

ESTABLISHING THE FLORIDA STATE GUARD

Defining, establishing, manning, and communicating the capabilities of the Florida State Guard

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Letter to Governor Ron DeSantis

Governor DeSantis,

We've never met, but have served on the same soil. I was also deployed as a Naval asset to Iraq in 2004, albeit with the U.S. Marine Corps. My role was as a combat correspondent and chief of media relations for an infantry battalion where I was honored to share the battlefield stories of my fellow Marines and sailors, accompanying them on combat missions and coordinating media assets from the outskirts of Nasiriyah to the city gates of Baghdad, Fallujah, and Ramadi.

And like you, I have a desire to continue serving my country, state, and community. That is why when I read about your desire to re-establish the Florida State Guard, I knew I could not sit idly. As President John F. Kennedy, Jr. said, "All it takes for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing."

I see that good in the effort to establish a state-led emergency response force that serves the people of Florida and have done what I can at this early stage to aid in its success. This briefing, whoever executes it, contains best practices from state guards and defense forces across the nation so that we may establish the Florida State Guard for maximum benefit to the state it serves, engender public support, optimally coordinate during times of peace and emergency with local, state and federal assets, and ensure Floridians know the state guard is their homegrown response force for whatever emergency occurs.

My hope is it helps whomever you appoint as your adjutant general to the state guard, and I look forward to following its success.

Respectfully Submitted-
Shawn Rhodes
(Former Sgt., USMC)

BLUF: Standing Up The Florida State Guard

BLUF:

The goal of this brief is to provide a starting point for the governor's liaison/state guard adjutant general in defining, establishing, manning, and communicating the capabilities of the Florida State Guard and to prepare the organization for executing its mission.

While it focuses on the current missions, roles, composition, and operations of state guard/defense forces across the nation, it specifically delves into what state guard public affairs offices are doing and have learned so we may better prepare the Florida State Guard for success.

This brief moves from the organizational composition of other guard/defense force units across the country, roles they play in their home state, interface they have with their state's National Guard, and lessons in becoming a respected emergency response asset.

Through speaking with multiple public affairs officers at state guard/defense forces across the country, I learned that the success of (re)establishing a state guard depends heavily on the information flow to internal and external stakeholders within the state to engender public support and ensure proper coordination of state and federal assets during emergency response. To that effect, an effective public affairs office must be established early in the standup process of the Florida State Guard, be properly staffed, and serve as the focal point for achieving the governor's appointed missions.

The Role Of Public Affairs And The Florida State Guard:

Although the Florida State Guard has a precedent as a former unit, few of its original members are still alive and no one serving in the 1940s would be able to anticipate the changes in technology, communications and types of emergencies they would have to respond to in the 21st century.

Battles, whether with a foreign nation, insurgent movement, a natural disaster or as the result of civil unrest are no longer fought and won on traditional battlefields. Instead, as countless examples from Vietnam to Afghanistan have showed us, they are fought and won in the perception of citizens.

That is why public relations have taken on such a critical role in the active duty, reserve, National Guard, and state guard/defense forces. In addition to serving as a central hub for communications between units and supporting agencies, public affairs is also the tip of the spear in responding to media inquiries. Hurricane Katrina showed us that simply responding with supplies and support was not enough to fully resolve a disaster in the mind of citizens; it also takes a coordinated and targeted communications plan executed by both senior leaders and agencies interfacing with those affected by an emergency.

As the interviews with state guard/defense force public affairs officers revealed, the danger in standing up any new taxpayer-funded organization will first and foremost be perception, especially in a climate as politically charged as ours. Citizens will want to know the role of the Florida State Guard, if they will be used as a police force against the state's citizens, and what

they can expect from the state guard during times of crisis. Local, state, and federal agencies will want to know who the key points of contact are with their counterparts in the Florida State Guard during times of peace and of emergency, NGOs (non-government organizations) will want to know how they can support, and that their resources are being well-used. Those that are volunteering their time to serve in the Florida State Guard will want to know their time and skills are being well-used to serve their state, fellow citizens, and communities.

Primary Sources Consulted:

Lt. Col. Scott Malyerck, Public Affairs Officer Of The South Carolina State Guard

Maj. Steve Estes, former Public Affairs Officer of the Tennessee State Guard, current OIC of the G3 division of the Tennessee State Guard, and officer in the State Guard Association Of The United States

Col. Richard Goldenburg, Public Affairs Officer Of The New York National Guard

Lt. Col. Jonathan M. Shiroma, Chief of Media Relations California National Guard

Maj. Terry Heifetz, Public Affairs Officer Of The Indiana Guard Reserve

Maj. Steven Rice, Public Affairs Officer Of The Maryland Defense Force

Capt. Mark Getman, Director of Public Affairs Of The New York Guard

Establishing The Florida State Guard

As the Florida State Guard is established, it is imperative to focus on both internal and external considerations.

Internal considerations involve the stated mission of the organization, what roles it will play for the state, recruiting volunteer members, deciding what types of uniforms they will wear and how uniforms and supplies will be procured, whether volunteers will be paid or unpaid for their travel, drill weekends and mobilizations, how often they will drill and how to ensure force readiness in the event the state guard as a whole or its individual volunteers are mobilized.

We address each of these in the sections below.

The Mission of The Florida Guard

One of the key elements of success of any mission is its objective; and ensuring an organization's success is no different. That is why almost all state guard/defense force units around the country have a public-facing mission statement. Not only does this serve as a clear indication of their purpose to their state's citizens, it's also a reminder of their specific role they play within their own state. Below are a sample of mission statements from various state guard/defense forces around the United States. As you will notice, some are aspirational in nature and focus on the role the guard plays during an emergency, and some focus on the state statute that justifies their state guard/defense force's existence.

South Carolina State Guard

When serious natural or man-made disasters strike the State of South Carolina, the mission of the State Guard is to quickly respond to protect people and property and to help communities recover. Acting in coordination with the National Guard, state, county, and municipal agencies, the State Guard is trained and ready to put boots on the ground when called upon.

