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National Guard Bureau Public Affairs

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NATIONAL GUARD ON-THE-RECORD TELEPHONIC MEDIA ROUNDTABLE

JANUARY 29, 2021

TOPIC	SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS
National Guard COVID Response Efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Air Force Maj. Gen. Jerry L. Fenwick, Director, National Guard Bureau Office of the Joint Surgeon▪ Army Maj. Gen. David S. Baldwin, Adjutant General, California National Guard▪ Army Maj. Gen. Paul D. Rogers, Adjutant General, Michigan National Guard▪ Army Maj. Gen. Bret D. Daugherty, Adjutant General, Washington National Guard▪ Army LTC Paul Tumminello, Deputy Surgeon General, DC National Guard

Introduction:

The National Guard has been at the forefront of the COVID-19 pandemic response across the nation, providing support to federal, state and local authorities. In June, more than 47,000 Guard men and women were supporting COVID operations across the country, and currently nearly 23,000 remain on duty battling the pandemic today. Currently, governors in 30 states and territories are actively utilizing the National Guard to administer vaccines to the civilian population. A senior leader from the National Guard Bureau, and three general officers representing state senior leadership, will provide information on the missions their National Guard men and women are conducting in continued response to the pandemic in their respective states.

All bios were provided in the media release, and at the end of this media round table, if we have any open questions or anything, we will follow up with you, and provide the information as requested.

The on-the-record telephonic media roundtable was held Friday, January 29, from 1-145 p.m. (ET).

Dialogue:

[Name]

[QUESTION/RESPONSE]

Ms. McFadden

Please introduce yourself and then your outlet and please just limit it to that. Today, we have Air Force Major General Jerry Fenwick, who is the



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director of the National Guard Bureau Office of the Joint Surgeon General. We also have Army Major General David Baldwin, the adjutant general of California National Guard. We have Army Major General Paul Rogers, adjutant general of the Michigan National Guard. And we also have Army Major General Bret Daugherty, adjutant general of the Washington National Guard. Each general will provide some brief on the record comments regarding their state's National Guard COVID missions. And then if you didn't receive their bios, we can forward that to you. And then following their comments, we will take your questions with that. Let's start with introducing Major General David Baldwin, Adjutant General California.

Sir, would you like to begin? General Baldwin, we can't hear you.

MG Baldwin - CA

How about now?

Ms. McFadden

Thank you, sir, we can hear you now. Great, thank you.

MG Baldwin - CA

Good morning, everybody. Good afternoon. Depending on where you are. I'm Dave Baldwin. The Adjutant General of California as introduced. Thanks very much to all the reporters for taking an interest in what the guard is doing across the nation, because this has been an unprecedented year for us. Starting last March when we all became involved in response to Covered California COVID infection rates are trending down, which is some good news. But we still are having quite a few excess deaths, about five hundred excess deaths across the state every single day. This week, though, that is down from the trend from last week. Our governor lifted our statewide stay at home order that we still have a lot of restrictions in place to prevent the spread of the disease. The state has begun. Mass vaccinations is good, but we're not out of the woods yet. And because of that, we anticipate many, many more months of taskings for the California National Guard here in the state to assist local authorities and medical people with our COVID response. We currently have one thousand four hundred and eighty four (1,484) soldiers and airmen on duty across the state doing a broad range of mission sets that include COVID testing sites. We have regional medical strike teams that are working in emergency rooms to help relieve hospitals. That staff are under pressure from COVID cases are being infected with COVID themselves. We're in 16 food banks across the state. We've already prepared over one hundred twenty eight (128) million meals. We have airmen working in coroner's offices in two counties that have been assisting with the excess deaths. Our airmen have processed one thousand one hundred and eighty three decedents on that mission. We're working in vaccination sites. We have 15 teams and we're



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ramping up to assist in four very large scale vaccination points of distribution in three counties. So four sites in three counties. So we can really start pumping out the vaccinations. Because of that, we're anticipating an increase of about another thousand soldiers and airmen on duty over the next couple of weeks. So it'll take us up to two thousand five hundred (2,500) people coming soon. I know some of you have some interest in the DC mission. California National Guard sent two hundred and eighty six (286) soldiers and airmen to participate in the security for the inauguration. We provided security people, transportation support, explosive ordinance disposal chaplain teams, which are religious support teams, some weapons of mass destruction experts from our civil support teams. And we, of course, provided our own airlift to do that. We currently have two hundred and sixty soldiers remaining in the greater DC area. They're providing security at congressional buildings on Capitol Hill and we expect them to be there for several more weeks. And again, thank you for your interest and I look forward to your questions.

