

SUMMARY OF AVAILABLE STATE DEFENSE FORCE AFTER ACTION REPORTS FROM HURRICANES KATRINA AND RITA DEPLOYMENTS ¹

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National concerns over terrorism and homeland security notwithstanding, recurring natural disasters are presenting a serious drain on state resources normally available to treat with and mitigate them. Recent hurricanes Katrina and Rita are just two terrible examples of catastrophic natural disasters; recent years have seen other disastrous hurricanes, major floods and snow and ice storms.

Normally, the state can rely on its National Guard (NG) and civilian “first responder” infrastructure. Unfortunately, international terrorism, foreign combat and homeland security needs are impacting these resources. According to Associate Press writer Liz Sideri, 10 September 2005, “About 41,000 Guard members are scattered across Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana ... (and) About 30,000 Guard members are serving in Iraq, with smaller numbers in Afghanistan, Kosovo and elsewhere overseas.” Thus, drastically reducing their National Guard’s potential effectiveness in this emergency. And this will continue to be the case as long as the Department of Defense continues to view the Reserve Forces as a component of overall military operations.

In past years, most State Adjutants General considered their Title 32, USC, authorized State Defense Force [(SDF), State Guard, State Military Reserve or other similar authorized organization title] of little or no value in disaster mitigation or homeland security. Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, as a cap on earlier disasters in South Carolina and Georgia, to name a few, demonstrated the error of this belief.

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita ushered in a new era of natural disaster mitigation by the SDF; Governors and Adjutants General across the nation answered the call. They agreed to permit SDF units from other states to function in damaged areas and SDF units were deployed in very short order, often before the NG units were deployed; in other words, they rewrote the perceived rule book. The results were comments of appreciation and praise from the hurricane impacted areas.

An overview of deployments follow:

- o FEDERAL – Captain John Stone reported the following Active Duty and Reserve Forces deployments in response to the hurricanes:
 - 13,000 Active Duty personnel;
 - 67,500 NG personnel;
 - 6 Navy ships;
 - 4 Coast Guard ships;
 - 19 fixed wing aircraft; and
 - 8 helicopters.

¹ Information contained in this summary report were obtained from deployed State Defense Force Brigade After Action Reports submitted to the State Guard Association of the United States and provided for this purpose.

Report Documentation Page

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

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1. REPORT DATE 2006	2. REPORT TYPE	3. DATES COVERED 00-00-2006 to 00-00-2006			
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Summary of Available State Defense Force After Action Reports from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita Deployments		5a. CONTRACT NUMBER			
		5b. GRANT NUMBER			
		5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER			
6. AUTHOR(S)		5d. PROJECT NUMBER			
		5e. TASK NUMBER			
		5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER			
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) State Defense Force Publication Center, 19819 Maycrest Way, Germantown, MD, 20876-6339		8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER			
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)		10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)			
		11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)			
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES See also ADA494464. Pub in: State Defense Force Journal, Vol. 2, Issue 1, Spring 2006. © 2008 State Defense Forces Publications Center. Creative Commons Attribution License.					
14. ABSTRACT					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT Same as Report (SAR)	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 5	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT unclassified	b. ABSTRACT unclassified	c. THIS PAGE unclassified			

- o NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU –
 - Lieutenant General H. Steven Blum, Director, National Guard Bureau stated that early numbers indicated that nearly 1,700 SDF personnel were assisting on Katrina needs and pledged to build stronger relationships with responders.

- o SDF DEPLOYMENT NUMBERS – Captain John Stone reported later counts to be in excess of 2,274, as follows:
 - ASDF – 600;
 - GASG – 138;
 - LASG – 117;
 - MDDF – 126 in two deployments,
 - MSG – 111;
 - TXSG – 1,000+;
 - TNSG – 150;
 - VADF – 32;

 - CASMR – 153 (reporting independently);

 - (Final figures are still unavailable as some states have not updated their initial deployment numbers and some others have not reported these numbers to the State Guard Association of the United States or other central reporting point.)

- o ALABAMA – Colonel William A. Morris, ASDF, reported:
 - All four Brigades activated personnel involved in State operations centers,
 - Personnel were involved in the operation of shelters, distribution stations and warehousing;
 - Personnel were working to meet needs in Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi.

- o CALIFORNIA – Colonel Martin Ledwitz, CASMR, reported:
 - Deployed 152 members, one of which (Lieutenant Colonel Knight) was called up by the NG Bureau for duty in Mississippi and Louisiana in support of the NG;
 - Other activities included the Joint Operations Center, communications and electronics, medical, public relations, air operations, and Judge Advocate General.