<https://sg.sc.gov/>

California State Guard

The California State Guard (CSG) is a volunteer force that protects California and its citizens from natural and man-made disasters, including wildfires, floods, earthquakes, and pandemics. It was formed to provide California with a trained and organized force in the event of a state emergency.

<https://stateguard.cmd.ca.gov/public/>

Tennessee State Guard

The purpose of the Tennessee State Guard is to provide a professional complement of personnel to support the State mission of the Tennessee National Guard, by assisting the Tennessee Army National Guard as a force multiplier, and at the direction of the Adjutant General, to assist civil authorities with disaster relief, humanitarian causes, ceremonial service, religious and medical support for the well-being and safety of the citizenry of Tennessee.

<https://www.tn.gov/military/who-we-are/state-guard.html>

Washington State Guard

The mission of the Washington State Guard is to provide organized units that are equipped and trained in the protection of life or property and the preservation of peace, order, and public safety under competent orders of State authorities.

<https://mil.wa.gov/state-guard>

Virginia Defense Force

The Virginia Defense Force is authorized by the Code of the Virginia as the all-volunteer reserve of the Virginia National Guard and serves as a force multiplier integrated into all Guard domestic operations. Members of the VDF volunteer their time for training and community support and are only paid when called to state active duty by an authorization from the Governor of Virginia.

<https://vdf.virginia.gov/>

Vermont State Guard

The mission of the Vermont State Guard is to be prepared to perform tasks of internal security and public safety, as ordered by the Governor, under the direction of The Adjutant General. As an example, the VSG is in charge of the Transportation Center in the event of an accident at the Vermont Yankee Power Plant. The VSG also assists the National Guard with Memorial Ceremonies such as the annual POW / MIA Day Remembrance.

<https://www.vermontstateguard.org/>

Georgia State Defense Force

When ordered by the Georgia State Adjutant General, provide an organized, trained, disciplined, rapid response volunteer force to assist state and local government agencies and civil relief organizations in impending or actual emergencies to assure the welfare and safety of the citizens of Georgia. Also, on order, support the activities of the Georgia National Guard and other branches of the Georgia Department of Defense.

<https://paonews.net/our-mission-and-purpose/mission/>

Texas State Guard

The mission of the Texas State Guard (TXSG) is to provide mission-ready military forces to assist state and local authorities in times of state emergencies; to conduct homeland security and community service activities under the umbrella of Defense Support to Civil Authorities, and to augment the Texas Army National Guard and Texas Air National Guard as required.

<https://tmd.texas.gov/state-guard>

Mississippi State Guard

The Mississippi State Guard is an all-volunteer organization tasked with supplementing the forces of the Mississippi Army National Guard and/or Air National Guard upon the order of the Governor of the State of Mississippi through the Adjutant General of the State of Mississippi. While its primary mission is to assist in coping with any man-made or natural disaster, the MSSG trains to be ready to meet any assignment. As a State Guard Unit, it is not subject to any federal authority, with regard to assignment and/or control.

<https://www.msstateguard.us/home>

Michigan Defense Force

The Michigan Defense Force under state law Michigan Military Act 150 of 1967 and under United States Code 32 USC 109 is a component of the States Military Establishment and is

constituted as a State Defense Force. Michigan Compiled Laws (MCL) 32.509 State Military Establishment Sec. 109 "The organized militia of this state taken collectively shall be known as the state military establishment and constitutes the armed forces of this state. The organized militia consist of Army National Guard, Air National Guard and the defense force when actually in existence as provided in this act." The Michigan Defense Force is 1 of 3 authorized Armed Forces of the State of Michigan and serves under the Governor as Commander in Chief. The Michigan Defense Force, 1st MIVDF Brigade (32 USC 109), 3rd SDF, is structured as a Light Infantry Unit, reserved to support Michigan Army and Air National Guard as a force multiplier, under the direction on The Adjunct General and Chief of Staff for the Joint Chiefs. The State Defense Force supports the State of Michigan with DOMOPS (Domestic Operations) such as Military Support to Civil Authority (MSCA) Operations. Support Task Assignments Include Michigan Emergency Management Plan Tasks (MEMP) Such as Logistics: POD, Warehousing, Mass sheltering. Communications: Establish and maintain Interoperable Communications with local, state, and federal agencies. Engineering: Debris Removal, Infrastructure Damage Assessment, SAR, Hazmat/CBRNE, and Flood Response. Security: Traffic Control, EVAC Route, ECP, CIP. State Defense Force Essential tasks include: MI's Receipt, Store and Stage (RSS) of the CDC Strategic National Stockpile (SNS), Support MING with County Liaison Officers (LNO), Support the MING with Joint Reception, Staging, Onward Movement and Integration (JRSOI) staffing, Support MING with Retirement Services Specialists, Support <https://midefenseforce.org/>

Indiana Guard Reserve

Today's Indiana Guard Reserve focuses on serving Hoosiers. As a subset of the Indiana National Guard, the IGR assists in supporting domestic missions that execute skills obtained through the National Incident Management System (NIMS). The Guard Reserve continually hones capabilities through designing and evaluating internal training exercises and providing community support.

<https://www.in.gov/ago/indiana-guard-reserve/about-igr/>

New York Guard

New York Guard members are a volunteer, unpaid force which serves at the direction of the Governor. They assist the National Guard in planning, training for and executing state emergency support and disaster missions and provide legal and medical pre-deployment assistance to the National Guard units and other reserve components as requested.

<http://dmna.ny.gov/nyg/>

Oregon Civil Defense Force

The Oregon Civil Defense Force is a volunteer force established in Oregon (Revised Statute 399.035). Its mission is to augment the Oregon National Guard as a reserve force under the authority of The Adjutant General of Oregon. As outlined in Command Policy Memorandum #167 (Joint) – Support of the Oregon Civil Defense Force (formerly known as the Oregon State Defense Force), the initial focus will be supporting HF communications at armories. Other tasks will be determined in coordination with Oregon National Guard units. <https://www.oregon.gov/omd/programs/Pages/Civil-Defense-Force.aspx>

Alaska State Defense Force:

The Alaska State Defense Force (ASDF) is an all-volunteer organization and is considered part of Alaska's Organized Militia. Alaska Statute 26.05.100 states "during the time that the Alaska National Guard or the Alaska Naval Militia, or any part of either of them, is not available to the state by reason of active federal service, or the National Guard or Naval Militia requires augmentation to perform its state mission, the governor may activate the Alaska State Defense Force."

