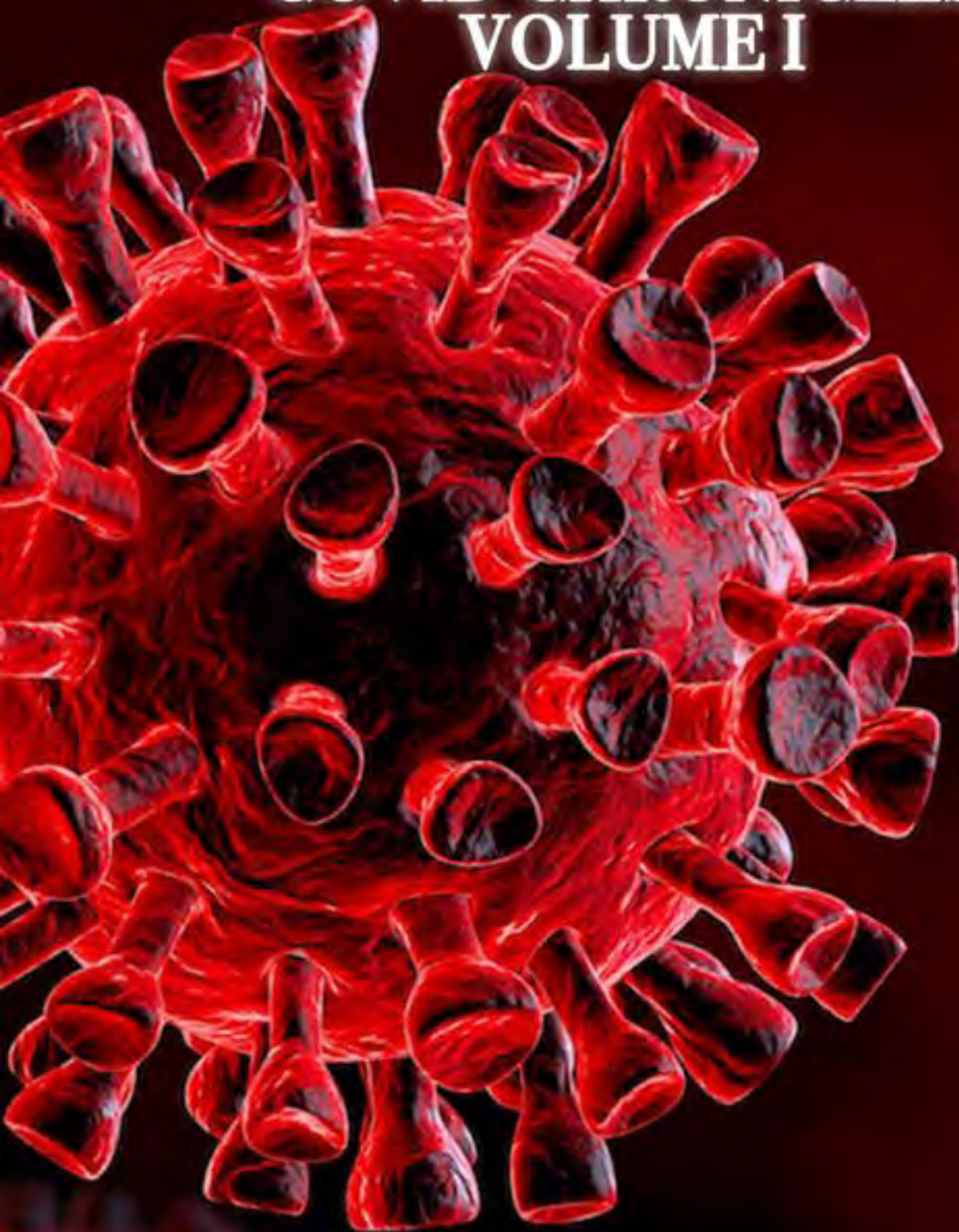


GEORGIA GUARDSMAN



★★ SERVING THE NATIONAL GUARD AND STATE DEFENSE FORCE OF GEORGIA ★★

COVID CHRONICLES: VOLUME I



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The Georgia Guardsman is published quarterly under the provisions of AR 360-81 and AF 6-1 by the Georgia Department of Defense Public Affairs Office. The views and opinions expressed in the Georgia Guardsman are not necessarily those of the Departments of the Army, Air Force or the Adjutant General of Georgia. The Georgia Guardsman is distributed free-of-charge to members of the Georgia Army and Air National Guard, State Defense Force and other interested persons upon request.