- o MARYLAND – Colonel Jack McNiff, (MDDF-Ret), Captain John Stone and the Globe Newspaper company reported:
 - Governor Robert L. Ehrlich addressed the volunteers, designated Operation Lifeline.” Also present were Major General Tuxill, The Adjutant General, Brigadier General Frederic N. Smolkin, MDDF Commanding General, and senior military and civilian

officials from MDARNG, MDDF, emergency management, health and mental hygiene, and homeland security;

- Since Maryland physicians and first responders who wished to volunteer were not certified or insured to practice in the disaster areas and were unable to obtain air or ground transportation there, they were sworn into the MDDF as military medical personnel, thus permitting them to practice there and to utilize military air and ground transportation (a modern day coup for the better, undertaken as a convenience to the Maryland Emergency Management Agency, the Maryland Emergency Responders and the Maryland Military Department);
 - Brigadier General James Flynn, MDDF, was the overall Medical Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Patrick Shanahan, MDDF, was the Medical Commander of Operation Lifeline and Major Michael Millin, MDDF, was the Chief of the Medical Clinic (all three are physician specialists from the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine;
 - Services provided included initial trauma care, standard internal medicine treatment and food.
- o TENNESSEE – Brigadier General John T. Frame, Commanding General, TNSG, reported:
- In excess of 150 personnel were deployed;
 - Services performed included housing displaced persons, uniformed facilitation at military installations housing disaster victims and uniformed escorts for buses transporting displaced persons.
- o TEXAS – Command Chief Master Sergeant Norman King reported:
- 594 personnel were deployed;
 - 50 Texas State Guardsmen were assigned unarmed to assist the Dallas policing effort;
 - Sergeant First Class Delaney, TXSG, reported unarmed assistance to the San Antonio Police Department in removal of some undesirables and resolving one domestic squabble;
 - Lieutenant Colonel Steve Baczewski, TXSG, commented “the amount of support provided the refugees was amazing”;
 - Lieutenant Colonel Jim Miles, TXSG, stated the shelter management was good experience for the State Guard, commenting that this “was our foxhole”;
 - Lieutenant Colonel Joeanna Mastracchio, TXSG, reported that the troops were on duty around the clock on 12-hour shifts;

- Master Sergeant Kate Callahan, TXSG, and Senior Airman Renee Runningdeer, TXSG, both trained medics, provided immediate emergency medical attention to a refugee with life threatening injuries, releasing the injured person for hospital transport when the on-scene aid was no longer needed;
 - Colonel Paul Watkins related an incident where a person stranded on a rooftop in New Orleans cell-phoned a cousin who reported it to a state guardsman, who in turn contacted a team resulting in the person's rescue;
 - Colonel Paul Watkins further stated that the refugees were more likely to talk to a state guardsman than to a police officer;
 - Colonel Victor Ortiz, TXSG, stated our mission is now to support the NG;
 - Command Sergeant Major Richard Vasquez, emphasizing the importance of the NG and the State Guard within the Texas Military Forces, commented "We are a team";
 - When state guardsmen who were out of water refused to use the water supply for the refugees, Command Sergeant Major Vasquez immediately corrected the shortage saying "Just let us know what you need, I don't take NO for an answer";
 - Sergeant David Cauble, TXSG, provided many of the above anecdotes;
 - State guardsmen performed support activities for Red Cross shelters, state refugee facilities, police health and safety services, the Information Services Communications System, religious services and comfort to guardsmen, medical provision, and facilitating family reunion.
- o VIRGINIA – Captain John Stone, VADF, reported:
- 32 Virginia State Guard personnel were deployed;
 - State guardsmen provided mobilization assistance for the NG deploying to the Gulf Coast;
 - Several Defense Force personnel provided communications assistance to the Virginia Operations Center;
 - Chief Warrant Officer (5) James B. Spencer, VADF, reported that they were working on seven (7) day rotating shifts.

Several other State Defense Force Brigades or Units were said to have deployed in support of hurricane disaster mitigation efforts; however, since they did not publicize their deployment experience, they could not be included herein.

The effort put forth by the SDF Brigades or Units, the joint effort between them and the deployed NG units, the humane services provided to the Hurricane Katrina and Rita victims all speak

to the fact that the SDF is on the cusp of a new era. Their service within their respective states and while deployed to other states have impressed their Adjutants General and NG leadership; their Governors are beginning to recognize their value within and across state boundaries.

It is incumbent on the SDF leadership to capitalize on this “political bank account” in order to ensure a proactive future.