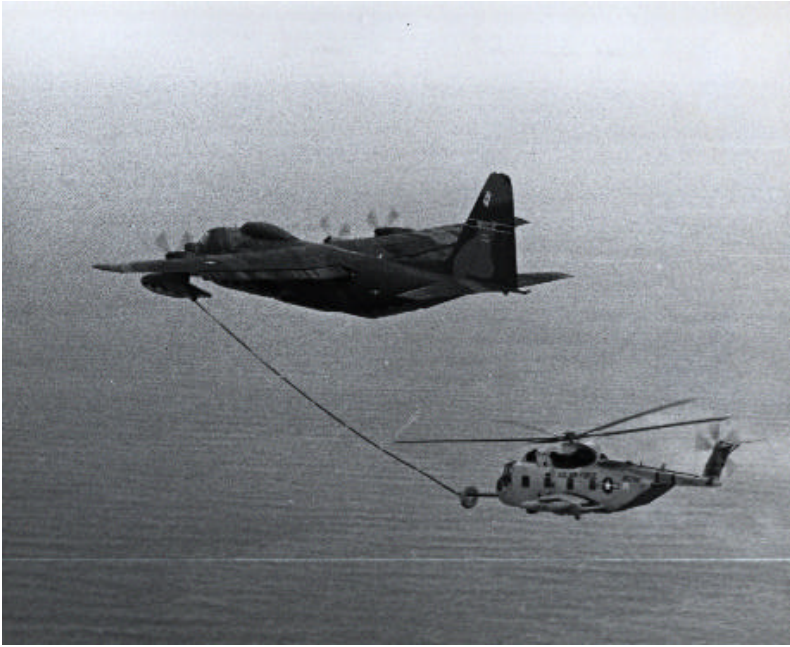
Miller was the Commander of the 95<sup>th</sup> Squadron and was "shot down by German fighters on March 10, 1918 over German territory in the Rheims sector." At the end of the war the unit was demobilized at Garden City on May 1, 1919.<sup>12</sup>

### **The Interwar Years**

In the aftermath of World War I, twenty former flyers worked with the Adjutant General of the New York National Guard. Their purpose was to organize their own observation squadron. After the Great War, despite the War Department's long predisposition favoring ground forces, Guard aviation was placed on a permanent basis.

The army organized twenty-nine Guard observation squadrons composed of some 4,800 experienced personnel during the interwar period. Thus, when the War Department approved the establishment of an Observation Squadron for each National Guard Division, the 102<sup>nd</sup> Squadron, 27<sup>th</sup> Division Air Service, New York National Guard, was

granted Federal recognition on August 8, 1921. It began with the assignment of three officers and all the enlisted men of Company M, 14<sup>th</sup> New York Infantry (a unit that dated from 1848).<sup>13</sup>



C-130 Refueling a Rescue Helicopter. Courtesy of Public Affairs Office, 106th RQW, New York Air National Guard.

The newly federalized squadron began its flying missions from Mitchel Field where pilots were trained in aerial observation; enlisted troops trained in nearby Hempstead. The pilots' duties included flying aircraft, filling out flight logs, studying every aspect of the plane's mechanical structure and engine performance, troubleshooting scenarios in case of malfunction while in the air, and tending to other administrative details. Enlisted personnel were trained "in the assembling, maintenance and repair of airplanes and motors, radio telegraphy, aerial photographic development, machine gun maintenance and repair. . . in addition to the regular drill of all National Guard soldiers."<sup>14</sup>

On January 23, 1923 the unit was re-designated as the 102<sup>nd</sup> Observation Squadron and began conducting its training at Miller Field in New Dorp, Staten Island. The 102<sup>nd</sup> became part of the 27<sup>th</sup> Aviation Division. The new air base was named after its fallen comrade. In the fall of 1922, the squadron flew six JN4H aircraft to the Hartford Aviation

Meet in Connecticut. The event earmarked the aviation skills of the unit's pilots. The squadron took home six silver cups. An account written by Captain Curtiss Wheeler, New York National Guard Operations Officer, noted the following: "Air service meets and flying races were held throughout the eastern seaboard. In the fall of that year six ships flew up to the Hartford Aviation Meet and in competition with regular Army and civilian flyers, won six silver cups.<sup>15</sup> The squadron also held its first Air Circus in 1924. Over 41,300 people came to the event at Miller Field. A year later, the 102<sup>nd</sup> took first place in the National Guard Aerial Machine Tournament.