Ms. McFadden

Thank you, sir. Major General Rogers, would you like to make your comments?

MG Rogers - MI

Excellent. Good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to be here and share a Michigan story and contribution to the COVID response this year. We've been in support of our Health and Human Services Department since March of last year. Over the course of that period of time, we've administered over two hundred and fifteen thousand COVID tests. We also administered over forty thousand vaccinations since the 16th of December, and we've distributed twenty seven million pounds of food. And that's all in addition to our normal operational requirements to support combat operations around the world and in security operations here within the United States. It's been a very busy year, but it's been a very satisfying and gratifying year. Also, we are continuing to support our Department of Health and Human Services, particularly with the mass vaccination clinics. We've been on that mission since 16 December. We have a total of one hundred and seventeen teams and five hundred and sixty eight personnel on orders supporting the COVID response. Those one hundred and seventeen teams are distributed throughout the state. We are in small clinics with local health departments. We're also in major metro. Providers, hospital systems helping to administer vaccine to their staff, and then we are conducting clinics at the local level, mass vaccination clinics with up to two thousand vaccinations per day. Again, I offer that we've already vaccinated just the Michigan National Guard is vaccinated over forty thousand citizens of Michigan as part of that entire enterprise.



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We're also a key enabler for vaccination within our Department of Corrections. And we've already last week started to vaccinate the sixty five and older inmate population and has more vaccine flows in. We will continue to administer vaccines to the thirty nine thousand inmates that are in our Department of Corrections. We are also supporting local first responders and we're vaccinating the Michigan State Police. We're also providing vaccination teams to some of the federal agencies that have employee programs for vaccinating their federal employees and Department of Defense employees. So we're well integrated into the state wide response. Again, it's a great team effort. We are a supporting entity to them and we're always focused on being ready when they call and then being there at the point of need to make sure we are providing that resource in a very professional way. That's truly what the National Guard brings to the table as a professional value based workforce, people who are committed to the mission first and who are willing to do whatever they have to be successful and ensure our partners are successful and we are scalable and salable and we can respond very quickly overnight. In fact, if a clinic finds that they're short of personnel, we surge people there to make sure that they are successful in administering the vaccine on that given day. So I'm free and available to answer any questions that you may have. And thank you for including me in this opportunity.

Ms. McFadden

Thank you, sir. Now, Major General Daugherty from Washington.

MG Daugherty - WA

Great, thanks. Well, thanks for taking the time to give me an opportunity to tell you what we've been up to out here in the state of Washington. So the Washington National Guard has had between eight hundred and a thousand soldiers and airmen conducting COVID response missions for almost a year. Now, as you recall, state of Washington was one of the very first COVID case was discovered in and the very first outbreak. And that already seems like a very long time ago. We've been very busy. So we have run food banks and continue to do so. We've provided over 70 million pounds of food to our communities. We have built test kits. We had a real hard time getting a hold of the testing materials initially. So the guard stepped up. And we've built and provided over half a million test kits to get that testing done. We've done a lot of contact tracing and we've even assisted our state's employment security division in getting unemployment benefits to our citizens. There was a huge backlog. State was completely overwhelmed and kind of echoing what my fellow tags have said when they're when there's a difficult task, even though it's something that you don't necessarily think the guard would step up to. Do we have a very capable, flexible force that can do just about anything? And so that's what



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we've been doing this week. We have one hundred and fifty soldiers and airmen and we've begun our support to the Washington State Department of Health efforts to vaccinate all Washingtonians against COVID-19. So under the Department of Health direction, Guard personnel are currently located at four mass vaccination sites across our state, and each site includes a twenty nine Guardsman team, which consist of eight medics administering shots at each site and twenty one soldiers and airmen. They're assisting with logistics and administrative duties running the site. We also have a team that is supporting the mass vaccination effort as a mobile team traveling to nursing homes and independent living centers to vaccinate the elderly population that is unable to physically come to a mass vaccination site. Our teams are capable of administering about a thousand shots per day per team, and so far we've administered nine thousand shots over the past four days. We've just been at it now for this is our fifth day. We're capable of growing from five teams to 10 or even as much as 15, really kind of dependent on the supply of vaccine that comes into our state. Our state's goal right now for all sites combined, both civilian and military. National Guard is forty five thousand shots per day. And we're providing, as I said right now, about nine thousand. We'll probably be up to ten thousand by the first part of next week. Our state is administered about six hundred thousand vaccinations so far. Our population here is around seven and a half million people. So we've got a ways to go. But as I mentioned before, we're truly only limited, I think, by the amount of vaccine that is coming into our state. I know that that's a national effort, but we are ready to receive. So in kind of some summary here, I think the Washington National Guard, my folks that are out there in the field are really excited to play a major role in what we hope is the final push to defeat this deadly disease. And I've been describing it as we've been running a mile race and we're now in the gun lab where in the last lap and we're digging deep, we're pushing hard and we're going to see this through. So I'll stand by for your questions. And thanks for being here with us today.

