



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Ritchie Hosts 8th Annual '10th Mountain Division and Fort Drum Day' at Capitol

PATTY RITCHIE May 14, 2019



State Senator Patty Ritchie welcomed the heroes of the 10th Mountain Division, including its new Commanding General, Major General Brian Mennes to the State Capitol Tuesday for “10th Mountain Division and Fort Drum Day.”

Now in its eighth year, the annual event recognizes the service and sacrifice of 10th Mountain Division soldiers, as well as highlights the positive economic impact of Fort Drum and the critical role the installation and its troops play in our national defense.

“It is truly an honor and a privilege not only to welcome the brave men and women of the 10th Mountain Division again to the state Capitol, but also to be their representative in the New York State Senate,” said Senator Patty Ritchie.

“I am in awe of their selfless service to our nation, and know that 10th Mountain Division and Fort Drum Day has again helped to highlight for my colleagues the tremendous sacrifices they make in the name of protecting our freedom, as well as the critical importance of Fort Drum to the North Country and New York State as a whole.”

One of the highlights of 10th Mountain Division and Fort Drum Day was a special address by Major General Mennes in the Senate Chamber. During his remarks, General Mennes—a Buffalo area native, West Point graduate and the first native New Yorker to lead the 10th Mountain Division—spoke about the 10th Mountain Division’s long military tradition, Fort Drum troops who had made the ultimate sacrifice, and support from the community, as well as New York State, that is vital to the strength of Fort Drum and its soldiers.

“The cost of freedom is high, but in a community like ours, our men and women in uniform—the soldiers on Fort Drum—find comfort and inspiration by a community that supports us,” said General Mennes.

“It’s that welcome feeling that we get that gets us through those tough times, those tough winters, those tough training events and those tough deployments. It’s the special partnership that we enjoy in the North Country, and we know it’s partially because of the attitude that’s demonstrated here in this great chamber and exhibited by your leadership.”

As part of 10th Mountain Division and Fort Drum Day, the Fort Drum Color Guard opened the day’s Senate session and Division Chaplain Lt. Col. James Foster delivered the invocation. In addition, lawmakers adopted a Senate Resolution proclaiming May 14th as

“10th Mountain Division and Fort Drum Day.”

This year, for the first time ever, 10th Mountain Division and Fort Drum Day included a performance by the 10th Mountain Division Band. In addition, 10th Mountain Division troops also manned interactive, informative displays throughout the Legislative Office Building, where lawmakers and visitors could learn more about the 10th Mountain Division's mission and new equipment being used in the field. North Country community groups that aim to support Fort Drum also shared information on the important work they do to strengthen the partnership between the area's military and civilian communities.

Among the several dozen troops in attendance were a number from New York State. In addition to Major General Mennes, New Yorkers attending included:

CPT Sean Robishaw (Highland, NY)

2LT Samuel Quattrone (Lakewood, NY)

MSG Dean Vernooy (Downsville, NY)

MSgt Patrick Naughton (East Chester, NY)

US Air Force SPC John VanRensselaer IV (Elmira, NY)

SPC Samuel Agyei-Darboh (Bronx, NY)

PFC Christopher Baker (Carthage, NY)

PFC Felix Severino (Bronx, NY)

SGT Jesse Lee (Unadilla, NY)

Fort Drum is the largest U.S. Army post north of the Carolinas and east of the Mississippi River and home to more than 30,000 soldiers and family members. Fort Drum's 10th Mountain Division was the first to deploy following the attacks on September 11th, and its brave troops continue to serve in various locations around the globe.

In addition, the installation is the engine that drives the North Country economy. Fort Drum is New York State's largest single-site employer, employing nearly 4,000 civilians and supporting tens of thousands of jobs off-post. According to a recent economic impact study, it was estimated that Fort Drum pumped roughly \$1.42 billion into the North Country economy last year.