The first commanders of the 102<sup>nd</sup> Aero Squadron were Major George A. Vaughn and Major Kenneth P. Lettauer of the old Lafayette Flying Corps – the French force that included American pilots during the early stages of American military intervention in World War I. Both pilots fought in every front in France.<sup>16</sup> The roster of pilots in the 102<sup>nd</sup> also included several World War I aces who accounted for over fifty-five enemy planes shot down.

In the 1920s and 1930s, the 102<sup>nd</sup> flew various strategic observation missions for New York's 27<sup>th</sup> Division.<sup>17</sup> Many of these missions involved mapping of the geographic terrain and coastal defense facilities. Training in the areas of aerial bombing, reporting/spotting for artillery fire, protecting troop movements, and aerial maneuvers avoiding anti-aircraft fire was also part of the daily regimen. During the years 1925 to 1931, for example, the squadron trained at various locations: at Pine Camp practicing artillery spotting; at Camp Smith (Peekskill, New York) supporting infantry maneuvers; at Fishers Island supporting the Coastal Artillery; and at Oswego Lake, practicing with an Anti-Aircraft Battalion. The squadron also supported the regular army at Fort Dix and at Lake Ontario. In addition, throughout the entire 1930s, the squadron "took over 70,000 photographs for the mosaic mapping of the St. Lawrence River waterway."

### **Word War II and the Start of the Cold War**

During World War II, the 102<sup>nd</sup> Observation Squadron was activated for Federal Service. Members of the unit, along with its component aircraft of one AT6 (an advance trainer that was single wing), two 047s, six 046s, and three 049s, commenced one year of intensive training.<sup>18</sup> The unit remained under federal jurisdiction for the duration of the war. Initially, the unit was sent to Fort McClellan, Alabama, for a course in infantry training as well as flight training. In 1941, the squadron participated in basic maneuvers, and on December 22 was transferred to Morrow Field, San Bernardino, California.<sup>19</sup> At Morrow Field, and later at Ontario Observation Aerodrome, Ontario, California, the 102<sup>nd</sup> flew

numerous shore patrols and photographic missions as defense measures. As military technological development grew and expanded so, too, did the nature and mission of the 102<sup>nd</sup>. On April 15, 1943 the unit became the 102<sup>nd</sup> Reconnaissance Squadron (Bombardment) and four months later, August 21<sup>st</sup>, was designated as the 102<sup>nd</sup> Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron. At this point in the war, the squadron participated primarily in maneuvers in the Gulf of Mexico, providing reconnaissance along the Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas coastlines. On April 15, 1944 all squadron personnel were reassigned to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Air Commando Group. Although the unit remained stateside during the conflict, many of its more experienced members were rotated to other Army Air Corps squadrons and served with valor in the European and Pacific theaters. Among those pilots were Francis Gabreski and Lewis A. Curtis, later Brigadier General and Commander of the New York Air National Guard in the 1950s.<sup>20</sup>



106<sup>th</sup> Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Group, Westhampton Beach, N.Y. August 23, 1981. Courtesy of PAO, 106th RQW, NYA.