Ms. McFadden

Thank you, sir. And Major General Fenwick, are you here? Nothing. OK, so hopefully he'll join us soon. He's from the National Guard Bureau, office of the joint surgeon. So let's go ahead and let's start with NBC News. Mosh, are you here Mosheh?

MG Fenwick - NGB SG

Good afternoon everyone, I'm Major General Fund like the National Guard Bureau Joint Surgeon. First off, I'd like to express my gratitude to all of the Guardsmen serving in these incredibly challenging times. I'd like to thank the families and the employers, the governors and my fellow adjutant generals out there who just spoke for their support on our guard



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operations. You know, we should realize that not only is the guard supporting the COVID-19 pandemic, but during these times we've responded to over 30 hurricanes, a greater than seven wildfires, a presidential inauguration and some civil disturbance operations. National Guard, we continue to demonstrate that we'll go wherever we're needed and whenever we're needed. Our medical guardsmen currently are serving in support of COVID-19 in several mission sets to include civilian vaccination, administration testing and screening operations, patient transport, medical personnel, augmentation and behavioral health support. Right now, the current number of troops we have supporting our National Guard COVID-19 operations is about twenty two thousand nine hundred and over two hundred and sixty sites nationwide, and an additional forty four thousand are serving in other domestic operations. Currently right now, there are currently guardsmen supporting COVID vaccinations to civilian operations in thirty eight states, giving over fifty one thousand shots a day and providing mobile vaccination teams for access to rural areas, remote sites as well as the underserved. We've administered over thirty seven thousand five hundred and eighty vaccines to Guardsmen. As of today. We follow the DOD personnel schema and is in line with the CDC recommendations and we're dedicated to this COVID-19 response. I would like to say that all of our guardsmen, we're committed to our country, their states and their communities. I would like to say that we have to realize that despite all of these things that I just mentioned these days, the vast majority of these folks have civilian occupations that could not be more proud to be a guardsman. And I'm not more proud. I could not be more proud of all of our Guardsmen. And I look forward to your questions.

Ms. McFadden [

OK, thank you, sir. All right, let's go ahead and we'll start with Barbara Starr, CNN. How about Ellie Koffman from CNN? Nothing heard. OK, Tara Copp from McClatchy.

Tara Copp

This is Tara with McClatchy. Thank you for doing this. I have a question for the first for the California Guard. Just how many members of the California National Guard are there? So when you're increasing the numbers that will be deployed in the next couple of weeks, up to more than 2000, how big a percent of that is that of your force? And then more general for everyone and including the surgeon general? Have you seen this very, very rapid pace, an intense time of demand on the guard, weighing on members, either medically or mentally? Are you getting more mental health service requests? Are you seeing more potential suicide ideations? Thank you for your responses.



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Ms. McFadden

General Baldwin.

MG Baldwin - CA

We have about eighteen thousand Army and Air National Guardsmen, plus another thirteen hundred members of our State Guard, which is our state militia. So when we bump up to twenty five hundred, that's a little over 10 percent of our force. So it does it does put some measure of strain on us, especially as we try to preserve a significant amount of troops, availability for unforeseen contingencies if we have a major earthquake or a tsunami. And of course, this is on top of our steady state of deployments for other federal requirements that are include our overseas mission, which for California right now, at any given time, we have about a thousand people deployed overseas. So it is it is it is quite a lot that we're asking of our part time Guard members, their families and our employers in these tough times. But we're managing to work through it pretty well.

Ms. McFadden

General Fenwick, do you have anything to add on a national level regarding the stress levels?

MG Fenwick - NGB SG

On the national level, we have a warrior resilience and fitness office that is actually assigned to the headquarters of the National Guard bureau, and they've provided incredible support throughout the entire COVID response since its beginning last March. We've also had very good support from our chaplain corps who have provided information as well as counseling to the soldiers and airmen out there that are having issues. It should be realized as well, as I mentioned before, that a lot of these folks have civilian occupations and we do the best we can to track their behavioral health needs. But with the chaplain support and our behavioral health experts in the wings, as well as in the medical detachments, I think we've got a pretty good job of getting after it over.

Ms. McFadden

Thank you, sir.

