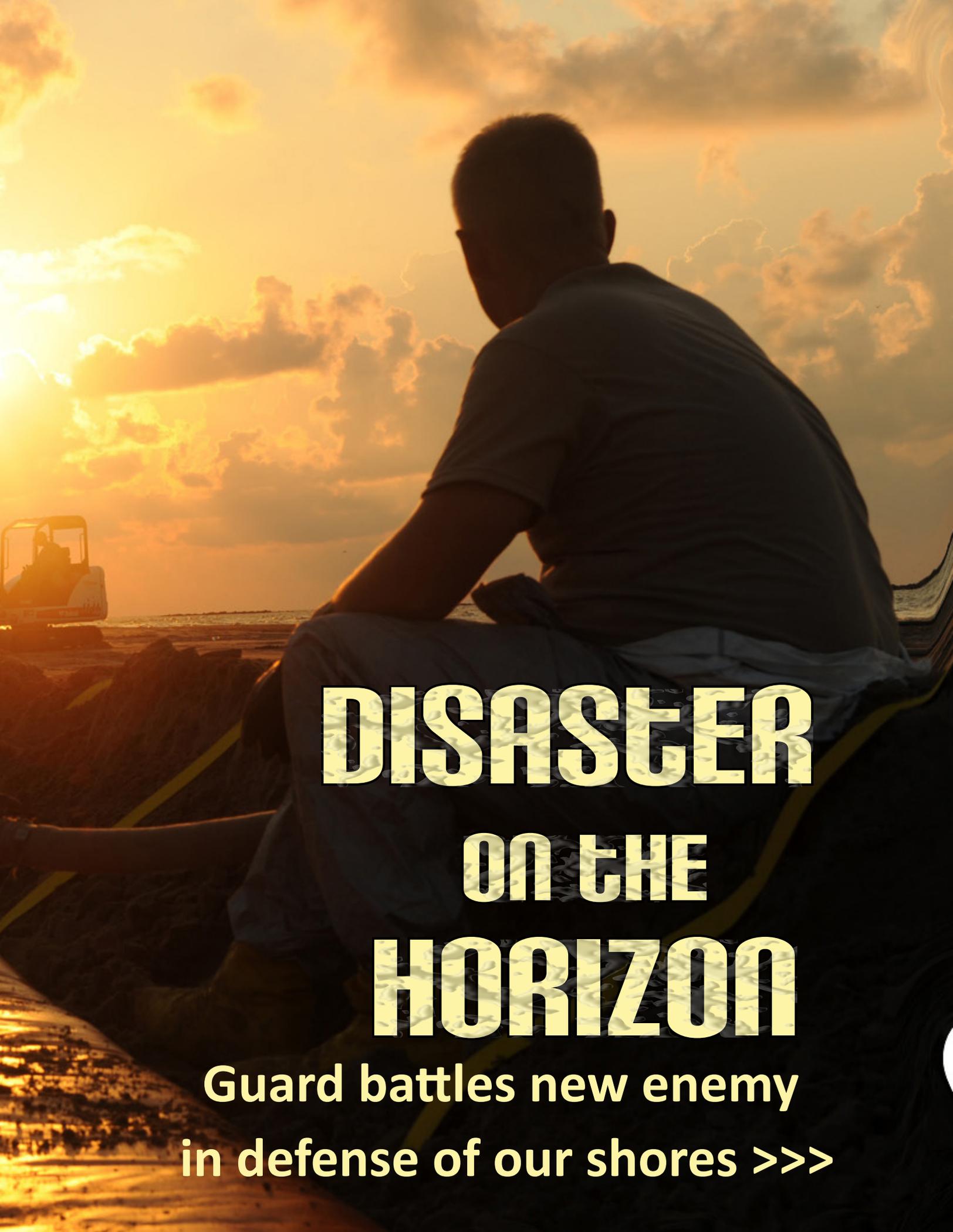


# On Domestic Response



Soldiers with the Louisiana Army National Guard work through the night to construct a Tiger Dam interlocking water diversion system in Grand Isle, La., May 31 in support of the Deep Horizon oil spill clean-up efforts. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Jeffrey T. Barone)



# DISASTER ON THE HORIZON

Guard battles new enemy  
in defense of our shores >>>

# Guard in epic battle to protect Gulf Coast from oil contamination

Just days after oil was detected leaking from where the Deepwater Horizon drilling rig once stood, thousands of Guardmembers from at least six states were called up to assist local communities in the cleanup and removal of oil and to protect critical habitats from contamination.

