As part of the statewide response to COVID-19, members of the Georgia State Defense Force serve at a food bank distribution site in Gainesville, Georgia, May 9, 2020.

Georgia State Defense Force photo by Maj. James LeMay
Message from the President
Maj. Gen. (CA) Jay Coggan

As of this writing, the nation has been at war for 120 days with a vicious enemy that attacks Americans at the cellular level, the COVID-19 virus. Over 1,000,000 Americans have been infected, and at least 60,000 Americans have died from the illness - more than all of the American Soldiers, Marines, Airmen, and Sailors who died in the Vietnam War that lasted roughly 10 years.

This pandemic led to a response by the nation’s State Defense Forces (SDFs). And fortunately for the nation, our SDFs were ready to respond. As President of the State Guard Association of the United States, it is incumbent upon me to survey SDFs to determine how active we are in this national response, as well as to determine how effective our response is now and how it might be better. I’m pleased to report that the response of our SDFs is outstanding.

SGAUS tracked those states and territories that have been called upon to respond. In reaching out in the last 30 days I found that 13 states and territories put Soldiers on State Active Duty (SAD). Ten of these states (Alaska, California, Connecticut, Maryland, New York, Ohio, Puerto Rico, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia) put Soldiers on some form of paid SAD, 3 states had both paid and unpaid SAD Soldiers (California, Ohio, and Texas), and 4 states activated Soldiers without pay (Georgia, Indiana, Maryland, and South Carolina). In all, at least 1,075 Soldiers went on State Active Duty, the most SDF Soldiers deploying at one time since the Korean War 70 years ago. At its peak, SDF Soldiers made up more than 10% of the Joint Task Force troops collectively in those states where we deployed to fight the pandemic.

Perhaps just as importantly, our SDF Soldiers responded to a national crisis. Historically, Soldiers in states and territories deployed in response to crises in their own states. For instance, New York Guard Soldiers responded to hurricanes, floods, and blizzards in the past 24 months inside their borders, while Puerto Rico, Georgia, and Texas' SDFs responded to hurricanes inside their borders. But to have a national threat that calls for help from a SDF is unprecedented in the history of SGAUS. I am proud to be able to point out how much help SDFs have provided - and know that we have saved lives and reduced the suffering in our nation as a result.

The individual stories of SDFs are inspiring to read, and several of these stories are reported in this issue of State Defense Force Times. In my own state, the California State Guard fielded complete medical teams, JFHQ support, JAG support, PODs, communications, chaplain, and shelter operations. Similarly, the Tennessee State Guard fielded health care providers and administrative personnel. One story is particularly interesting: In Tennessee there were qualified medical personnel who wanted to serve, but who could not be quickly enlisted into the fight by the National Guard. The Tennessee State Guard became the rapid recruitment vehicle for the crisis because of the speed with which Soldiers could be enlisted in the TNSG and then quickly deployed. Licensed medical professionals were recruited, sworn into the TNSG, and placed on State Active Duty in 24 hours.

In addition to medical responses, there were other types of responses that SDFs provided. Joint forces headquarters support, liaisons, food distribution/PODs, warehouse and logistics, military police, communications, chaplains, decontamination, shelter construction, social services, and checkpoint operations were provided by various SDFs. As we anticipated in our training, the nature of the call depends on the crisis and the assets needed in a given environment. That our SDFs provided so much help, to so many, and so quickly appears remarkable to those who do not know us. But we knew. We knew because we have been training for these situations.

What lessons learned can be taken from this crisis? By all accounts, this battle with the COVID-19 pandemic will continue for the next 12-18 months, with a possible vaccine available in 2021. SDFs will revamp their strategic positions inside their states, adjust their METLs and operating procedures, and continue with their good relationships with their National Guard and Emergency Management Agency counterparts at the local and state levels. But one thing can be assured: Americans will know that State Defense Forces made a difference when the call came for us to step up.

Jay M. Coggan
President, State Guard Association of the United States
Major General (CA), Commanding
California Military Department

SDF Total Force Size / Forces Activated

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<th>State</th>
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What lessons learned can be taken from this crisis? By all accounts, this battle with the COVID-19 pandemic will continue for the next 12-18 months, with a possible vaccine available in 2021. SDFs will revamp their strategic positions inside their states, adjust their METLs and operating procedures, and continue with their good relationships with their National Guard and Emergency Management Agency counterparts at the local and state levels. But one thing can be assured: Americans will know that State Defense Forces made a difference when the call came for us to step up.
Greetings to all of our members! As MG Coggan indicated in his message, these are tough times, and we truly are at war with this invisible stealthy virus. Our hats are off and a big salute to all the SGAUS members who have been activated and are currently activated in their states’ service helping with the fight. Our salute also goes to all of the medical personnel and responders who are going above and beyond the call of duty while exposing themselves to the “enemy.” You, our members, are who make SGAUS great!

Here are a few developments in SGAUS that I’d like to share with you. First and foremost was the cancellation of the mid-year Board meeting that was scheduled in April at Nashville, Tennessee. In retrospect, it was a good decision to cancel given all of the SDF activations and social distancing measures in place across the country. Rest assured that any pressing business requiring Board consideration and approval was handled at that time, and will be handled by exception and using our online tools and resources.

The second item in my message is that we are still planning on having the scheduled annual conference in September in Orange County, California. Of course, as we get a bit closer, we will be assessing the situation on the ground and update you as soon as we have more information.

Thirdly, as many of you are aware, the COVID-19 situation disrupted our SGAUS online store replenishment supply chain; orders and deliveries of MEMS badges, flashes; and affected all online store functioning. Even though our suppliers are in the USA, all of them have been outsourcing their manufacturing to China for many years (for instance, metal badges). SGAUS placed a large replenishment order for MEMS badges in early February, and that order was received on 12 May. So supply chain issues will affect current and future orders for some unknown period of time.

We have news regarding flashes for all SGAUS members who were activated and deployed, and news of the sew-on MEMS badges: the factory in South Carolina was shut down and is operating only working one day per week. This status also caused delays in sew-on badges. We are in close contact with our suppliers working diligently on alternatives. The good news is that we received the flashes, and we are starting to see some normalization in our supply chain. Our SGAUS Store shipping cell recently began shipping back-ordered badges and flashes to our members.

Lastly, on this topic, we have placed “defensive” replenishment orders for the items. That is, we have ordered more than we would normally just in case the supply chain is disrupted again.

The last item I would like to cover is the online PME Academy. This has been a very successful program and keeps growing. A few weeks ago, we added two COVID-19 Pandemic related Medical courses to our offering. One on COVID-19 Operations and the other one on the proper wear of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). These have been very popular (2000+ enrolled students) and we are glad that we are somehow helping to keep you safer. Thanks go to The SGAUS Medical Academy, the Indiana Guard Reserve and the Tennessee State Guard who contributed the content for these courses. We have made those two courses available to everyone, member or not, as a public service during this trial.

Well, I sit here writing this message wishing I could snap my fingers and make all this go away and back to the “normal” we had in December. However, I must look at reality in the face, raise my own very high and face the wind. We will get over this. We lost one of our officers in the Tennessee State Guard to the virus. That made it very real, close and personal. We will be victorious rest assured. We are Americans and that is what we do. I wish all of you to keep doing what you are doing, look forward to the future and stay safe with your families.
From the Sergeant Major’s Desk

I have contacted several of our MEMS Academy State Directors in reference to the Pandemic. I am pleased to report that our emergency management training proved to be invaluable to our State Defense Forces during disaster, specifically to what we are experiencing today. Our personnel are highly trained and assisted in every capacity during this national call-out.