On May 24, 1946 the 102<sup>nd</sup> returned to state control and was reassigned to the New York National Guard as the 102<sup>nd</sup> Bombardment Squadron (Light), Floyd Bennett Air Field, Brooklyn. The field had been extremely active during the war. It had grown from 387 acres to 1,288 acres. The 106<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group was the direct descendent of the 394<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group which had served with distinction during the D-Day Invasion and later at the Battle of the Bulge.<sup>21</sup>

After the war the creation of the Department of the Air Force led to the reconstitution of air units into wings, groups, and squadrons. The policymakers creating the Air Force as a separate military branch envisioned a separate service “capable of winning wars independently by

destroying the enemy's war making capability." This has remained the primary focus of the air force, a branch characterized by "a concentration on the development and employment of new technology to a higher degree than any of the other services."<sup>22</sup>

During the early years of the Cold War, the 102<sup>nd</sup>, now part of the 106<sup>th</sup>, operated out of Floyd Bennett Field. Federal recognition was bestowed on the bombardment unit on March 21, 1947. Increasingly, the role of air power as a critical element in U.S. military doctrine and strategy expanded. As the technology grew so did the types of aircraft being built. In the late 1940s, the unit was equipped with B-26 Avengers (bomber aircraft).

After the Korean War broke out the 106<sup>th</sup> was once again called into active service. The unit was re-designated the 106<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Wing and equipped with B-29 Super fortresses (the largest bomber aircraft in the Air Force). The 106<sup>th</sup> was then assigned to March Air Force Base, California, until June 16, 1952, when it was deactivated. During the conversion process, the aircrews of the unit won distinction by completing accelerated B-29 training in less than three weeks. On December 1, 1952 the 106<sup>th</sup> returned to New York where it was re-designated as the 106<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group and reconverted to flying B-26s.<sup>23</sup>

After Korea the Air National Guard became a "mixed force of fighters, air lifters, tankers, and support units."<sup>24</sup> The resulting inclusion of the Air Guard as part of the larger Air Force mission witnessed a number of changes for the 106<sup>th</sup>. The 106<sup>th</sup> and 102<sup>nd</sup> continued flying their B-26's until February 1957. Annual Field Training, apart from one weekend a month at the home unit, was conducted at Hancock Field in upstate New York. There, for two weeks each year, gunnery and rocketry practice was held at the Grenier Range. Low level bombing practice was also conducted on Gardiner's Island, just off the eastern tip of Long Island. In February 1957, as the American military fully entered the jet age, the unit began flying the Lockheed T-33A "Shooting Star," and the F-94B "Starfire" (for defense). In 1957, the 102<sup>nd</sup> Squadron was re-designated a Fighter Interceptor Squadron, while the 106<sup>th</sup> was re-equipped with the F-86 "Sabrejet." It was also awarded the Governor's Air Trophy as the top-flying unit in New York. Moreover, in September 1958 the unit's mission was changed to Aeromedical Transport and the fighter jets gave way to the C-119 transports (large planes capable of carrying medical supplies, personnel, and equipment). The unit also boasted as one of its pilots, Lt. Colonel Norma Parsons Erb. Erb, a registered nurse, was the first female in the history of the Air National Guard. During the next four years, when the unit flew the C-119s, the

102<sup>nd</sup> was the annual recipient of the Certificate of “Notorious Achievement for Flying Safety.”<sup>25</sup>

In the early sixties the mission changed once more. On January 1, 1963 the unit received the first of nine C-97 Stratocrusiers. These heavy-duty transports would remain with the unit for close to seven years. The acquisition of these heavy aircraft signified that the unit’s mission was now Air Transport (Heavy) with responsibility for cargo and personnel; medical evacuation became secondary. The unit crews frequently flew to military installations in the Pacific, the Caribbean, South and Central America, Europe, Asia, Africa, and Australia. The 106<sup>th</sup> and 102<sup>nd</sup> were averaging six missions per month.