But as hundreds of thousands of barrels of oil continue to billow out of a broken riser pipe almost a mile down, and with many experts saying that the leak won't be stopped until as early as August when relief wells are drilled, can the Guard really make a difference?

The answer is simple: They already have. From building barriers that protect sensitive marshlands to giving officials a bird's eye view of oil slicks, Guardmembers are a much-needed asset in the fight.

As with any national crisis, the Guard is once again part of the solution, supporting federal, state and local organizations.

Heavy equipment operators, communications and security specialists, civil engineers and

strong-backed sergeants went to work immediately. They deployed boats, all-terrain vehicles, dump trucks, security vehicles and communications equipment to the affected area.

The Guard has made a difference on land:

One of the Guard's biggest feats occurred June 7 when it filled eight breaches on Pelican Island in coastal Plaquemines Parish, La., with sandbags ranging from 2,000 to 4,000 pounds each. The same day it finished installing almost six miles of a shoreline protection system near Venice, La.

In the air:

Helicopters have sling-loaded sand bags weighing thousands of pounds and have dropped them into island breaches to stem the flow of oil into critical waters and marshes. Many of the same helicopters are also employed to transport Soldiers and Airmen to

**This is Cajun ingenuity. This is south Louisianians at our best to fight and protect our way of life**

*-Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal after observing oil suction operations June 9*

These Tiger Dam systems are interlocking rubber bladders filled with water which create a continuous barrier to prevent oil from washing ashore. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Jeffrey T. Barone)



and from remote work sites, and to transport the critical pieces of engineering the troops need to perform their missions, such as fuel pallets and generators.

In the water:

The Louisiana National Guard deployed a 380-foot, floating bridge to serve as temporary wharf; it was once used by U.S. forces to cross the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers during the invasion of Iraq.

Non-Gulf states are pitching in too:

Helicopters and aircrews from the Illinois, Missouri, Florida, Mississippi and Nebraska, some of them veterans of Hurricane Katrina and Gustav relief, were brought in.

Though the work ahead may seem daunting, the Guard knows what to do in a disaster and how to recover from one. It has removed fallen tree limbs after tornados in the Midwest, plowed snow-drifts after blizzards in the North and West, and used special equipment to check for toxic wastes after hurricanes in the South.

Though the cleanup and the capping of the leak may have most people's attention, the Guard is providing security, medical capabilities, communications support and command and control functions.

What began as a "potential" environmental disaster has, by most accounts, become America's worst.

As the scope of it intensifies over the summer and with the threat of hurricanes and tropical storms looming, Citizen-Soldiers and -Airmen in the affected Gulf states will continue to do battle.

While many of us will enjoy the lazy days of summer, Guardsmen will be toiling in the heat, humidity and a toxic environment—in a fight never before seen by them or America. 🇺🇸

-Compiled from news articles

# Defending our shores

## Current Ops in the Gulf

### ERECTING BARRIERS

When these 7,500 pound bags of sand are placed together, they form a barrier wall that protects from encroaching oil. A 1,000 of them were used to erect a 2.5-mile barrier wall by Soldiers of the Louisiana National Guard May 29 on the shoreline of Port Fourchon to protect Bay Champagne.

### HELICOPTER SUPPORT

UH-60 Blackhawks and CH-47 Chinooks are sling-loading sand bags, often weighing up to 6,000 pounds, and dropping them into island breaches to stem the flow of oil into critical waters and marshes. They also transport Soldiers and Airmen to and from remote work sites, and carry critical pieces of engineering the troops need to perform their missions, such as fuel pallets and generators.