Historically, I have not changed the MEMS training certifications after they are issued on 01 January of each year and published at https://sgaus.org/2020-mems-student-handbook/. However, due to these circumstances I am making an exception. I am including two courses that are currently voluntary, but which will be mandatory after 01 January 2021:

- Basic MEMS certification FEMA Course IS 520 Introduction to Continuity of Operations planning for Pandemic Influenzas
- Master MEMS certification FEMA Course IS 522 Exercising Continuity for Pandemics

These courses will aid MEMS Academy State Directors with training and education, and hopefully can be used to protect civilians and members of our State Defense Forces.

I hope that this finds you, your family and the members of your organization in good health, and as always feel free to contact me with any questions and concerns about the program.

SGM Fred A. Tredy
Commandant, State Guard Association of the United States MEMS Academy
California State Guard
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SGM Fred Tredy
MEMS prepares SDF Soldiers to interact with multiple and diverse agencies, both civilian and governmental, while performing with a military component such as a National Guard unit or Joint Task Force. When working with multiple agencies and units, communication that is of high quality is necessary for appropriate action and mission completion. “Talking the language” of our counterparts in joint operations that rely on SDF Soldiers and their superiors, peers, and subordinates is critical. This is where the Military Emergency Management System (MEMS), which parallels the National Incident Management System (NIMS), comes into play.

The Presidential directives establishing NIMS and mandating uniform training classes provides the platform from which to learn and practice proper and effective communication. Earning the SGAUS MEMS badges not only provides a format to comply with the NIMS directives, it establishes a tracking resource for that compliance and is a way to publicly show to peers that you “speak the language” of incident management and understand critical concepts. As with all military qualification badges, a peer soldier or superior can view the level of badge worn and immediately determine the minimum knowledge possessed by the wearer and be able to position the soldier accordingly.

In addition to the pride of accomplishment signified in the wearing of the badge, it provides non-prior service state defense force soldiers the ability to earn and wear a nationally recognized military qualification badge. MEMS training has allowed a smooth interaction with public health, state and local political governments, law enforcement, emergency management, hospital staff and other military services. Being able to speak a common language with familiar terms is paramount for accomplishing the public health COVID testing missions.

There are prescribed ways to earn this achievement that are articulated in the SGAUS Student Handbook (https://sgaus.org/2020-mems-student-handbook). Specified classes are required, but one alternative recently developed includes SDF Soldiers who are on State Active Duty (SAD). If you are serving in SAD or real-world call-up as an LNO or position of liaison and command authority such as an OIC of joint troops or managing logistics and personnel for joint troops, candidates for the Capstone Master MEMS may forego some coursework and FEMA task book, per SGAUS MEMS Student Handbook established guidelines.

Recently three Tennessee State Guard Soldiers, MAJ Anthony Crawford, CPT Daniel Smiley, and myself met the standards: Master level MEMS qualified, as well as serving as Instructors for TNSG MEMS Academy, were awarded the All Hazard Liaison (LNO) Specialist designation. This is the highest level of accomplishment within the MEMS Academy.

As usual for your SDF, your ability to wear the blue oval and gold insignia is determined by your state’s 670-1 guidelines.

My congratulations to CPT Smiley and MAJ Anthony Crawford of the Tennessee State Guard. SDF Soldiers who qualify for this LNO designation may contact me at the address below. Best wishes in your training, stay safe, and I hope to be hearing from LNOs soon!

MAJ. Alan Bagley (speaking), from TNSG’s JTF Medical Expeditionary Group, briefs National Guard and State Guard medical responders prior to traveling to a remote site to test for COVID-19. Photo by CPT. Steve Estes.
Know your MEMS Academy State Directors

The information below is a listing of all of the MEMS Academy State Directors for 2020. Most of the links are active and current. Stay in touch with these leaders for information in your state regarding MEMS.

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ASDF 49th Brigade SFC Branham and PFC Smart assisted at the entrance of a food bank during COVID-19 global pandemic.
VENTURA COUNTY, CA. Originally on ESAD orders from the middle of March to April 2020, the 146th Support Group, Air Component unit of the California State Guard (CASG), had to stand down from their mission as Air National Guard transitioned from Title 10 to Title 32 status. The compassion and dedication of these service members showed through the bonding they created with their civilian partners, Food Share of Ventura County. They waited for a week until it was cleared through the chain of command, and service members of the 146th Support Group continued their mission, without pay with the same enthusiasm and dedication, they had shown when on ESAD. Word spread about this mission and what this unit was doing and some service members of the Army component of the CASG joined the mission with orders for COVID-19 food relief. This shows that the measure of one’s heart cannot be measured in dollars and cents but through commitment. A commitment that the California State Guard shows day in and day out. Without pay.
Always ready to serve, the Georgia State Defense Force (GSDF) put boots on the ground in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

On March 14, 2020, Governor Brian Kemp authorized the Georgia Department of Defense to provide Georgia National Guard personnel to be used in preparation, response, and recovery efforts associated with a public health state of emergency.

Governor Kemp and Georgia Adjutant General Maj. Gen. Thomas M. Carden Jr. took further action on March 31, 2020, when they deployed military personnel to fight COVID-19 in the state’s long-term care facilities. The GSDF readily responded, assisting the Georgia National Guard on facility decontamination missions.

Both Governor Kemp and Maj. Gen. Carden thanked military personnel for their service.

Through April 2020, the GSDF’s COVID-19 contributions had included medical support, medical screening, joint force headquarters support, liaison officer support, food bank distribution, warehouse/logistics, chaplain support, and decontamination operations.

“We’re proud of the contributions our Soldiers made during the COVID-19 pandemic,” said GSDF Commander Brig. Gen. Thomas H. Blackstock Jr. “We’re honored to have worked alongside the Georgia National Guard in serving the citizens of Georgia.”
Georgia State Defense Force COVID-19 Work Hit the Airwaves
Popular Nationally Syndicated Radio Show Host Broadcasted Highlights

By Sgt. Beverly Shepard
Georgia State Defense Force

Clark Howard is an author, television and radio show personality, and host of the nationally syndicated Clark Howard Radio Show.

But he is also a commissioned officer in the Georgia State Defense Force (GSDF).

Capt. Howard, as he is known in the GSDF, recently used the airwaves to highlight the GSDF’s work during the COVID-19 pandemic. Capt. Howard’s taped broadcast segment aired twice a day during the week of May 4, 2020 on the WSB radio station in Atlanta.

“I’m a proud member of the GSDF,” said Capt. Howard. “I wanted to highlight the contributions and sacrifices that GSDF Soldiers are making during the COVID-19 pandemic and to invite others in the state to join the GSDF—where they, too, can help the citizens of Georgia stay safe and well.”

During the pandemic, the GSDF worked alongside the Georgia National Guard on various missions. Both Georgia Governor Brian Kemp and Georgia Adjutant General Maj. Gen. Thomas M. Carden Jr. publicly commended the GSDF for its work.

Capt. Howard shares the GSDF mission both on and off the field. Over the years, hundreds of recruits have cited Capt. Howard’s broadcasts as their impetus to answer the call to serve. In 2017, the GSDF presented Capt. Howard a Meritorious Service Medal.
During the past few years, Georgians have dealt with various natural disasters, including tornadoes and hurricanes. Recently, they faced a different force of nature—a pandemic.