<https://dmva.alaska.gov/asdf>

Louisiana Military Department (Louisiana State Guard)

Protect and serve the citizens of Louisiana by providing a highly trained, qualified and reliable force to support All-Hazard Responses and "At-Risk" Youth Education Programs

<https://geauxguard.la.gov/organization/louisiana-state-military-department/>

Maryland Defense Force

Protect and assist the citizens of Maryland at a moment's notice while we fight and win our nation's wars on the ground, in the air, and in the intelligence, information, and cyber domains.

<https://military.maryland.gov/Pages/about-us.aspx>

Ohio Military Reserve

The Ohio Military Reserve (OHMR) is a component of the Ohio Adjutant General's Department and serves under the governor as commander in chief. Its primary mission is to provide a fully manned and mission-ready civil support and sustainment brigade to support to state and local governments. The brigade offers Emergency Support Function 6 (mass care) and Emergency Support Function 7 (logistics and resource support) during natural or man-made disasters or other threats to homeland security.

OHMR units are trained in disaster relief, medical support, volunteer reception and management, shelter management and logistics support in addition to basic soldier skills. Our core competencies are training to National Incident Management System (NIMS), Military Emergency Management Specialist (MEMS), and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) standards.

<http://www.ohiomilitaryreserve.com/WhoWeAre>

Best Practice In Establishing The Florida State Guard Mission Statement

To ensure the mission statement achieves the objective of serving to define the mission set of the guard, promote recruitment, and does not conflict with the Florida National Guard's mission, ensure that it is clear enough to answer the question about why the state guard is different from the national guard and is not a state militia that will police citizens. Put the mission statement front and center on the Florida State Guard website and ensure it is promoted. Allow the Florida National Guard to review the mission statement and offer insights.

The Role Of The Florida State Guard

As a reflection of their vastly different mission statements, we discovered that the roles of state guard/defense forces around the nation varied as well. While they all focus on emergency response, *how* they accomplished that response, with what resources, and with what level of efficacy, varied considerably among the state guards interviewed.

It was, however, universally communicated by state guard/defense force representatives that their state guard/defense force was rarely used to quell civil disturbances or even secure public/private property in the event of an emergency. Those roles were left to their state's National Guard or local law enforcement agencies.

As a result, *no state guard or defense force unit interviewed issues firearms to their members or required them to be carried during mobilizations*. This distinction was emphasized multiple times throughout almost every interview. It sets a clear standard that the state guard/defense force is not a 'militia' or a military unit that operates at the behest of the state governor. There were a few instances of state guard/defense force personnel carrying weapons, but most of those volunteers were fulfilling security-specific roles and augmenting National Guard personnel, while also serving as law enforcement professionals when not volunteering.

Outside of preparing for emergencies through monthly drills (a topic covered later), we found that the role of the state guard/defense force was almost universally related to emergency response. The type of response varied with the types of emergencies their given state encountered, but recruitment, planning, and coordination with state and federal assets was always centered around being a value-add during emergencies in their states.

Most of the interaction that state guard/defense force units had with state emergency response assets, federal emergency response assets and emergency-focused nonprofits didn't occur except during emergencies, a challenge that meant state guard assets tended to be underutilized until they proved their capabilities to emergency response teams, National Guard units, and federal emergency management agencies.

Best Practice In Establishing The Florida State Guard's Role:

Establish a resource of all county emergency management agencies, state emergency management agencies and federal emergency management representatives for Florida and ensure they are aware of the personnel assets and skillsets the Florida State Guard can bring to bear in an emergency, and what volunteers in the Florida State Guard's likely response time and length of mobilization will be during emergencies. It will be imperative that it be faster than existing emergency response agencies such as the Florida National Guard, or the state guard will likely be passed over/underutilized during an emergency. The Florida State Guard and Florida National Guard should work closely to ensure the Florida State Guard is a force multiplier to the National Guard and does not conflict with the missions of other state or federal agencies.

Chief Stakeholders

Stakeholders for each state guard/defense force were each unique to the structure and size of the state guards/defense forces interviewed. There were multiple internal/external stakeholders that each state guard/defense force benefitted from cultivating relationships with.

Internal Stakeholders

Internal stakeholders were those organizations and agencies within the county, state, and federal government. Surprisingly, few state guards/defense forces had any interaction with their state's governor and almost all reported to their state military department's adjutant general, which often oversaw and commanded the state's National Guard units as well.

Across interviews, it was emphasized that state guard/defense forces, to be successful, must have clearly defined reporting and command structures. To that effect, almost all state guard/defense force units interviewed reported directly to the adjutant general of their state's military department. The danger in having state guard/defense force report to a chief of staff or any other leader is that they may be underutilized in an emergency/not have the resources needed to properly assist existing efforts of other emergency response agencies and not have a presence at joint operations centers during emergency planning and responses.

Depending on the command and reporting structure of the Florida State Guard, chief stakeholders may vary. We discovered most state guards/defense forces' internal chief stakeholders were their National Guard counterparts across job roles, as it was their state's National Guard who requested assistance of, and often was the first to request mobilization, of the state guard/defense force during emergencies.

Another internal stakeholder for state guard/defense force units were the county emergency management offices in their state. It would often be these offices that guard/defense force units would coordinate emergency response with after being mobilized, so it was imperative that state guard units were in contact with their civilian counterparts across these offices and established strong relationships prior to an emergency.

According to Lt. Gen. Russel Honoré, commander of the Hurricane Katrina Response Force, "Local, state and federal officers need to train together. You don't want to be exchanging business cards after a disaster."

During emergency response, many state guard/defense force units report to the joint operations center managed by their state's military department/National Guard, so it is a wise course of action to ensure leaders among the Florida State Guard have a place in the written guidance and procedures on standing up/operating a joint operations center in the event of an emergency in their state.

Surprisingly, there was little interaction between state guard/defense force units and federal agencies such as FEMA. This may have been due to the inability of state assets to utilize federal resources (a problem interviewees stated their state National Guard units also encountered), but it would undoubtedly be a good idea to cultivate relationships with the state-level representative of

federal emergency management agencies, if they exist.