### TIGER DAMS

Tiger Dam systems are interlocking rubber bladders filled with water which create a continuous barrier and are being used as a preventive measure in case oil washes onto shore. Guardmembers are building miles of them, including a 5-3/4 mile one near Venice, La.

### VACUUM BARGES

Operated by Guardmembers, these oil vacuum cleaners are made from pumps connected to tubes that can be individually operated by Soldiers to collect oil up to a mile out in the gulf. The two vacuum barges currently in operation, one comprised of military float bridges and the other on a civilian barge, are recovering about 1,000 gallons of oil each per day.

### CLAIM INFORMATION

About 200 Alabama Guard members are working with local officials to ensure the paperwork to make any claims to British Petroleum is getting into the hands of those who may be eligible to file a claim

### AERIAL RECONNAISSANCE

Specialists from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission have been flying in a Florida Army National Guard C-23 Sherpa airplane and an LUH-72 Lakota helicopter over the Gulf of Mexico each day, to spot oil encroaching near the beaches of Florida's Panhandle.

## Time line to disaster

April 22

Deepwater Horizon oil rig sinks

April 24

First oil leaks discovered; USCG elevates response

April 25

Overflights indicate the oil spill size is approximately 48 miles wide by 39 miles long

April 30

The secretary of defense authorizes under Title 32 the mobilization of the Louisiana National Guard to help in the ongoing efforts to assist local communities in the cleanup and removal of oil and to protect critical habitats from contamination

May 1

Coast Guard Commandant, Adm. Thad Allen appointed to serve as national incident commander

May 4

SECDEF authorized use of Title 32 status for up to 17,500 Guard members in four states: Alabama (3,000), Florida (2,500), Louisiana (6,000) and Mississippi (6,000).

May 7-8

A 125-ton container dome is placed over the largest of the well leaks; it fails when gas leaking from the pipe combined with cold water to form methane hydrate crystals that blocked up the steel canopy at the top of the dome

May 13

1,304 Guard personnel supporting oil response—952 from the Louisiana are



A Louisiana Guardsman works through the night in Grand Isle, La., May 31. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Jeffrey T. Barone)

**... that leaves a lot of Guardsmen ready to help.  
And if our governors call on them, I know they'll be  
ready, because they're always ready**

*-President Barack Obama June 15 referring to the 1,600 Guardmembers already called up and the 17,500 that could be*



Louisiana Guardsmen hook sling cables, attached to sandbags, to the bottom of a Florida Guard CH-47 Chinook helicopter in Buras, La., June 5. (Photo by Spc. Tarell Bilbo)

providing command and control and sandbagging support to St. Bernard and Plaquemines parishes, supporting marina operations and conducting HAZMAT training; 323 from the Alabama are deploying protective barriers around Dauphin Island and conducting sandbag and security operations; 25 from the Mississippi National Guard personnel are providing helicopter support and liaison officers to aid local officials with emergency response

#### May 17

Elements of Louisiana Guard's 205th Engineer Battalion work with 1st Battalion, 244th Aviation Regiment fill and airlift sandbags to fill 16 breaches spanning more than seven miles from Pelican Island to Scofield Island, La.

#### May 20

Personnel and vessels from the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service assist the Louisiana Guard with technical engineering recommendations for stabilizing beach and headland areas where sand and earthen material is being placed to plug openings to prevent the oil from entering the wetlands

#### May 26

BP starts "top kill" attempt to seal the blown-out well

#### May 26

Missouri Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters from Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., help with the response

#### May 29

Soldiers of Louisiana Guard's 527th and 769th Engineer Battalions complete a 2.5-mile wall of sand-filled Hesco Concertainer

## Historical perspective

# Not the Guard's first oil spill

By Bill Boehm

NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU

During the country's last, large-scale national oil spill, the crash of the Exxon Valdez in Spring 1989, the Alaska National Guard assigned 130 Guardsmen to duty after that ship ran aground on a reef in Prince William Sound and leaked over 10 million gallons of oil. The accident caused a tremendous amount of environmental damage and calls to halt all oil tanker traffic in the Sound. Until the Deepwater Horizon mishap, the Valdez tragedy evoked images of environmental catastrophe to millions.