Community volunteers typically support Georgia's food banks by providing the manpower to fill food boxes and ensure their distribution to the community. All of that changed when national shelter-in-place orders took effect during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Faced with a diminished volunteer pool and growing needs, area food banks called upon the Georgia State Defense Force (GSDF). Hearing the call, the volunteer Soldiers of the GSDF readily responded—sorting and packing thousands of boxes of nonperishable food and fresh produce to feed Georgians.

GSDF Soldiers Throughout the State Volunteered

While on a mission at the Second Harvest of South Georgia, GSDF Soldiers were asked to pack 20,000 food boxes—in one week!

The Soldiers readily responded. On the first day of the mission, they assembled 4,000 boxes of relief food—equivalent to what the site typically produces in a week. Within about four weeks, GSDF Soldiers had packed and palletized 44,000 disaster boxes—including special boxes for seniors—for south Georgians. Soldiers assisted at Second Harvest of South Georgia's Thomasville food bank and at the Tifton point of distribution as well.

GSDF Food Bank Efforts Featured on Local Television

In April, Atlanta's CBS46 television aired a segment that featured the GSDF and the Georgia National Guard. A CBS46 television crew interviewed GSDF's Sgt. Kerry Hatcher.

“It was a really good sort of rush of adrenaline to know that I was getting into the fight and joining my fellow Soldiers on the front line doing what I can to help win this battle against this hidden enemy,” Sgt. Hatcher told CBS46, referring to COVID-19.

Long lines had formed at many food banks and food distribution sites across the state. Severe economic times had increased demands.

“It’s not that there's not groceries on the shelf, but there's just not money in the bank, and that's what we’re working to solve,” Sgt. Hatcher told CBS46.

Other broadcast and print media outlets, as well as social media channels, have mentioned the GSDF’s COVID-19 efforts, alongside those of the Georgia National Guard.

Photo courtesy of CBS46
Above: Georgia State Defense Force Soldiers serve at food banks around the state during COVID-19. Georgia State Defense Force photo by Warrant Officer Candidate Alexander Davidson

Left: Georgia State Defense Force Soldiers also served at the Georgia Mountain Food Bank in Gainesville. During one evening shift at the food bank, the team assigned to the Volunteer Action Center sorted, boxed, and categorized approximately 3,125 pounds of salvage food to be shared with the food bank’s partner agencies. Georgia State Defense Force photo by Sgt. Beverly Shepard

Georgia State Defense Force Assisted with Community Event

By Pvt. Taryn Evans
Georgia State Defense Force

Georgia State Defense Force (GSDF) Soldiers recently partnered with the Circle of Care Thrift Shop in Forsyth to provide food for residents in need.

On April 20, 2020, GSDF Soldiers assisted with unloading trucks, preparing boxes of canned foods, distributing these boxes to the local community, and performing traffic control. This community partnership was among various contributions the GSDF has made during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

During the event, the GSDF, Circle of Care Thrift Shop, and local volunteers provided 325 families with a Circle of Care food box. GSDF Soldiers wore masks and gloves to protect the local community and themselves.

“It was an absolute honor to serve the people in the city of Forsyth,” said GSDF Officer Candidate Jeffrey Gonzales. “Missions like these are truly rewarding.”

The GSDF is a volunteer component of the Georgia Department of Defense, serving under the direction of Georgia’s governor and adjutant general. The GSDF provides an organized, trained, disciplined, rapid response to assist state and local government agencies, and civil relief organizations in impending or actual emergencies.
On March 14, 2020, Georgia’s governor authorized the state’s Department of Defense to provide Georgia National Guard personnel for preparation, response, and recovery efforts associated with a coronavirus (COVID-19) public health state of emergency. The Georgia State Defense Force (GSDF) put boots on the ground to assist.

Through April 2020, GSDF COVID-19 contributions had included medical support, medical screening, joint force headquarters support, liaison officer support, food bank distribution, warehouse/logistics, chaplain support, and decontamination operation.


LEFT: A Georgia State Defense Force (GSDF) Soldier decontaminates a Guardsman on a mission with the Georgia Army National Guard’s 3rd Battalion, 121st Infantry Regiment, 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team in north Georgia, April 18, 2020. GSDF Soldiers remain outdoors during these missions to decontaminate Guardsmen who address conditions indoors.
Georgia State Defense Force photo by Chaplain (Candidate) Pvt. Donna S. Mote


Right: Before starting a mission, a Georgia State Defense Force Soldier removes her patrol cap to have her temperature checked by a medical professional using a handheld device, Tifton, Ga., April 9, 2020. Georgia State Defense Force photo by Sgt. Kerry Hatcher
Top: Georgia State Defense Force Soldiers distribute supplies at Second Harvest of South Georgia’s point of distribution (POD) in Tifton, Ga., April 9, 2020. In a matter of hours, more than 1,750 households had picked up supplies through the POD operation. Georgia State Defense Force photo by Sgt. Kerry Hatcher.

DUNDALK, Md. — As the sun rises, the first few Maryland National Guard service members and Maryland Defense Force members begin trickling into the Dundalk Readiness Center. As they start their preparations, it appears to be an average day, with a few exceptions.

Instead of handshakes, elbows are bumped and the staff of the joint reception, staging, onward movement, and integration station are maintaining a more cautionary distance from each other than normal. Grey and red vests are worn, depending on their roles in the process, breaking up the usual earth-toned or digital camouflage seen on MDNG and MDDF military uniforms respectively.

This is one of the first mandatory stops soldiers and airmen make to be placed on State Active Duty in response to Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan's activation of the National Guard in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. They must in-process at the JRSOI before they can participate in missions that will help augment the civil authorities in Maryland.

“Our goal is to process groups of 50 people within one hour and we are exceeding that goal at this point,” said U.S. Air Force Maj. Joseph Winter, JRSOI deputy commander. “We are a joint team led by Air National Guard members. The joint team also includes the MDDF who is assisting our medical personnel with initial medical screenings.”

The MDDF members ensure the Soldiers and Airmen have all of their proper paperwork and guide them through a pre-medical screening to ensure they are not exhibiting any signs of illness. If any exhibit any symptoms, they are sent through a more in-depth screening process.

“The MDDF provides professional and technical support on a variety of levels,” said Maj. (MDDF) Fred Sanford, the officer in charge. “I’m a teacher, and we’re all off for two to three weeks [because of COVID-19]. When the call came from our chain of command to support the response to COVID-19, I thought that this was an opportunity to serve and to work with my National Guard counterparts.”

Each Soldier or Airmen are then medically screened for a second time to make sure the MDNG service members are not immunocompromised or have been potentially exposed to COVID-19, as well as make sure that they are medically up-to-date and ready to serve the people of Maryland.

“Our mission, which is led by the Air National Guard, is for us to receive forces who have been pre-identified to participate in on-going missions by order of the governor as it relates to the pandemic we’re facing,” explained Winter. “Our ultimate goal is to ensure our members who are going on to future missions know exactly their roles and that they’re protected.”

More than 2,000 Maryland National Guard members are activated to support Maryland’s response to COVID-19. The MDNG is working in close coordination with many agencies to support civil authorities to augment civil agency capabilities. MDNG capabilities include medical augmentation, transportation support, food distribution, and supply distribution.
MDNG Serves Real, Virtual Communities in COVID-19 Response

By Senior Airman Sarah M. McClanahan, Maryland National Guard Public Affairs Office

MIDDLE RIVER, Md. (April 04, 2020) — The Maryland National Guard is assisting in protecting virtual communities through the development of a joint task force composed of Guardsmen and their cyber partners in the Maryland Defense Force and the Maryland Department of Information Technology.

