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Retired NY National Guard commander from Cazenovia killed in glider crash



Retired Maj. Gen. Robert A. Knauff, a former New York Air National Guard commander from Cazenovia, was killed Saturday while piloting his glider plane in the desert northwest of Phoenix. In this photo, Knauff stands in front of a small arms firing range at the Air National Guard at Hancock Field. Knauff commanded the Syracuse-based 174th Fighter Wing at Hancock Field from 1996 to 2003. (Frank Ordenez | The Post-Standard file photo)

Print (http://blog.syracuse.com/news/print.html?entry=/2014/05/retired_ny_national_guard_commander_from_cazenovia_killed_in_glider_crash.html)

<http://connect.syracuse.com/staff/cotoole/index.html> By [Catie O'Toole | cotoole@syracuse.com](mailto:cotoole@syracuse.com)



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on May 04, 2014 at 8:06 PM, updated May 05, 2014 at 10:17 AM

Syracuse, NY -- A retired fighter pilot and former New York Air National Guard commander from Cazenovia was killed Saturday while piloting his glider plane in the desert northwest of Phoenix, authorities said.

Retired Maj. Gen. Robert A. Knauff, a combat veteran with more than 3,900 flying hours, was about 100 feet in the air in Aguila, Ariz. when a towrope connecting him to an airplane somehow became disconnected, a Maricopa County sheriff's spokesman told The Associated Press.

Witnesses told investigators Knauff -- the registered owner of the aircraft -- appeared to try making a sharp turn and then the glider plane stalled, hitting a pole, according to the AP.

Knauff was pronounced dead at the scene. He was 61.

The New York National Guard issued [a statement](http://readme.readmedia.com/New-York-National-Guard-Mourns-Loss-of-Former-Leader/8511175?utm_source=newswire&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=media_pr_emails) (http://readme.readmedia.com/New-York-National-Guard-Mourns-Loss-of-Former-Leader/8511175?utm_source=newswire&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=media_pr_emails) Sunday saying its members are mourning the loss of its former commander.

Knauff commanded the Syracuse-based 174th Fighter Wing at Hancock Field from 1996 to 2003. He then became chief of staff for the New York Air National Guard, and then commander in 2005.

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When he was commander, New York's 109th Airlift Wing flew many missions with lots of materials to build a research station in Antarctica, said his sister Christy Fitzpatrick, of Colorado. After he retired, the National Science Foundation named a mountain in Antarctica in his honor, she said. Fitzpatrick said she once found "Mt. Knauff" on Google Earth.

"He was pretty modest, but I think he was pleased," Fitzpatrick said. "I thought it was pretty cool."

Fitzpatrick said her brother always brought out the best in the people with whom he worked.

"He was very fair," she said. "He was very direct. And he really cared about his people."

Knauff 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, according to the New York National Guard. He retired from the military in February 2009.

"Our entire military family extends our deepest sympathies on the loss of this great Air Force leader and friend," Maj. Gen. Patrick A. Murphy, the adjutant general and commander of the New York National Guard, said in a prepared statement. "Bob Knauff stayed active in his support of soldiers and airmen even in his retirement years and our National Guard has lost a tremendous leader and supporter."

Knauff's death comes just months after his wife, **Tara Howard Knauff** (<http://obits.syracuse.com/obituaries/syracuse/obituary.aspx?pid=167570327>), died of cancer in October. They had been married for one year and four months.

His first wife, Kathy Knauff, died of cancer in 2009.

Robert Knauff lived in Cazenovia, Madison County, and remained active in the Central New York community, according to his sister and the military. He was an advisor emeritus with the **Syracuse area Salvation Army** (http://www.use.salvationarmy.org/use/www_use_SyracuseNewYork.nsf/vw-sublinks/DEB478EB4492244885257C11005039AE?openDocument) and involved in its annual **Christmas Bureau** (http://www.use.salvationarmy.org/use/www_use_SyracuseNewYork.nsf/vw-text-dynamic-arrays/208AE2E4E84FoF3E85257C15003EDDC?openDocument&charset=utf-8). Knauff also belonged to a local glider club, Fitzpatrick said.

He recently served as chief executive officer at Northeast UAS Airspace Integration Research Alliance (NUAIR) in Rome, where he was involved in the proposal to bring **drone research**

(http://www.syracuse.com/news/index.ssf/2013/06/syracuse_council_weighs_concer.html)

to Central New York, his sister said. He also served as a chairman of the Board for the Military Association of New York, according to the military.

Knauff received many awards over the years, including the Legion of Merit, Air Force Overseas Ribbon, Global War on Terrorism Medal and New York State Defense of Liberty Medal.

Tait Funeral Home in Cazenovia is still finalizing Knauff's funeral arrangements. Knauff is survived by his sister, and several nieces and nephews.

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 **parkstrees** 1 day ago
 Thank you for your tremendous service General Knauff. It's always the good ones that go. RIP.


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 **polishandproud** 1 day ago
 I think the liberal media is covering up Obama's involvement in this. He ordered the tow rope tampered with!!!! Lolololololol


Reply

 **parkstrees** 1 day ago
 @polishandproud Why are you so disrespectful? Grow up!

Reply

 **northlakesid** 18 hours ago
 @polishandproud I wouldn't be if I were you. Nothing to be proud of. Your a complete heartless scum bag.

Reply

 **Joseph Riccio** (http://connect.syracuse.com/user/joseph_riccio/index.html) 1 day ago
 (http://connect.syracuse.com/user/joseph_riccio/index.html) General, Thank you for all you did for New York and the nation. You cannot be replaced, you were a true patriot and a great friend. You will be missed

"Oh! I have slipped the surly bonds of Earth
 And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings;
 Sunward I've climbed, and joined the tumbling mirth
 of sun-split clouds, — and done a hundred things
 You have not dreamed of — wheeled and soared and swung
 High in the sunlit silence. Hov'ring there,
 I've chased the shouting wind along, and flung
 My eager craft through footless halls of air..."

Up, up the long, delirious, burning blue
 I've topped the wind-swept heights with easy grace.
 Where never lark, or even eagle flew —
 And, while with silent, lifting mind I've trod
 The high untrespassed sanctity of space,
 - Put out my hand, and touched the face of God."

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torquemada2

1 day ago

Catie, well written. They may have given your an incorrect flying hours number, however.

It is likely that his total flying hours would be 39,000, rather than 3900.

Reply



Heather M

16 hours ago

3900 is correct. Once you attain a certain rank, your flying status diminishes. MG Knauff, RIP, sir. You were a main reason I joined the military and were truly a leader. It was an honor serving with you.

Reply



WMcArdle (<http://connect.syracuse.com/user/WMcArdle/index.html>)
(<http://connect.syracuse.com/user/WMcArdle/index.html>)

1 day ago

We've lost a true leader, motivator and mentor. RIP Maj Gen Knauff.

Reply



usavet

1 day ago

Maj. Gen. Robert A. Knauff, (Retired), Thank you for your outstanding service to our country. Rest in Peace General.

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