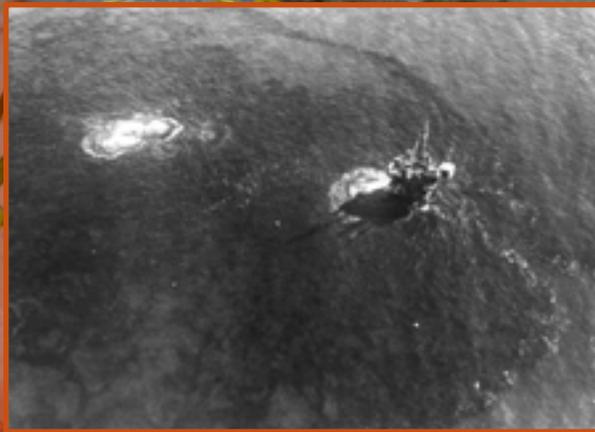
Another oil spill that holds a stronger parallel to today's current tragedy took place Jan. 28, 1969, near Santa Barbara, Calif. An offshore oil platform wellhead there blew out and spewed over 3 million gallons of crude into the Pacific Ocean, killing thousands of birds and other marine life. It will be remembered by thousands of images of volunteers along the shoreline trying to save wildlife and minimize coastline damage.

The tragedy ultimately led to the start of the modern environmental movement. Soon afterward, the Environmental Protection Agency was founded, and other legislation put in place nationally in the interest of minimizing offshore drilling to protect wildlife and seaside habitats in waterway areas.

The Santa Barbara spill did not, however, spur Gov. Ronald Reagan to call out the California National Guard to assist in the cleanup or provide any security or crowd control. The decision to sideline the Guard may well have been a political one, since the presence of uniformed Soldiers or Airmen may have agitated local citizens on the beachfront. The Guard's force structure could have provided security at the disaster site, expediting volunteer efforts to clean birds and other animals by hand.

Now juxtapose the absence of Guardmembers in 1969 with the prominent role it's playing in the Gulf today. The fact that the National Guard has been tasked to assist in fighting the environmental damage of an oil spill speaks to how the Guard has evolved in the last 10 years. It has acquired equipment and capabilities that allow it to battle natural and chemical disasters. It underscores its transformation from a reserve force to a strategic fighting force, ready to tackle any challenge with which it is presented.

*-Boehm is an NGB historian*



Overhead photograph of oil spilled from the drilling platform, Santa Barbara, Calif., January 1969. Courtesy of the U.S. Geological Survey.

units in Port Fourchon, La., to help keep oil-tainted water from reaching Bay Champagne near Port Fourchon, La.

**June 12**

Hesco barrier wall equipment staged in Cameron to be placed along eight miles of shoreline by Louisiana Guard members

**June 16**

President meets with BP executives at the White House

**June 22**

Construction of 8.5 miles of wall barriers by Louisiana's 225th Engineer Brigade continues in six areas along the coast of Cameron Parish in an effort to keep oil-tainted water from reaching inland

**June 30**

Tropical Storm Alex turns into a hurricane and threatens Texas' coast; hampers efforts to control the spill; Texas Guard on standby

**July 2**

Louisiana governor announces that the Guard is providing a special team to assist the Coast Guard. The team will provide real-time information of skimming operations and oil collection

**July 8**

Officials announce that the Mississippi Guard has successfully taken part in the first monumental use of a state-of-the-art secure digital interoperable radio system that enables direct communications with the Coast Guard and civilian state agencies to guide cleanup vessels

*-Compiled from [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov) and various National Guard news articles*