The Maryland National Guard’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic has involved a number of missions, including statewide efforts in assisting transportation support, medical supply and food distribution, and setting up potential health screening locations. However, the response efforts to protect the health of Maryland communities does not stop in the physical world and the cyber task force is the first of its kind to be stood up in response to COVID-19.

In response to the Governor’s call for a state of emergency, U.S. Air Force Col. Reid J. Novotny, MDNG Joint Staff J6, began coordinating with the Maryland Military Department and lead agencies doing cyber protection for the state to determine how they could assist the state’s operations.

“_The [Maryland Military Department], both in the Army, Air and Maryland Defense Force, have a great deal of cyber capabilities,” explained Novotny. “_We stood up a joint task force for cyber under the air component and will be helping the [Maryland] Department of Information Technology in their mission to protect communication coming from the Governor and the state._”

The joint team will be tasked with evaluating Maryland government websites to ensure they are functioning properly and the information presented is accurate. These sites are providing critical information to the public to include avenues for applying for unemployment, how to donate resources, and timely updates on the state’s response.

“It’s an incredibly fluid situation,” said U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Colin Ferguson, MDNG Joint Staff Deputy J6 for Cyber. “There’s a lot of data sources and information flowing around. We want to make sure the public is getting the most accurate information and that the governor doesn’t have to worry about nefarious activity [disrupting the flow of information to the public].”

The 175th Cyberspace Operations Group actively rotates through mobilizations and is consistently training. This allows the MDNG to be fully prepared to defensively support a mission like the COVID-19 response efforts.
“Our livelihood basically is to prepare for these types of events,” explains Air Force Lt. Col. Janice Hernandez, Maryland Joint Task Force Cyber commander. According to Hernandez, the group’s cyber protection team has had substantial experience in defending military computer networks. “We’ve trained for it and we can also use it in our state capacity.”

In many ways, this mission is “business as usual” for the cyber professionals of the MDNG. This is in part due to existing partnerships with Maryland’s other agencies involved in cyber protection.

“They have already done preliminary work in support of the Maryland Emergency Management Agency in the Maryland Joint Operation Center to reduce known vulnerabilities, especially those used by advanced persistent threat actors,” explains Novotny. “It’s easy to hit-the-ground-running because we already knew the people involved and had already set up the command structure between the different organizations in the military and at the state level.”

In a great example of neighbors stepping up to help their neighbors, the members of Joint Task Force Cyber will be able to work within Maryland State government systems and websites, having a direct impact on the members of their communities.

“One of the things that makes it very meaningful is the real impact on the state and for the citizens,” explains Chip Stewart, Maryland Department of Information Technology State Chief Information Security Officer. “What we’re doing helps protect the state from bad guys that would seek to do harm in this crisis and I think that that impact is extraordinarily positive and unique.”

In a time of crisis, it is more important than ever to come together and collectively do our individual parts in responding to the COVID-19 crisis. Each role may look different, but each and every instance of neighbors helping neighbors makes an impact.

“Outside of our Guard family, we’re members of the community,” said Ferguson. “I’ve had multiple Maryland residents reach out to me to ask if I was getting pulled into the guard efforts to ask what we’re doing. I think it’s really important for citizens to be able to have a level of one-on-one connection with a Guard member to understand this is a supportive and enabling effort. That’s the real intent and they’re hearing it directly from the people that are their friends and neighbors.”
By: Maj. Stephen Rice

**MDDF Supports MDNG Covid-19 Response Efforts**

In March Maryland Governor Lawrence J. Hogan, Jr. activated the Maryland National Guard (MDNG) to support the state’s efforts to combat the impact of the Covid-19 virus. From the outset of this state activation, the Maryland Defense Force (MDDF) has been integrated into National Guard operations and called upon to support MDNG efforts to fight this global pandemic. The MDDF has been relied upon to provide medical, Joint Staff and cyber support to the State of Maryland during this crisis.

In mid-March as the MDNG ramped up to increase the numbers of National Guard troops on State Active Duty, the MDDF was brought in to help with the in-processing at the Dundalk Readiness Center.

“Our job was to make sure that the guard members had the necessary paperwork and then we guided them through a pre-medical screening process,” shared Lt. Col. (MD) Fred Sanford who oversaw the effort. “This was the first step before the guard members received a series of briefings and were given their respective assignments,” Sanford continued.

Maryland Defense Force personnel have also been activated to support the coordination of the statewide National Guard efforts while being detailed to the MDNG Joint Staff. “The Joint Staff is the epicenter of Maryland National Guard Covid-19 response activity. Missions are planned, executed and monitored through the Joint Staff,” Lt. Col. (MD)
Sanford continued. “The MDDF has supplied ongoing Joint Staff support to help the MDNG carry out its important supplemental support for civilian authorities across the state,” Sanford concluded.

The MDDF Cyber Defense Unit has also been very busy. As a part of Joint Task Force Cyber, MDDF personnel have worked with their counterparts in the MDNG and the Maryland Department of Information Technology to assess hundreds of state IP addresses and websites for vulnerabilities. The results of these assessments were shared with state officials so that corrective action could be taken. This initiative was undertaken to make sure that the public could be confident in the information that was being communicated by the governor and various state agencies. “This has been a great opportunity for our MDDF cyber security experts to play an important role in the protection of statewide cyber assets,” stated Maj. (MD) James Lai who leads the MDDF Cyber Defense Unit.

“I am extremely proud of the work that the MDDF has done to date to support the Maryland National Guard and the State of Maryland during this Covid-19 global pandemic. However, we are far from being finished with this fight. The MDDF will continue to carry out our missions and support the state as needed in the months and days ahead,” shared Brig. Gen. (MD) Gregory Juday, commanding general of the MDDF.

The Maryland Defense Force (MDDF) is the State’s uniformed volunteer militia unit providing competent, supplementary, professional and technical support and soldiers to the Maryland Military Department and the State of Maryland as needed. Established in 1917, the MDDF consists of nearly 200 personnel who perform legal, engineering, finance, medical, chaplain, field support and ceremonial services for the State of Maryland. For more information: www.mddf.maryland.gov.
As we all are navigating this difficult time with COVID-19 and the economic impact, the MSSG PAO unit is pleased to share this good news.

CPT Jonathan Price reports that on 14 March 2020 the 310th BN was first on-scene to an overturned vehicle during the units’ transit back to Camp Shelby from a training exercise in Oak Grove, MS.

The trailing vehicle spotted the vehicle and stopped to render aid. 911 was contacted at that point. The victim was found unresponsive in the woods far from the vehicle. The first HPD police officer arrived just after the victim was found and just before 310th personnel began administering medical aid. 310th personnel continued assisting as HFD and EMS began to arrive on scene.

After HFD and EMS took over the victim, 310th personnel assisted in transporting the victim from the woods to the ambulance. Troops in the front end of the caravan stopped in a parking lot at the next intersection and conducted a traffic control point at the request of HPD.

The incident is shared in detail to illustrate that MSSG members conducted in a real life event many of the actions for which it trains. “It could very well be a life was saved due to this excellent engagement,” said MSSG CSM Don Wallis.
The Mississippi State Guard is deeply saddened to inform that COL Christopher “Chris” Lee Clements passed away Saturday, February 29, 2020 in Brandon, Miss. at Hospice Ministries in Ridgeland, MS. He was 52. COL Clements was a member of the MSSG for some 25-years. Most recently he served as the Chief of Staff.

