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OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
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CONTACT: pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov, (212) 788-2958

MAYOR BILL DE BLASIO, STATEN ISLAND BOROUGH PRESIDENT ODDO AND DOT COMMISSIONER TROTTEBERG ANNOUNCE NEW STATEN ISLAND FERRY BOAT WILL HONOR AFGHANISTAN WAR HERO STAFF SERGEANT MICHAEL OLLIS

The first of three new ferry boats will be named for Army Staff Sergeant Michael Ollis, a Staten Islander killed saving fellow soldiers



New York—Mayor Bill de Blasio, Staten Island Borough President James Oddo and Department of Transportation Commissioner Polly Trottenberg announced that the first of three new Staten Island Ferry Boats will be named in honor of the late Army Staff Sergeant Michael H. Ollis, a Staten Islander killed in Afghanistan in 2013 at the age of 24.

The *Staff Sgt. Michael Ollis* will be the first of three new Staten Island Ferry boats that New York City will have built in the next four years. It is expected to begin service in 2019.

"Staff Sergeant Ollis represented the very best of our city. For decades to come, the *Staff Sgt. Michael Ollis* will be an icon and a point of pride for Staten Island and the whole city," said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**.

"We have so much love and pride for our son," said **the Ollis family**. "We can't put into words what it means to know that every day, for decades and decades to come, Michael's neighbors, his fellow Staten Islanders and New Yorkers, and people from all over the world will see his name on this beautiful boat, and remember his life and his sacrifice."

"Army Staff Sergeant Michael Ollis represents the very best of Staten Island and America. He is a hero who gave up his life to protect his fellow soldiers from a suicide bomber, and naming a Staten Island Ferry boat after Army Staff Sergeant Ollis will make sure his legacy lives on. We are all deeply proud of his service and equally humbled by Sergeant Ollis's sacrifice. Now, millions of commuters and tourists aboard the Ollis Ferry will be just as proud as we connect his home to the rest of our great city. I want to thank Mayor de Blasio and the New York City Department of Transportation for posthumously honoring Army Staff Sergeant Ollis in such a fitting way," said **Senator Charles E. Schumer**.

“Staff Sergeant Michael Ollis is a true Staten Island hero and will be a perpetual reminder that we can and must be about something greater than ourselves, in all ways big and small,” said **Staten Island Borough President James Oddo**. “Like Father Vincent Capodanno before him, through his heroism Sergeant Ollis was the embodiment of selflessness and clearly demonstrated the truth of John 15:13 – ‘Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.’ Naming the Ferry after him not only honors Sergeant Ollis, it also pays tribute to every Staten Islander who has made the ultimate sacrifice in defense of this nation, and all those men and women who have put on a uniform in service of this country. Lastly, and equally as important to me personally, is the timing of this wonderful news. I wanted so very much for Mr. & Mrs. Ollis to have this moment to revel once again in pride of the man they raised and the genuinely good human being he was. Their pain will be forever, but I think it is so important for them to have this small measure of comfort. I am deeply indebted and so very grateful to Mayor de Blasio for making this happen.”

“Staff Sergeant Michael Ollis died protecting the freedoms that we Americans hold so dear,” said **District Attorney Michael E. McMahon**. “I think it is a wonderfully fitting honor that a Staten Island Ferry be named after Sergeant Ollis to remind all New Yorkers of the supreme sacrifice he made while deployed in Afghanistan. I know that Bob, Linda and the entire Ollis family are incredibly proud of Michael, and now, rightfully, the City of New York is recognizing our joint pride and admiration for his heroism, courage, and selflessness.”

“Our community and our nation is forever indebted to Staff Sergeant Michael Ollis and his family for their sacrifice,” said **Congressman Daniel Donovan**. “There’s no better way to honor our hometown hero than to enshrine his name for decades to come on Staten Island’s newest ferry. In Washington, I’m continuing to advocate for Staff Sergeant Ollis to receive the Congressional Medal of Honor.”

“I can think of no more deserving and fitting person to name the ferry in memory of. Staten Islander Michael Ollis was a true American hero who made the ultimate sacrifice in order to defend human liberty and the American way,” said **State Senator Andrew Lanza**. “I thank and commend Mayor de Blasio for recognizing Michael’s bravery and heroism with this enduring tribute and memorial.”

