

THE ON GUARD

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Misson First



Training turns into a real-world mission. Page 3.

History



A historical look at the Guard responding to natural disasters. Page 7.

Water Taxi



Counterdrug Guardsmen rescue victims from floodwaters. Page 13.

Guard focused and ready ahead of storm

By Master Sgt. Bob Haskell

National Guard Bureau

BELLE CHASSE, La. – "Excuse me? They said what? That we were asleep? Playing cards? That's hogwash. That's just plain wrong."

Fatigued Louisiana Army National Guard Soldiers didn't know whether to laugh or cry about a city official's accusations in a recent news story that they sat around playing cards, that they went to sleep in their trucks, while victims of Hurricane Katrina were dying in New Orleans.

But they were adamant that they were prepared for the monster hurricane that hammered the Crescent City on Aug. 29; that they moved out to save lives as soon as they were ordered; that they had not been asleep at the switch.

They were exhausted after nearly two weeks of nonstop duty, heartsick because they had lost nearly everything they own, and mindful of how hard they had worked to care for and evacuate some 20,000 people at the hot and foul

Louisiana Superdome. They did not take kindly to any official's comments that they had not done their duty.

They were still on duty 10 days after the storm, working 12 hours a day at the Joint Operations Center at Naval Air Station New Orleans. That is one of the gateways for the military's support of the massive relief effort underway in the city that the storm and flooding through ruptured levees turned into a vast cesspool.

Brig. Gen. Hunt Downer, Louisiana's assistant adjutant general for the Army Guard, stood solidly behind the Guard members' actions before, during and after the hurricane, a phenomenon familiar to Louisiana people.

"You didn't have to command or tell people what to do. They knew what to do," said Downer who weathered the storm at Jackson Barracks, the Louisiana Guard's joint state headquarters that the Mississippi River quickly flooded.

See READY On Page 6

Absolutely No Doubt

"National Guard deployments to Iraq DID NOT slow the Guard's response to Hurricane Katrina," said LTG H Steven Blum recently.

"National Guard forces were in the water and on the streets throughout the affected areas rescuing people within four hours of Katrina's passing. The Guard had more than 11,000 people involved in rescue operations on 31 Aug. when the governors asked for more troops.

"The National Guard amassed an additional 30,000 troops in 96 hours.

"There were more than 6,500 in New Orleans alone by Sept. 2.

"More than 50,000 National Guard members from every state, territory, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia responded to Hurricane Katrina."

"The fact that National Guard units were deployed to Iraq at the time of Katrina did not lessen the Guard's ability to respond."

'Show Me' State Soldiers support relief efforts



Photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. Todd A. Pendleton

Maj. Gen. Steven McCamy (left), Missouri National Guard assistant adjutant general, speaks to one of the troops called in to clean up Gulfport, Miss., on Sept. 7, in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. McCamy flew to Gulfport on a mission with the 139th Airlift Wing who began supporting relief efforts on Aug. 30.

Family Programs help save lives

ARLINGTON, Va. – The National Guard Bureau Family Assistance Center helped in the rescue of six people trapped in a water-filled house in New Orleans.

Jason Williams, an evacuee, called the center requesting help in the rescue of his brother and father who were trapped in their flooded house; the call was taken by Della Baker, a National Guard Family Program volunteer. Baker sent the call to the Family Assistant Center clearing officer Lt. Col Cory Lyman, who contacted the Louisiana Police Department, and they responded to the rescue call.

"Staff and volunteers have been working around-the-clock at the Army National Guard Readiness Center to help those affected by this disaster," said Col. Anthony Baker, chief of Family Programs for the National Guard Bureau.

"We are asking family members, especially of deployed service members, living in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama who have been evacuated to please call us at 1-888-777-7731. We need to know their condition and where they have been evacuated to so we can inform their deployed service member of their whereabouts," Baker said.

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Chief expresses concern, vows support

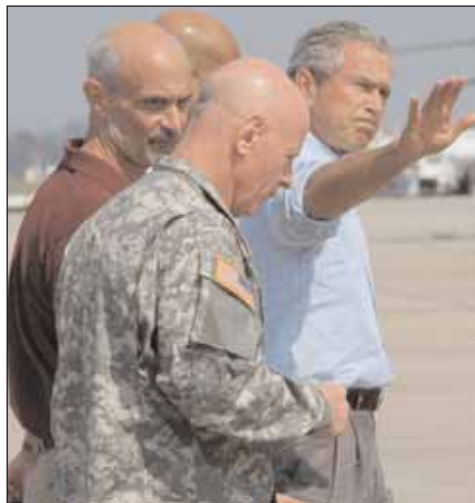


Photo by Master Sgt. Bob Haskell

LTG H Steven Blum, chief of the National Guard Bureau, joined President George Bush and Michael Chertoff, secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, during a Sept. 2 tour of the recovery mission in the New Orleans region ravaged by Hurricane Katrina. National Guard forces from across the country were pouring in to support the mission.

Hurricane Katrina has presented our nation with unprecedented challenges. The National Guard has faced such challenges many times before, and we are responding to them again – just as we have magnificently done since the terrorists attacked America four years ago this month.

Twenty-seven thousand National Guard Soldiers and Airmen, more than an Army division, were serving on state active duty in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida by the evening of Sept. 3, 2005, five days after Katrina struck the Gulf Coast with such savage fury.

I know that many of you have left families and homes that have been battered by the storm.

National Guard personnel from across the country are supporting the massive relief effort for those who have been left without food, water, clothing, shelter and power in the afflicted southeast region.

I am immensely proud of your willingness and ability to serve your states and our nation during this time of crisis at the same time that we are heavily engaged in the Global War on Terrorism.

I am also aware that many of our Guard members who are serving overseas have lost homes, perhaps loved ones, and are experiencing other forms of personal loss because of the hurricane and subsequent flooding.

The National Guard family is doing everything possible to support and care for your loved ones while you are serving overseas and in this country. Our Family Readiness personnel and volunteers are making every effort to provide food, water, clothing, shelter and other forms of support and guidance to the family members who need them.

We are diligently striving to keep our troops serving far from home informed about their families' situations. We will not rest until this mission is completed. The National Guard is a family. We have pulled together countless times in the past – we are doing so again.

God bless you and your families. I am most proud and grateful of your selfless service to these great United States.

STEVEN BLUM
Lieutenant General, U.S. Army
Chief, National Guard Bureau

Guard families affected by Katrina call 1-888-777-7731 for help

By Tech. Sgt. Gary Hicks
National Guard Bureau

ARLINGTON, Va. – Families of deployed Guard members affected by Hurricane Katrina, should call the National Guard helpline (1-888-777-7731) as soon as possible.

By calling the number above, the National Guard will be able to contact the deployed Guardsman and let them know of the family's current situation.

"There are four ways to connect with their service member. Either through the Family Assistance Center (FAC), state Family Program director, wing Family Program coordinator, or through the rear detachment of their unit," said Col. Anthony Baker, chief of the National Guard Bureau's Family Programs. "We will bridge that gap for them by making sure they have all of the information necessary. In cases where they can't make that contact, we will make it for them."

Deployed service members can also call the hotline to contact their families.

"If a service member calls in and asks us to find their family, we'll call one or all of the

services in that state and say, 'please connect, find the family and get back to us,' so we can let that service member know that they are all right," Baker said.

If a deployed service member cannot call one of the toll free numbers, they can make

contact through www.army.mil/ako or www.guardfamily.org Web sites.

Baker and his team of coordinators have already been successful in contacting deployed service members with family information.

In addition to helping Guard families and service members make contact, operators at the hotline can assist families in getting help and services from federal, state and local agencies.

"Once they call the hotline, the person can expect a live person to answer the phone, listen to their issue or concern, provide information, or provide a referral or outreach to another agency," Baker said. "Before we hang up the phone, we'll contact the Family Program director or other assisting agency while they are still on line and let them know what their issues are and what type of assis-

Update: availability of pay for all Military Service members, employees, retirees

ARLINGTON, VA. – Due to Hurricane Katrina, the banks and credit unions in Louisiana, Alabama, and Mississippi have implemented contingency procedures. The Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) has completed payroll for the Sept. 1, 2005, payday.