Tara Copp

If I can ask one follow up on California before we up needing the forces on hand for you, it's likely you'll have another very demanding wildfire season. You mentioned the earthquakes. At what point do you have to pause and maybe ask another state to help fill a request? Thanks.

MG Baldwin - CA

So it is something that we that we try to balance on a daily basis. Even of those eighteen thousand or so forces that we have at any given time, only about ten thousand are available for general purpose missions because the other people or people that generate combat power, their mechanics and



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pilots and people that work at our installations for a state of 40 million people, it's a big problem in California. If you were to take the National Guard of the United States, which is a total of four hundred fifty thousand people, and spread it equally across the nation, per capita, California would have a guard force of sixty thousand. We'd have forty thousand in the Army Guard and six and twenty thousand in the Air Guard. We don't have that. So we have to manage our mission sets very carefully. And we keep in close contact with the Western states that in the event that we have contingencies that over requirements that overwhelm our capability, we'll bring in forces from other states.

Ms. McFadden

OK, moving on, we're going to go to the Wall Street Journal, Alexa Corse, Alexa.

Alexa Corse

Hey, thanks for doing this. I was wondering if one of you have the latest numbers on how many of the Guard members were sent to Washington for the inauguration have tested positive for COVID?

Ms. McFadden

Thank you. Let's see we have Lieutenant Colonel Paul Tumminello, who is the deputy surgeon general for the D.C. National Guard. We'll give you his name and information post event. But he wasn't originally available, but now he is Lieutenant Colonel Tumminello. Could you please just provide a little bit oversight on that?

LTC Tumminello

Yes, I can. Thank you very much. And thank you, everyone, for being here. So given that this is a very dynamic mission and we're running folks in and out. All the time where we're at any given time, there's people either moving in, there's people moving out, we've run up to a you know, it has been openly on the press, twenty five thousand or so folks on the ground. And because of this constant ebb and flow of folks and people, if they become COVID positive or they are exposed, they are moved into a restricted or isolation in in their hotels where they are staying. And so that that number is a constant number to kind of chase. And it's about two percent at any given time, over.

Ms. McFadden

General Fenwick, could you add a little bit more to that?

MG Fenwick - NGB SG

Yeah, I think that, you know, we have to look at as LTC Tumminello said, we have to look at this in a in a dynamic sense. And so our positivity rates, if we look at it from the 5th of January, which we consider the beginning to the end, are to today, we're looking at positivity rates of about one to three percent. And so over time, if we snapshot it, it comes out to about



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two percent. I think that should be looked at clearly in the lens of the national percentage rate of nine point three percent. So I think we've done very well with that for self-protection as well as our guidance for the soldiers and airmen here. Over.

Ms. McFadden

Moving on, we have Washington Examiner Abraham Mahshie, Are you here?

Abraham Mahshie

Yes. OK, here. Thank you so much for doing this. A couple of quick questions I wanted to follow up on the COVID issue, I understand, the two percent is sort of the rate, but do you have a hard number of how many Guard troops are currently in quarantine or who have already come down like 200 or whatever that number might be? Also, Major General Baldwin. I walked the perimeter of the Capitol the other day and I spoke to a number of your Guard members who were wary about when they might go home. Are you communicating to them an end date to their mission, or are you giving them some sense of when they might be finished? And then Major General Fenwick, can you can you talk overall about how these Guard members might be contracting COVID and any sort of special preparations that you're giving them to keep them from contracting COVID. Thank you so much.

Ms. McFadden

General Fenwick, if you would start, please.

MG Fenwick - NGB SG

Sure, I think that, you know, as we started this mission said the nature of the missions that dictated that the most appropriate COVID mitigation strategy was that in line with the CDC guidance and that included screening before they left home station, as well as screening here, temperature checks, questionnaires. And of course, any member who arrived in D.C. or before they left with any risk factors from screening or became symptomatic was immediately sent to a medical treatment facility for testing and if positive was quarantined. Contact tracing was also completed at that time and then they subsequently went into quarantine as well. I should say that, again, a number of positives and those in restriction of movement or ROM, from is fluid over time as soldiers depart and arrive in the area due to the dynamic nature of the mission. And I don't know if LTC Tumminello has any follow up on that or.

Ms. McFadden

Lieutenant Colonel, would you like to add just a little bit to that?

LTC Tumminello

I don't think so, the only other thing I guess I would like to add is that we are taking very good care of our soldiers in that do have to go through their



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restriction of movement. What we call ROM, it's known as isolation or quarantine. Those soldiers are there's a white cell or a buddy care at every hotel at where those soldiers are staying and they're know they're visited at least three times a day, making sure they have all the food and care that they need. And if there's anybody that has any increase in their symptoms or are feeling not, well, they would be moved to a hospital. But that has not had to happen. And I think that's all. Thank you, over.