CONTENTS

NEWS

6 | THE FOREFRONT OF COVID FORCE PROTECTION

Georgia National Guard G6 ensures that programs and communication are accessible during COVID-19.

10 | GA DOD ICT'S DEPLOY

The Georgia National Guard partners with the Georgia Department of Health to disinfect long-term care facilities.

12 | FOOD BANK

The Georgia National Guard provides aid to local community food banks in response to COVID-19.

14 | ICT'S BATTLE COVID-19

Infection Control Teams disinfect and educate long-term care facilities during COVID-19.

FEATURES

4 | A FAMILY AFFAIR

A Georgia National Guard, mother and son serve as a team at Grady Hospital during COVID-19.

8 | LUCKY VET

Georgia National Guardsmen were given the opportunity to meet a WWII veteran during a clean-up of a long-term care facility.

16 | VIRTUAL TOWN HALL

The Georgia National Guard State Public Affairs Office hosted a Facebook Live event with leadership to provide accurate information in regards to COVID-19.

18 | SOCIAL MEDIA SPOTLIGHT

Georgia National Guard social media highlights during COVID-19 response.

LOOKING BACK: 30 DAY OF GEORGIA DOD CORONAVIRUS RESPONSE OPERATIONS

GEORGIA NATIONAL GUARD

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COVID-19 TIPS TO #SLOWTHESPREAD



WASH YOUR HANDS!

Wash your hands thoroughly (at least 20 seconds) and often. It is important to wash up to your forearms and under your nails.

SOCIAL DISTANCING

COVID-19 can be spread by close person-to-person contact. Maintain distance from others in public spaces by at least 6ft. when possible. Avoid gatherings of groups larger than 10 people.



STAY HOME IF SICK

If you feel sick, it is important to stay home. Do not return to work or gather socially until you are fever-free and have been cleared by a medical professional.

WATCH WHAT YOU TOUCH

Out in the community, COVID-19 can survive up to nine days on certain surfaces. It is important to not touch your face, eyes, nose, mouth, etc. after touching other surfaces.





A Family Affair

Guardsmen have the unique opportunity to help the same communities in which they live during times of crisis. They may clear the roads they take to work every day after a hurricane or hand out water and other necessary supplies to their neighbors. Now, during the COVID-19 response effort, Guardsmen are answering a more personal kind of call. The hours are longer, the stakes are higher, and it often comes with a familiar cost for Soldiers, being away from family.

That's what Spc. Leslie Davila, a medic with 2nd Battalion, 121st Infantry Regiment, 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Georgia Army National Guard, expected when she was assigned to the Medical Support Team, or MST, at Pheobe Putney Memorial Hospital in Albany, Georgia. But her son, Pfc. Luis Rosario, also a medic, assigned to the 878th Engineer Battalion, 648th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, joined the fight beside her.

"My son was with me on the first day," she said. "They needed three

volunteers, three medics to go in on the first day, and I volunteered us."

MSTs, like the one Davila and Rosario are assigned to, help hospital staff care for the surge of patients who come in due to complications arising from COVID-19. According to Davila, their duties can range from recording vital signs, which frees up nurses to focus on their responsibilities, to preparing patients to see their families for the last time.

"They said 'hey, we need help on this unit,'" Davila recalled. "I said 'Okay, great.' I ended up being in the MICU, which is the Medical Intensive Care Unit. We had 15 patients, and they were all COVID-19 positive, and 13 out of the 15 were intubated."