External Stakeholders

External stakeholders are stakeholders outside the command structure of county, state, and federal agencies. Largely, this means the citizens of the state that the state guard/defense force serve, the media and NGOs (non-government organizations).

While coordination with NGOs was rare across the guard units interviewed, it did exist with Red Cross and a few other emergency response organizations. Numerous interviewees emphasized the importance of state guard/defense force units not over-leveraging assets from NGOs during emergencies that would have otherwise gone to National Guard units in their state, which is why many state guard/defense forces folded into the joint operations center and under National Guard oversight when mobilized. This prevented duplicate requests for valuable emergency response supplies.

Interfacing with and educating the public is the purview of the public affairs unit within each state guard/defense force unit, and public support among external stakeholders in the state and community was almost entirely dependent on differentiating the state guard from their National Guard and active military counterparts. While the National Guard is largely composed of citizens throughout the state, National Guard personnel can (and often are) mobilized at the federal level for out-of-state missions. To engender support of the public, the state guard/defense force units interviewed emphasized that ‘we are an emergency response organization that can deploy within the state in a rapid manner.’

A key element in engendering the support of external stakeholders is the cost savings the state guard/defense force brings. For instance, emphasizing that the state guard can mobilize quickly and be at the site of an emergency within a few hours, whereas the National Guard might take at least 12 hours to mobilize and arrive on-site is a strategy utilized by many state guard/defense forces. Many state guards quantify the dollar value of their emergency response and take every opportunity to promote that to their state’s citizens. *For instance, South Carolina quantified the value of their state guard’s response during a hurricane to \$3.5 million dollars. Surprisingly, the value they provided for that one emergency response was more than their entire state-allocated budget for the year, making them a clear return on investment for their state’s taxpayers.*

Media relations were critical in all emergency response situations across state guard/defense forces interviewed as it will be the media who paint the state guard/defense force in a positive or negative light to citizens. Public affairs officers across state guard/defense force units stated that one of the first calls they made during an emergency was to the media outlets of the areas affected by the emergency to ensure those outlets were aware of the state guard/defense force’s response.

Best Practices In Cultivating Relationships With Chief Stakeholders

In addition to developing a list of contacts at county emergency management offices across the state, it is also recommended that a clear reporting channel be established between the public affairs officer and adjutant general of the state (and not reporting through another leadership position). If the state governor has the authority to do so, state guard/defense forces should have

specific roles and duties during the standup of a joint operations center during an emergency to ensure they are utilized. If state-level representatives from federal emergency response agencies exist, then relationships between the state guard/defense force should be cultivated and if any resources can be utilized from federal agencies during an emergency, clear protocols for their use should be established.

It is imperative that a public affairs office be quickly established within the state guard/defense force to handle the interface with external stakeholders such as the public and by proxy, the media. This means a similar contact list should be compiled of media assets throughout the state and relationships cultivated ahead of time with those outlets. As new volunteers are recruited, those media outlets can be made aware of the new volunteer from their area. During an emergency, the state guard can often be the first contact the media has at the site of an emergency and pre-existing relationships always come in handy in generating positive media coverage.

State Guard Unit Composition, Recruitment And Mobilization

Because so many state guard/defense forces serve in a supporting capacity to their National Guard counterparts, many state guard/defense forces have unit compositions that mirror the military's. These are as follows, with notes made for how each of these units serves in a specialized emergency response capacity:

Command Staff:

This leadership unit is composed of the adjutant general, who among interviewees reports directly to the governor and leads the state's military office. It also contains the senior enlisted leader, deputy commander, chief of staff, legal counsel, public affairs officer, and chaplain, among others.

Additional functions are as follows:

G1: Administration/Manpower

This administrative function tracks personnel records, pay and reimbursement and mobilization capability of volunteer members.

G2: Intelligence/Security

While state guards/defense forces rarely have a need for offensive intelligence operations (Texas being a rare exception with their border guard function), there is a need for intelligence as it relates to emergency response. Meteorologists, cartographers, and other skillsets that can assist in an emergency can be housed in this unit.

G3: Operations

This is the workhorse of emergency response capability, and is the department that houses plans for deploying assets during emergency response and coordinating training during drill days to ensure that personnel are competent in their skillset and understand their role in coordinating with other units within their state guard/defense force and integrating with their state's National Guard.

G4: Logistics

This department is responsible for the acquisition, storage, distribution, maintenance, and turnover of supplies and material. It is in this department that all emergency response supplies are acquired, inventoried, tracked, and disbursed during mobilization.

G5: Plans and Strategy

While few state guard/defense forces had an official plans and strategy department, its value cannot be understated as this is where emergency response plans would be researched, developed, and reviewed before testing them during exercises and then in actual emergency response situations. Coordination between this department and the state's joint operations command center staff during training exercises would be invaluable during emergency response.

G6: Communications

The importance of communications during emergency response cannot be overstated. This department is responsible for establishing and maintaining communication channels not only for

state guard/defense force personnel, but also for the communities they respond to. It is important to staff this department with those familiar/licensed in amateur radio, digital communications, and information technology repair.

Drill Days

Because drill days serve as an opportunity for training and unit cohesion (as they are usually the only time when fellow state guard members interact with each other outside of mobilizations), they fall into state guard operations as one of its primary duties. Many state guards can leverage their National Guard counterpart's bases and facilities for drill days, especially if their reporting structure folds into their state's National Guard unit. For those state guards/defense forces who do not have a reporting relationship with their National Guard counterpart, drill days can be conducted at any state facility where lodging is available nearby and classrooms/equipment are available.

Most representatives interviewed shared their state guard/defense forces do not pay/reimburse their state guard for drill days, or for travel to/from the drill site. Usually, lodging was provided to state guard/defense force members during required drill days, or the cost of lodging was reimbursed. Obviously, not paying/reimbursing members limits the type of recruit who can participate to those who already have the income to offset missing a day of work/can afford to travel to/from a drill site on their own. It is advised, if the budget is available, to reimburse members for mileage to/from their drill site and provide them lodging and meals while drilling. Even better for recruiting would be to pay the members at the same rate as their military rank while drilling, if budget permits.