Ms. McFadden

General Baldwin. Do you have anything to add? I think there was a little bit of a California question.

MG Baldwin - CA

So, we we've told the soldiers from that task force that to expect to be on mission no later than the 14th of March. And we are also working with individuals that have some hardships because of civilian employment. For example, there's a captain that's accepted a job in Europe that we're going to work to replace him. So the ones that are hardships where we're dealing with on an individual basis, but in the meantime, their orders go through the 14th of March.

Abraham Mahshie

Thank you for that. Can I have a follow up, please? So I'm sorry to press on this, but you must have received an actual number at a certain time. So today at five hundred there were X number of Guard members in quarantine and isolation who had contracted the virus. Do you have a number and a time stamp? Thank you,

Ms. McFadden

General Fenwick.

MG Fenwick - NGB SG

Well, right now, I'm not at liberty to disclose the actual number from one time frame to another time frame. Our office has been tracking the actual percentage rates over a period of time due to the dynamic nature of the mission over.

Ms. McFadden

OK, let's moving on and we're going to go to Air Force magazine, Jennifer Leigh.

Jennifer Lee

Hello, thank you all so much for taking the time today. My question is for Major General Fenwick. I was hoping that you could tell me whether the total number of vaccinated Guard personnel you provided reflects those who received two doses or if it includes those who have received just at least one. And then I was wondering if you could comment on how the bureau will ensure that guard personnel receive their second doses on time out of state mobilizations and deployments considered. Thank you.



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MG Fenwick - NGB SG

Thanks for the question. Yes, we've received about thirty seven thousand five hundred doses total with about 4000 guardsmen receiving their second dose in terms of deployment, as if you're speaking of the Washington, D.C. deployment, our office is prioritizing our vaccines now to make absolutely sure that any soldier or airman that received a first dose at home will receive their second dose on deployment. We've also initiated our prioritization to ensure that all the guardsmen here can receive their first dose if they so desire to recover.

Jennifer Lee

Yes. And does that prioritization also apply to overseas deployments?

MG Fenwick - NGB SG

Yes, it does. Thank you.

Ms McFadden

General Daugherty, would you please just a little bit more from a state perspective on how that is viewed and how you are doing that for your National Guardsmen and then as they're going overseas?

MG Daugherty - WA

Sure. Well, yeah, we are we are vaccinating our force here, and again, it's all really kind of dependent upon the vaccine flow that's coming in. But the way the way it's flown into our state right now, we're feeling pretty confident that probably by June we're going to have the vast majority of our force vaccinated. I don't have specific numbers right off the top of my head for you this morning, but the vaccine is flown in. We are getting our Air Force vaccinated. And our hope is, of course, that we can certainly vaccinate all of the folks that we have headed downrange there at the top of our priority list. And we do have a big year again for overseas deployment. We've got about one thousand five hundred members of our eight thousand person force that are headed downrange. So it's definitely something that we're paying attention to. And I know everybody's concerned about the spread of COVID and especially with what happened in D.C. People are looking for a concrete number. We are tracking that among our soldiers and airmen that went to the DC event. We had six that have tested positive out of about four hundred that we sent. And I have to tell you, that's not unusually high for operating in a covert environment. We had a lot of civil unrest missions this summer and we had a kind of an equal number of folks that tested positive after that. So it's just unfortunately, it's the environment that we're working in now. And for the guard to be out doing what we have to do in a covert environment, it's inevitable that some of our folks are going to test positive. But we get right on it. We isolate and put them into quarantine. And so we're doing our very best to keep everybody healthy. Back to you.



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Ms. McFadden Appreciate that, sir. Going on to Fox News, Lucas Tomlinson, are you here? Lucas. Nothing heard Lara Seligman from Politico.

Lara Seligman Hello. I just wanted to ask you to follow up on the question about the D.C., Tell me about the snapshot in time. My understanding is that over the weekend, the soldiers and tested American rates were between 10 and 15 percent.

Ms. McFadden Apologize. Why are you breaking up? Could you please?

Lara Seligman Sorry, I'm on my computer. Can you. Can you hear me now?

Ms. McFadden Yes, that's much better.

Lara Seligman So over the weekend, my understanding is that groups of soldiers were being tested and they you were seeing positivity rates for some groups of 10 to 15 percent for COVID positive in the D.C. National Guard mission. Can you speak to those numbers, please?

Ms. McFadden General Fenwick, could you begin?

