

## Prison on Dry Hill marks 25th anniversary

**BRIEF CEREMONY:** Memorial unveiled; rumors of expansion are denied by official

By DAVID C. SHAMPINE

TIMES STAFF WRITER

THURSDAY, MARCH 6, 2008

Speakers, a singer, a bagpiper, a color guard and a gathering of about 30 people endured a biting cold wind Wednesday afternoon for a 20-minute memorial dedication at Watertown Correctional Facility, Dry Hill.

Dr. Lester N. Wright, deputy corrections commissioner standing in for Commissioner Brian Fischer, said he always expects a wind when he visits Dry Hill, and he has yet to be disappointed.

Officials unveiled a memorial plaque honoring all deceased employees of the prison. The ceremony observed the 25th anniversary of the facility's opening. A program for the event honored Thomas A. Coughlin III, a "brash Air Force sergeant from Brooklyn" who was stationed at the site when it was an Air Force station, for his efforts while corrections commissioner to bring the property into the prison system.



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DAILY TIMES

Correction Sgt. Bernard Ward, right, calls out commands Wednesday afternoon to the Watertown Correctional Facility Color Guard during the dedication of a memorial to deceased employees of the state prison. The prison's 25th anniversary was observed Wednesday.

Mr. Coughlin, founder of what is now the Jefferson Rehabilitation Center, was director of the state office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities before he served as corrections commissioner from 1979 to 1994. He died in August 2001.

Mr. Fischer had planned on participating in the ceremony, but he had to turn around at Syracuse to respond to a call at another prison, said Ekpe D. Ekpe, superintendent of the Watertown facility.

Dr. Wright, Manhattan, the system's chief medical officer, said he visits all of the state's 70 prisons at least once a year, and has been impressed by what he has seen at Watertown.

After the ceremony, Dr. Wright denied there are expansion plans for the Dry Hill property.

"I don't see an expansion coming for any of the prisons in the state for at least the next two years. The population has been going down. We are doing a good job in getting people reformed and returned to society," he said.

Watertown City Councilman Peter Clough served as master of ceremonies. Marty Martinez, a counselor at the prison, sang "The Star Spangled Banner" and "America the Beautiful." An invocation was offered by Deacon Mark LaLonde, Riverview Correctional Facility, and following benediction by Deacon Kenneth Seymour, Watertown Correctional Facility, Jeff Forsythe, Gouverneur Correctional Facility, played "Amazing Grace" on his bagpipe.