### **Vietnam and After**

As events in Vietnam captured the daily headlines in newspapers across the country, the 106<sup>th</sup> and 102<sup>nd</sup> went about their business in support of the conflict. In 1966, Lt. Colonel John B. Conley (later Major General and Commander of the New York Air National Guard) assumed command of the 102<sup>nd</sup> and its new designation as a Military Air Lift Squadron. Over the next eighteenth months, the squadron compiled an outstanding safety record while carrying out priority flights to Southeast Asia.<sup>26</sup> The flight logs recorded for that period note the following: fifty-seven missions to Southeast Asia (SEA), each a ten day round trip, other flights to Europe, Africa, Australia, 1,430,000 nautical airlift miles flown while airlifting 1,200 tons of cargo and 3,230 passengers.<sup>27</sup>

By the end of the decade the unit underwent another change in mission. On September 17, 1969 the new mission was that of Air-to-Air refueling. The C-97s were replaced with the KC-97s (tankers). Following a brief mobilization of the entire 106<sup>th</sup> wing in order to move the mail stalled by the postal workers strike of March 1970, the full unit was moved from Floyd Bennett Field to Suffolk County in Westhampton Beach in June of 1970. Its relocation marked a strategic change in the Air Force’s doctrine of global readiness and aerospace preparedness. More importantly, the relocation would also pave the way for the 106<sup>th</sup>’s major contribution in the area of search and rescue missions. This is where the 106<sup>th</sup> would achieve its present-day notoriety.

The former Suffolk County Air Force Base was selected to serve “as a natural aircraft carrier for the new unit mission of Aerospace Defense.”<sup>28</sup> During World War II a plan had been suggested making the Westhampton Beach air base the Northeast’s first line of defense against possible attacks by Nazi war planes. A 1940 plan entitled, “Engineering Brief for the Construction of a Major Military Airplane Base on Eastern Long Island, New York,” was discovered recently at the base. It advocated constructing underground bunkers housing 1,000 fighter planes

that could be quickly dispersed to pursue Nazi bombers and fighter planes. In 1960, the base was leased by the U.S. Air Force for an Air Defense Command Base, deactivated in 1969, then released back to Suffolk. In 1991, the airport was renamed in honor of Colonel Francis S. Gabreski, a former base commander.<sup>29</sup>

A primary reason for relocating the 106<sup>th</sup> was the extensive runway at Westhampton Beach. The runway was capable of handling large transports required for takeoffs and landings. The runway is also currently used to accommodate an emergency space shuttle landing. As the mission changed so, too, did the physical features of the base.

When it was an active Air Force base in the fifties and sixties, numerous barracks and housing for officers and enlisted personnel were situated on the west side of County Road 31 (Old Riverhead Road). Today, those buildings no longer exist. All facilities, including hangars, supply buildings, base headquarters, dining, fire equipment, air operations, etc., are presently located on the east side of County Road 31. The base currently occupies eighty-eight acres, with thirty-four buildings, thirty-two industries and two services encompassing 311,000 square feet. There are 250 day-to-day personnel. During a weekend drill approximately 800 Air National Guard personnel report to the base in order to perform their duties.

On June 6, 1972 the 106<sup>th</sup> was assigned officially to the Aerospace Defense Command. In December of that year, the formal conversion started with F102s, fighter jets, replacing the KC-97s. However, another change was in the wind for the unit. On June 14, 1975 the 106<sup>th</sup> was re-designated as an Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Group. This was marked by the arrival of the first of the HC130 Hercules that were specifically designed for aerospace and recovery missions. In fact, one month after its re-designation, the unit was put on standing alert in support of the Apollo-Soyuz Mission.<sup>30</sup>

With its new mission designation the 106<sup>th</sup> also began carrying out civilian search and rescue missions. The first actual airborne rescue mission took place on February 7, 1976. However, the first two unit saves were not until January 15, 1977 when two children trapped in an icebound boat off the coast of Southampton were rescued. The number of successful rescues grew each year. In 1977, eleven lives were saved; in 1978, twenty-one lives were saved, and it was only up from there.<sup>31</sup>



F-86 Saberjet. Courtesy of PAO, 106th RQW, NYANG.