Electronic funds transfers (EFT) have been provided to the Federal Reserve Banks and Treasury checks have been mailed. For those

members, employees, and retirees impacted by Hurricane Katrina either due to living in the vicinity of the disaster areas or maintaining accounts in the area, the Federal Reserve Bank, the FDIC, and the Banking and Credit Union Associations have implemented procedures to pull the EFT files into their alternate banking and credit union sites where possible. DFAS is closely monitoring the financial institutions as they progress through their contingency procedures to assure funds are available to account hold-

ers. For those expecting delivery of checks by mail in the declared disaster areas, local information is the best source for determining when mail delivery will resume in your area. Central pickup locations are being planned and will be announced.

If a military member or civilian employee cannot access an account in the Hurricane Katrina disaster area, contact the home office of your financial institution and then contact your local finance office if funds are required immediately.

Fast Facts ...

- * Family Assistance Centers were established in 2003
- * There are 430 FACs nationwide
- * FACs provide services, support, information, referral and outreach efforts to families of service members
- * Centered around Joint Forces Headquarters in each state
- * Deeply connected with the local community and services
- * Help is not limited to the National Guard. FACs will provide services to anyone
- * If a service is not directly available through a FAC, the FAC coordinator will contact the proper servicing agency

tance they need. The two are then connected."

The assistance provided through the hotline is very extensive and all encompassing. National Guard Family Program personnel are deeply connected with numerous federal, state and local agencies. This partnership allows them to assist families with agencies and resources operating in the immediate geographic location.

No matter what the problem or issue, Family Programs has the ability to help.

Air Guard medical personnel respond

By Master Sgt. Bob Haskell

National Guard Bureau

BELLE CHASSE, La. – Lt. Col. Craig Manifold found a moment's amusement in the fact that one of the Air National Guard's two new mobile hospitals was up and running at Naval Air Station New Orleans on Sept. 9 to support the tens of thousands of military troops helping Louisiana recover from the ravages of Hurricane Katrina.

That was four days before a training exercise called TALON Response was originally scheduled to begin testing the expertise of Air National Guard medical people in FEMA Region 6 - Louisiana, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas and New Mexico, explained Manifold, an osteopathic physician and Texas Air Guard officer.

Katrina changed the training mission into an honest-to-God, real-world mission for the Air Guard's doctors, nurses, administrators and technicians who came from across America to staff its two 25-bed EMEDS and other medical facilities that have been set up in Louisiana and Mississippi, the two states hit hardest by the most devastating natural disaster in this country's history.

Why train, Manifold pointed out, when you can do the job for real. Indeed, why talk about the benefits of the new EMEDS when you can show the entire country, perhaps the world, how well they really work right here at home.

That's why the training exercise scheduled for Little Rock, Ark., was cancelled, said Lt. Col. Kenneth Franklin, deputy director of the Air National Guard's Medical Services. The two EMEDS had real work to do - in Belle Chasse, La., and in Bay St. Louis, Miss., on the Gulf Coast.

Remember M*A*S*H? The EMEDS - Expeditionary Medical Support teams - are the 21st century version of the Korean-

War era's Mobile Army Surgical Hospitals made famous by Hawkeye Pierce, Hot Lips Houlihan and Radar O'Reilly. The EMEDS are new to the Air National Guard, and Katrina is their baptism under fire, observed Col. Randy Falk, the Air Guard's director of Medical Services.

They are mobile hospitals in rounded Alaskan tents, shaped like Quonset huts. They have emergency rooms and operating rooms, intensive care units, pharmacies, wards for patients who have to be observed for 24 hours, and all of the other facilities and equipment found in a modern hospital, explained Lt. Col. Larry Trail from the District of Columbia Air Guard. He is the chief nurse for the Air Guard's EMEDS set up beside the busy runway at Belle Chasse, a few miles outside New Orleans.

They can be set up and ready to receive patients within a day.

"We have 20 medics from the Air Guard and five more from the Army," explained Massachusetts Air Guard Lt. Col. Maureen McCarthy, the EMEDS commander at Belle Chasse. "We've got nurses. We've got 13 physicians - for just about every injury you can have."

Although civilian hospitals and other medical facilities are accessible throughout the region, McCarthy said that EMEDS was set up for a specific purpose.

"We're here primarily for the military personnel who are working in this region," she said. "We're here for as long as there are troops out there and the states need us."

There were plenty of troops to support by September's third weekend. More than 25,000 National Guard members remained on duty in Louisiana, and over 42,000 were in duty throughout the Gulf Coast region. Many members of the other services were also on duty.

Ailments and injuries ranged from heat stress and blisters during the day to a broken elbow, when a Soldier fell from a truck, during the night.

It was obvious, however, that the Air Guard has served a lot more people than the troops since the Louisiana medical group deployed the day before the massive storm struck on Aug. 29.

As of Sept. 16, some 300 Air Guard medical people had treated 11,279 Katrina victims in Louisiana and Mississippi. They had treated 7,028 people in Louisiana, mostly in New Orleans, and another 4,251 in Gulfport and Bay St. Louis, Miss.

They have witnessed heroism and horror at the New Orleans international airport and convention center and at the Louisiana Superdome while treating the hungry, dehydrated and disenchanted during the first few days after the storm.

Their stories include looking for the dead among the living at the airport; being handed babies who were separated from their parents; having young civilian men wheel the disabled and elderly to them on baggage carts; treating one man who tried to shrug off a four-day-old alligator bite; doing triage on people at the convention center who were very ill and on others who faked illnesses and injuries to hasten their departure; and hearing one desperate husband who had given up hope shoot his wife and then himself to death.

They have also validated the EMEDS that have been part of the Air Guard's inventory since 2002. Air Guard medical people have served in other EMEDS in Southwest Asia, Franklin noted, but this is the first time that the Air Guard has deployed their own.

The EMEDS in Louisiana, staffed by 92 people from eight states, came from Michigan; the facility in Mississippi, staffed by 66 people from five states, came from Kansas, explained Lt. Col. John Kirk, one of the pivotal figures in the Air Guard's medical team.

The facility from Topeka, Kan., is the Air Guard's operational EMEDS, he explained. The Michigan EMEDS is the Air Guard's schoolhouse, the Alpena Combat Readiness Training Center located beside Lake Huron. Kirk is the director.

"This is the first time I've ever heard of a schoolhouse being deployed for an actual mission," he said.

The center, named for the small Michigan city where it is located, has trained about 3,500 students from the various services in EMEDS procedures during the past three years, he explained. That includes, by his estimate, about 70 percent of the Air Guard medical people who are turning out to support Joint Task Force Katrina.

"We brought the tents and equipment and five people to help set up this facility," Kirk said. "This is, literally, on the job training for all of these people."

Personnel from three Texas Air Guard



Photos by Master Sgt. Bob Haskell

A military patient is wheeled toward a waiting medevac helicopter after being treated at the Air National Guard's Expeditionary Medical Support (EMEDS) facility.

wings, who were among the first military medical people from outside Louisiana to reach New Orleans after the storm, also helped set up the EMEDS in Belle Chasse.

They have been replaced by people from eight states - from Massachusetts to California. Air Guard people from Mississippi, Kansas, Iowa, Maine and Alabama are staffing the EMEDS in Mississippi.

There is no shortage of volunteers to sustain the medical mission. "There are almost too many," said McCarthy. "We've had to ask the states to send only the people for our critical needs."

Air Force Reserve Lt. Col. Leslie Milligan is a physical therapist from New Orleans who volunteered for duty with the Air Guard EMEDS in Belle Chasse because her former husband said they could probably use her help, she explained. She spent her first week at the Superdome, Milligan said.

Many of the people, particularly doctors and senior medical personnel, are taking time from lucrative positions to help, it was pointed out. But that's what it means to be in the National Guard.

"Sure, this duty affects the income of just about all of the civilian members of the professional staff. But when the first call comes, we're here," said Trail. "Besides, we're doing real-world work. This is not simulation."



The Air National Guard's Expeditionary Medical Support (EMEDS) facility at Naval Air Station New Orleans in Belle Chasse, La., was set up to support the tens of thousands of military personnel participating in the Hurricane Katrina relief mission in Louisiana.