Darla Torres Hey, Lara, this is Darla Torres. We can get back to you on that. I think that General Fenwick has kind of given an overarching percentage number. So let us take your question. If you can give us send me an email or our media desk, a little more insight about what groups you're talking about that be great and we can get back to you. Thanks.

Lara Seligman Just with respect, I sent you that query by email and phone earlier this week, a week ago maybe so we can get an answer.

Darla Torres Yeah, please send it again. I'll be happy to entertain it. Thanks.

Ms. McFadden Thank you. OK, Idrees from Reuters.

Idrees Ali Thanks for doing this. Two quick questions. So with the two to three percent positive rate based on the inauguration, what is the total number that you've seen positive out of the twenty five thousand? And secondly, more broadly for the generals from the different bureaus. Do you feel comfortable enough to say no to some of the requests that come from the governor's, given how stretched you may be? Or do you feel compelled to have to say yes, given that it just seems like the country needs more



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National Guard troops now than ever before?

Ms. McFadden

Thank you. Let's start with General Rogers. If you could speak to how it is at the state level.

MG Rogers - MI

So I think when you asked about the whether or not we feel compelled. We have a very good dialog, it's a very collaborative from when a request comes in from the National Guard Bureau, it's a request and they're asking Michigan if we can support given all the other demands. And we take it very seriously. We look across our own situation. And to give you some context, we have eleven thousand members here in Michigan of the Army and Air National Guard. We have about a thousand deployed overseas. We have almost six hundred on the COVID mission. We have a thousand going to D.C. So we take all of that into account and we look at our training requirements and then our ability to respond. And I go to the governor's office and I provide a recommendation. We discuss it and then collaboratively we decide what we're able to support. So there's no I wouldn't say we're not forced we have full discretion to give that feedback to guard bureau. And I think you need to look at the National Guard as a nationwide network where we collaborate together in order to resource requirements. And if one state can't quite do it, another state will step up and fulfill that obligation. This summer, I had soldiers and airmen in California supporting General Baldwin for the fire response. We also sent soldiers to Wisconsin to support with the civil unrest that they were having. We supported the F-16 crashed out of Wisconsin. We supported with soldiers and airmen there, too. So it's really a collaborative enterprise where we work together to provide a solution and we figure out how to support the requesting agency so that they can be successful and we can be successful.

Ms. McFadden

Thank you, General Baldwin, would you like to talk a little bit more about what California is doing?

MG Baldwin - CA

Yeah, so I just echo what General Rogers says is we I get a briefing every single day down to the individual soldier and airmen of who's available, who is currently on a mission, who's in the pipeline for overseas deployment, who is in the pipeline for training, and who's not available either because they're medically non deployable or sick or exposed to COVID or as I mentioned before, they're on another critical Terpsichore function or another task force like our counterdrug task force. And I just want to say on COVID positivity. So for California, the two hundred and eighty six people that we sent to D.C., we had one person test positive for



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COVID and that soldier is currently in quarantine. Back in D.C., we take very aggressive measures to protect our force, including daily medical screening. People wear masks. What we found here in California is our COVID positivity rate across all our troops that were deployed at the peak. We had over ten thousand soldiers and airmen deployed in June for civil unrest here in California. And we did not see any large scale. And I would describe large scale as more than one and a half to two percent positivity. We didn't see that coming out of our forces at all. And because we do some pretty good contact tracing to. So what we're finding is, is that people are catching it, not on duty. They're catching COVID when they get exposed off duty, with the exception of some of our firefighting hand crews managed to give each other COVID because they would let their guard down when they're riding around in 15 passenger vans. So, of course, our theory is, is that COVID is caused by 15 passenger vans. So we're trying to ban the use of those. But otherwise, we're doing a pretty good job of protecting our force from this deadly threat.

Ms. McFadden

Thank you, sir. Now, I know you guys are all very interested in what's happening in D.C., what I'm going to refer you to is yesterday, Mr. Kirby, at a press conference, he provided some information on numbers. So please look at that. Anything else with regard to specifics in D.C., just send us another email and or follow up after this press conference, and then we're going to do our best to try to get you the information you're looking for. But it has been shared multiple times. Two percent is and or below is what's happening here in the D.C. mission as it relates to the positive COVID numbers. So I'm going to ask for one more question and maybe two, if we have the time. But we're going to go to National Guard Magazines, Drew Brooks. Are you here, Drew?

Drew

I'm here, but no question at this time.

Ms. McFadden

Copy that. Thank you so much. Let's see, Tom Bowman from NPR. Nothing heard, I do see Sig, Sig is one of the few on camera, do you have a question from San Antonio Express?