Drill days usually were one day a month and conducted on a Saturday, with expected travel days to be the Friday prior and Sunday after. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many state guard/defense force units had their units drill in smaller groups across Saturdays to ensure better social distancing (the medical unit drilling on the first Saturday of the month, engineers drilling on the second Saturday of the month, etc.).

State Guard Recruitment

We found that recruiting efforts across state guards/defense forces were largely done by word-of-mouth with little traditional media, social media or advertising used to attract new volunteers. Because so little budget was available for most state guards/defense forces, only a few units interviewed had found the funds to develop commercials or radio advertising to recruit new volunteers.

If organic recruiting is the strategy of the Florida State Guard, then it means emphasis on passive recruitment strategies, which makes the state guard website the primary public-facing recruiting asset. Representatives interviewed stressed that contact forms on the website be functional and correctly route to the person responsible for reviewing applications, and that a robust public affairs effort is used to promote the service of even the earliest members of the state guard across social media channels.

Leveraging existing social media accounts of elected leaders in the state and sympathetic influencers in the media and public eye is key in growing the social media following of the state

guard until it reaches enough influence to stand on its own and reach new volunteers. In fact, for many state guards, their chief challenges to success were social media related. For instance, one guard had trouble with some volunteers making unauthorized statements on social media and they had to counsel them on appropriate social media posting. To combat this problem for the future, they created an initial entry training brief for new volunteers on how to conduct themselves on social media.

Once a recruitment strategy is in place, many of the state guard/defense forces interviewed mentioned that a list of desirable skillsets should be built to recruit for, especially if a force is limited in budget. This skillset would be largely dependent on the type of emergencies the state guard/defense force responds to, but in states that also respond to floods and hurricanes on a regular basis, skillsets like structural engineers, first responders, doctors, firefighters, and other fields usually deployed by federal agencies in emergencies should be the first volunteers to seek. While it is appealing to fill the ranks quickly to show public support for the state guard/defense force, that support will quickly disappear if the state guard can't provide value during an emergency.

Another factor almost every state guard/defense force we interviewed mentioned about recruitment was a height/weight standard for volunteers. While the type of citizen willing to volunteer for state-based emergency response may not be within the age range or physical fitness demanded by the National Guard or other armed services, the appearance of the state guard will make a difference in how quickly they are leveraged by their state's National Guard and in how they are viewed by citizens. A basic physical fitness test was required by some state guards/defense forces both for new volunteers and for existing state guard/defense force members to remain in a 'mobilizable' status.

While many state guards/defense forces are staffed with prior service personnel who have already completed basic training, there will be ideal volunteers who do not have military experience. State guards/defense forces in each state developed some form of basic training that new members complete over the course of multiple drill days spread across multiple months, as few volunteers can afford to leave their civilian jobs for multiple weeks in order to attend a nearby basic training at an Army, Navy, Air Force or Marine Corps training center.

Pay and benefits are an area that the Armed Forces have available as an asset to gain new recruits, but few state guard/defense forces interviewed had the budget to pay their members (some not even during drill days, and some not even when the members are activated and deployed during emergency response). Because of this, many states have workers compensation/liability insurance available to their state guard/defense forces that activates when volunteers travel to drill days, during drill days, on their way home from drill, and during activation/mobilization. This is often the same insurance provided to state employees and should be mentioned during interview sessions with volunteers who have expressed interest in joining.

There was no single, shared policy on how to assign rank across the state guard/defense force units. South Carolina, for instance, has recruits send in documentation, prior service information, educational level, etc., and a committee assigns them a potential rank. If the recruit meets certain requirements, they can be commissioned as an officer. Prior service members across state guards

were usually allowed to join at or just below the last rank held while on active duty. Any member with a college degree who was willing to complete an abbreviated ‘officer candidate school’ the state guard hosted during drill weekends could be offered a commission in the state guard/defense force, if the leadership role they were fulfilling warranted an officer’s position.

In almost all cases, uniforms worn by volunteers mirrored their state’s National Guard uniform with the difference of the state name in place of ‘National Guard’ on the nametape, and if a patch was to be worn, the state flag replaced the US Flag in most cases. There was no standard policy on how uniforms were supplied, however. Many state guard/defense forces required their members to pay for their own uniforms regardless of rank, some were able to use excess inventory from their National Guard counterparts, and some provided one or two uniforms for enlisted members but required state guard/defense force officers to purchase their uniforms out of pocket.

State Guard Mobilization

Mobilizing or deploying a state guard/defense force during an emergency should be the chief operational priority of any state guard/defense force, as that is when it proves its value to its stakeholders and justifies its taxpayer expense.

The state guard/defense force has a strategic advantage over its National Guard and active-duty counterparts during an emergency as its members do not have to necessarily muster at a central depot or command center before responding to an emergency. This 12 or 24-hour window is critical in emergency response until the National Guard, FEMA, or other emergency response agencies can deploy personnel and supplies. Additionally, it is critical to know what missions the Florida State Guard can execute, based on the skillsets of its members, their ability to mobilize and the length of time they can be on-site. For one state guard unit, for instance, medical missions were their primary skillset as they had 10 medical doctors among their members, compared to their state national guard’s one full-time doctor.

Again, Lt. Gen. Russel Honoré, commander of the Hurricane Katrina Response Force, had this to say about the importance of mobilizing an emergency response force with speed: “...the governor will make decisions on employment after deployment.” That is why it is critical to get assets to the site of an emergency and then coordinate with local agencies on best utilizing them.

Unfortunately, many state guards/defense forces interviewed said they struggled with mobilizing their members. This came, they said, from a lack of knowing who in their organization was in which areas of their state and could reach an emergency soonest, who among that group had the skillsets needed in each area at that time, and what county/state agencies should be contacted or coordinated with once state guard assets arrived. This administrative hurdle is why many state guards/defense forces fell under the command of their state’s National Guard during an emergency, as the full-time staff of the National Guard already had those assets and plans worked out.