Chris was born on Oct. 27, 1967 in New Orleans, LA and graduated from Brandon High School in 1985 and Mississippi College. He was a member of Saint Marks United Methodist Church in Brandon, MS. Chris was involved in Boy Scouts since childhood, receiving his Eagle Scout and Vigil and was also a Colonel in the Mississippi State Guard. He enjoyed Civil War reenacting, hunting, camping, history and traveling. Chris loved the Lord, family and friends. Most of all he loved and was so proud of his children.

He is survived by his wife of thirty years, Cynthia “Cindy” Clements; mother, Vera Clements; son, Andrew Christopher Clements; daughter, Rachael McCalip Clements; sister, Sara Clements Cook (Ross); nephew, Tyler Cook (Mackenzie); niece, Carley Cook; uncle, Billy Clements (Anne); mother in law, Jinja Flowers; sister in law, Michele McCarthy (Jamie) and several cousins, other relatives and many friends.
Brigadier General (MS) Mississippi State Guard Doug Hayhurst has selected and appointed CSM Don Wallis as the new MSSG state CSM. The position was vacated due to the passing away of CSM (R) Johnny Marlow.

BG Hayhurst states, “Please provide your full corporation with him as he fills this important position. He has my full confidence and is my senior advisor for all matters concerning our enlisted soldiers.”

CSM Wallis joined the MS State Guard in June 2014 - MSG/E-8 3rd BDE Training and Operations SNCO, 3rd BDE CSM. Before joining the MSSG, he served nearly 21-years of active duty. He retired in 1998.


US Navy SCUBA School, San Clemente and Coronado, CA – 1979; Drill Instructor Academy, Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego, CA – 1981; Graduated Seven (7) Platoons; Marine Staff Non-Commissioned Officer's Academy, Quantico, VA – 1983; Marine Security Guard Academy, Detachment Commander – Quantico, VA – 1988
- US Consulate, Zagreb, Yugoslavia
- US Embassy, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago
- US Embassy, Mexico City, Mexico

Naval Communications Security School, New Port, RI – 1994

Inspector General Staff, Cherry Point, NC - 1994
Inspector General Staff, Okinawa, Japan – 1995
Inspector General Staff, Camp Pendleton and El Toro, CA – 1996

Coach, USMC Shooting Team, Western Division Matches, Camp Pendleton, CA – 1997

Civilian affiliations:
Homeland Security/FEMA – Armed Security Contractor - 2005
MS Dept. Of Revenue – 2012
Substitute School Teacher – 2013 - 2015
MS State Guard, Command Sergeant Major, 3rd MP Brigade 2015 - Present

Significant experiences:
President Ronald Reagan’s Security Detail, Mexico City, Mexico
Presidents G. Bush and B. Clinton Cabinet Members Security Details
Awarded the Department of State’s “Award for Valor” by Sec State James Baker
Cortlandt Manor, NY- Camp Smith Training Site- Officer Candidate AARON D.T. MURANTE, New York Guard, currently serving on state active duty as the Operation Safety Officer for Joint Task Force 2, Bravo Strike Team, is awarded his MEMS (Badge) Military Emergency Management Specialist (MEMS) April 16 2020 at CSTS. OCS Murante was badge was pinned by Captain Gabriel Felix, New York Guard, MEMS Academy State Director for New York.

Camp Smith Training Site- Officer Candidate Aaron Murantem New York Guard along with 15 other Bravo Strike Team members recently completed their Military Emergency Management Specialist (MEMS) training, while on state active duty, and were awarded the MEMS badges and certifications in similar ceremonies conducted the earlier part of April 2020.

MEMS is offered through the State Guard Association of the United States (SGAUS) MEMS Academy, and open to all members of both SGAUS and the New York Guard who satisfy the requirements of the program. Broken down into three levels – Basic, Senior, and Master, the certifications are earned via completion of FEMA Emergency Management Institute Distance Learning courses available online, some classroom-only tabletop courses/exercises, and practicums completed by individual soldiers.

When submitted to the MEMS Academy State Director, those soldiers who successfully complete all the required coursework/documentation are awarded the corresponding MEMS Academy certification.

The New York Guard currently has 85 service members on paid state active duty supporting National Guard efforts throughout the state, where they are providing logistics and operations assistance supporting the New York National Guard and NY State multi-agency response to COVID-19.
MEMS certifications represent a culmination of academic study and practical hands-on experience in the area of emergency management, and help soldiers familiarize themselves with real-life protocols and procedures utilized during activations (State Active Duty – SAD). Soldiers who understand the incident-command structure, defined roles, and forms utilized during emergency response are integral parts of teams and operation centers.

Utilizing this knowledge helps our soldiers serving in leadership roles during activations and training alike and promotes soldier development, in relation to much of the work that the New York Guard is called to perform in our role augmenting the New York Military Forces. Mission readiness of the individual soldier is greatly enhanced by the combination of a strong knowledge base that certification provides, the hands-on experience earned through training and activations, and the willingness of the soldier to both learn and apply knowledge in emergency situations.

New York Guard Service members assigned to Joint Task Force 2, Bravo Team, hold an early morning briefing, prior to a promotion and MEMS award ceremony that was conducted on April 16 2020.

How do I get started? The first step for any prospective MEMS certification is joining SGAUS via their website: http://www.sgaus.org. After joining SGAUS, soldiers will complete the required FEMA Distance Learning courses online, available at: training.fema.gov/is. Once a soldier completes all the required courses, they will complete the required practicum in accordance with the requirements outlined in the MEMS Academy Student Guidelines. Applicants will then submit their completed packets (proof of membership in SGAUS, FEMA Academic Transcripts, Practicum, and any other supporting documentation) through their respective chain of commands, to the MEMS Academy State Director for review and processing.

Benefits. Upon successful completion, review, and processing soldiers can expect several things: a certificate demonstrating completion of the requirements, a letter from the MEMS Academy State Director formally congratulating them for their achievement, and orders from the New York Guard G-1 for authorization to wear the MEMS badge on their uniform. In addition, New York Guard members who join SGAUS are entitled to wear the permanent award, SGAUS Membership Ribbon on their dress uniforms.

Guidance. Anyone interested in pursuing MEMS Academy certification but is unsure of how to proceed, are encouraged to reach out through their respective chain-of-command to the MEMS Academy State Director CPT Gabriel Felix, New York Guard, or alternatively, MEMS Academy Deputy Director CW2 Humza Bashir, New York Guard, for assistance with all facets of MEMS Academy and SGAUS-related inquiries.

The New York Guard Congratulates the following Service members on their recent achievements being awarded their MEMS badges and certificates.

BASIC
SPC Hondo, Tatsuya, SPC Herring III, Vincent, W01 Tierney, Michael J., SGT Pisanelli, Mark, SPC Rocco, Andrew, OCS Murante, Aaron, 1SG Raymond, Andrew, SGT Hazell, Andrew H, SGT Poteau, Wendell J, SGT Cafone, Patrick, SSG Torres, Lester, SSG Ojeda, Luis, SSG Santana, John, PFC Matias, Richard, PFC Elliston, Donald, PFC Rodriguez, Luis A., SGT Villa, Orlando, SPC Batista, Joshue, SGT Tatum, Nathan R.

MEMS SENIOR Badge
SPC Maryjanowski, Samuel J., WOC Earley, Theodore

MEMS FLASH
Like many states hit with the Covid-19 virus, Tennessee needed a response - and responders - who could quickly join the force and provide immediate expertise in a variety of medical situations. The response from the Tennessee State Guard (TNSG) was to form the Medical Expeditionary Group (MEG), and at its heart is the 61st Medical Company, a unit led by Col. Alan Cox. The MEG was formed almost overnight, and the first task before Col. Cox was to identify Soldiers who could provide the type of medical expertise needed, held a current Tennessee license, and who were able to deploy. When the call went out Col. Cox knew he needed more qualified medical professionals to meet the Tennessee National Guard's request for assistance. So he brought to bear his own expertise in military operations, and in medicine, to come up with a plan of action.

One of the solutions was simply to “grow the force.” And to do this he needed to literally “beat the bushes” and enlist trained medical personnel who could immediately go to work on State Active Duty (SAD) in their occupational specialty from within the Tennessee State Guard and recruiting new members. The following stories are those of some of the TNSG personnel who answered the call, of how they came to be in the TNSG, and what their duties during the pandemic are.

Interview with Col. Alan Cox
Commander of the Tennessee State Guard Medical Expeditionary Group, 08MAY2020

From the perspective of the National Guard, it is like fitting pieces into a machine that they need to build. If the State Guard can be a piece in that machine then the State Guard is going to be seen as a force multiplier.

What have you learned now that you have worked for 45 days in the Joint Task Force? The skill set, licenses, of a state defense force (SDF) needs to be something that the National Guard can use. In a way it is simple: If we plan to work with the National Guard, and the National Guard is tasked with a mission, can we provide a trained and certified force whose credentials are recognized as meeting the NG training standard, then state defense forces can contribute to that mission and be an asset to the National Guard's response.
So how can a state defense force position itself to ensure that it can be seen as a force multiplier? SDF leaders need to find out what training standard the National Guard trains to, and then the State Guard will need to train to that standard. This is how a military works: know the standard, and then train to it. So by working with National Guard leaders we learn what their missions are likely to be, we learn what the training standards are for performing those missions, and train to that standard, be it professional schools, certifications, and or state licensing. Then if we deploy we will be well integrated into units that execute and perform up to these standards.

Did you have a good idea of what the standards would be for this deployment? Yes. We anticipated that licensed healthcare professionals could step in immediately to perform duties that the National Guard might be called in to perform. We began surveying the force (Tennessee State Guard) soon after my change of command, looking for Tennessee licensed medical professionals; nurses, EMTs, MDs, LCSWs, and pharmacists. When we responded to the call from the National Guard with this information we were immediately integrated into the larger state-wide response, and put on State Active Duty (SAD).

Are you pleased with the performance of the Tennessee State Guard’s Medical Expeditionary Group (MEG)? Extraordinarily. Over half of our Soldiers are new recruits, and we are close to 40 on State Active Duty orders. Most of the rest have roughly 6 months in the State Guard. Because all of these Soldiers are licensed in their medical specialty to practice healthcare in Tennessee we were able to hit the ground running as healthcare professionals. They already possess an aura of professionalism from their civilian jobs, so their integration into this deployment coordinated by the National Guard was easier. We conducted a Military Professional Development Board daily for the new gains.

What challenges did you face when you began this deployment? The challenge was that we had relatively few Soldiers in the MEG with prior military service. But we had enough senior non-commissioned officers to provide training to non-priors so that we knew we could learn to function in the performance of our duties as military personnel. Of particular note Mst. Sgt. Brian Emigh and Stf. Sgt. Jonathan Bailey inspired our newly gained Soldiers to perform and integrate with our Army and Air National Guard counterparts. They made sure that the on-site professional military education was done up to specifications, and they got our people up to speed. Emigh and Bailey were just what we needed to make this work.

So you are pleased with TNSG’s response to date? Absolutely. Our people stepped up, and I am proud of how well they have done this. Our deployed Soldiers gave up so much to work on the MEG, to come on this “adventure” of deployment with a smile on their face, and doing their jobs very well. I am so proud of all of our Soldiers, and I know that Brig. Gen. Craig Johnson, the TNSG commanding general, is proud of their response as well.

Any final thoughts? The complete integration of the Tennessee State Guard into the National Guard command structure of the Joint Task Force MED Operation, was down through Company and Platoon levels, it’s has been great. We attend all at the same meetings, perform the same jobs, same missions, and share the same responsibilities and respect as our Army and Air National Guard counterparts.

2Lt. (TN) Charles Lattus performing Covid-19 testing at a remote site. Masked and hooded in PPE, all deployed Soldiers and Airmen are on the same team. Photo by Col. Alan Cox.
While I don’t know what is going on in other states with their SDFs and National Guard units, I suspect that how we are integrated with our National Guard counterparts here in Tennessee is somewhat unique. The TNSG is integrated at every level of this deployment. While there may be three uniforms at a testing site (State Guard, Army National Guard, Air National Guard), it is clear that we are all on the same team performing the same mission. This is a powerful feeling for our Soldiers to experience, to be part of a great culture and an integrated team performing this mission. We have been embraced as colleagues. When we are out in the field wearing hoods and masks on our Personal Protective Equipment no one can tell who is underneath - it is one mission, one team. This is what an effective force looks like on the job, and I’m proud to be a part of that.

It’s been a long time since TNSG deployed (15 years since Hurricane Katrina). What was the first thing that you did to begin the deployment? “Take a really deep breath and slowly release, then get to work.” From the Human Resources side we maintain good information, but with this being the truly first “modern” call to State Active Duty (SAD) Orders we were not 100 percent sure of the type of information we needed. Honestly, neither did our National Guard G1 counter-parts. Once the required information needed to go on SAD was settled, we learned an early AAR item and it was this; just because you have the information needed, doesn't mean it is in the needed format for use.

Fortunately we had a new commander, Col. Alan Cox, who had just taken command of our 61st Medical Company in January 2020. He is prior service Navy where he served as a joint force operations officer, as an executive officer of a combat cargo handling battalion, and he also made a deployment as the operations officer for an expeditionary Support Force. All of these positions were great training for this joint deployment, and he knew exactly what he needed me to do as his XO.

Col. Cox had begun the survey of personnel processes two months prior to the deployment of the TNSG force. He knew that we needed trained personnel with specific licensed skills in Tennessee who could immediately work anywhere in the state (EMT, MD, nurses, 68W, etc.).

Interview with Tennessee State Guard’s MAJ Anthony Crawford, Medical Expeditionary Group (MEG) Executive Officer/S1

In late March, 2020, the Tennessee State Guard (TNSG) got the call from the Tennessee National Guard that it needed help providing the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency (TEMA) support to fight the Covid-19 pandemic. The call came on a Thursday afternoon; in 48 hours TNSG deployed 35 soldiers, 32 licensed healthcare professionals and 3 administrators, to aid in the fight. Maj. Crawford was TNSG’s G1 OIC, and coordinated the administrative processes involved in the call-up.

