DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS NEW YORK AIR NATIONAL GUARD

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Colonel Anthony B. Basile
Chief of Staff
HQ NYANG//MNAF/CS
330 Old Niskayuna Road
Latham, New York 12110-3514

To The Outstanding Men and Women of the New York Air National Guard

Writing these words, I am brought back to when I went away to college back in the late '80s…OK, OK, so it was the early '70s. Anyways, I remember the empty, lonely feeling I felt as my family dropped me off in a strange environment to begin a new, intimidating phase of my life. Gone was the comfort zone of familiar surroundings and people who cared about me. And while I knew that I would see my family again, I didn't know when that would be, and I didn't know what would happen to me between now and then.

Well, after a few months, I did see my family again, and the comfort zone I knew as a teenager growing up in central New York was replaced by various other comfort zones, and eventually by one that spanned 31 years in a blue [on Mondays] uniform. But once more, I find myself in unfamiliar surroundings, saying goodbye to family, not knowing when I'll see you again. History, however, has taught me that I WILL see you again, and I know that I will certainly be following what happens to you and this great organization.

I have often told young people at career fairs that if you can look back at the end of your career and honestly say that you would choose the same occupation, you are probably in a small percentage of our society. Yet, that's exactly how I feel today. I suspect, and certainly hope, that many of you feel the same way about your choice. There have been other opportunities along the way, but none that could have reached through my skin and seized my soul as my military career has.

I know I am very fortunate to have an exciting new opportunity waiting for me as I conclude these last couple weeks in uniform. That being said, I am quite certain that no matter what I do professionally with the rest of my life, I will never be more proud of what of I have done in the last 31 years, nor who I have done it with. Thank you for being the best America has to offer. Thank you for the outstanding service you provide the NYANG, your communities, and our nation. It has been an honor and privilege to have served with you all. My heartfelt best wishes to you in the future.

Sincerely

ANTHONY B. BASILE, Colonel, NYANG