Most state guard/defense force units interviewed had limits on the amount of time their members could be mobilized during an emergency. Twenty-four hours was the shortest length for volunteer mobilization, and by that time, National Guard or other emergency response agencies

were usually able to be on-site. The longest stretch of mobilization was multi-month in the case where state guard/defense force assets were augmenting National Guard personnel.

Pay and benefits were also an important issue among interviewees when mobilizing state guard/defense force members during an emergency. While some state guard/defense forces did not pay or reimburse their members for drill days or mobilizations, other states did pay/reimburse their members when those members were mobilized to respond to an emergency. Usually, mileage in a personal vehicle and state active-duty pay was the minimum for those states that did have budget to pay their activated members during emergency response and mobilization.

Best Practices In State Guard Operations, Recruitment And Mobilization

When standing up a new state guard, begin by filling the leadership positions across command divisions and ensuring those commanders understand the roles their division has in completing their state guard's mission. Only when those leadership roles have been filled is it advisable to begin recruiting the state guard's front-line volunteers.

Volunteers need a command structure, or they will quickly lose interest in being part of a larger, well-coordinated organization.

Secure a centrally located site to conduct drill days. The earliest drill days will be used in simply establishing the force, locating supplies/uniforms, and coordinating storage of emergency response supplies. Ensure the drill site has nearby lodging that can house the entire Florida State Guard for one night, should all state guard volunteers drill on the same day. Determine if there is budget available to reimburse members for mileage to/from the drill site or even pay them for a day on duty commiserate with state active duty pay for drill weekends.

Stand up a Florida State Guard website as soon as possible, ensuring it features the mission of the state guard, outlines what it does and doesn't do, and has contact pages both for media inquiries and potential volunteers. Test the contact pages to ensure they route to the correct person for a timely response.

Establish a policy on how rank from prior service members will transfer and what the commissioning program will entail for non-prior service officers.

Determine what uniforms will be worn and how they will be sourced and where they will be stored to be ready for new volunteers. It is recommended this location is also at the drill site to make it easier to issue them to new volunteers.

It is imperative to keep accurate personnel records and contact information on all state guard members, segmented by their geographic location, mobilization ability and that person's skillset if they are to be effectively mobilized and leveraged during short-term emergency response. Develop a mobilization plan for individual volunteers and for the state guard. This will mean an accurate contact roster of all members by geography, listing their skillsets and how far they're willing to travel and how long they're willing to be mobilized. The roster must also list mobilization status based on health, height/weight standards and if any necessary licenses are up

to date (doctors and structural engineers, for instance). A crisis response plan is essential as the state guard/defense force's leadership needs to coordinate ahead of any mobilized members to let county emergency response team assets know state guard resources are on the way.

Determine what pay and benefits, if any, a state guard member will have while mobilized and ensure that is communicated during new-volunteer interviews and drill days.

If coordination with the state's National Guard unit is required before/during mobilization, establish clear lines of communication, and ensure the state guard has a seat at the table in the joint operations center that stands up in the event of an emergency.

The Role Of Public Affairs In The State Guard

At this point, we will examine specifics of the role of Public Affairs in the success of the Florida State Guard. Because of the author's background and the fact that all sources interviewed held public affairs positions within their state guards/defense forces, we will outline a public affairs operations plan and how to leverage public affairs in establishing the state guard, engendering support from the public, and the benefit the state guard public affairs office brings in coordinating with other agencies during and outside of emergencies.

According to Army Regulation 360-1, the Army defines public affairs as the function that conducts public communication strategy for information, command information, leader engagements, and community outreach activities directed toward both the external and internal publics with interest in the Department of Defense. This places the public affairs department and the public affairs officer as the chief spokesperson of the state guard to both internal and external audiences. Lt. Gen. Russel Honoré, commander of the Hurricane Katrina Response Force, likened the role of public affairs as the difference between a thermostat and a thermometer. A thermometer, he said, tell the temperature and is little more than an observer. A thermostat, in contrast, controls the temperature. In an emergency scenario, the media's traditional role has been to be the thermometer and simply report facts. That role is changing, and media are more apt to interject heresy and their own opinions into their stories, especially during an emergency. Therefore it is imperative to have a strong public relations strategy and the personnel to support it; we need someone to have their hand on the thermostat, lest in begin controlling itself.

While most state guards we interviewed had a dedicated public affairs officer with no other additional duties, the involvement of those public affairs officers, their release authority, and their capabilities varied greatly from state to state. Below, we will review best practices gathered from each of the public affairs officers in how they staffed and operated their departments, responded to the media during and outside of emergencies, and engendered public support for their state guard's mission.

State Guard Coordination With Governor's Office/Press Secretary

Surprisingly, there were zero instances across all state guard/defense force units interviewed of anyone except the state guard/defense force adjutant general interacting with their governor's office. However, depending on the reporting structure, interviewees did have the following insight to offer:

Best Practices In Coordinating With The Governor's Office:

This will largely depend on the reporting structure that defines the state guard's chain of command, but if the Florida State Guard is established with a direct reporting chain to the governor, care should be taken to clearly differentiate the types of missions the Florida National Guard would own and which missions the Florida State Guard would primarily respond to, so at the very least, there is not a duplication of effort. There will undoubtedly be times when the Florida National Guard and Florida State Guard would benefit from working together for the good of Floridians and that relationship could be damaged by both units independently responding to the same incidents/emergencies.

If the state guard is going to be positioned as an asset that reports to the governor, then the public affairs officer should be working closely with the governor's press team and the Florida National Guard's public affairs office to promote the mission and needs of the guard and to ensure that state guard assets appear alongside the governor during press conferences when he is addressing emergency response issues. This will provide needed credibility that the Florida State Guard is a trusted emergency response asset.

Coordination With NGOs/State Assets/Emergency Offices During And Outside Of Emergencies

Few state guards/defense force public affairs officers interviewed had any communication or coordination with emergency response offices, even during emergencies. This was a task largely left to other departments within the state guard or turned over entirely to the state's National Guard and its joint operations center.

Public affairs does play a critical role in promoting the interface of state guard units and the agencies they rely upon for materiel support. The more the public understands their county emergency response office is leveraging state guard resources during an emergency, the more likely they will be to support similar collaboration in the future and support the growth of the Florida State Guard.