Photo by Col. Alan Cox

Col. Alan Cox, TNSG MEG Commanding Officer, looks over the shoulder of Maj. Anthony Crawford, MEG XO/S1, as they plan to deploy Soldiers to fight the Covid-19 Pandemic.
Photo by Cpt. Steve Estes
Next, we need to seriously consider what the Tennessee Military Department and the State of Tennessee might need from us in the future. We need to be more outward looking. If it is medical personnel then we need to train for that. If it is military police then we need to train for that. Whatever our “client” needs, then that is what we should train for. The National Guard is, in a sense, our “client.” Now that the National Guard knows that we can deploy highly skilled Soldiers, and that we really are a force multiplier, then we can sit down at some point in the future and we will be taken more seriously about what we can and cannot do, and construct our Mission Essential Task List (METL) accordingly. In so doing we will focus more “outward” outward on our client’s needs, and a bit less on what we would like to do based on historic missions that we fulfilled in the past. For instance, in World War II state defense force units guarded national infrastructure. We’ve trained for that in the past, but we are more likely to fulfill missions like the one we are engaged in now. Six months ago, a deployment like this was not on the radar to too many people. So I suspect we will adapt as we move into the future.

Did anything surprise you once you were deployed and working in a Joint Task Force environment? The National Guard did not have a good handle on what we could do. To be fair, WE did not have a good handle on what we could do. But we are fortunate to be composed of older, very well-trained professionals, and the adaptation of our Soldiers to a fluid environment impressed everyone who observed. Our Soldiers were very enthusiastic, and we have some great people leading Soldiers in the JTF environment, to the respect for TNSG leadership rose naturally from the ranks. For instance, our NCO-IC MSG Brian Emigh deployed to the Middle East, and his experience as a senior non-commissioned officer was invaluable. He showed our non-prior Soldiers “how to Soldier.” They already know how to do their medical work, so it was just a matter of having a good NCO doing good NCO work on the military side to make things work. National Guard soldiers responded to his leadership, and we got a lot of good work done. The measure of this was

So the first thing we did was figure out who we had who could help. Next, we had to figure out if our Soldiers were deployable. The National Guard developed a 3-tier system where Soldiers would deploy in Phases. Non-deployable characteristics were things like availability to deploy, prior medical conditions, age, and height and weight restrictions. Not meeting the qualifications for the first Phase moved our Soldiers into later phases of deployment. We ended up with 32 Soldiers who could deploy immediately for the time needed. We were able to get that information to the National Guard in fairly short order, within 48 hours, and consequently we were seen as an asset – a force multiplier.

The one tool we had at our disposal was our Google Drive, and I recommend something like this tool for every SDF. We were able to set-up personnel folders and data sheets, work on them from home in real time. We were able to work collaboratively and efficiently, allowing us to put out Request For Orders (RFO) in a manner that otherwise would have been slow - or even impossible. We also used Google Meet to have video conferences to keep ourselves updated, as well as to update the command staff as the deployment progressed. We continue to use the “MEG” Google Drive to maintain reports on mission status and Daily PERSTAT Reports.

It’s a little early for a “lessons learned” AAR, but you have probably learned what the TNSG needs to do to be better next time. Any early thoughts? We have a lot of knowledge in the force - people who can bring good things to the table. However, we learned that too many of our Soldiers – due to age, fitness, availability, or other personal attributes – will not be able to deploy on SAD orders. We need to assess our force, and then control and train for those characteristics that we can change to make ourselves deployable and an asset. For instance, if height and weight requirements are important, then we need to make sure that our Soldiers can meet those requirements. One hard “go/no” for this deployment was the COVID-19 Health Questionnaire. Again, we were able to use the Google Forms to make an online and secure portal to gather and assess the viability of our response force.
Cpt. Bigham grew up in Paris, Tennessee. He became interested in medicine at first from his interest in sports and the medical side of sport performance, and was especially interested in motocross – an activity that intuitively lends itself to an interest in rehabilitative medicine. He had the usual injuries that one experiences in motocross, and through these experiences he came to like what healthcare professionals did to facilitate healing. These experiences led to his training to become a nurse, and he began his studies at Murray State University in Kentucky, where he studied biology in a pre-professional program that feeds into the various healthcare professional specialties in medicine. Currently Cpt. Bigham works at Vanderbilt Medicine as an operating room nurse. This led to his serving as a flight nurse at the Veterans Administration.

Due to his experiences as a licensed flight nurse, Cpt. Bigham’s skillset is highly valued by the Tennessee Department of the Military. Yet Cpt. Bigham was one of the newly enlisted Soldiers in the Tennessee State Guard. After a very brief on-the-spot training of roughly two weeks in military protocols and duties, Cpt. Bigham was immediately pressed into service leading teams of National Guard and State Guard Soldiers and Airmen to remote sites to provide testing to Tennesseans. As Officer in Charge of a small team of healthcare providers, Cpt. Bigham had exactly the

Any final lessons learned before you do the AAR? The key to being successful, I think, is establishing a quality long-term relationship with our counterparts in the Tennessee Military Department. If it’s engineering then you should know your counterpart; if it’s medical then you should be training with your National Guard counterparts as often as possible, even more so than we did last year, such as Ardent Sentry/Shaken Fury. If it’s Public Affairs then you should be working with your counterpart there. Whatever your job, make sure that you know people with whom you will deploy. Get to know them, work with them, and then when the balloon goes up you will be able to hit the ground running, together with one mission in focus.

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UH-60 Black Hawk ferrying Tennessee State Guard, National Guard, and Air National Guard Soldiers and Airmen to a remote prison site to provide Covid-19 testing. Photo by Cpt. Andrew Bigham, TNSG Medical Expeditionary Group, OIC of this mission.

Cpt Bigham found the TNSG through a colleague, Cpt. David Hiller, work also works with Vanderbilt lifeflight. Still, it does not necessarily follow that joining a military happens just because of an invitation to do so. “I always wanted to be part of something like this (a military unit). My family has a history of military participation – all of them served in the Army, but none of them served in the medical field. So I suppose their background and our family history made this opportunity look like a good one to me.” Cpt. Bigham knows that he is missing much of the military training that supports his medical work, and noted that he is looking forward to Initial Entry Training, Officer Basic Course, other military training courses. As part of his training for this deployment he is taking the online FEMA courses that provide the background for this deployment and those that might happen in the future.

Cpt. Bigham moved quickly into the military mindset when asked about his current duties and priorities. “Leading my team,” said Cpt. Bigham, “a unit composed of 2-3 medical professionals and one administrator. We are assigned to a remote site, and provide whatever medical healthcare is required in the situation. We are surging throughout the state in response to calls from the Department of Health, and we are training for as many eventualities as we might experience. The past two weeks have been a blur - we are going through multiple training courses such as intubation and ventilation, Basic Life Support (BLS), Advanced Cardiac LifeSupport (ACLS), and Pediatric Life Support (PALS). What has been rewarding is the bonding that is occurring between me and members of the teams we are building. That helps us get through the long hours, and helps us know the skills that might be needed.”

“The State Guard provides me a great opportunity to combine my civilian and military training, and to bring both of those together. I am doing the same things as I do in the hospital, but now in a military setting. The skills I have now I can apply immediately; I hope that the military skills can be taken back to my civilian life. The training here has been invaluable, and I can see how it will benefit me in the civilian world.”

When asked what makes TNSG’s contribution significant, Cpt. Bigham was specific: “Our biggest
role is to get the testing sites up and running. The Governor wants 10-15,000 swabs/day. Right now we are at 3,000 swabs/day, so increasing that amount we will need something like the manpower we can bring in through this military effort. To support hospitals and other facilities the military can bring a lot to bear, and do so quickly in this fight.”