Sig Christenson

Yes, I do. We have been trying to ascertain the total number of guardsmen who have gotten positive test results for COVID or sick in Texas. And somebody told me there was a number. I'm not very sure about it, but I'm asking about that. And I'm also wondering why it is that you cannot provide a hard figure on these on that number four for the guard nationwide. I read Laura's story yesterday and there seems to be quite a controversy about that. You have unhappy people on the Hill about it.



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What's the problem?

Ms. McFadden

As it relates to the information that we have regarding the COVID mission and the numbers, you know, we normally don't talk about COVID cases. It does relate to operational security. So we are still in the middle of trying to figure out how to support the D.C. mission with the members that we have. And we have been identified, those who are positive and we are taking care of them, they will remain on orders until they are able to either report back to duty or to return home. As it relates Texas, we're going to get you back to the Texas National Guard and help you with the specific numbers to that. And Darla, you have a little bit more to add?

Darla Torres

Hey Sig, this is Darla. If you're looking for nationwide, that's we can help you with that. But let me give you a call after this. Thanks.

Sig Christenson

Sure thing. I've already sent a message to General Norris in Texas, so we'll see if they respond.

Darla Torres

OK. I'll give you a call right after this. Thank you.

Ms. McFadden

OK, last question. Military Times, Meghann Myers.

Meghann Myers

Great, thank you. I am basically just wondering, in response to FEMA's request to get DOD on board and get some troops out to help with vaccines, and I know it's early, but what sort of plans have you guys been able to grow together or what sort of directives are you getting from the Pentagon about what to prepare for?

Ms. McFadden

Thank you. Let's start with General Fenwick and then we'll go through the three Adjutants Generals, as they understand from their perspective. General Fenwick?

MG Fenwick - NGB SG

Yes, we've we have liaison officers at FEMA and HHS which have provided information on what FEMA's plans may be for active duty support of civilian vaccination centers. My goal has been to make sure that our guardsmen are supporting their communities first in rural, remote, as well as under underserved areas. FEMA is still very early in their planning cycle for this. We have not been notified of any need for National Guard as of yet. I will tell you that the vast majority of our National Guardsmen are currently involved in the fight as well. As you have to realize, too, that everyone that I put and I think this has probably been mentioned in other briefings, but every National Guard medical airman or soldier that I put



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into a vaccination site, I am taking out of their civilian community to do perhaps the same thing in a different uniform. So I have to be very careful about that. But right now, we are awaiting any word as to whether or not we will be task or needed. But my goal as the Joint Surgeon of the National Guard is to make sure we're supporting our communities first.

Ms. McFadden

Over to General Rogers, if you would like to add your closing statements and how you're supporting this new mission.

MG Rogers - MI

Excellent. Thank you. First of all, with regards to FEMA, we're in FEMA Region five, but they have personnel in our state emergency operations center that work closely with the Michigan State Police who run that center and they coordinate any federal assistance through our state emergency operation center with our health and human services. So there is planning ongoing right now for potential federally supported mass vaccination clinics across the state. It's in the planning phase, but we're eager to take advantage of any support we can get if it means vaccinating people of Michigan and helping us transition back to an open economy and people getting beyond the COVID restrictions. So we're working closely with them on that planning. I will tell you, based on the one hundred and seventeen teams I have from the Michigan National Guard supporting vaccination clinics, we have the potential to do fourteen thousand vaccinations per day based on the limited supply of vaccine. We're operating at about half that capacity. So the real limiting factor is the availability of vaccine. And I think that's a common story across the country. So as we ramp up production and we get that distribution into the states, we have a lot of capability within Michigan to distribute and provide vaccinations to our population. That's really untapped right now. So although we'll never turn down outside, support of vaccination availability is the limiting factor. To get to my just a couple of closing comments. I'm grateful for the men and women of the Michigan National Guard. They really there are values based organization. These are people who put service before self and that's actually an Air Force value. And selfless service is the army value. It's part of our fabric of who we are. We're here to support our communities. And although we're being called on a lot for a lot of different missions, it's a very resilient force. We are never out of volunteers who are willing to come on to orders to answer that call, no matter what the mission has been over the last year, from floods to fire support to civil unrest to COVID testing food, bank support to COVID vaccination. Now. We still have people willing to step up, come on orders and support us when we need them to. So we're blessed to have very dedicated men and women across Michigan who are part of this this



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organization. So thank you for the opportunity to participate here. And I look forward to any follow ups that may occur. Thank you.