Therefore it is critical to have a seat for the state guard public affairs officer at the joint operations command during an emergency – it has been discovered that if public affairs doesn't know about something, it become difficult for them to cover it themselves or respond to media inquiries about it. The interface between state guard units and local emergency response assets is critical for both the image of the state guard and to fulfill their mission.

Outside of emergencies, state guard public affairs can build a roster of media outlets across the state and interface with any other public relations peers in emergency response agencies. This roster can parallel the roster of county-based emergency office contacts that will be critical in responding during emergencies.

Best Practices In Coordination With NGOs/State Assets/Emergency Offices During And Outside Of Emergencies

Ensure that the Florida State Guard public affairs officer has a seat at the joint operations command in the event of an emergency, and that they come with a list of media contacts separated by geography across the state. Once the operations center has coordinated interface with an NGO/state asset/emergency office, public affairs should make every effort to have a photographer/videographer at the site to capture the interface between state guard personnel/the NGOs/state assets/emergency office.

Standing Up A Florida State Guard Public Affairs Office:

The chief role of the public affairs office of the Florida State Guard will be to interface with media, emergency management offices and county resource offices about the mission of the state guard, how it's accomplished and why the guard is an asset to the community. To accomplish this, public affairs officers at other state guards advised that a public affairs team be chosen that already has an understanding of media relations and emergency response, with preference in recruiting given to military-trained personnel who have completed Defense Information School courses, and secondarily to actual members of the media across the state who can leverage their skillsets and media network to ensure positive coverage for the state guard.

The reporting structure of the public affairs office was almost universally, among state guard/defense forces interviewed, direct to the adjutant general. This is a best practice from active-duty military operations as the public affairs officer is the primary person responsible for communicating the commander's intent both internally to unit members and externally to the media and the public. In the instances where the state guard public affairs officer reported to the chief of staff or to the National Guard public affairs officer, release of information was delayed, often for weeks, and media inquiries had to be cleared with multiple levels of command before responses could be issued. In a world of 24-hour news cycles, not being able to immediately respond means media will run whatever story they have without the insight or input of the state guard's commander or public affairs officer.

If the state guard will have regular interface with the National Guard (if not reporting directly through them), then it will be critical for state guard/National Guard public affairs officers to interface with one another, share resources and ensure they are not working at odds.

In most military units, the unit website is the purview of the public affairs office, and the Florida State Guard website should be one of the first priorities of the state guard's adjutant general. It will be there that the public and media will turn for their primary sources of information about the new state guard, what differentiates it from a militia, and what role it will play in emergency response. This website should also contain a contact form for media inquiries and for interest from potential volunteers, making it a key element in communicating the commander's intent and in growing the volunteer force.

The size of public affairs offices differed throughout the state guard/defense forces interviewed, ranging from one person (only a public affairs officer) to multiple officers and several enlisted personnel. In those state guard/defense forces of less than 300 volunteers in total, many public affairs officers relied on unit-level public affairs representatives to gather images and ideas for stories as a secondary duty during drill weekends and mobilizations. This is a best practice from active-duty public affairs units in the military that serves as a force multiplier for public affairs offices.

Best Practices In Standing Up A State Guard Public Affairs Office:

It was advised to build this office slowly, as it will be the one with the most interface with the public and be the voice of the commander in interviews and in gaining new volunteers. The public affairs officer should have prior service experience so they understand the structure of the military and can gain credibility with their National Guard counterparts. It will also be

imperative that they have strong military bearing and project a professional image. Because of their visibility, they will be the impression that the media and public will have of all state guard members.

Standing up the state guard website should be a top priority of the commander and the public affairs office. This can be built by volunteers in professional website development firms and should serve the purpose of both educating the public and giving media and interested recruits a way to contact the appropriate state guard recruiting representative.

Secondarily, invitations to the media to visit during drill weekends to see how the state guard prepares was advised as an 'open house' event. Also recommended was to stand up social media pages across social media platforms and get pictures of state guard/defense force members training for emergencies and interacting with the community to make the public aware of the state guard's mission and volunteers.

Engendering Public Buy-In To The Florida State Guard Mission:

While this is a primary focus of the state guard public affairs office, it is also far-reaching enough to involve multiple levels of command up to an including the governor.

As soon as the state guard is re-established by the Florida legislature and funded, it will be critical that the governor begin press conferences around the state and submit op-eds to media outlets around Florida that explain what the Florida State Guard is, what it does, what it doesn't do, and of course, how to apply to volunteer.

It is critical for the lasting success of the state guard that it be seen as an apolitical entity solely dedicated to serving the people of Florida. If public opinion is that the state guard is only for the benefit of the governor's political party, then it will be reduced or dissolved completely if a future governor's politics don't align.

As soon as volunteers begin to join, leverage the governor's media office to get their stories into the public eye, with messages such as "Our volunteers are part of your community and are schoolteachers, firefighters, and doctors. They care about their state and about serving." Interviewees recommended that the public affairs office of the Florida State Guard interview new volunteers with prior service to share why they're joining the state guard as well and feature them across media outlets to showcase their professionalism, continued service and dedication to their country and state.

Best Practices In Engendering Public Support And Buy-In For The Florida State Guard

As soon as the state guard is re-established, launch a press conference tour around the state to control the narrative of what the state guard is charged with accomplishing, and how to apply.

Have op-eds prepared by the governor that communicate the value the state guard will bring to the citizens of Florida, how the unit is not an armed militia, and how to apply to join. As one interviewee stated, "(State guards) are a civic service organization that wears uniforms."

Both the press conferences and op-eds can mention the economic impact that other state guards bring to their states, saving taxpayer dollars and providing critical response during emergencies. As soon as the Florida State Guard begins responding to emergencies or participating in events, that economic impact should be calculated and promoted.

Lt. Gen. Russel Honoré, commander of the Hurricane Katrina Response Force, also recommended bringing the media along even during emergency response so they could see firsthand what efforts were being given to medical aid, structural inspections, etc. This ensures the media doesn't think they are being led on a 'dog and pony show', and instead are seeing the reality of the situation and the efforts of their own volunteers to render aid.