Arkansas engineers hit the streets of Mississippi

By Spc. Chris Jones

40th Public Affairs Detachment

WAVELAND, Miss. – After Hurricane Katrina, all but three houses on one Washington Street block in the city of Waveland, Miss., were left in pieces. According to Annie Singleton, separated from her husband during the storm, the streets of Waveland were temporary rivers; she said her husband escaped the violent waves by kayaking down the street, with the family cat in his lap.

The flooding eventually subsided, and the streets of Waveland were left up to 6-feet high with rubble, from broken trees to smashed cars to segments of houses.

The Army Corps of Engineers was called in to clear the streets. Two engineers from the Arkansas National Guard, Staff Sgts. Henry Laxton and Bobby Farmer, have been operating bulldozers, sweeping the roads off the Mississippi coast, to allow for transportation in an area that was near the center of Hurricane Katrina's deadly path.

"All the debris was in the street, so nobody could really get to us for four or five days," said Andrew McDonald, who was at his mother's house during the storm.

Farmer and Laxton, both members of the 875th Engineers Battalion out of Jonesboro, Ark., have been working doggedly since last week. Laxton said the job can be emotionally draining.

"Sometimes it gets to you," Laxton said of working in the devastated city, constantly



Photo by Spc. Chris Jones

Heavy equipment operators, Staff Sgt. Henry Laxton (front) and Staff Sgt. Bobby Farmer, from the Arkansas National Guard clear streets in Waveland, Miss., after Hurricane Katrina left the town's roads littered with debris.

surrounded by citizens who have lost all their personal belongings and, sometimes, a loved one.

The job itself places Laxton and Farmer in often extreme heat with little time for rest and in conditions which offer constant dis-

tractions. Still, Laxton said he understood his job from the moment he arrived in the area, and the engineers in his unit have been working nonstop to make the streets of Waveland clear for transportation.

"We all knew right where to start, and we just got right into it," Laxton said.

Singleton, who returned to her demolished home across from the McDonalds' house, said the military's presence in the relief effort has been indispensable.

"I love what the military is doing here," she said. "The best part of my day is when I look up and see a helicopter, because I know that somebody's going to help."

McDonald withstood the hurricane with his wife, Deniz, and his mother, who owns the house, less than 100 meters from the beach. As it happened, the house they stayed in was one of only three houses on the street that withstood the storm. Every other home or building was completely demolished.

"[The house] saved our lives," said Deniz, who lives in Budapest, Hungary, with McDonald, but spent the summer in Waveland with McDonald's mother. "We have a new appreciation for this house."

McDonald and Deniz, both of whom are studying for doctorate degrees at Central European University in Hungary, were scheduled for a flight out of New Orleans and back to Hungary on Sept. 4.

They missed that flight. Laxton and Farmer are among those making sure they make the next flight on time.



Photo by Spc. Chris Jones

Staff Sgt. Bobby Farmer of the Arkansas National Guard drives a bulldozer to clear roads in the city of Waveland, Miss., following Hurricane Katrina. Guardsmen in the area are helping clear the town, one of the heaviest hit on the coast of Mississippi.

U.S Government response to Katrina

Federal support to state and local officials, volunteer organizations and families who have been devastated by Hurricane Katrina continues around the clock in an effort to provide recovery support to those affected by this unprecedented natural disaster.

Federal assistance to households will help them get on the road to recovery. The following facts provide an update to some of the important activities and approximate numbers as of 2 p.m. EDT Sept. 15.:

*More than 122,000 people are currently housed in shelters throughout all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

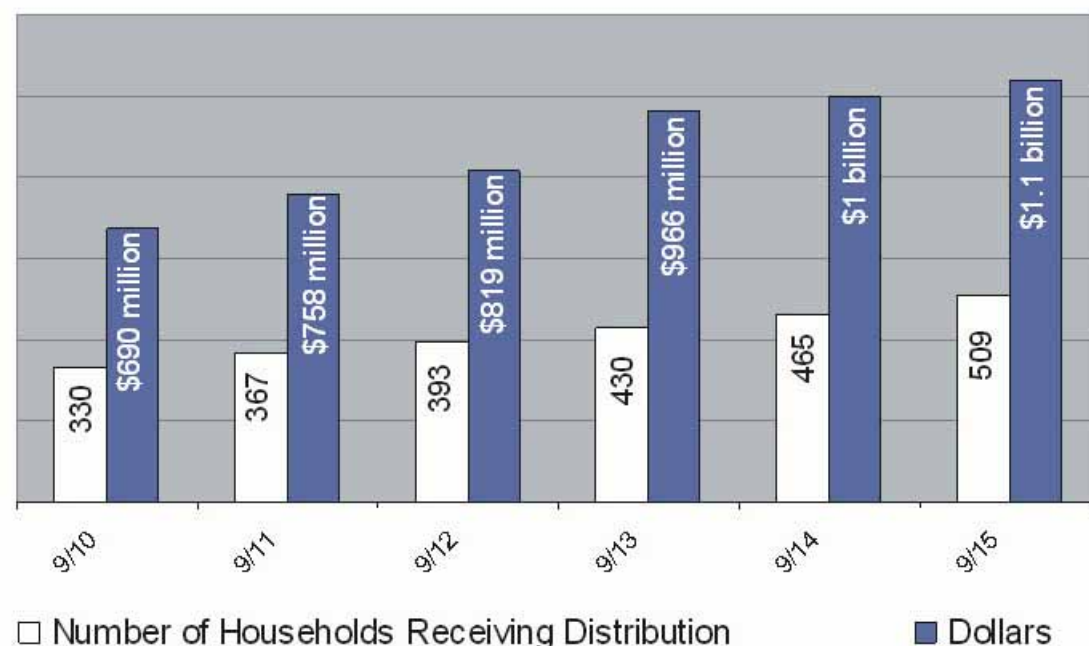
This number is expected to continue to decrease as people are provided long-term housing.

*SBA disaster loans are the primary source of federal funds for repairing or rebuilding disaster damage to private property owned by homeowners and renters. Homeowners may borrow up to \$200,000 to repair or replace damaged or destroyed real estate.

Homeowners and renters may borrow up to \$40,000 to repair or replace damaged or destroyed personal property, including vehicles.

* Department of Agriculture Rural Development's single-family home loan programs, which have enabled thousands of rural Mississippi families to build or purchase homes over the past decades, will soon be extended to non-rural areas such as Hattiesburg and the Mississippi Gulf Coast in order to help families affected by Hurricane Katrina.

Household Assistance Funds



Father and son mobilize for Hurricane Katrina together

By **Spc. Sherree Casper**

West Virginia National Guard

BELLE CHASSE, La. – Like father, like son; it's all in the family for a pair of infantrymen with the Oregon National Guard.

As Staff Sgt. Michael L. Baker from the Oregon National Guard sat on a New York City transit bus at the Belle Chasse Naval Air Station near New Orleans, his thoughts were on his family.

And his mind didn't have to wander far.

A few buses over sat his young stepson who also mobilized with Delta Company, 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. While waiting for the buses to take the men to the French Quarter where they would be tasked to provide security and support for the area, the younger Baker checked in on his stepfather.



Staff Sgt. Michael L. Baker (left), and his stepson, Pfc. Michael J. Baker, joke with one another before leaving the Belle Chasse Naval Air Station for downtown New Orleans.

Although stepfather is the word given by the dictionary to describe the pair's relationship, the younger Baker thinks of the senior as simply "Dad."

Staff Sgt. Michael L. Baker, 40, and his son, Pfc. Michael J. Baker, 22, are both infantrymen in the same Oregon National Guard unit and hail from Grants Pass, Ore.

When volunteers were sought for the humanitarian effort neither hesitated.

"I came because as a human being it was the thing you have to do," said the elder Baker, who sells cars for a Chevrolet dealership back home.

A 15-year veteran of the military, Baker became 40 percent disabled after he shattered his right shoulder while on a mission in Egypt in August, 2002. Still, his disability wasn't about to keep him sidelined from helping the victims of Hurricane Katrina.

"We just had a big disaster," Baker said of the wildfires that swept through portions of Oregon a year ago.

"I couldn't say no," he said. "I've got fellow Americans that are hurting."

Those were the same sentiments of his stepson, Michael J. Baker, who joined the Oregon National Guard nearly two years ago. A laborer back home, Michael credits his stepfather with motivating him to join the military.

"He was a huge reason why I joined. He brought me into the Guard," he said. "He raised me for more than half of my life. He's been a big influence."

Out of respect for his stepfather, Michael legally changed his surname from Poe-Livingston in January 2004 to Baker. "He brought me out of childhood into adulthood," said the young man.

Guard EVAC's patients ...



Photo by Senior Master Sgt. Charles R. Ware

Personnel of the Alabama Air National Guard help unload patients from a C-130H of the 130th Airlift Wing, West Virginia Air National Guard, on Sept. 2. The patients were transported from the Louis Armstrong International Airport in New Orleans, La., as part of relief efforts from Hurricane Katrina.

FROM PAGE 1

Ready

Four thousand Guard Soldiers and Airmen were on duty the day before and pre-positioned to spring into action, Downer explained. Engineers organized damage assessment teams and checked out their chainsaws.

Aviators maneuvered their aircraft into places where they could get airborne right after the storm passed through. Flat-bottom boats were checked out and spare engines were purchased to keep them running.

"So much was happening at the same time. Everybody was humming," added Downer. "If anyone says we were sleeping or playing cards, that's bunk."

Maj. Ed Bush told how 300 or 400 National Guard members, security details and medical teams, screened and provided food and water for the first 10,000 people who flocked to the dome the day before the storm struck.

He also told of how hard the same Guard members and the Louisiana State Police worked to maintain order for several days after the storm - when the number of storm victims swelled to about 20,000, the lights and the air conditioning and the plumbing no

longer worked and when the food and the water had run out.

"There were three types of people in the Superdome - the evacuees, the Louisiana State Police and the Louisiana National Guard," Bush said. "Our challenge was to convince the people that as bad as it was in there, that was the best place to be. I had a bullhorn and I would tell different sections that we're all in this together.

"The Guard members handled it marvelously. They carried people through knee-deep and waist-deep water to the buses," Bush said. "They showed a complete disregard for their own safety in a nasty situation. I didn't see anybody playing cards. Those comments are as insulting as they are ludicrous."

Army Guard Sgt. 1st Class Fermin Montano and Sgt. Russell Banks recounted providing security for the drivers when the buses began rolling to evacuate people from the Superdome. They worked 21 hours during one long day.

"I didn't like it, but I knew they had been through a lot worse than I had ever been through so I was going to do what I had to do to help them," said Montano who waded into

"The Guard members handled it marvelously. They carried people through knee-deep and waist-deep water to the buses. They showed a complete disregard for their own safety in a nasty situation. I didn't see anybody playing cards. Those comments are as insulting as they are ludicrous."

— Maj. Ed Bush

the water to help load people - some old and some sick - onto his bus.

"In a situation like this, we're not Beetle Bailey Soldiers sitting around and doing nothing," explained Banks. "We did not take this lightly."

"We were ready. Our adrenaline was pumping," added Montano. "We saw this stuff on TV and we wanted to help."

Meanwhile, the situation went from bad to worse to impossible at Jackson Barracks. The fast-rising flood covered cars and then the high-water trucks earmarked for search and rescue missions. It threatened to trap the boats inside the armory where they were being kept away from the weather. The Category 4 winds formed whitecaps on the helicopter pad. The storm knocked out the

power, the plumbing, the emergency generators and the telephones.

But the Guard members there did not stop, said Sgt. 1st Class Sandra Lachica who had worked there for 26 years.

"We carried personnel files, that we had already put in boxes, from the first floor up to the third floor as the waters were rising," she said. "The water came up so fast, 15 feet in 20 minutes. I saw lots of people trying to save the boats and motors and other equipment in waist-deep, then chest-deep water."

The storm hit early that Monday morning, but the long day was just beginning.

The boats were used to carry the people at Jackson Barracks to the levee beside the Mississippi, and Louisiana Guard helicopters flew them to the Superdome that night, Lachica explained. That evacuation lasted until early the next morning.

Those exhausted and soaked Guard people went right to work at the dome, setting up a new operations center while trying to stake out places to sleep. Lachica said she worked there for four days. She slept outside for three nights. She directed hundreds of the homeless who were flown to the dome to the right entrances. Then she came to Belle Chasse to help set up the new joint operations center in an Air National Guard hanger at the Naval air station.

Many of the 6,000 Louisiana Guard people still on duty have lost their homes and other worldly positions, Downer said. Lachica is one of them.

Her home, a few miles from Jackson Barracks, where she lived with her daughter and her husband, who is also in the Army Guard, is under water. So are their two cars. So are the nearby homes of her two sisters and her mother. Her entire family is homeless, she said.

"It's such a weird feeling to know that everything I own is sitting on my cot. I've got a bag and a purse - two uniforms, a pair of boots, t-shirts, socks, a towel, personal items, one blanket and a pillow," Lachica recounted.

Her property is fully insured, but she and her husband have been too busy to try to call or file claims, she explained.

"It's just hard to comprehend the whole thing," said Lachica who realizes that her life has probably been changed forever. She is, however, still a Guard Soldier.

"I'm on duty just like everybody else," she said. "It really, really makes me mad that anyone would say we were playing cards. It's hard for me to believe that someone would say that."



Photo by Photographer's Mate 1st Class Robert McRill

Army National Guard units prepare to disseminate troops throughout the city of New Orleans, La., on Sept. 7.

National Guard: Always Ready, Always There

By CW2 John W. Listman Jr. (Ret.)

National Guard Bureau

Mobilization was difficult due to lack of communication, but as fast as troops could be mobilized, they were sent to the most seriously affected areas ... Contact with the Red Cross was made ... There was no communication with the outlying affected areas.

These reports might seem familiar, like so many coming in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, but in fact they are from the after-action report from the adjutant general of Rhode Island about the events surrounding the complete mobilization of that states' National Guard in response to a devastating hurricane which hit parts of New York and New England in September 1938.

Virtually every year finds Guard personnel serving on state active duty (SAD) somewhere in the nation. The focus of this piece is to briefly outline the Guard's role in assisting their communities after some of the biggest natural disasters of the last century, events that often cost many lives and millions to billions of dollars in damage. The Guard has played important roles in many more disasters than those cited but these are among the most devastating events in American history.

1906-San Francisco, Calif., suffers the worst earthquake in American history. More than 3,000 people die and nearly three-quarters of the city's population is left homeless. The entire 2nd Brigade, California National Guard, numbering some 1,700 men, is placed on SAD. Most of its units are from the area, with some men guarding their own neighborhoods against looters. Since this event struck just three years after the Dick Act in 1903, little federal equipment had yet reached the Guard. For instance, the California Guard did not have enough tents for its own men, so none were available to aid the homeless. Fortunately, the Regular Army had a large number of troops stationed at the Presidio and they established tent cities and feeding lines. The Guard spent most of their duty patrolling to prevent looting and violence until released six weeks after the quake.

1927-Torrential rains caused the worst flooding of the Mississippi River in history, impacting communities from Iowa and Illinois south to Louisiana and Mississippi. Tens of thousands of people were stranded on levees, rooftops and patches of high ground, desperate for rescue. Guardsmen in six states were called to SAD, using whatever they could to assist in river rescues, including manning civilian boats to pick up survivors. For the first time in Guard history assigned aircraft were used in aid to civil authority when Arkansas' 154th Observation Squadron flew search missions over the stricken area. Many victims were taken to tent camps established by a combination of the Guard, Army and Red Cross working together. Arkansas alone reported 107,000 people being cared for, plus almost a quarter-million inoculations

were given against disease. From the six states affected a total of 4,288 Guardsmen served on SAD, some for more than a month.

1938- In New York and New England, a massive hurricane, nicknamed the "Long Island Express" struck with little warning. Its worst effects were felt in Rhode Island, which had a storm surge up Narragansett Bay, leaving more than 12 feet of water in Providence. The entire RI Guard, some 2,094 men, served on SAD for up to 12 days. They first helped search for survivors and later assisted in security and cleanup. They used their unit trucks and other Army-issued equipment in moving troops, supplies and victims. The 43rd Signal Company played a key role in establishing a radio net to keep the governor in contact with the officials on site.

1955-In a five-day period dual hurricanes known as Connie and Diane slam into the North Carolina coast and move into Virginia and up the east coast, dumping up to 20" of rain in just a few hours. Massive flooding killed 184 persons and caused nearly \$900 million dollars damage. The worst hit areas were in Pennsylvania and New England. Guardsmen in eight states, totaling more than 8,000 troops, were mobilized on SAD to search for survivors, reopen roads and protect against looting. During this operation, Guard helicopters are used for the first time on SAD missions.

1969-Hurricane Camille, a Category 5 storm, slammed into the Gulf Coast of Mississippi on Aug. 16, killing 143 people and wiping out whole towns with its storm surge. It moved inland and reformed over the mountains of Virginia, dumping up to 20 inches of rain in less than five hours. This causes some the worst flooding in the state's history, killing an additional 113 people. Mississippi mobilized 3,878 Guardsmen with Virginia calling up 710 personnel. In each case the major mission was to look for survivors, recover the dead and clear roads so rescue equipment can reach the worst impacted areas.

1972-Hurricane Agnes struck Florida and from its first landfall on June 19, moved along the East Coast for six days, dumping



Mississippi Guardsmen staff a medical treatment station for evacuees after Hurricane Camille in 1969.



Members of the North Carolina Army Guard remove debris, including a car, that was blocking a creek to prevent additional flooding in the aftermath of Hurricane Agnes in 1972.

up to 19 inches of rain in some areas, causing wide-spread flooding from Virginia and Pennsylvania to New England. Virtually every state in the area had some Guard personnel on SAD, amounting to more than 11,000 personnel. They assisted in the rescue of the living, recovery of the dead and clearing roads to allow emergency vehicles to reach the impact zones.

1989-Hurricane Hugo raked across Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands as a Category 5 storm in early September. Packing winds in excess of 160 mph it killed five persons in the islands before moving northward. On Sept. 21st, a Category 4 storm, it slammed into South Carolina with a tidal surge of 18 feet, causing massive damage and killing an additional 21 people. Guard units in all three areas responded by assisting in searching for survivors, cleaning away debris and securing the worst impacted areas against looters. A total of 5,507 Guard personnel served on SAD during this period.

1989-San Francisco (Loma Prieta) Earthquake, the worst such event since the famous 1906 quake, struck on Oct. 5. It killed 62 people and injured another 3,757. It left over 12,000 people homeless and cost an estimate \$6 billion in damage. In what has been the largest state mobilization for any natural disaster to date, 32,711 California Guard personnel, Army and Air, are called to SAD over a three-month period. Those immediately mobilized help search for survivors and recover the dead. Others were detailed to security. Air Guard assets were used to ferry troops and equipment from southern California to the impact area. Other units assisted in the major clean up and restoration of roads.

1992-Hurricane Andrew, the most devastating storm to hit the United States since the Galveston, Texas, hurricane of 1900, wiped out much of south Florida before hitting Louisiana. At least 6,300 Florida and

1,350 Louisiana Guard personnel were mobilized to aid in search, recovery and security missions. Guard armories were used as temporary shelters and first aid clinics. With communications down over much of the impacted area, the Florida Guard printed its own weekly newspaper, titled *The Task Force Times*, to keep the troops informed on news and sports scores.

1993-Following heavy spring and summer rains, the upper Mississippi River flooded, primarily affecting Minnesota, Iowa, Illinois and Missouri though having an impact all the way to the Gulf of Mexico.

From these four states a total of 8,400 Guard personnel were mobilized with additional Guard help coming from states not directly impacted adding additional troops to the effort. They helped reinforce levees, move evacuees from danger and set up and staff refugee camps. Other units, such as two Alabama quartermaster companies, set up water purification equipment in Des Moines, Iowa, to aid a hospital.

2004-Four hurricanes in the space of five weeks devastated Florida from the Keys to the Panhandle. Almost all Florida National Guard troops not serving in the wars overseas were mobilized for SAD. These storms brought high winds, tidal surges and heavy rains, causing floods. Other states were affected too. These included Alabama, Louisiana, North Carolina, Texas and Virginia. Again, most of the damage to these states was caused by heavy rains.

Regardless of the circumstances and often at the risk of their own lives, men and women of the Army and Air National Guard have answered and continue to answer the call to duty to help their neighbors at the most trying of times. Often among the many 'first responders' they have unique skills and training needed to deal with great tragedies as the dedicated professionals that they are.

National Guard members support ma



(Left) Sgt. James Bock, of the Georgia National Guard, watches through a crane hatch as a CH-47 lowers a sandbag to repair a levee in New Orleans.

Army National Guard Soldiers from Oklahoma and Drug Enforcement agents wait for the SPCA to remove two dogs prior to checking a home in New Orleans, La., for stranded residents on Sept. 7. The military and federal agencies are performing house-to-house searches rescuing New Orleans residents stranded in their homes due to floodwaters.

Photo by Air Force Master Sgt. Scott Reed



Photo by Air Force Master Sgt. Scott Reed

Sgt. Eduardo Villarreal, 149th Aviation Support Battalion, Texas Army National Guard, guides the pilot of a UH-60 Blackhawk into position to drop a sling-load, Sept. 10. The 149th is airlifting and strategically dropping bundles of rock and sand at the break in the 17th Street Canal, which collapsed when Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans, La.



Photo by Air Force Master Sgt. Mike Arellano

Senior Airman Angela Kaster, 149th Fighter Wing, Texas Air National Guard, prepares for the day's taskings in New Orleans, La., on Sept. 10. The 149th FW is deployed as part of Task Force San Antonio providing military support in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

Assive Hurricane Katrina relief effort



Photo by Air Force Master Sgt. Scott Reed

Army National Guard Soldiers rescuing one of the thousands of New Orleans residents stranded in their homes due to floodwaters.



Photo by Senior Master Sgt. Mike Arellano



Photo by Tech. Sgt Brian E. Christiansen

Sgt. R.V. Hyder gives first aid to a woman while he's on duty at a Wal-Mart in Hammond, La, on Sept. 9. Hyder is a medic in the North Carolina National Guards' 113th Quick Response Force.



Photo by Senior Master Sgt. Mike Arellano



Photo courtesy of Lt. Col. Hunt Kerrigan

(Above) Members of the 149th Fighter Wing, Texas Air National Guard, talk with a New Orleans, La., police officer along the Mississippi River on Sept. 10. (Left) National Guard helicopters operate at the Air National Guard Combat Readiness Training Center, Gulfport, MS.

(Left) Members of the 149th Fighter Wing, Texas Air National Guard, San Antonio, arrive at the Belle Chasse Joint Reserve Base from the Ernest Morial Convention Center in New Orleans, La., on Sept. 11.

When duty means more than personal sacrifice

By SPC Sherree Casper

West Virginia National Guard

BELLE CHASSE, La. – Many of the Soldiers and Airmen from the National Guard who have responded to New Orleans in the wake of the recent natural disaster, have done so at great personal sacrifice.

Whether it be postponing a honeymoon, missing an anniversary or being absent for the birth of a child, when duty calls these volunteers don't hesitate to respond.

And most of their family members wouldn't have it any other way.

Instead of enjoying a honeymoon with her new husband, Staff Sgt. Dana L. McDowell from the Wisconsin Air National Guard found herself pulling security in downtown New Orleans.

"I just got married and this is my honeymoon," said McDowell, who makes her home in La Crosse, Wis.

Ironically, when the tsunami slammed into Indonesia late last December, the security forces member with the 115th Security Forces Squadron was scuba diving in the Indian Ocean. She was mobilized to the disaster area where she would meet her future husband who serves with the British Royal Marines. McDowell and Cpl. David Elliot were married on Aug. 12 in Madison, Wis.

"I wanted to take the time to help folks that are in need of support," the 29-year-old said.

Helping those in need was on the minds of many National Guard Soldiers and Airmen who were waiting at Belle Chasse Naval Air Station near New Orleans to get their mission orders.

Sitting on a New York City transit bus which would transport him to his temporary home in the French Quarter in downtown New Orleans, 2nd Lt. Chris A. Bird, a platoon leader with Delta Company, 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry, with the Oregon National Guard, noted that a fellow officer was married on Sept. 3.

In a matter of days the new groom boarded a military flight bound for New Orleans. Bird said 2nd Lt. William Morgan, platoon leader for Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry, Oregon National Guard, left with the rest of the state's contingent on Sept. 7.

According to Bird, the Oregon National Guard deployed about 1,400 Soldiers to assist in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

Troops will fall under the 41st Brigade area of operation which includes the French Quarter and Superdome. Besides security, Bird said Soldiers will try to prevent any more damage to the civilian infrastructure.

"We will also help with evacuations when necessary," he said.

Bird said that Spc. Heath Cooper, a Soldier from Delta Company, 1st Battalion, 186th



Spc. Jessica Brandon, of the 196th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, W. Va. National Guard, talks to LTG H Steven Blum, chief of the National Guard Bureau. The general thanked Army and Air National Guard troops for their response to the Katrina disaster.

Infantry, will miss the birth of his second child which is due within the next week. Cooper's first child – a girl – was born when he was dispatched to Egypt, Bird said.

Births, marriages, anniversaries – all are among the milestones missed when duty calls.

It's a fact of military life.

Tech. Sgt. Paul F. Opper from the 115th Security Forces Squadron, Wisconsin National Guard, and his wife, Margaret, had planned to celebrate their fourth anniversary with a long weekend in Door County, Wis.

"She pretty much scrapped it and said I really needed to do this," the 34-year-old from Madison, Wis., said.

Service members send message of hope to Katrina victims

By Master Sgt. Lek Mateo

Texas Army National Guard

ALI AIR BASE, Iraq – Americans serving in Iraq who have families and friends affected by Hurricane Katrina came together during a remembrance ceremony at the base chapel here Sept. 7.

U.S. Army Chaplain (Maj.) Donald E. Sides, of the 56th Brigade Combat Team, 36th Infantry Division, Texas Army National Guard, addressed the congregation before him and asked that its members come together to reflect on the tragic loss of life and send a message of hope through prayer to the survivors.

Chaplain Sides said that the tragedy took a heavy toll of human life and has deeply affected many people here in Iraq and that holding the memorial ceremony is a way for everyone to come together in unity and show those back at home that they are not forgotten by those serving overseas.

"The people back home are facing a great challenge and tragedy, and our prayers are with them," Chaplain Sides said.

The chaplain shared a spiritual message with survivors of the storm who he said have endured horrible and traumatic times in the past days and weeks, recalling a verse from the Old Testament which stated that, in times of tragedy, God is there and cares and that there is hope and a future.

"No matter what the tragedy is or how deep the hurt, the Lord is with us and will help us through times of turmoil," Chaplain Sides



Photo by Master Sgt. Lek Mateo

Command Sgt. Maj. Timothy Grant Sr., and Senior Airman Jessica R. Raby, sing a hymn during a remembrance ceremony for the victims of Hurricane Katrina held at Ali Air Base, Iraq.

continued.

Marcia Washington, a civilian employee that works for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Gulf Region Southern District, said that she came to seek solace and comfort and send a prayer to those who have lost everything.

The New Orleans native tearfully told those in her presence that her entire family that lives in the city was devastated by the storm and her older brother is still among those who are missing. She added that, for her, not knowing if he is alive and safe is the hardest thing to take.

Although the road to recovery will be long and painful, Washington said, the people of New Orleans will overcome the adversity they confront because they are spiritually strong and prayerful and she believes in her heart that her brother will be found.

"I have to keep faith that my brother will be found alive and safe," Washington said. "There may be some weak moments sometimes ... but I have to stay strong."

Capt. Kesler Weaver Jr., of the Alabama Army National Guard, assigned to the 122nd Corps Support Group, 1st Corps Support Command, could not hold back his emotions as stirring images of the victims being rescued from the floodwaters flashed across the screen on stage. The storm not only affected his aunt in Mississippi but also his friends living along the Alabama coast.

The captain said he believes the storm has brought out the best in people and shows how everyone can pull together in times of tragedy to overcome adversity. He also said he hopes the tragedy will reignite the rest of the nation, to include those serving in Iraq, to come together and show compassion and reach out to their fellow human beings during their time of need.

Captain Weaver added that he would like everyone affected by Katrina to know that they are always in their hearts and minds even though they are far away and cannot be there to help with relief and recovery efforts.

"No matter how far away we go, America is still our home and we'll pull together to pull through this crisis."

Texas Guard forces help Katrina victims

By Command Chief Master Sgt. Norm King

Texas State Guard

HOUSTON, Texas – Airmen of the Texas Air National Guard (TXANG) and the Texas State Guard (TXSG) are serving here on active duty as part of Task Force Comfort to support Operation Katrina. They are from the 147th Fighter Wing, TXANG, and 447th Air Support Group, TXSG, at Ellington Field.

The 447th Airmen have been assisting the 147th since Aug. 31 with the processing of emergency medical flights from the hurricane area. C-130 aircraft arriving with 40-50 critically ill patients arrived every hour during the peak of the operation. From Aug. 31 until Sept. 6, 21 flights with 726 patients were processed. Personnel from the Air National Guard, Army National Guard, Texas State Guard and Houston area Civil Air Patrol off-loaded the patients and took them to triage for further transport to local hospitals.

"Lt. Col. Willie B. Williams, 447th ASG commander, and his highly motivated Texas State Guard 447th Air Support Group came alert and ready to help," said Edgar Tucker, Department of Veterans Affairs director for Houston.

The Airmen are now staffing the evacuee shelter at Houston's George Brown Convention Center. They are providing health and safety support serving as two-person teams with one TXANG and one TXSG Airman 24 hours per day. TXSG Airmen also team with Soldiers from the 149th Aviation Battalion. Like all Air National Guard units in Texas, the 147th could use more personnel. An additional 100 to 150 ANG airmen are expected to be redeployed to Louisiana.

More than 13,000 evacuees processed through the George Brown shelter in Houston. As of Sept. 12 approximately 1,500 remained. There has been a concerted effort to get the evacuees settled into new lives either by finding



Texas State Guard photos

Airmen from the 147th Fighter Wing, Texas Air National Guard, and 447th Air Support Group, Texas State Guard, line up to offload Louisiana hospital patients from an Air Force C-130 aircraft at Ellington Field, Houston, Texas.

housing and jobs in the Houston area or getting them settled with relatives.

Buses arrived consistently and transported the refugees to all parts of the country. At one point last week, four busses arrived and offered evacuee's transportation to Las Vegas, Nev., that included housing and a job upon arrival. The

buses filled quickly and headed out to new opportunities.

The Brown Center has three floors with a building length of almost half a mile. The sleeping areas are 100 by 100 yards square, and the building has five on the first floor alone.

The State Guard as well as all the other agencies represented are committed to provide their services as long as is needed to ensure care for the disaster victims. Currently more than 630 Soldiers and Airmen of the Texas State Guard are on active duty in Operation Katrina.

Capt. Michael Passamano (center) of the 447th Air Support Group, Texas State Guard, discusses evacuation procedures for critically ill patients from Louisiana.



Airmen of the 447th Air Support Group, Texas State Guard, assist in loading a critically ill patient into an ambulance at Ellington Field, Houston, Texas.



TRICARE:DoD supports military families during relief efforts

FALLS CHURCH, Va.—Hurricane Katrina displaced more than 136,000 military personnel and family members in the Gulf Coast region two weeks ago. TRICARE, the Department of Defense agency responsible for managing the military's health care plan, has been working diligently to ensure its beneficiaries have access to medical care during recovery operations.

"We will continue to take care of our beneficiaries as we move forward into post-Katrina recovery," said Dr. David N. Tornberg, MPH, acting deputy director of TRICARE Management Activity. "The health and welfare of our beneficiaries are always at the forefront of everything we do."

TRICARE has implemented various initiatives to assist displaced beneficiaries with their health care needs:

The waiver of pharmacy copays has been

extended through Sept. 30, 2005, for beneficiaries affected by Hurricane Katrina who are unable to pay it.

Humana Military Health Services, TRICARE's regional contractor in the Gulf Region, dispatched staff to various evacuee sites to provide one-on-one counseling for affected beneficiaries. They are advising them how to access care and answer questions about their health benefit options.

On Sept. 12, TRICARE delivered materials such as wallet cards, fact sheets and benefit overviews to evacuee sites, MTFs and TRICARE Service Centers, that list customer service contacts, phone numbers, Web sites and special benefits for hurricane victims.

Under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act Privacy Rule, providers at MTFs and in the TRICARE network may share Katrina-affected patients' information

with other providers as necessary to provide care. This includes sharing prescriptions, lab results and X-rays with other providers, hospitals and clinics; referring patients for treatment in areas where they have relocated; and coordinating care with others, such as emergency relief workers, to find appropriate health services for patients.

TRICARE is continuously reevaluating its ongoing relief efforts and partnering with its regional contractors to ensure beneficiaries' needs are being met. If future relief programs or extensions of current efforts are needed, TRICARE will make those decisions as necessary to help beneficiaries recover from the hurricane.

Beneficiaries should call the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System Support Office at 1-800-538-9552 to update their family members' information, including

address changes, to maintain access to TRICARE benefits.

In addition, beneficiaries seeking information about their TRICARE benefits may call the regional contractors: Humana Military Healthcare Services (South region), 1-800-444-5445; HealthNet (North region), 1-877-874-2273; or TriWest (West region), 1-888-874-9378, or visit the TRICARE Web site, www.tricare.osd.mil/katrina.

Beneficiary counseling and assistance coordinators, debt collection assistance officers, TRICARE service centers and family support representatives at local military installations are also available to help active duty military personnel and their families.

Other resources available include Military One Source at 1-800-342-9647 or www.militaryonesource.com.

Family feels safe after National Guard arrives

By Chief Master Sgt. Gonda Moncada

Texas National Guard

NEW ORLEANS, La.— After spending days in the dark, with their windows boarded up, no water, and no electricity, a family of 10 finally felt safe to come out of their New Orleans Parish home Sept. 3 and seek help.

The family members, all dressed in light blue shirts, their belongings in a shopping cart, appeared as if from nowhere and were quickly surrounded by the media because of their sudden appearance in a deserted part of town.

Texas Army National Guard Task Force 536 mission got under way at 8 a.m. on Belle Chasse Joint Reserve Base but took on an unexpected mission, providing transportation for the California Army National Guard personnel whose task it was to secure a looted Wal-Mart.

The family appeared at a crossroad as soon as the vehicles arrived and the Soldiers took their position. The family members explained that they had been holed up in their home and had been afraid to come out because of the looting they had observed.

The Wal-Mart, not far from their home, was broken into and looted of its contents. Inside the Wal-Mart, even with the doors wide open, the stench of rotting meat and vegetables was overwhelming, yet a neighborhood child roamed around the store, oblivious of the devastation inside and outside.

The family, sensing that some of the looters might not stop with simple looting and do them bodily harm, had stayed in their home until they saw the military vehicles approach and take up position in the Wal-Mart parking lot. Then they knew that this was their chance to come out of their home and make their way to the convention center and seek help.

"We were afraid until the National Guard arrived," the father said. "Now we know it is safe to walk to the convention center." He also explained why they all dressed alike, "So we will recognize each other in the crowd, and hopefully we will be able to stay together."

The father took the lead, and the family disappeared from view, through streets littered with bricks from buildings torn apart by Hurricane Katrina.



A family seeking the protection of National Guard Soldiers finds itself the object of media attention.

Photo by Chief Master Sgt. Gonda Moncada

Red Cross recognizes 'above and beyond' National Guardsmen

By Joseph Garrison

Indiana Army National Guard

BROOKHAVEN, Miss. — A pair of Indiana National Guardsmen were commended by Red Cross officials for acts above and beyond the call of duty during the initial stages of Operation Vigilant Relief.

Specialists Jason Burris and Raymond Burge, both of A Co., 2nd Battalion, 152nd Infantry Regiment, while assigned as security for Red Cross emergency shelters in southern Mississippi following the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, quickly realized why the Guard was ordered to the area.

While on a late-night patrol, Burge noticed a car slowly approaching Red Cross emergency response vehicles without headlights. Knowing this seemed unusual, the armed Guardsman darted toward the vehicle to challenge its occupants. "They turned around and took off into the night," Burge, of Connerville, Ind., explained of the incident.

On the other side of town, Burris received word of a mugging in a nearby Red Cross shelter, assisting hundreds left homeless after the hurricane's path of destruction. Burris, from Bluffton, Ind., was across the street of the said shelter and quickly assessed the situation. "I knew if there was trouble in the shelter, it would be at the back door," he said.

Burris met the thieves at the back door of the shelter, subduing one as an officer from the Monticello Police Department apprehended the second. Both men had stolen a purse from an elderly woman living in the shelter, a victim of Hurricane Katrina's destruction.

"I was glad to see her get her \$1,100 back that she just received from the Red Cross," Burris said. "That was all she had to her name."

Kelly Fitzgerald, a manager with Red Cross Family Services assigned to the region, stated the National Guard was crucial in the Mississippi and Louisiana area following the hurricane's damaging blow that hit in late-



Specialists Jason Burris (right) and Raymond Burge, of the 38th (Mechanized) Infantry Division of Indianapolis, were recognized by the Red Cross for serving above and beyond the call of duty.

August. "We have served thousands and thousands here at this location, and the Guard has been awesome for us," she said. "The Guard has really made a safer and better working environment for us and the victims that received food, water and financial assistance."

The Red Cross claims to have helped 20,000 effected by Hurricane Katrina and the Guard has been there to help.

"This is the largest area I have ever had to go to with the Red Cross to help people," Fitzgerald added. "This was a category 5 disaster, destroying two states. We could not have provided this help without the Guard."

The Red Cross plans to continue providing assistance to those affected by the devastation of Hurricane Katrina through mid-October with the Guard's help.

"This shows what the Guard can do," said A Co. commander Daniel Hensley. "Both soldiers live the Army values and I admire their selfless acts for those left homeless and in distress in this region."

Burris and Burge are both infantrymen, part of the 38th (Mechanized) Infantry Division of Indianapolis.

Counterdrug provides critical rescue efforts for Hurricane Katrina

By Staff Sgt. Cheryl Hackley

National Guard Bureau

NEW ORLEANS — Guardsmen and equipment from several state Counterdrug Programs have traveled to Louisiana to provide much needed recovery mission support after the devastating attack from Hurricane Katrina. As of Sept. 6, using the Light Armored Vehicles, Counterdrug Soldiers and Airmen have rescued over 150 victims to date from their homes in this damaged city still partially covered in water. “The LAV is the only vehicle here able to get the job done because boats can’t get through and the helicopters can’t land,” said Army Lt. Col. Thomas Brewer, commander Task Force CD LAV. “It is amphibious, has 8-wheel drive and it has the necessary power. We are operating through over 4 feet. of water.”

Task Force LAV became operational Saturday morning and Counterdrug currently has dedicated seven of their 11 vehicles for hurricane relief efforts. Twenty-one National Guard Soldiers and Airmen are operating missions in the vehicles that came from Michigan, Nebraska, Oregon and Tennessee. Two more LAVs will be arriving from California.

Missions are conducted during daylight hours and four crew members are operating with each vehicle including a commander, driver, security guard and a New Orleans Police Officer to navigate them through the streets and provide security. Guided through the flooded city, Soldiers and Airmen are patrolling the city looking for survivors, said Colonel Brewer. They are at ground zero and have covered about 10 percent of the city, primarily the French Quarter, but they are moving to the residential areas, he added.

LAVs are designed to hold 10 people in the back, but rescue missions have squeezed as many as 10 victims inside, 10 more on top plus the crew. Operations begin at 6 a.m. each morning and the crews run missions until dusk or the LAVs run out of fuel. They forge through the water, over fire hydrants and fences, and pull right up to houses to let people jump on board. They bring them back to dry land where they are received by more Guardsmen and brought



Counterdrug Guardsmen navigate through the flooded city of New Orleans in Light Armored Vehicles searching for survivors stranded in their homes in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.



Photo submitted by Task Force CD LAV members

A grateful man rescued from his home by Counterdrug Guardsmen gives the photographer a thumbs-up after being picked up from his home. Over 150 victims from the hurricane had been rescued using the LAVs and other military vehicles as of Sept. 9.

in for medical attention. This mission is repeated relentlessly throughout the day, said Colonel Brewer.

