



# News Release

National Guard Bureau Public Affairs

Press Desk (703) 601-6767

ng.ncr.ngb-arng.mesg.ngb-media-desk-owner@mail.mil

www.nationalguard.mil

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### National Guard Response to COVID-19

#### Air Force General Joseph Lengyel, Chief of the National Guard Bureau, Press Briefing

Today, we face a national emergency in this COVID-19 pandemic. This is a serious situation, and we are all concerned about the health and safety of our fellow Americans, our first responders, and our citizen-soldiers and citizen-airmen. Thus far, six members of the National Guard have tested positive for COVID-19. We have Force Health Protection measures in place, and will continue to keep our National Guard members informed as the situation develops. We all play an important part in ensuring the health and safety of our communities, and take this responsibility seriously. We are here to support each other and support our communities.

I want to take this opportunity to talk about what the National Guard is doing in response to COVID-19.

First of all, this is a historic event, unlike any we have faced in recent years. For example, when there is a hurricane, you can see the eye on a map, and you have a sense of how hard the storm will hit and how long the storm will last. With COVID-19, it's like we have 54 different hurricanes hitting every state, every territory, and the District of Columbia. Some are Category 5, some are Category 3, and some are Category 1. Unlike a hurricane, we don't know when it will swing out to sea. But a historic event demands a historic response—and that's what you're seeing from the National Guard, America's military response force.

The National Guard is a unique military component. We are part of the Air Force, and part of the Army. But if you were going to design an ideal military component to assist with a response like this, it would be the National Guard. We are 450,000 strong, in nearly every zip code in the country. When disaster strikes, we don't have to mobilize at a base—we pack a lunch and go to work, because we're already in the community. We live there, so we can respond faster. We bring our military training, equipment, and experience to help our communities here at home. What we offer is unlike any other military component.

While circumstances will continue to evolve, here are the facts as they stand today. All 54 states, territories, and the District of Columbia have declared a state of emergency. Governors in 27 states have activated parts of the National Guard. Across those 27 states, more than 2,050 National Guard members are assisting with state response.

We anticipate doubling that number by the weekend. And we expect the total number of Guardsmen activated will increase rapidly as test kits become available.

We are ready to respond depending to the needs of the community, and as ordered by the Governors. We are involved in a multitude of mission sets and functional areas. The National Guard is providing medical testing, assessments, facilities, ground transportation, logistics, command and control, planners, and liaison officers, and will continue to adapt to fulfill the mission.

We are already making a difference in communities across the country. For example, New York Guard members have been helping local officials distribute food to those who need it, much of it in the hard-hit New Rochelle area.

A Tennessee Air National Guard C-17 delivered 500,000 COVID-19 testing swabs to Memphis.

In south Florida, more than 500 combat medics are assisting with collecting samples for drive-through testing sites in Broward County.

In Maryland, the National Guard is supporting medical assessments and testing site operations.

In Wisconsin, we are supporting transportation missions for the Wisconsin Department of Health Services.

In Louisiana, Guard liaison officers are assisting the New Orleans Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness.

Across the country, our Civil Support Teams are supporting the local Departments of Health drive-through testing stations.

And in California, it was the California Air National Guard who delivered COVID-19 test kits to the Grand Princess cruise ship two weeks ago.

This is a small sample of the efforts we are supporting across the country.

Going forward, we expect the role of the National Guard will continue to grow and evolve to meet our country's needs during this historic pandemic. We remain flexible and committed to whatever mission we may be called to do. I want to thank all of our Guard members and all the first responders for their service during this difficult time.

We continue to rise to every challenge before us, and continue to work with our partners to keep our nation safe. We remain true to our motto: Always Ready, Always There. I appreciate your time, and I look forward to your questions.

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