Conclusion:

Hopefully, this report allows someone unfamiliar with the difference between a state guard/defense force and the National Guard/active-duty military some insight into the valuable role that state guards/defense forces play across the country.

Because of their volunteer structure, state guards/defense forces can be valuable force multipliers in the event of an emergency and produce a tremendous cost savings to state taxpayers.

Additionally, the state guard/defense force creates an opportunity for prior-service men and women and service-oriented citizens to give back to their state in a meaningful way, one that ensures their skillsets are utilized domestically to serve their own state, counties and communities.

Additional resources, along with contact information for all state guard/defense force public affairs officers interviewed, are included in the 'Additional Resources' section below.

If I can answer any questions for readers, please do not hesitate to contact me. As a citizen who has benefitted greatly from my military service and from the benefits Florida provides its veterans, it is my honor to continue to serve.

-Shawn Rhodes
Former Sergeant, USMC

Additional Resources:

Through the interviews conducted, we discovered many resources that might assist the Florida State Guard in its standup, especially as it applies to its Public Affairs assets.

Many of the following resources can be found as documents and PDFs in the following folder:
<https://bit.ly/3v0LMoV>

10 Quick Wins During A Disaster

Lt. Gen. Russel Honoré, commander of the Hurricane Katrina Response Force, had these following '10 Quick Wins' to share about disaster response in his book *Survival: How Being prepared Can Keep You And Your Family Safe*, each of which can serve a state guard unit:

1. Command and Control: Determine who is in charge early in the event.
2. Preposition response forces: Too many assets prepositioned outside the affected areas when a storm hits will slow response times.
3. Government employee disaster clause: Employees on government payroll not able to do their jobs after a disaster should be required to assist in operations or lose pay.
4. Single Department Of Defense contact with Federal Coordinating Officer – Eliminates confusion over who is making requests.
5. Communication Continuity: Need redundant emergency communications, prestaging of a separate network, and compatibility of communications assets.
6. Provide external support, including federal funds, to affected areas before the event.
7. Ensure federal and other agencies have workspace in state emergency operations centers.
8. Continuity of government plan: Governments down to the local level should have a plan to maintain continuity to quickly reestablish control in the wake of a disaster.
9. Pre-existing contracts: Establish critical needs and utilize contracts to ensure support after a disaster.
10. Integration Of Industry: Form an industrial civic coalition/partnership that gets commitments from industry to provide support and services in the event of a disaster.

Article: *The Militia You've Never Heard Of* by Adam Freedman, City Journal, 3/28/2018

This 10-page article is an excellent summary of state guards and defense forces around the nation, with special focus on why state guards/defense forces are different than National Guard units and can play a complementary role in a supporting state defense and emergency response.
<https://www.city-journal.org/html/militia-you%E2%80%99ve-never-heard-14339.html>

Evaluation of Department of Defense Interaction with State Defense Forces (Publicly Available)
DODIG-2014-065

This report outlined the interactions between the DoD and state defense forces and offers recommendations that will be useful in standing up the Florida State Guard to include coordination with other federal military assets in the state.

The Army Public Affairs Program

Army Regulation 360-1 (Publicly Available)

This 67-page document outlines the Army's public affairs guidance, to include

roles/responsibilities, policies, and procedures of the Army PAO, and guidance for print and digital communications.

Public Affairs Operations, FM 3-61 (2014) (Publicly Available)

This operational manual produced by the Army does an excellent job of outlining the roles public affairs plays in and for military units.

Public Affairs Specialist / Chief Public Affairs NCO (Publicly Available)

STP 46-46QZ14-SM-TG Soldier's Manual and Trainer's Guide

This Army document drills deeper into the Public Affairs role of a military unit by outlining the roles, responsibilities and skillsets required by a unit-level, or enlisted, public affairs specialist. In the case of state guards/defense forces, this could serve as an operational manual for the public affairs role as there will likely be few public affairs positions available.

New York Guard Policy for Social Media Use (2015)

A five-page document specific to the social media policy of the New York State Guard. Useful for state guards/defense forces that wish to stand up individual unit websites/social media accounts.

New York Division of Military and Naval Affairs (DMNA) Media Guidance and Procedures (2021)

This military-department specific public affairs guidance mirrors what would be more common among state guards/defense forces who report to an adjutant general and interface with their state's National Guard.

State Guard Association Of The United States Public Affairs Training (2019)

This 108-slide presentation is a comprehensive public affairs training program specifically for state guards.

Army Social Media Handbook (2013)

Although almost a decade old, this comprehensive program outlines best practices for military units leveraging social media for internal and external communication and recruiting.

Maryland Military Department Annual Reports (1983-2020):

<https://military.maryland.gov/NG/Pages/Annual-Reports.aspx>

Social Media Examples From The Maryland Defense Force:

MDDF Website:

<https://military.maryland.gov/mddf/Pages/cg.aspx>

MDDF Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/MarylandDefenseForce/>

This is the most utilized and viewed social media platform. This is our main information link to a wider audience.

MDDF 10th Medical Regiment:

<https://www.facebook.com/10thMEDREG>

MDDF Flickr Site:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/58685478@N08/>

This site is where most of the MDDF pictures go.

MDDF Twitter Site:

<https://twitter.com/mddefenseforce>

This site does not have a large "Twitter" following but it serves as another platform for getting the MDDF information out to the public.

MDDF YouTube Channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCGWk--E9zWDsjB4zkqFJC3Q>

This site is for video content which has been a challenge given our limited expertise and equipment. Professional quality is very important.

The MDDF LinkedIn Page:

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/maryland-defense-force>

This page is used for recruiting purposes.

The MDDF Band Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/mddfband/>

This site is managed by MAJ Rick Barnes (Band PAO) and is used primarily for recruiting purposes.

Military Support Detachment Delta Facebook Page:

https://www.facebook.com/pg/Military-Support-Detachment-Delta-Maryland-Defense-Force-222912674419971/posts/?ref=page_internal

This is an old MDDF unit that was folded into Troop Command (Delta). It has not been updated since 2017.

MDDF Cavalry Troop A Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/CavTroopA/>

This is a page for a disbanded MDDF unit that has not been updated since 2014.

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