Ms. McFadden

Thank you, sir. General Daugherty,

MG Daugherty - WA

Thanks. Well, I'll just echo my fellow adjutant general have had to say we're always receptive to receive additional help into our state with vaccination or anything else for that matter. But we're also under the belief that we're limited by the amount of vaccine. So we're looking at this as a three phase. The operation we're in phase one, a vaccination right now where I have five teams. That's my entry next will grow to ten, then potentially to 15. And that's going to tap me out with the number of medics. And after that, we would be very, very willing to accept some active duty folks to come here. And we're already in the planning stages of that. The State Emergency Management Division and the State Emergency Operations Center are actually in my agency. So we're directly tied into that as the National Guard. And we have Joint Base Lewis McChord right across the street. We're already in kind of preliminary conversations with those folks about how we would approach it. So I think we're going to have a pretty good plan for phase three will stand up. A dual status command will receive additional Title 10 forces. But again, I do believe the biggest hurdle that we have to overcome as a country is the vaccine supply itself. And so I'm very excited to see that the president is going to use the Defense Production Act to boost that production. I think that's going to be the linchpin to our final push to get through this thing and we're ready to receive. So if we receive in Title 10 people, that's great. If we're receiving vaccine, that's great. We'll take max advantage of all of it for the benefit of our citizens. And I'll just echo how proud I am of my team. You know, it hasn't been just a long year. It's been a long 20 years. And I just want to focus on that. We're all consumed with our domestic operations right now, but it is simultaneous with our overseas deployments, which have not let up one iota. And so we are an amazingly resilient force. But I'll also kind of echo my fellow TAGs' position that we could be a little bit bigger if we had a little bit more force structure. It wouldn't be such a stretch for us to get all these missions accomplished. So I hope that as we have a tendency to kind of reevaluate our Department of Defense is structured in the future, perhaps we can find a little bit more force structure for our National Guard because that will take some of the burden off of our soldiers, airmen, families and employers. Those folks are really shouldering a burden along with our soldiers and airmen. So a little bit of extra force structure for us would be a good thing. And I've enjoyed this conversation. I'll be available if anybody wants to shoot me



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an email for a follow up or anything like that. So. So thanks. Back to you.

Ms. McFadden

Thank you, sir. And General Baldwin.

MG Baldwin - CA

Thanks and thanks again, everybody, for participating today. First on COVID positivity rates in the CalGuard for the state of California the last 14 days, the positivity rate is down to eight point two percent. So that's the number of people to test positive based on the total population that they test, which they tested. Forty one million people in California, almost forty two million since testing began in the late spring. But this is down from a high of about 12 percent. Our numbers in the CalGuard trend below the statewide average. And we can get into the details offline if anyone's interested. And I think it's because of the measures that we take to protect our force, which we started earlier than they did with the general public. And we're more aggressive about enforcing it. So I'm not concerned about COVID positivity within the CalGuard because of the mitigation measures we've taken place. But those mitigation measures are successful because I am very concerned about the threat of code COVID how contagious it is, how deadly it can be. So we ruthlessly enforce our force mitigation measures to make sure that our service members and their families don't get sick. With regard to what's over the horizon in the short term, at least for California, as I mentioned before, where our demand signal is going to go up for guard mission sets in the next couple of months, we are working closely with our federal partners in the active component through FEMA and bringing in more Title 10 forces to assist us with vaccination sites. We've established a dual status command here in California to take command of the just shy of two hundred or so active component medical people that are helping us out in hospitals. And we will also be working, I believe, to help establish or mass vaccination sites with the assistance of our Title 10 partners. And we're looking forward to this. But I will echo what my fellow adjutant general said and I mentioned earlier is, is that the bottom line is that our mission set to continue to increase the demand signal for the National Guard goes up and up. It's we're largely victims of our own success in that regard because the National Guard has become so professionalized, still capable people are relying on us for more and more mission sets. To that end, the guard is not big enough and we need to grow. We also need to look at benefits, parity across the force, because the benefits that our soldiers and airmen receive when Title 32 missions and stated active duty missions are not commensurate with what our title 10 Brothers and sisters receive. And we need to take a look at that because it has an impact on our ability to retain the top quality people that we have serving in today's National Guard. And we also all always need to



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remember to look out for those employers of our part time forces that make huge sacrifices every day in their businesses or governmental agencies or even at home or wherever they work to allow our soldiers and airmen to take time away from their full time jobs, to go out and save lives across the nation and fight and win our nation's war around the world. Over.

Ms. McFadden

Appreciate all the adjutants generals and General Fenwick for being here. Everyone, if you have any questions or follow-ons, please send it to our media org box and we will be getting back with you on that. This concludes our media roundtable on the COVID Mission Response. Thank you so much for being here.

[End of Audio]

Duration: 55 minutes

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