Throughout the 1980s the unit's saves ranged from injured sailors, seamen and fishermen from various countries to local medivac operations. The most notable rescue during the early years of the unit's search and rescue operations involved the crew of the *John F. Leavett*. The *Leavett* was the first modern sail powered cargo vessel built in the United States in forty-four years. According to the mission log, on December 27, 1979 the *Leavett* was 290 miles offshore and sinking in the North Atlantic Ocean. The unit, once notified, immediately sent a C130 and HH3 (helicopters) support. Despite fierce winds and frigid waters, two PJs went into the water and saved the crew. One of the PJs, TSGT (Technical Sergeant) Jay Davis, was named the Air Force's 1980 Outstanding Pararescueman of the year for his efforts on the *Leavett* rescue. In November, 1980, the 102<sup>nd</sup> Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron was awarded the New York Air National Guard Commanders Trophy as the top unit in the state air guard. On August 23, 1981 moreover, the 106<sup>th</sup> Aerospace and Recovery Group (now wing) was awarded the United States Air Force Outstanding Unit Award for its search and rescue activities from 1 September 1978 to 31 May 1980.<sup>32</sup>

Along with its remarkable efforts in search and rescue missions, the 106<sup>th</sup> began the 1980s by participating for the second time in the space program in support of the Columbia Space Shuttle. This was followed up with another mission in November of 1981. On August 27, 1981 a new milestone was achieved when the unit registered its 106<sup>th</sup> save. The rescue was appropriately referred to as the first "Rotor Baby." An acutely

ill baby was evacuated by helicopter to a Long Island hospital that was designated for pediatric intensive care.<sup>33</sup>



B-26. Courtesy of PAO, 106th RQW, NYANG.

As volunteer servants of their country and state, the men and women of the 106<sup>th</sup> continued their impressive record of saving lives in the 1980s. The unit has flown every mission in the Air Force inventory. As the unit's impressive record of saving lives using HC130s and now HH60s continued, it also received its current designation just prior to the 1990s. On October 1, 1989 the 106<sup>th</sup>, with all its component squadrons, was formally given status as an Air Rescue Wing. It became one of only three rescue wings in the entire Air National Guard. Its mission was now clearly defined as one of land and sea recovery. The current mission of the 106<sup>th</sup> is twofold: (1) conduct Search and Rescue (SAR) and Medivac Operations from the Northeast United States, south to the Bahaman Islands, and east to the Azores. Its air refueling capabilities allow for long range rescue missions; (2) provide the Airborne Mission Commander (AIRBOSS) for every shuttle launch, as well as PJ men on board the HC-130(Hercules) for deployment in the event of a launch accident.<sup>34</sup>

As an Air Rescue Wing, the 106<sup>th</sup> quickly achieved greater stature and publicity at the beginning of the new decade. Unfortunately, it did not get off to a good start. The 1991 attempted rescue of crew members of the *Andrea Gale* on Halloween night, depicted in the book and movie, "The Perfect Storm," cost the life of TSGT (Technical Sergeant) Rick Smith, a valued PJ in the 106<sup>th</sup>. The mission logbooks depict a harrowing

experience, marked by bravery and courage. Every effort was made to save the lives of the Massachusetts fishermen. What is not detailed in the movie is how unit members, flight crews and PJs, planned the mission while fully aware of the risks.<sup>35</sup>

In 1994, the 106<sup>th</sup> conducted the longest over-water helicopter rescue in U.S. history when it saved the lives of one crew member in the frigid waters in the North Atlantic after their container ship, the *Salvador Allende*, broke apart. The round-trip mission took fifteen hours.<sup>36</sup>

Iraq has led to further examples of exemplary military service. On September 29, 2003 “A U.S. Army quick reaction force” was attacked near a prison in Baghdad. An Army Humvee rolled into an irrigation canal, tossing its occupants into the muddy ditch. The 106th PJs sprung into action. The PJs “began their search underwater in the filthy irrigation ditch where visibility was less than a foot. They felt their way blindly in dark and dangerous waters where live munitions had fallen only moments before.” They worked through the night “until the next day finally resulted in the recovery of two missing soldiers who did not survive their violent water entry.” Though the soldiers were not found alive, recovering their bodies for their families led PJ Chief Master Sergeant Tim Malloy to state: “It was my proudest day as a PJ.” As noted earlier, moreover, the unit’s heroism was demonstrated during the rescue of the two soldiers in a downed helicopter.<sup>37</sup>