“I want to thank Mayor de Blasio for his wise choice in the naming of our new ferry boat. It is a fitting reminder, not just to Staten Islanders, but to all who use this boat of the supreme sacrifice made by Michael Ollis and his family,” said **State Senator Diane Savino**. “In addition, credit goes to the thousands of Staten Islanders who participated in the effort to make this happen.”

“Thank you Mayor de Blasio for naming this ferry boat after our hometown hero. Staff Sergeant Michael Ollis is a role model for all Americans and gave his life to protect our freedoms and liberties,” said **Assembly Member Nicole Malliotakis**. “The Ollis name is one that the 22 million passengers that use the ferry every year should know, and one that all Staten Islanders can be proud of.”

“It gives me great pride that the newest Staten Island Ferry boat, our most iconic landmark recognized across the globe, will be named in memory of Staff Sergeant Michael Ollis,” said **Assembly Member Michael Cusick**. “Sergeant Ollis’ bravery and sacrifice were truly remarkable and naming this vessel in his honor will ensure that his memory will live on in the hearts and minds of Staten Islanders and passengers from across the globe for generations to come.”

“It is important to honor and remember our heroes,” said **Assembly Member Matthew Titone**. “Staten Islanders already know about the heroic sacrifice of Staff Sergeant Michael Ollis. Now millions of people from around the world who ride this ferry will know as well.”

“I cannot think of a more fitting tribute to our native son, Staff Sergeant Michael Ollis, than naming a Staten Island Ferry in his honor,” said **Council Minority Leader Steve Matteo**. “The millions of people who ride this

boat each year will soon be reminded of the sacrifice and the legacy of a true hometown hero and a patriot. Borough President Oddo and Mayor de Blasio deserve credit for this worthy choice."

"I am proud to stand here and honor Staten Island native son Staff Sergeant Michael Ollis for his ultimate sacrifice," said **DOT Commissioner Polly Trottenberg**. "Naming a vessel in his honor is a fitting tribute to his service."

"Naming the first of three new Staten Island Ferry Boats in honor of the late U.S. Army Staff Sergeant Michael H. Ollis is a most fitting tribute to his lifetime record of heroic service and ultimate sacrifice for his fellow comrades and country," said **Retired Brigadier General Loree Sutton, Commissioner of the Mayor's Office of Veterans' Affairs**. "Under the leadership of Mayor Bill de Blasio, this historic dedication serves as an enduring testament honoring the stalwart courage and character of Staff Sergeant Hollis; the Ollis family legacy and proud tradition of military service; the selfless commitment and patriotism of the entire Staten Island community; and the many generations of New Yorkers who, since our nation's founding, have so nobly answered the call of duty."

There was a groundswell of support behind renaming the boat in the Staff Sergeant's honor, with an online petition garnering more than 5,700 signatures.

A lifelong resident of New Dorp and a graduate of Michael Petrides High School, Staff Sergeant Michael H. Ollis was assigned to the U.S Army's 2nd Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team and the 10th Mountain Division. After enlisting in 2006, Staff Sergeant Ollis served one tour of duty in Iraq and two tours in Afghanistan. On August 28, 2013, during his third deployment serving at a forward operating base in Ghazni, Afghanistan, the base was attacked by insurgent forces. In the course of meeting the enemy, Staff Sergeant Ollis stepped in front of a wounded Polish officer in order to protect him from an insurgent wearing a suicide vest.

Staff Sergeant Ollis has since been honored posthumously with the Bronze Star, the Purple Heart, the Silver Star and the Audie Murphy Medallion. Mr. Ollis' heroism has also been honored by the Polish government with their highest military award, the Polish Medal of Honor.

The three new 4,500 passenger ferry boats will be funded by a \$156 million Federal Transportation Administration grant awarded in 2014 thanks to Senator Charles Schumer, New York City's congressional delegation, and \$138 million in City funds and \$20 million in other state and federal grants funds. The new boats will be able to operate more safely in more extreme weather conditions. This will be the first new class of boats added to the ferry fleet since 2006, and will reflect modern engines and technology, as well as many of the celebrated features of past Staten Island Ferries, including outdoor promenades.

The *Staff Sgt. Ollis* is anticipated to be delivered to New York City in early 2019, the second boat is expected to be finished in fall 2019, and the final boat is anticipated to be in early 2020. In fall of 2015, DOT surveyed three new styles of ferry seats and is currently reviewing the responses. Currently, the new ferry boats are still in the design phase. A bid will be issued in spring of 2016, and the 'Notice to Proceed' for the first of three boats will be issued at the end of the year.

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