When asked if he had any other observations that might be interesting, Cpt. Bigham reflected on his personal experience. “This is absolutely the best experience ever! Ours is a brotherhood of men and women who are working on a common practice, and I feel like I will know and work with them for the rest of my life! I came in knowing one person, and I will leave knowing 35 Soldiers in my unit with whom I deployed. This is a unique experience, to be able to come together on a common project, and work toward seeing that project to its end. I cannot imagine how I could have ever experienced anything like this in my civilian life.”

“Overall this is just a great opportunity to be part of a great organization in a united force with the National Guard. Every branch of the Tennessee Military Department is here, alongside the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency and our local and state healthcare providers. We are working for the Department of Health, so this is a great opportunity for these separate departments to become a single working unit. I’m proud to be a small part of that.”

**Profile: Master Sergeant (MSG) Brian Emigh**

MSG Brian Emigh currently lives in Walter Hill, Tennessee. His civilian duties have him at the Tennessee State Veterans Home, where he serves as the Director of Clinical Reimbursement and Quality. In this position he oversees the healthcare, clinical finances, clinical and operation improvements, cost analysis, and other executive and operational functions of the company.

MSG Emigh is a relative newcomer to the Tennessee State Guard, having joined immediately prior to the FEMA-led Operation Ardent Sentry/Shaken Fury. That exercise was a Joint Task Force operation involving 9 states along the Mississippi River that could be affected by a large earthquake along the New Madrid fault. MSG Emigh was immediately pressed into service because of his medical and healthcare training (Registered Nurse and Infection Preventionist), and was assigned to the TNSG 61st Medical Company.

MSG Emigh’s interest in service in the State Defense Forces stems from his initial involvement with active duty in the US Army. He was interested in serving again after his 10-year stint in the US Army, having missed the type of service that a uniformed military can provide. MSG Emigh first looked to serve in the Tennessee National Guard, but chose the State Guard because of the flexibility offered in training.

Prior to serving with the TNSG, MSG Emigh was a 10-year US Army Soldier and deployed twice to the Middle East as a combat medic. “I chose the State Guard because I missed military service, so the flexibility of serving in a state defense force both fit my skill set and my wanting to serve again. The jobs I had in the Army led naturally to what I am doing right now.”

MSG Emigh’s education fits well with the Army’s and the TNSG’s needs. His first bachelor’s degree was in healthcare management, which he earned while serving in the Army. Once he was discharged, he continued his education, and earned the Registered Nurse license.
MSG Emigh is serving as the Company 1st Sgt. during the deployment, and his duties include overseeing the overall health and welfare of 61st Medical Company Soldiers serving in the Military Expeditionary Group. Taking care of the deployed Soldiers, many of whom were enlisted specifically to respond to the pandemic, is his responsibility. “It’s been a lot of work, but incredibly rewarding work, to bring these licensed healthcare professionals up to speed. Some went from civilian status to deployed Soldiers in 24 hours, and it is my job to transition these healthcare professionals to deployed Soldiers. Their housing, chow, mentoring, and Soldiering is my responsibility, and it has been one of the most rewarding jobs I’ve ever had.”

One of the challenges that the State Guard will face is to retain all of the lessons learned so that it does not have to rebuild all of the processes that occur during a deployment from scratch. “We learn as a unit what we can do - see our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats - and we go from there. We have strengthened our relationship with the National Guard because we actually have more healthcare experience in many of the leadership roles required in a deployment. They look to us because of the nature of the work, and what we have been trained to do as civilians. So, this is the beginning of a great future with the National Guard in both training and deployment environments. Coordination, utilization of resources, training opportunities - you name it, we are doing it now and doing well. They have a better handle on our capabilities, so they will likely use us when they need us. That’s exciting.”

“Everyone here in the 61st Medical Company is licensed in their healthcare specialty already, so we can step in and do medical work right away anywhere in Tennessee. In contrast, most of the National Guard are 68 Whiskey (Combat Medical Specialist) and are not practicing in the state. Since we are licensed right now then we can step in right away. It turned out that this training is our entry card into being able to help quickly in a medical emergency.”

“Because of my background I am hard on our Soldiers on being professional in a military sense, and I am so proud of our Soldiers because of their attitude and behavior - we are learning fast. Our goal is to take the 61st Medical Company ‘to the next level’ – we are a force multiplier and the National Guard now knows that. We can back them up when and where they need us, and the National Guard is becoming very aware of our capabilities.”

One of the questions outsiders might ask is how well these non-priors are performing in a military environment. MSG Emigh's prior service made him a good choice to usher these “boots” into the military. “I am very happy with my soldiers, how they have stepped up – especially the non-priors. They have jumped in with both feet, eager to learn, and they are already professionals and carrying that forward into the Guard. It's now a real team – we have both strengths and weaknesses, like any team, and we overcome our weaknesses by working together as a team.”

**New State Defense Force Recruit Hits the Ground Running**

Sgt. Kelie Jasso is from Sullivan County, Tennessee, and serves as a paramedic in the TNSG. She began her paramedic program at Virginia Highlands Community College and currently works full time at the Bristol Life Saving Crew. It did not take long for...
the role reversal to take place - once she joined the Tennessee State Guard she began teaching EMT scenarios to Soldiers who will deploy to the frontlines of fighting the pandemic. It was not long ago that SGT Jasson was only a student, having graduated from Ray County High School in 2018.

How long have you served in the Tennessee State Guard? I’ve been in for 4 weeks – only! It’s gone by quickly. I now have the rank of Sergeant (E5), and it has been a bit of a blur. I’m looking forward to all of the military training since I did not have any military experience prior to this.

Is the TNSG anything like what you expected? Yes and No. There’s lots of military in my family – my uncles, aunts, and grandfather all served – and they all thought that it would be a good experience for me. So I took a leap of faith and put in my application. They were right!

Now that you are in the State Guard, is there anything that you are learning that you did not expect? I'm a new EMT, so this will give me some new skills that I don't have yet. I really like working with my new colleagues – the people who have been in for a while sat me down and gave me the basics, “showed me the ropes.” I really appreciated that. At first there was a lot of fear on my part that I might not look or act “military,” but everyone has been so helpful that I’ve really begun to enjoy the experience. It makes me look forward to IET and the other schools that TNSG has to train us to be a Soldier.

What are your duties here? I have helped with CPR and Basic Life Saving (BLS) training as an instructor. I'll have other specific duties when I deploy, all within my duties as an EMT. So I’m confident about that part of the deployment; it’s the military part that I’m studying for at nights so that I can work effectively with my team.

Are there functions that you can see from your position that the TNSG, National Guard, Tennessee Emergency Management Agency, etc., can fulfill during the pandemic? 61st MedCo is all medically trained, certified, and licensed, so we will be able to fulfill that function immediately. We are part of the larger Medical Expeditionary Group, which in turn is working for the Department of Health. Because of our healthcare backgrounds the National Guard really appreciates our ability to jump in and pick up some of the work. It’s so nice to be appreciated! And in turn the National Guard Soldiers have been great in showing me the “soldiering” part of my job. Really good team effort.
Sgt. Kelie Jasso (back row, third from right) with her new Joint Task Force healthcare team in Bristol, Tennessee.

Any observations or thoughts that you can share on your upcoming deployment? The State Guard is a very good job for people who are thinking about the military, but have not committed to it fully at this time. The more gradual movement into the military life that the State Guard provides may be an advantage for Tennesseans who have backgrounds such as mine.
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