America’s oldest Air National Guard Unit, which began as an observation squadron and is now an elite pararescue organization, continues to serve the nation and the state of New York. The men and women of this unit adhere to the motto that “Readiness Strengthens Liberty.” As a valued part of our military and an important organization on Long Island, the 106<sup>th</sup>’s humanitarian mission testifies to its resolve not only to preserve and protect America, but also to save lives.<sup>38</sup>

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> “Long Island Unit Rescues 2 in Iraq,” *Newsday*, November 6, 2003; see also, *Newsday*, November 30, 2003; *Newsday*, December 28, 2003: G10-11.

<sup>2</sup> Historical Records, Public Affairs Office, New York Air National Guard, 106<sup>th</sup> RQW, Westhampton Beach, New York.

<sup>3</sup> Bruce Jacobs, USA (Ret.), “The National Guard, Yesterday, today, tomorrow,” *American Legion Magazine* 157 (October 2004): 10-14.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-14.

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<sup>5</sup> Historical Records, Public Affairs Office, 106<sup>th</sup> RQW; see also, unpublished paper compiled by Public Affairs Office (PAO) entitled "102 Air Rescue and Recovery Squadron, 106 Air Rescue and Recovery Group."

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*; Quoted in Major William J. O'Dwyer, "The First Flying Squadron of 1912: War Games That Changed History," *Gabreski Gazette* 259 (September 1998): 1, 910; *Gabreski Gazette* 260 (October 1998): 9; "Our heritage: Beckwith Havens, First Pilot," *Gabreski Gazette* 259 (September 1998): 16.

<sup>9</sup> Lt. Colonel George H. Wrenn, "History of the 102<sup>nd</sup> Observation Squadron," pamphlet prepared by the New York Air National Guard, 1956.

<sup>10</sup> Historical Records, Public Affairs Office, 106<sup>th</sup> RQW; Wrenn, "History of the 102<sup>nd</sup> Observation Squadron," 1956; Reggie Shore, "Mitchel Field and the History of Aviation on Long Island," *Long Island Historical Journal* 12 (Spring 2000): 216-220;  
[www.hempsteadplains.com](http://www.hempsteadplains.com)

<sup>11</sup> Historical Records, Public Affairs Office, 106<sup>th</sup> RQW; Wrenn, "History of the 102<sup>nd</sup> Observation Squadron," 1956.

<sup>12</sup> Wrenn; Reference and Research Section, Air Historical Office, October 1, 1947 copy located at Public Affairs Office, 106<sup>th</sup> RQW;  
[www.encyclopedia.thefreedictionary.com](http://www.encyclopedia.thefreedictionary.com);  
[www.geocities.com/miller\\_field.com](http://www.geocities.com/miller_field.com)

<sup>13</sup> Historical Records, Public Affairs Office, 196<sup>th</sup> RQW; Charles J. Gross, *Militiamen, Volunteer, and Professional; The Air National Guard and the American Military Tradition* (Washington, D.C.: National Guard Bureau, 1956); *Air National Guard* (Washington, D.C.: Air Force History & Museums, 1964), passim.

<sup>14</sup> Margery Cohen-Willard and Charles F. Howlett, "Military Training at Camp Upton During the Great War: The Diary of Oscar I. Ostrow," *Long Island Historical Journal* 16 (Fall 2003/Spring 2004): 55-103; "When

doughboys Camped in Garden City, *Newsday* November 9, 2004, B2-B5; Report prepared by Captain Curtiss Wheeler, June 1924, New York National Guard Air Corp, 27<sup>th</sup> Division, Division of Historical Records, Archives of Air Historical Office, Washington, D.C.

