



Testimony of Terrance R. Holliday,

Commissioner of the Mayor's Office of Veterans' Affairs before the New York City Council Committee  
on Veterans

May 10, 2012

**New York City's Preparations for Fleet Week 2012**

Good afternoon Chairman Eugene and members of the Veterans' Committee. My name is Terrance Holliday and I am the Commissioner of the Mayor's Office of Veterans' Affairs (MOVA). With me today is Mr. Ronald Cohen, Deputy Commissioner & Senior Advisor Office of the Mayor. Thank you for the opportunity to come before you today to discuss the City's preparation for Fleet Week 2012.

Since 1987, MOVA has advised the Mayor on issues impacting the veterans and military community and has coordinated delivery of City and non-profit services to these communities. MOVA works closely with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the New York State Division of Veterans' Affairs, City agencies, veterans' organizations, area military commanders, and other stakeholders to assist active service members, veterans, their dependents and survivors. MOVA is one of only a handful of city-level veterans' offices in the United States and we provide a critical link between individual veterans and the myriad of service agencies and organizations that are available to assist them.

New York City hosted its first Fleet Week in 1982. Ships are docked on the west side of Manhattan near the New York Passenger Ship Terminal, in Brooklyn and also at Stapleton, Staten Island. It is anticipated that more than 3,000 U.S. Sailors, Marines and Coast Guardsmen will be attending Fleet Week New York 2012. An estimated 1,500 coalition service members will also be present. Fleet Week is also something of a homecoming, as over 200 of the service members attending Fleet Week New York call the Tri-State area home.

Fleet Week is a tradition of the United States Navy, United States Marine Corps and the United States Coast Guard. Historically, recently deployed ships returning from overseas operations dock in several major cities for one week. Crews and military personnel are granted liberty to visit and enjoy the hospitality of the host city. Additionally, air shows are often provided by military demonstration teams such as the United States Navy Blue Angels or the Canadian Defense Force Snowbirds.

The bicentennial of the War of 1812 and the writing of the Star-Spangled Banner will be the theme for this year's Fleet Week. Coordinated by the Navy and OpSail 2012, the week will kick-off with a flotilla of seventeen tall ships and ten warships, sailing up the Hudson River from the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge to the George Washington Bridge before berthing and welcoming the general public for guided tours

Fleet Week is an opportunity for the United States maritime forces to interact with the American public and create an opportunity for further understanding of the military and its vital role. Each year MOVA and the Mayor's Office of Special Projects and Community Events (MOSPCE) work together to coordinate the Fleet Week Welcome Reception hosted by Mayor Bloomberg at Gracie Mansion. This year the event will be attended by 600 guests and will

provide a platform to inform service members about New York City and its many attractions. NYC & Company will furnish visitor's guides containing information about all Fleet Week and Op Sail events.

The Office of Citywide Event Coordination and Management (CECM) takes the lead role in the operational planning of Fleet Week. They work closely with representatives of MOVA, the United States Navy, the New York Police Department (NYPD), New York Fire Department (FDNY) and other appropriate agencies to coordinate safety and operational logistics.

The Navy develops a "communication plan" that includes information for the participants and is available to the public. The Mayor's Office also provides this information on [www.nyc.gov](http://www.nyc.gov) and the Mayor's Office of Veterans' Affairs shares all Fleet Week information with veterans and veterans' groups on its website and social media sites. Each year, the Fleet Week New York website is updated with event information, and the US Navy's Captains' Handbook, which contains the entire schedule of events. NYC & Company lists events and promotional discounts, maps and other helpful information on their website, [www.NYCGO.com](http://www.NYCGO.com).

As I mentioned, we anticipate that more than 3,000 U.S. Sailors, Marines and Coast Guardsmen will be attending Fleet Week New York 2012. In preparation, all participating military personnel must view a video developed by the staff of Commander Carrier Strike Group TEN regarding Fleet Week. Additional command briefings include:

- Senior non-commissioned officers will conduct safety briefings with personnel
- Ethics and Conduct Video on conduct and behavior while on NYC liberty.

During their visit to New York City for Fleet Week many of the service members are encouraged to get involved in community outreach events. Outreach events for Fleet Week 2012 include: Boys and Girls Club, Military Concerts (Times Square and Central Park), visits to soup kitchens, hospitals, school and more. There are Joint Air and Ground Demos planned for Coney Island, NYC Schools and 23 NYC Parks. Fleet Week events will also be held at Citi-Field -and Military Island in Times Square. Service members will visit Veterans Groups throughout the five boroughs and participate in Memorial Day Parades within the five boroughs.

NYC Fleet Week 2012 will be another outstanding moment in our calendar of events and the history of the Big Apple. Opportunities will be abundant to meet and greet Sailors, Marines and Coast Guardians throughout the five boroughs of our great city. I urge all of the members of the Veterans' Committee to take advantage of the moment and visit the gallant members of our military, many of whom have probably deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan---- some several times ---- and some of whom may soon return. Fleet Week provides all of us with an opportunity to thank these men and women for their continued service to our nation.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. At this time I will be happy to take your questions.



**IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN  
VETERANS OF AMERICA**

**Testimony of Anthony Pike  
Membership Coordinator  
Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America  
New York City Council  
May 10, 2012**

On behalf of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America's 250,000 member veterans and supporters, including more than 2,100 members who call New York City their home, thank you for inviting me to speak on the preparation for Fleet Week.

My name is Anthony Pike and I am a Membership Coordinator at IAVA. IAVA is the first and largest non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to improving the lives of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans and empowering them to become the New Greatest Generation. We strive to build an empowered generation of veterans who will provide sustainable leadership for our country and their communities.

I myself am a veteran of two combat tours to Iraq as a United States Marine. I joined the Marine Corps in March of 2000, shipping off for basic training in December 2000 and serving on active-duty until December 2004. I returned to active-duty in 2006 for one last deployment to Ramadi, Iraq.

Although during my time in service I never had the opportunity to participate in Fleet Week, I did participate in several training deployments with comparable experiences of being in a new city and wanting to get out and explore. During these deployments, I came to love my host countries in the same way that our service members participating in Fleet Week will come to love New York.

This is an opportunity for the greatest city in the world to recruit the New Greatest Generation by opening the city up and making it more accessible during Fleet Week. New York City is an amazing place. The sights, sounds, and opportunities that are found here are unique and countless. New York city is a place where the entrepreneurial person can thrive - the military breeds the entrepreneurial spirit.

New York can and should be the place where our service members not only want to spend their vacations, but to be the place to settle down when they leave the service. This is the city where they should want to pursue new endeavors, return to school, and raise their families. The council should look into making New York as accessible as possible while also using this opportunity to showcase the many opportunities available to veterans and their families.

## **Transportation**

One of the biggest challenges I experienced on the deployments I participated in was a lack of readily available transportation. With a world-class public transportation system in place, IAVA recommends that the city should consider making available weekly passes to all service members participating in Fleet Week. New York's public transportation is easily accessible, well connected and easy to understand. By opening up the city to our Armed Forces, it will ensure that they can see all the city has to offer and will come to look forward to an opportunity to return.

## **National September 11<sup>th</sup> Memorial**

Today, the vast majority of service members have deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan, or other forward locations in support of the Global War on Terror. In fact, more than 2.4 million members of our military have deployed in the wake of September 11<sup>th</sup>. The military community is linked to that day and their lives have been shaped by deployments to Iraq and the ongoing operations in Afghanistan.

I first visited ground zero several years ago before the memorial opened. Along with other veterans of Iraq, I walked around the area taking in the emotions that the location evoked. I returned last year after the memorial opened to the public. I was overwhelmed by the connection I made to the memorial and my service in Iraq.

We are all uniquely tied to the World Trade Center and the memorial that now stands in the footprints of the Twin Towers. For now, and for many untold years to come, the memorial at the World Trade Center is the only national memorial that our veterans have for their service in Iraq and Afghanistan. IAVA recommends making visitor passes available to our service members, it will provide a chance for them to connect to the city in a very personal way. The memorial is a place for healing and remembrance.

## **City Attractions**

The interests of our service members are as many and varied as the people themselves. Fortunately for them, New York has something for everyone. Again my recommendation is to make these opportunities available for all.

The majority of the armed forces is made up of junior enlisted individuals on their first enlistment, as such there is not a lot of disposable income. Making discounts available to Fleet Week participants on the widest possible level will help to ensure that these members are able to take advantage of all the city has to offer. Museums, theaters, and concert halls should all be encouraged to offer discounts and passes to bring in Fleet Week participants. New York City landmarks such as the observation deck of the Empire State Building should also be encouraged to open their doors.

## **Veteran friendly**

Finally, the city should present itself as a veteran friendly city. As members transition from active-duty they do so to pursue new interests, careers, and education. With the reduction in force and the planned withdrawal of troops from

Afghanistan, it is estimated that over the next five years, one million service members will be leaving the service. This city should open its arms to welcome the New Greatest Generation of veterans into the city.

New York City is home to many great schools. With the New GI Bill and Yellow Ribbon programs these schools can be affordable to thousands of veterans. These schools offer world-class education and programs for advanced studies and should be recruiting these members. IAVA encourages these schools to open their campuses to tours targeted at bringing these veterans into their programs.

For veterans ready to enter directly into the work force, programs such as Veterans on Wall Street (VOWS) should be readily available to talk about the services they offer. New York City employers will find this New Greatest Generation of veterans capable, willing, and readily able to overcome any challenge presented to them. IAVA encourages New York City to be a leader in reducing veteran unemployment from the 17% rate that our members are facing. In doing so, this city will come to truly understand that veterans are an investment and not a charity.

It is my sincere hope that my testimony today will show this council that New York City should open its arm to welcome the New Greatest Generation of veterans into the city.

Thank you.

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms