



THE DISPATCH **D**

JULY 2016

THE MAGAZINE OF THE
TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT



HURRICANE PREP

READYING TEXAS FOR THE NEXT STORM

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The Cover



Texas Guardsmen transport mock patients to military aircraft during an evacuation exercise at the Valley International Airport in Harlingen, Texas, June 9, 2016. The Texas Division of Emergency Management along with the support of Texas Military Department and other state and local authorities conduct a state level hurricane-preparedness exercise June 1-9, 2016 across various Texas cities. The Texas Military Department practiced both general population and medical evacuation through embarkation hubs in the Rio Grande Valley. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Elizabeth Pena/Released)





Texas Army National Guard's Spc. Peter Johanningman, a member of the 36th Infantry Division Brass Band based out of Camp Mabry, Austin, Texas, high-fives a local young boy during the Tarrytown Parade July 4, 2016. This year, the band participated in more than 10 July Fourth events throughout Texas communities during their annual training. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by: Sgt. Elizabeth Pena/Released)



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The Adjutant General
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Deputy Public Affairs Officer
Maj. Joshua Amstutz

Public Affairs Staff
Capt. Martha Nigrelle
Capt. Jessica Jackson
Sgt. Elizabeth Peña
John Gately
Laura Lopez
John Thibodeau
Michelle McBride

Graphic Layout and Design
Bob Seyller

Contributing Writers and Photographers

The Texas Military Department Public Affairs Office would like to thank all the contributing writers and photographers who generously share their work with us. Without the hard work and dedication of Soldiers, Airmen and civilians, we would not be able to tell YOUR TMD story.

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UNIT READINESS THROUGH STRONG PARTNERSHIPS AND NEW OPPORTUNITIES



“It is no longer our fathers’, grand-fathers’ or even great-grandfathers’ National Guard.”

~ MG William L. “Len” Smith ~

Commentary by MG William L. “Len” Smith
Deputy Adjutant General - Army
Texas Army National Guard Commander

Readiness continues to be my number one priority and in order to maintain readiness, we must leverage our partnerships.

The 39th Chief of Staff, Gen. Mark Milley, is using the Army’s total force model to meet the demands of a complex global environment.

I am very pleased that Texas has been selected to participate in the newly created Associated Units Pilot Program which establishes formal relationships between identified units across the Active Army, Army Reserve and the Army National Guard that would allow those units to train together before deployment. The planned associations for TXARNG include:

- The 1-143 Infantry Battalion - Airborne from the Texas Army National Guard will be associated with the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team stationed in Vicenza, Italy;
- The 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, stationed in Fort Polk, Louisiana, will be associated with the Texas Army National Guard’s 36th Infantry Division;
- The 249th Transportation Company, Texas Army National Guard, and the 1245th Transportation Company, Oklahoma Army National Guard, will be associated with the 1st Cavalry Division Sustainment Brigade, stationed in Fort Hood, Texas; and
- The 840th Engineer Company, Texas Army National Guard, will be associated with the 36th Engineer Brigade, stationed in Fort Hood, Texas.

Not only will AUP units participate in their Associated Units’ Annual Training and Collective Training Exercises, but an exchange of assigned personnel will also be conducted between active component and reserve component units. The exchange personnel identified to fill these positions will be on a two-year accompanied assignment to maximize experience gained, enhance relationship building and provide stability.

Positions are a one-for-one exchange by military occupational specialties and grade across components, and are as close to equivalent in duties and responsibilities as possible. In order to enhance our ability and reach a higher level of proficiency, the TXARNG looks forward to conducting this personnel exchange in addition to executing collective training together.

The AUP Program will be a dramatic shift in what has been a decades old paradigm.

Army leadership recognizes that our standard model of one weekend a month and 15 days of annual training does not necessarily allow reserve component units to maintain the highest level of readiness. In recognition of this, the 1-143 IN BN or soon to be 1-143/173 IN BN, will be resourced with additional training days, which means 45 training days in year one of Army Force Generation/deployment cycle and 55 training days in year two.

In another example, we will be fielding an OPCON unit called a Mission Command Post Operational Detachment which will augment an active component Division Headquarters. These units will be on the Alternative Training Methodology where they may not conduct monthly drills, and instead, conduct two or three training periods during the year.

It will take very special people to fill these positions, but I really believe we are at an inflexion point in the history of the National Guard. It is no longer our fathers', grandfathers' or even great-grandfathers' National Guard.

In addition to the AUP Program, we must also continue to enhance our partners domestically within the State of Texas as you will see for yourself highlighted throughout this issue. Our relationships with our law enforcement and emergency response civilians allow us to ultimately be successful and help us complete our mission of Texans serving Texas.

In the last six months our forces have conducted 437 air and ground missions and evacuated 1,521 citizens in response to several severe weather incidents. These missions could not have been possible without the long lasting relationships and partnerships the Texas Military Department has established with the Texas Department of Public Safety and other civilian personnel within the Disaster Districts Coordinators.

In closing, I stand ready to serve our Texans and I am hopeful for our future serving the Total Army. Thank you for this opportunity; I am very proud of our Texas Army National Guard Soldiers and the Texas Military Department. There is no task too big or too complicated that cannot be done. Duty, Honor, Texas. **-FROM THE TOP**

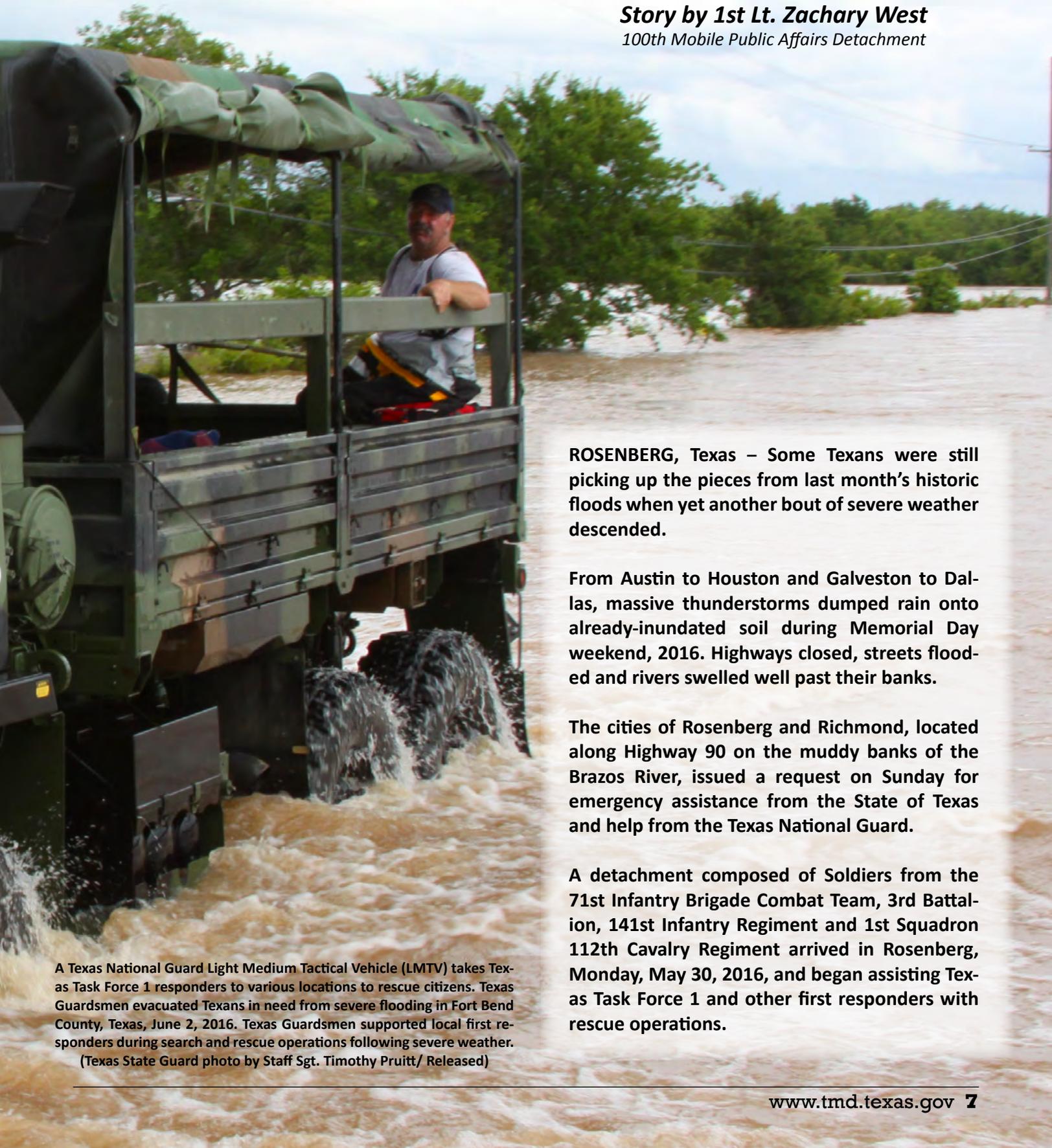
FROM THE TOP

GUARDSMEN EVACUATE



FLOODED COMMUNITIES

*Story by 1st Lt. Zachary West
100th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment*



ROSENBERG, Texas – Some Texans were still picking up the pieces from last month's historic floods when yet another bout of severe weather descended.

From Austin to Houston and Galveston to Dallas, massive thunderstorms dumped rain onto already-inundated soil during Memorial Day weekend, 2016. Highways closed, streets flooded and rivers swelled well past their banks.

The cities of Rosenberg and Richmond, located along Highway 90 on the muddy banks of the Brazos River, issued a request on Sunday for emergency assistance from the State of Texas and help from the Texas National Guard.

A detachment composed of Soldiers from the 71st Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Battalion, 141st Infantry Regiment and 1st Squadron 112th Cavalry Regiment arrived in Rosenberg, Monday, May 30, 2016, and began assisting Texas Task Force 1 and other first responders with rescue operations.

A Texas National Guard Light Medium Tactical Vehicle (LMTV) takes Texas Task Force 1 responders to various locations to rescue citizens. Texas Guardsmen evacuated Texans in need from severe flooding in Fort Bend County, Texas, June 2, 2016. Texas Guardsmen supported local first responders during search and rescue operations following severe weather. (Texas State Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Timothy Pruitt/ Released)



On Tuesday morning, Texas Guardsmen 1st Lt. Jon Parrocha and Sgt. 1st Class Mason Wood led a patrol out to areas affected by the flooding, including Riverbend RV Park on Agnes Road in Richmond. As Task Force 1 personnel went door-to-door, through knee-deep water, to check on residents, Parrocha and Wood spoke with various locals about the situation and assured them that rescue operations would continue throughout the week. While most residents opted to shelter in place for the time being, one couple and their two Yorkshire Terriers decided to accept a ride to drier ground in the patrol's military vehicle.

An afternoon patrol into east Simonton ran into faster, deeper floodwaters. Third Battalion, 141st Infantry Regiment, 1st Lt. Eric Flores and Spc. Craig Thompson transported two Task Force 1 rescue swimmers deep into the flood zone, where they met up with a rescue boat and helped bring three people, four dogs, a cat and a ferret to safety.

Monday and Tuesday saw dozens of similar missions and rescues across Fort Bend County, with Texas Guardsmen working tirelessly with Texas Task Force 1 to rescue people from flooded houses, trailers and cars. **—D**

Texas National Guardsmen and Texas Task Force 1 evacuate citizens struck by flooding in Fort Bend County, Texas, June 2, 2016. Texas Guardsmen supported local first responders during search and rescue operations following severe weather. (Texas State Guard photos by Staff Sgt. Timothy Pruitt/ Released)



THE GUARD STANDS READY

Story By Sgt. Elizabeth Pena
Texas Military Department Public Affairs

AUSTIN, Texas – This has been a busy year for the Lone Star State with the recent record-breaking floods. Over 250 Texas Guardsmen conducted more than 135 missions, rescuing an estimated 900 people in Southeast Texas, May 29 - June 12, 2016, after severe weather caused flooding to large portions of the region.

But the job doesn't stop there. As Texas rolls into hurricane season, Guardsmen must be trained and ready to react to emergency disasters when the state calls upon them.

"You have to be ready for whatever is coming at you, if you don't entertain the training aspect of it," said Matthew Geller, Task Force 1 Helicopter Search and Rescue Technician, "You're looking at the risk being great, and you can't sacrifice that much."



HURRICANE PREPARATION SPECIAL

This year, the Texas Military Department and first responders conducted a state-level hurricane preparedness exercise across various Texas cities, June 2-9, 2016. This is the third-annual exercise for Guardsmen, but the first one to include outside civil agencies.

“Two years ago we started with just the Army and just our internal components in the air operation center, said Chief Master Sgt. Shawna Wood, air operation superintendent at Camp Mabry. “Last year we started involving our inter-agencies such as, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Federal Aviation Administration, Incident Awareness Association and outside agencies, the Air Force, and then this year the big step was Texas Department Emergency Management.”

The Texas Military Department set up an Air Operation Center headquartered in Camp Mabry, Austin to coordinate the moving parts throughout the exercise along with over 11 state and local civil agencies.

“The Air Operation Center is a multi-agency air coordination center, and is hosted and managed by the Texas Military Department under the authority of the State Operation Center,” said Col. Tom Suelzer, director of operation for the Texas Air National Guard, and for the state he serves as the Air Operation Center director. “So when there is a state level or higher response, we’re tasked by the state to set up the Air Operation Center to help develop an air operation support strategy.”

The scenario was based on a fictitious Category 5 “Hurricane Tejas” which struck the Lower Rio Grande Valley, causing 1.1 million people to evacuate. In turn, Austin experienced widespread flooding due to the weather patterns.

Nearly 500 service members from the Texas Army National Guard, Texas Air National Guard and Texas State Guard participated in the state-level exercise.

◀ Texas Army Guardsmen prepare a role player for medical evacuation during training exercise. Nursing students the Valley Grande Institute played the role of evacuees with medical conditions that were transported from the path of a hurricane to Harlingen, Texas, June 9 2016 (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Elizabeth Pena/Released)

“For the past two years we’ve done search and rescue and on ground we’ve done aeromedical preparation,” said Wood. “But this was the first time we’ve actually moved the patients so this is a stepping-stone for what we’ve done the last couple years.”

Having these types of trainings help Texan guardsmen and first responders stay ready for natural disasters.

“It’s been eight years since we’ve had any kind of major hurricane activity and a lot of key leaders up and down our change of command have changed, said Wood. “Our partnership with Texas Division of Emergency Management is very important so it’s building those relationships so that when the time comes we can put them into play.” 



Col. Thomas M. Suelzer, director of operations for headquarters, Texas Air National Guard, addresses those assigned to the organization’s air operations center at Camp Mabry, in Austin, Texas, June 7, 2016. The center was stood up to coordinate air assets participating in an aerial evacuation exercise being managed by the Texas Division of Emergency Management, a component of the Texas Department of Public Safety. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by 2nd Lt. Phil Fountain)

TRACKING BANDS RECONNECT LOVED ONES AFTER DISASTERS

*Story by 1st Sgt. Daniel Griego
Joint Task Force 136th MEB Public Affairs*

The Texas Division of Emergency Management, part of the Department of Public Safety, is rolling out a new resource to help evacuees during disasters. As a longtime partner within the emergency response community, the Texas National Guard's Joint Task Force 136 Maneuver Enhancement Brigade supported a key effort May 12, 2016 in the system's implementation by hosting a training simulation and instructional video project at its Round Rock Armed Forces Reserve Center.



HURRICANE PREPARATION SPECIAL

“Today we are testing the ETN system,” said Sam Miller, the critical information systems response and development manager for TDEM. “We’re running through the steps and recording the process so that we can build a training video so that those who are going to be using the Emergency Tracking Network in the future would be able to watch the video to get a quick lesson before we implement it in real life.”

The network, which operates as both a web-based platform and a smartphone application, integrates capabilities that previously required four separate programs, allowing smoother accountability and tracking of citizens in need following a natural disaster.

“This is very innovative because it’s the first time that they’ve used an application like this and made it a cell phone-based application,” said Lt. Col. Patrick Nolan, the Joint Task Force 136 Maneuver Enhancement Brigade chief of staff. “For us it was a great opportunity, just using the resources we have at hand to help them out with that particular problem and further our partnership with the Division of Emergency Management.”

The National Guard’s role in the event included providing support personnel, a suitable location and resources to complete a scaled evacuation scenario and film the training video.

“This National Guard armory had all of the facets that we look for in an entry place and a shelter,” said Miller. “We also had the ability to load a bus. The pieces of the evacuation are simply just tracking the movement of people and assets and animals into vehicles and locations. This particular facility held all of them.”

◀ Staff. Sgt. John Harbin, Texas Medical Brigade, Texas State Guard, places a Texas Emergency Tracking Network wristband on evacuee role player Staff Sgt. Branham, 2nd Regiment, during tracking system exercise as a part of the Rio Grande Valley Evacuation Exercise, Harlingen, Texas, June 8, 2016. The tracking system helps to locate evacuees and assists families in reuniting with loved ones during an evacuation emergency. (Texas State Guard Photo by Spc. Stefan Wray, /Released)

▶ Spc. Victoria Diaz (left) of the Texas National Guard’s Joint Task Force 136 (Maneuver Enhancement Brigade) role plays as a disaster evacuee during a training scenario with the Texas Division of Emergency Management to test their new Emergency Tracking Network, May 12, 2016 at the Round Rock Armed Forces Reserve Center. The scenario allowed the National Guard and civilian authorities to work together while also creating a training video product for use once the new tracking system goes online June 1. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by 1st Sgt. Daniel Griego/Released)

Both the application and the video will be ready in time for the Texas hurricane season.

“We will have this product before June 1, and it will be available for the end users,” said Jaime Ovalla, CIS Developer for TDEM. “The important thing is we want to track individuals.”

Last month, JTF-136 (MEB) supported TDEM with a scaled display and guest speaker at the annual emergency management conference. This training event is just one of many each year that help to reinforce the strong bond between the two organizations.

“They can depend on us to bring resources together in partnership with them when they need to do just about anything,” said Nolan. 



NEW EQUIPMENT ENHANCES GUARD RESPONSE DURING STATE DISASTERS

*Story by 1st Lt. Sharon Calderon
Domestic Operations Taskforce Public Affairs*

AUSTIN, Texas – Texas National Guard units from across the state participated in the first phase of the Texas Interoperable Communications Exercise at Camp Mabry in Austin, Jan. 25–29, 2016. Phases II, III, and IV of the exercise followed in subsequent months, and will culminate in Phase V this May. Since 2008, the Texas J6 team, part of the Texas Military Department’s Domestic Operations Task Force, has coordinated and conducted this exercise. This year’s training is particularly noteworthy because the newest Texas Interoperable Communications Package is being fielded.

TICPs are a critical piece to disaster response operations in Texas and were deployed to Hurricane Dolly, Hurricane Gustav, Hurricane Ike and dozens of other missions, including the Bastrop County Complex Fire. Most recently, TICPs supported flood response efforts in Wimberley and the Texas A&M Winter Institute Exercise supporting Texas Task Force 1 and the U.S. Coast Guard.



HURRICANE PREPARATION SPECIAL



“The latest J6 communication platform sustains the Texas National Guard as the leader in domestic operations communications ahead of all states,” said Mr. Brian Attaway, J6 Director.

What is a TICP? The Texas Interoperable Communications Package is a unique capability consisting of a mobile trailer supporting a Command Post by providing Voice over Internet phones, computers, printer, power and public internet connections with WiFi, all via commercial Ku band satellite and radio interoperability bridging statewide Radio-Over-IP interconnecting five on-board high power radios with antennas on a 40-foot mast.

This system is important because it enables communications between Texas Guardsmen and their partner first responders during disaster situations. Both the military and partner first responder agencies use numerous kinds of radios to communicate, many of which are not interchangeable with each other. The TICP fixes that problem when it matters most: during an emergency response or disaster.

“The hands-on training on the new TICPs was very important and effective,” said Spc. Kendrick Washington, 136th Military Police Battalion, Domestic Operations, “and allowed us to not only build cohesion within our own teams, but to also cross-train with other teams for more of a real-world training experience.”

The new TICP is a larger trailer with more workspace and storage. It now has a roof-mounted auto-acquire satellite dish. With one push of a button, it automatically raises and acquires the satellite to connect to internet and phone service. This makes the TICP faster to deploy and setup. The new TICP can now be deployed by only two people instead of four, however, four people are needed to sustain the TICP for missions that last longer than 12 hours. The new TICPs have also begun conversion to a new satellite data modem that will enable much larger network bandwidth under the State of Texas satellite contract, which is scheduled to start May 1, 2016.

The TICP improves disaster response operations by enabling better communications between responders. As the new TICP is fielded, the Texas Military Department’s ability to enable this critical piece of disaster response will only get better.

The TICP system is designed, built, trained and sustained by J6 personnel, who also manage the State of Texas’ satellite network and associated network infrastructure and servers and the Network Operations Center, which supports 40 communications platforms from a variety of State agencies.

The Texas Interoperable Communications Exercise provides training for current and new TICP operators for five days each year. The exercise ensures all TICP teams are trained to a common standard every year.

“We have trained 60–80 soldiers and airmen every year, since 2008,” said Mr. Attaway.

The exercise is designed to help prepare the 136th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade and 176th Engineer Brigade for a disaster mission because they have TICPs assigned directly to them by the J6. In May, the J6 will oversee training with field communications’ teams throughout the task force, another part of the exercise. This training will prepare other units for operating TICPs and all other equipment provided by J6. 

Guardsmen pose in front of Texas’ Interoperable Communications Package, a unique platform capable of supporting a Command Post with VOIP phones, computers, printer, power and public internet connections with WiFi, all via commercial Ku band satellite and radio interoperability bridging
 (U.S. Army Photo by Sharon Calderon/Released)

STATE GUARD ROLEPLAYS HURRICANE EVACUEES

**Story Co-written by
Spc. Stefan Wray, Spc. Matthew Bramanti
and Sgt. Greg Illich**

Texas State Guard Public Affairs

HARLINGEN, Texas — The Texas State Guard is ready this hurricane season. In a major training exercise, more than 300 guardsmen from each component of the State Guard learned firsthand how to conduct a massive hurricane evacuation during a large-scale training exercise in the Rio Grande Valley, June 6 — 9, 2016.

“This exercise was a tremendous training and coordination opportunity among the Texas Military Department and emergency management agencies,” said Texas State Guard Brig. Gen. Howard N. Palmer, Jr., commander, Army Component Command. “When a significant event occurs, the Texas State Guard will apply the lessons learned at this exercise and will be fully prepared for deployment to assist and support the citizens of Texas.”



HURRICANE PREPARATION SPECIAL

The Texas Division of Emergency Management and the Texas Military Department Domestic Operations Task Force planned this exercise to test the ability and readiness to evacuate persons by bus and aircraft out of the Rio Grande Valley in the event of a hurricane strike.

Working with service members and employees from the Texas Army National Guard, Texas Air National Guard, Texas State Guard, multiple local and state emergency agencies and the American Red Cross, state emergency management tested the use of aircraft as a mode of evacuation of medical evacuees for the first time, while also providing medical attention and sheltering operations to mock hurricane victims.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency estimates that in a major hurricane emergency 30,000 civilians would need to be evacuated from the valley, making the ability to evacuate and track thousands of people efficiently and effectively important to emergency management operations.

“State Guard participation in the exercise and in a real-world state emergency is invaluable,” said Lee Schnell, a section administrator for the Texas Division of Emergency Management. “Without the State Guard, this doesn’t happen.”

Texas State Guardsmen supported several areas of the exercise, including emergency tracking trainers, Texas Operations Center members, command and control members, medical observers, mock evacuees and search-and-rescue victims.

The first phase of the four-day operation was the movement of the soldiers to various locations around the state. Using this as an opportunity to train, Guardsmen followed standard military operation procedures throughout the transportation process, practicing communication networking with partner agencies along the route.

Upon arrival in Harlingen, the soldiers checked-in through a new in-process and out-process system rolled out for the first time by the Texas Military Department.

Right away, soldiers trained on the Texas Emergency Tracking Network, a tool Texas State Guardsmen often use to support sheltering operations following large-scale evacuations. According to the Texas Department of Public Safety, this tracking system allows the state operations center to in-process every evacuee, keep track of evacuees as they are transported to shelters in other parts of the state and track medical assets.

It also helps to reunite family members, comfort evacuees that their loved ones are safe and save lives. Even evacuated pets are tracked by the system so that pet owners can also be reunited with their pets.

“The new evacuation tracking system that we are training on is very intuitive,” said Texas State Guard Staff Sgt. Cheryl Lemmings, 1st Battalion, 8th Regiment. “It’s a good feeling to know that we are preparing to help others in a time of crisis.”

After a day of training, many of the Guardsmen switched gears and participated in the medical evacuation exercise role playing evacuees.

They received wrist bands and were in-processed through the emergency tracking network just as evacuees would be in a real evacuation, many also receiving medical treatment from Texas Army and Air National Guardsmen for mock injuries. Following check in, they boarded busses for the Valley International Airport in Harlingen and went through the Transportation Security Administration security checks before taking Texas Air National Guard C-130 flights back to Dallas, Houston, Austin and San Antonio.

“This is a true joint exercise with all the different agencies working together,” said Texas State Guard Staff Sgt. Mike Mills, 1st Battalion, 2nd Regiment. “It’s great to see it from the evacuee’s side and helps me to empathize with them. We will be able to take that back and learn from it.”

Upon arriving at their respective airports, the role playing guardsmen were moved to designated shelters to spend the night just as evacuees would, away from the hurricane strike zone.

On the last day of the operation, June 9, 2016, soldiers returned home with a much greater understanding of what happens during an evacuation.

“The professionalism demonstrated by the men and women of the Texas State Guard in this Rio Grande Valley Evacuation Exercise is a credit to all Texans, said Maj. Gen. Jake Betty Commander of the Texas State Guard. “It will be a foundation for future possible disaster missions.” 

◀ Texas State Guardsman acting as evacuees, are received by Texas service members at the Valley International Airport during an evacuation exercise in Harlingen, Texas, on June 9, 2016. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Elizabeth Pena/Released)

NATIONAL GUARD CHIEF VISITS LONE STAR STATE





Story By Sgt. Elizabeth Pena
Texas Military Department Public Affairs

AUSTIN, Texas – The Chief of the National Guard Bureau, Gen. Frank J. Grass visited the Texas National Guard headquarters at Camp Mabry, Austin, Texas, June 17, 2016, along with his senior enlisted advisor Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Mitchell O. Brush.

During the visit, they met with key leaders from the Texas Air and Army National Guards to discuss operations within the Lone Star State.

“This is the best thing we get to do,” said Grass. “We love getting out and seeing what happens on the ground. The real world is out here and what you do every day. We are very happy to be here.”

Grass currently serves as a military adviser to the president, secretary of defense and National Security Council and is the Department of Defense’s official channel of communication to the governors and state adjutant general, on all matters pertaining to the National Guard.

“Just about every trip I take, I find out something that I didn’t know the National Guard was doing around the world,” said Grass.

After an operations brief from Texas National Guard leaders, it was Grass’ turn to brief Texas service members and thank them for their hard work and dedication to country. Grass expressed to Texas soldiers and airmen what a great opportunity it’s been to understand the different roles within the Guard and to actually share that information with people at the Capitol and people inside the Army and Air Force.

“You have two state partners, both Czech Republic, as well as Chile, and what you do there is so great. It has become so valuable all the way to the president of the U.S.”

Grass and Brush held a town hall meeting to talk with service members about past, present and future operations within the National Guard as well as the Guards’ State Partnership Program, which currently includes 70 unique security partnerships with 76 nations globally.

“It could be any one of our units that are building that mission whether it’s the war fight, the homeland or the partnerships,” said Grass. “Think about what’s happening this year in Texas alone. And between those three missions, says how heavily you’re engaged...everyday there’s something happening.”

With this visit, Grass has officially visited all the states of America. “Fifty-four states, territories and the District of Columbia and he saved Texas for last,” said Brush.

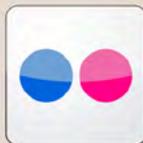
As a part of his Texas tour, the leaders went on to visit a local gym where Grass caught up with mixed martial arts fighter and Texas Guardsman, Sgt. 1st Class Tim Kennedy.

Lastly, Grass took a trip to Fort Hood, Texas, where he met with soldiers from the Mississippi and Kansas National Guards during their annual training. **-D**

- PHOTO ABOVE -

*General Frank J. Grass, Chief of the National Guard Bureau, center, and Chief Master Sgt. Mitchell O. Brush, Senior Enlisted Advisor for the National Guard Bureau, left, visits with Maj. Gen John F. Nichols, Adjutant General of Texas, right, and key leaders of the Texas Army and Air National Guard during an operations brief at Camp Mabry, Austin, Texas, June 17, 2016.
 (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Elizabeth Pena/Released)*

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TEXAS STATE GUARD BREVETS NEW ARMY BRIGADIER GENERAL



Story By Col. David Erinakes

Texas State Guard Public Affairs

AUSTIN, Texas -- The Commanding General of the Texas State Guard, Maj. Gen. Gerald "Jake" Betty, is pleased to announce the brevet of Army Col. Dan Flynn, inter-agency partnering officer, to the rank of Brigadier General.

In a ceremony at the Texas Capitol, in Austin, April 11, 2016, Brig. Gen. Flynn received his new badges of rank from both Governor Greg Abbott and his family. During his speech, Flynn thanked his friends and family for their continued support, as well as expressed his appreciation, to the leadership, for allowing him to join an exemplary group and give back to others.

"To get to serve the great state of Texas is an honor," Flynn said. "It's an honor I truly hope I am worthy of."

Flynn joined the Texas State Guard in 2005. Since then, he has deployed on State Active Duty in support of numerous state disaster responses. Additionally, Flynn has had a positive impact on the State of Texas and the Texas State Guard and has been instrumental in helping to develop policies and programs that have had a lasting impact on the training and readiness of the entire Texas State Guard. Other military service also includes several years with the Texas Army National Guard's 36th Infantry Division.

On the civilian side, Flynn currently serves in the Texas House of Representatives where he represents House District 2 in East Texas, to include Hunt, Hopkins and Van Zandt counties. While in this role he has sponsored bills passed into law that accept military training for Texas occupational and professional licensing, as well as to issue those licenses in an expedited manner. The U.S. Department of Defense has recognized him with their Distinguished Service Medal for his service and strong legislative support of the department's efforts.

Flynn lives with his wife Susan, in Van, and is the father of three, grandfather of five and recently a very proud great grandfather. **-D**

Brig. Gen. Dan Flynn pinned to the rank of Brigadier General by family members, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott and Maj. Gen. John F. Nichols The Adjutant General Of Texas. Monday, during his brevet ceremony held April 11, 2016.
(Texas Military Department photo by Michelle McBride) ▶



Gov. Greg Abbott (front) and Brig. Gen. Dan Flynn (rear) ▲ pose before a Texas State Guard brevet ceremony begins on Monday, April 11, 2016.
(Texas Military Department photo by Michelle McBride)



Knock It DOWN

Story By 1st Lt. Alicia Lacy
Texas Joint Counterdrug Task Force Public Affairs

A Texas Army National Guard soldier demolishes a home in Laredo, Texas, May 4, 2016. The Texas National Guard's Joint Counterdrug Taskforce demolished about 27 structures in Laredo that were used by drug users and dealers, as part of the task force's Operation Crackdown. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by 1st Lt. Alicia Lacy/Released)

LAREDO, Texas – Their voices thundered in unison, “Knock it down, knock it down.”

And with a few blows from an excavator’s arm, the small, dilapidated Maryland Avenue house came crashing down. The demise of the house that has been tied to the drug trade was met with cheers and applause from the dozens of community members, civic leaders, fifth graders and law enforcement who gathered outside the Laredo home to watch it fall May 4, 2016.

The house was one of 27 structures the Texas National Guard’s Joint Counterdrug Taskforce demolished in the South Texas community as part of the organization’s Operation Crackdown April 29 - May 15.

Operation Crackdown is a program unique to the Texas National Guard’s taskforce where Texas Guard engineers travel to a community for about two weeks to demolish about 30 structures tied to the use or distribution of drugs. Since the inception of the program in 1993, the taskforce has demolished more than 1,500 structures in 25 communities, ranging from homes to an abandoned warehouse and a former nursing home.

The May crackdown was the taskforce’s third time in the

Laredo community.

“What has gone on over the years that we’ve noticed is that once these structures go down, the crime goes down (in that neighborhood),” said Laredo Police Chief Ray Garner about the impact of the program. “If you take a look at the history of Operation Crackdown and go back and look at some of the addresses that have been taken care of, you’ll see new homes up there, you’ll see a cleaner neighborhood and that’s the important thing.”

The program aims to send a drug-free message to the children who live and go to school in these neighborhoods. With each operation, taskforce members visit with fifth graders from a local elementary school and present an anti-drug demonstration with the help of local law enforcement. For this operation, the members visited with J.C. Elementary School’s fifth grade class.

“Keeping our kids safe is more than a priority,” said Dr. A. Marcus Nelson, Laredo Independent School District superintendent. “If we don’t come together and focus on keeping them safe, there are a lot of people who will try and hurt them. The fact that we come and tear down this house is such a strong message to those who want to try and hurt or harm our children – and the message is so

clear. The message is that we will not tolerate those who seek to endanger our children in any way.”

Out of the school’s entire fifth grade class, about two dozen students were selected to witness the demolition.

“We are thankful and grateful for your interest and hard work in helping clean up our neighborhood and helping save us from drugs,” said Carolina Banderas, a J.C. Elementary School fifth grader. “Our school year is ending and we are looking forward to a clean and safe environment at the middle school next year. Many of us will walk to school and expect to be safe.”

The process for a city to have an operation take place can be arduous, but Laredo city officials said it’s worth it to help eradicate drug use and drug-related crimes in the city.

“This is a very rigorous process,” said Jesus Olivares, Laredo city manager. “It’s a process that involves a lot of investigating done by the police department, building department, community development and those involved with the U.S. Border Patrol. A total of 76 structures have been demolished in the city through Operation Crackdown.”

The process involves a request from the city and agreements made between the Texas National Guard and the city. For a structure to be selected, it must have a connection with the drug trade. Once the site has been approved, the city must receive approval from the homeowner to demolish the structure on his or her property. Then the structure is inspected for hazardous materials. Law enforcement officials secure the site before the National Guard’s arrival.

“The Laredo City Council approved the city of Laredo to participate in this operation, authorizing my office to approve any hard costs that would be associated with participating in this program, including hauling off all the debris and permits and field costs. We feel it’s a minimal cost for cleaning up our neighborhoods and making this program a successful program.”

Through the partnership, the taskforce provides the service members and the equipment to execute the two-week operation through the use of asset forfeiture funds.

“We’re using drug money and funneling it back into the community to knock down drug houses,” said Col. Suzanne Adkinson, taskforce commander.

Each two-week mission costs the program about \$30,000, to include personnel and equipment costs.

At the culmination of the operation, Laredo city officials moved more than 2,700 tons of debris to the landfill in about 400 trips, Olivares said.

The operation not only provides a service to the community in its war against drugs but also enhances military readiness for the Texas Guardsmen who can utilize their skill set in a real-world mission.

The taskforce tries to complete four missions every fiscal year, with the next operation slated for Dallas. **-D**



Laredo area law enforcement officers, fifth graders, community leaders and Texas National Guardsmen pose for a group photo, during an Operation Crackdown in Laredo, Texas, May 4, 2016. Operation Crackdown is a program unique to the Texas National Guard’s taskforce where Texas Guard engineers travel to a community for about two weeks to demolish about 30 structures tied to the use or distribution of drugs. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by 1st Lt. Alicia Lacy/Released)

CHALLENGE COMPLETED

2016

Story By 1st Lt. Alicia Lacy

Texas Joint Counterdrug Task Force Public Affairs

EAGLE LAKE, Texas – Their faces beamed with pride as the spotlights illuminated them. Some tried to maintain their bearing as they sat upright, but smiles emerged from others as cheers from their families, friends and staff who supported them throughout the residential phase of the Texas ChalleNGe Academy-East echoed in the auditorium.

The day had finally come. They were moments away from being Texas ChalleNGe Academy-East graduates during a ceremony June 18, 2016 at Rice Junior High School in Altair.

For the past 22 weeks, the cadets adhered to a strict, military lifestyle, waking up at 4:45 AM for physical training, attending classes during the day and turning in at 8:45 PM every night.

The 49 graduates have their own stories and different circumstances that brought them to the alternative education program, which is a Texas National Guard program under the Texas Joint Counterdrug Taskforce.

For some, it was a last option to reclaim their lives after a few bad decisions or life circumstances led them to dropout of high school or go down a wrong path and fall behind in their school work.

But regardless of the reason for attending TCA, they all finished with a new lease on life, with several earning their GEDs or high school diplomas or both.

For Samantha Villarreal, 17, of Houston, it was a way for her to not give up on herself and accomplish something she said she thought wouldn't happen.



State Rep. Dan Huberty presents a cadet with her diploma cover during the Texas ChalleNGe Academy-East graduation June 18, 2016, in Altair, Texas. (U.S. Air Force Photo by 1st Lt. Alicia Lacy/Released)

Villarreal said she began smoking when she was in the ninth grade. At that time, she started to lose interest in school and wanted to dropout, but because her parents stressed the importance of receiving an education, she began to look for alternative ways to complete high school.

“Dropping out was never an option for me because my parents didn’t graduate,” she said, “so they wanted more for me.”

Into her 10th grade year, Villarreal said she continued to smoke and eventually began a home school program, which she attended for only about a month before quitting that, too.

“I realized I’m here doing nothing and I’m supposed to be doing my school work and I’m not,” she said about the home school.

After traditional high school and home school didn't work, Villarreal said she began searching for military schools and found the Texas ChalleNGe Academy.

Villarreal went in to the academy missing credits from her sophomore, junior and senior years of high school, but due to her work in the program, she was able to earn her GED and recover most of her credits. Now she only needs three more credits to earn her diploma.

Even though she has a GED, Villarreal said she plans to go back to school and earn her diploma and eventually join the military and go to college.

Andres Martinez, 17, of Brownsville, has a similar story.

Martinez said he started doing drugs and his mom wanted to get him out of that environment.

Martinez said his mom and brother began looking for boot-camps to enroll him. When she found TCA, he said he was open to the idea of attending.

"I was pretty nervous," Martinez said, " but I believed in myself and that I was ready for it."

While at TCA, staff awarded Martinez the position cadet first sergeant. Staff holds the cadet first sergeant accountable for both student companies.

"I felt proud of myself to know that they were faithful in me to do that position," he said.

While at TCA, Martinez earned his GED and high school diploma and participated in the Commandant's Challenge.

Martinez said he plans to join the National Guard and attend college with hopes of becoming a border patrol agent.

"I'm glad I took the opportunity to come here because it helped make me more responsible and take care of my stuff, myself and have discipline to not follow bad influences," he said.

Throughout the cycle, TCA cadets were able to meet with and work with Texas Joint Counterdrug Taskforce airmen and soldiers, who helped mentor them through the process.

TCA is a Texas National Guard-sponsored educational program to help at-risk youth between 16 and 18 years old get their lives back on track. The program is completely volun-



Randy Aguirre delivers the class speech during the Texas ChalleNGe Academy-East graduation June 18, 2016, in Altair, Texas. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by 1st Lt. Alicia Lacy/Released)

tary and requires about a year and a half commitment. All cadets must not have any felony convictions and be drug free at the time of entry.

The academy is broken down into the 22-week residential phase and a 12-month, post-residential phase.

TCA focuses on eight core components – academic excellence, health and hygiene, job skills, leadership and followership, life-coping skills, physical fitness, responsible citizenship and service to the community.

In addition to their schoolwork, cadets had the opportunity to participate in other programs like archery, student council, student leadership positions and the Commandant's Challenge. Students also perform community service every Saturday and have the option to attend church and participate in intramural sports on Sundays.

TCA is a Department of Defense-funded program and receives 25 percent funding from the state. The program is free to Texas residents.

TCA's West campus in Sheffield plans to graduate 57 cadets June 24 in Iraan.

Both TCAs will begin its fall cycle in July. **-D**



OUR FORCE

SGT. JOSEPH A. PUENTE

A crew chief with the 2-149th General Support Aviation Battalion, of the 36 Infantry Division, based out of San Antonio, Texas, provides medevac services during emergency situations. The 2-149th is equipped with aeromedical capabilities to transport victims and pets to a higher level of care.





New Key Leadership Positions



Lt. Col. Scott H. Kingsley

Branch Manager for Family Support Services,
Texas Military Department

EXPERIENCE:

Kingsley's first assignment was Scout Platoon Leader, 6-112th Armor in El Campo, Texas. He then attended flight school and was assigned to the 1-149th Attack Helicopter Battalion at Ellington Field and eventually assumed command of the battalion. During the invasion of Iraq, he commanded Company G, 149th Aviation, a Heavy Lift Helicopter Company with 14 aircraft. Kingsley also deployed to Operation Enduring Freedom- Kuwait as the Executive Officer of the 36th Combat Aviation Brigade

EDUCATION:

Bachelor of Science from Texas A&M University. He has also attended Command and General Staff College.

DID YOU KNOW:

Kingsley is qualified on the UH-1 Huey, AH-1 Cobra, AH-64 Apache, CH-47 Chinook and UH-60 Blackhawk aircrafts.

IN HIS WORDS:

"There are so many resources and organizations that want to help our service members and families. Please contact our 24/7 Family Assistance hotline if you need help at (800) 252-8032."



Col. Phil King

J9, Inter-agency Communications & Strategic Planning,
Texas State Guard

EXPERIENCE:

King has served Deputy J9, Interagency Communications and Strategic Planning, as well as served as the Senior Advisor to the Commanding General-Policy. In his elected capacity, he currently serves as Chair of the State and Federal Power and Responsibility Committee. He also serves on the Energy Resources Committee, Environmental Regulation Committee and the Select Committee on Federal Environmental Regulation.

EDUCATION:

Bachelor of Arts and MBA degrees from Dallas Baptist University in Dallas. He procured the Juris Doctor degree from Texas Wesleyan University in Fort Worth.

DID YOU KNOW:

King is a practicing attorney with the firm of Eggleston King, LLP. He and his wife are the proud parents of six children, six granddaughters and four grandsons.

IN HIS WORDS:

"I am honored and humbled for the comments by Maj. Gen. Betty and to be selected for this position and having my friends and family with me during this day made it quite special."

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