<sup>15</sup> Historical Records, Public Affairs Office, 106<sup>th</sup> RQW; Curtiss Wheeler Report, June 28, 1924; [www.gees.com/miller\\_field.com](http://www.gees.com/miller_field.com)

<sup>16</sup> Recorded Records of 1<sup>st</sup> Pursuit Group History, August and September 1918, [www.acepilots.com](http://www.acepilots.com).

<sup>17</sup> Press Release, Public Affairs Office, 106<sup>th</sup> RQW.

<sup>18</sup> Historical Records, Public Affairs Office, 106<sup>th</sup> RQW; Wrenn, "History of the 102<sup>nd</sup> Observation Squadron," 1956.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Wrenn; George DeWan, "The Wings of War," in *Long Island Our Story* (Melville, N.Y.: Newsday Publishers, 1998): 304-311.

<sup>21</sup> Historical Records, Public Affairs Office, 106<sup>th</sup> RQW; Richard G. Davis, *Carl Spaatz and the Air War in Europe* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1993); John W. Chambers II, ed., *The Oxford Companion to American Military History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999): 18-24; [www.aero-web.org/history/fbennett/cgasb.com](http://www.aero-web.org/history/fbennett/cgasb.com)

<sup>22</sup> Chambers, 21-22; Herman S. Wolk, *Planning and Organizing the Postwar Air Force, 1943-1947* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1984); Walter J. Boyne, *Beyond the Wild Blue: A History of the United States Air Force, 1947-1997* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997).

<sup>23</sup> Historical Records, Public Affairs Office, 106<sup>th</sup> RQW.

<sup>24</sup> Chambers, 26; Gross.

<sup>25</sup> Historical Records, Public Affairs Office, 106<sup>th</sup> RQW; Wrenn.

<sup>26</sup> Historical Records, Public Affairs Office, 106<sup>th</sup> RQW.

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<sup>27</sup> Flight Log and Mission Logs, Historical Records, Public Affairs Office, 106<sup>th</sup> RQW.

<sup>28</sup> Historical Records/Unit Logs for 1972, Public Affairs Office, 106<sup>th</sup> RQW.

<sup>29</sup> Michael Dorman, "A Wing and a Plan," *Long Island, Our Story* , 308; DeWan, 304; "Francis S. Gabreski, WWII Air Ace, Dies at 83," *New York Times* (February 2, 2002).

<sup>30</sup> Historical Records, Public Affairs Office, 106<sup>th</sup> RQW.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*; Rescues 277 and 278, for instance, are recorded in *Team Rescue Today* , Special Issue (December 1999): 28-29; Tom Kaminski, "ANG Oldest Unit," <https://www.nysuff.ang.af.mil>.

<sup>32</sup> Mission Log, December 27, 1979, Historical Records, Public Affairs Office, 106<sup>th</sup> RQW.

<sup>33</sup> Historical Records, Public Affairs Office, 106<sup>th</sup> RQW.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Mike Canders, "The Perfect Storm, So that others may live," [www.usna.com/News.Pubs](http://www.usna.com/News.Pubs).

<sup>36</sup> Michael Hirsh, *Pararescue* (New York: Avon Books, 2001): 236; Historical Records, Public Affairs Office, 106<sup>th</sup> RQW.

<sup>37</sup> *Team Rescue Today* 321 (February 2004): 3, 9.

<sup>38</sup> Recently, local, state, and federal officials have been lobbying to keep the 106<sup>th</sup> at Gabreski, fearing it could be the target of a federal BRAC (Base Reduction and Closing) Commission report. Consult the following articles: "Supporters Rally for National Guard Unit," *New York Times*, December 5, 2004, LI Section, 3; "Civic leaders, Politicians fight to save base," *Newsday*, December 1, 2004, 17; "Life-Saving unit at risk," *Newsday* (December 14, 2004), 16-17; "Pataki vows to fight attempts to close base," *Newsday*, January 31, 2005, 14. As this issue goes to print in May, 2005 the U.S. military has indicated that the 106<sup>th</sup> was not slated to close. See "Nice Saves," *Newsday*, May 16, 2005.