Considering how many hours they are running the LAVs each day, it’s a miracle the vehicles are still operational. And somehow the fuel keeps finding its way to them, despite it seemingly running out everywhere else. Task Force CD LAV is housed with the 20th Special Forces unit at Harrah’s Casino. Working together, they are sharing tools, parts and pieces to keep all equipment operational.

“Let’s cross our fingers the LAVs stay that way,” said Colonel Brewer.

Right now they are focusing on search and rescue missions but have been providing support to SWAT Teams when necessary, said Colonel Brewer. Before Katrina, the National Guard CD Program has used the LAV since 2002 to support state, local and federal Law Enforcement Agencies in serving warrants on counterdrug operations; downed officer recovery; and as a communications, command and control platform.

Despite running several days on little sleep, eating Meals Ready to Eat and the difficult task at hand, the crews have a remarkably high morale because they know they are making a difference.

While the National Guard has always stood by ready to support the nation, Counterdrug Soldiers and Airmen possess many of the unique skill sets necessary to perform hurricane recovery missions. Utilizing those capabilities and equipment right here at home is something they are all happy to do.

“When you rescue someone who has been stranded on their rooftop and they are hugging you, you can’t help but

feel pumped about that,” said Colonel Brewer. “Seeing the National Guard operating around here and being the single most effective element here, really makes you proud to be a Guardsman.”

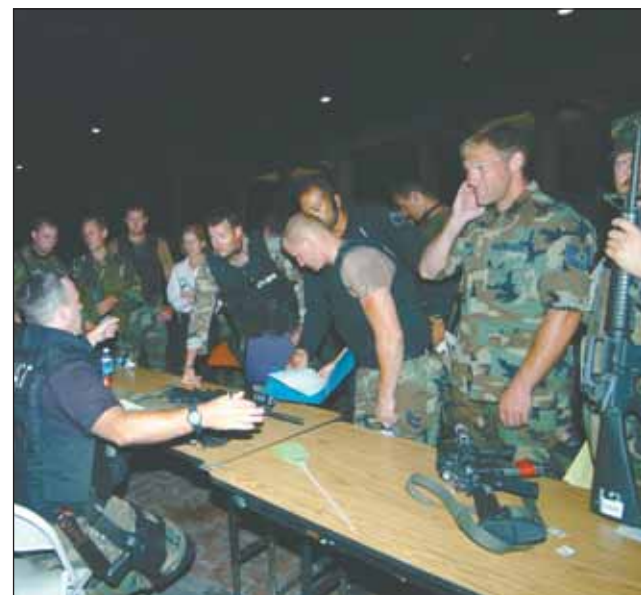


Photo by Staff Sgt. Cheryl Hackley

Counterdrug members receive a briefing from police before assisting them in a SWAT mission. Looting and other crimes were taking place after most citizens evacuated the city because of massive flooding caused by Hurricane Katrina and Guard members provided support in Light Armored Vehicles.

VFW offers grants to service members affected directly by Hurricane Katrina

ARLINGTON, Va. — Veterans of the Foreign War is offering a \$500 grant to National Guard members affected by Hurricane Katrina.

Service members affected by Hurricane

Katrina must contact their family support center (see pages 14 and 15) or unit commander to complete an application or to send the VFW National Headquarters a letter on the unit’s letterhead. The letter must contain the service member’s social security number

and working mail address to receive the check.

This is a one-time grant available to only those directly affect by Hurricane Katrina.

Letters and applications should be sent to:
Military Assistance Program

VFW National Headquarters
406 W 34th St.

Kansas City, MO 64111.

For more information call :

* a Family Assistance Center

* VFW at (816) 756-3390 Ext. 211

Contacting a Family Program Coordinator near you

The National Guard Family Program office in each state joint force headquarters (JFHQ) is designed to assist family members of all service members, regardless of the military organization or status, with information and/or referrals. Following is a list of Family Program offices in the 54 states and territories followed by Wing Family Program Coordinators.

Alaska

State Family Program Director
SENIor MASTER SGT. Jan Myers
505 W. Northern Lights Blvd., Suite108
Anchorage, AK 99503-2552

168ARW
Nola Barnes
2680 Flightline Ave. Ste. 117
Eielson AFB, AK 99702-1794
Office: 907-377-8715 DSN: 317-377-8715

176 WG
Emily Derksen
505 W. Northern Lights Blvd Suite 108
Anchorage, AK 99503-2552
Office/DSN 907-264-5346

Alabama

State Family Program Director
SGM Hubert Chance
1720 Cong WL Dickerson Dr.
Montgomery, AL, 36109-0711
Office/DSN (334)-271-7283 / 363-7283 or 1-(800) 231-2846

117ARW
Pamela Lacey
5401 East Lake Blvd.
Birmingham, AL 35217
Office/DSN 205-714-2699/ 778-2699

187FW
Sharon Hubbert
5187 Selma Hwy.
Montgomery, AL 36108-4824
Office/DSN: 334-394-7119/ 358-9119

Arkansas

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Mountaineer Guardsmen lend a helping hand

By **Spc. Sherree Casper**

West Virginia National Guard

BELLE CHASSE, La. – While on a convoy earmarked to deliver supplies to troops in New Orleans, Soldiers and Airmen with the West Virginia National Guard recently lent a helping hand to a victim of Hurricane Katrina as he cleaned up his home.

While Henri A. Alciatore Jr. was cleaning up debris around his front yard in Jefferson Parrish, the small convoy of Humvees and five-ton trucks rolled by and spotted the lone man who was digging out from the damage wreaked by the Aug. 29 storm that blew through the area.

A large live oak tree had slammed into his three-bedroom house that was built in the late 1950s and crushed a portion of the roof.

A pile of discarded furniture and personal belongings ruined by the storm was stacked near the street curb in front of the house.

"I don't think it's living anymore," Alciatore said of the fallen tree, trying to keep his sense of humor.

Alciatore said the inside of his home had received flood damage and mold was already growing.

Noticing the man might be hungry after working in the hot and humid weather in the deep South, Airmen Andrew L. Stine climbed down from atop a five-ton truck and brought a homestyle chicken and noodles in gravy heater meal in a box to him.

Asked if he was thirsty, Alciatore nodded and Stine disappeared to his truck for a moment and returned with three bottles of spring water.

"I said, 'this guy is hungry, let's give him some food,'" recalled Stine who was a passenger in the five-ton.

Stine is a civil engineer with the 167th Airlift Wing based in Martinsburg, W.Va.

"This is what it's all about -- helping people," said Stine, who lives in Chambersburg, Pa., and took time off from his civilian job as a heating and air conditioning technician.

Alciatore appreciated the kindness shown by the West Virginia National Guard.

He said he's in the midst of trying to put his life back together in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

Now living in New Iberia, La., about 100 miles away from his home on Neyrey Drive in Metairie, La., which was flooded in the storm, Alciatore said people seem to have pulled together in the aftermath of the recent natural disaster. "We are in good hands," he said of the residents who reside in his temporary neighborhood. Adding, "Everyone has been so helpful."

When Alciatore returned to his home on Neyrey Drive, his 9-year-old Persian cat Percy was waiting at the door eagerly.

"We rescued him. He was so traumatized," he said. "As soon as I opened the door he was rubbing up against my leg."

Alciatore said Percy lost a bit of weight because his food floated on top of the water and he didn't seem to want it.

"He needed to lose some weight anyway," Alciatore said with a smile.



Photos by Spc. Sherree Casper

(Above) Airman Andrew L. Stine, a civil engineer with the 167th Airlift Wing in Martinsburg, W.Va., gives three bottles of spring water to New Orleans resident Henri A. Alciatore Jr. (Below) Soldiers and Airmen from the West Virginia National Guard set up a tent which will serve as a sleeping area for the troops at Belle Chase Naval Station at New Orleans.



(Left) A Guardsman refuels a truck in support of hurricane relief efforts. (Center) West Virginia Soldiers and Airmen huddle for a quick briefing before starting out on their missions. (Right) Spc. Wayne J. Gasparro, a combat engineer with Charlie Company, 1092nd Combat Engineer Battalion, uses a side-view mirror of a Humvee to get a quick shave.