Davila said the first day was especially challenging, as one of her patients passed away.

"I stayed in the room with him until he took his last breath, and that was a lot," she said. "It was devastating honestly."

Although her son was not as-

signed to the same floor as her that day, the two kept in contact through text messaging.

"I would text him and we would meet downstairs by the Starbucks and just talk about it," she said. "I was able to cry and just hug him and that's such a blessing because nobody really has a family member with them here. To have my son that I can go to and vice versa and just confide in and have as ultimate support is a true blessing."

The command team of the MST Davila and her son are assigned to have been proactive about ensuring the medics are allowed downtime in order to decompress from their stressful jobs. They host game nights, movie nights, and even modestly celebrate birthdays. For most Soldiers, this is an unfamiliar type of mission as MSTs are not a function organic to the National Guard. When Georgia Governor Brian Kemp declared a state of emergency, the National Guard had to rework the way it traditionally responds.

Guardsmen have had to innovate and do things they're not used to, and possibly not comfortable with, said Major General Thomas Carden, adjutant general, Georgia National Guard.

"We didn't start preparing to do defense support to civil authorities when this pandemic was set upon our state, our nation, and the world," said Carden. "We've been preparing to support civil authorities for the last thirty-four years that I've been in the Guard and all the training and the interagency coordination that we've done have really paid off."

Davila echoed Carden's words when she spoke about her initial expectations for this mission.

"I don't think anyone really expected to deal with COVID-19 and the pandemic that we're facing, and it has been a lot, to be honest with

you, mentally, emotionally, physically," said Davila. "It's a lot to take in, but we have a lot of support, and that has definitely helped keep us on track with our mission and our purpose here."

Davila said that the greatest reward has been being able to have a positive impact on her patients and provide them with a personable, human experience during an especially lonely and frightening time in their lives, all while representing the Georgia National Guard.

"When I walk into a patient's room, I introduce myself and let them know that I'm a medic with the Army National Guard," she said "To them it's great, they're excited, and they're thankful that we're there. The patients are thankful as well as the staff."

Davila said that she is also, of

course, proud of her son. For her, choosing the same military occupational specialty as him allows her a deeper appreciation of the work he is doing to combat this "invisible enemy." Not only are they together during a time when so many are separated from their family, but they can also relate as Soldiers in the same fight.

"I am a trained Soldier to fight an enemy with a weapon," she said, recalling a pep-talk she gave herself before her first shift. "This is different. They compare this to a war zone when you're in these intensive care units. You're walking into a room where there's an enemy that you cannot see, and your weapon is your PPE, not your rifle. It's different than what we've been trained for, but at the same time, we need to execute our mission."

STORY AND PHOTOS BY STAFF SGT. AMY KING | PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE | GEORGIA ARMY NATIONAL GUARD





Communications of Coronavirus Fo

Story and photo by: Maj. William Carraway | Public Affairs Office | Georgia National Guard

On any given day, the communications staff of a state's National Guard conducts important routine tasks such as ensuring internet bandwidth, answering computer and telephone maintenance inquiries, and maintaining secure information databases. But Georgia's coordinated response to the Coronavirus outbreak has brought the Georgia Department of Defense's (Ga DoD) communications directorate, or G6, to the forefront of the effort to protect not only the most vulnerable populations, but to ensure the Georgia National Guard is able to continue to answer the calls for assistance from state and local agencies.

On April 13, Brig. Gen. Randall Simmons, commander of the Ga. ARNG and Joint Task Force Commander of the Georgia COVID-19 Response Force, charged the G6 with developing a technological

solution that would help the Ga. Department of Public Health collect vital information on vulnerable populations. Within 24 hours, the G6 had the answer.

"In collaboration with the Georgia Departments of Public Health and Community Health, the Ga DoD G6 created an online database for nursing home and long term care facilities to input their data which populates the database," said Col. Shane Strickland, chief information officer for the Georgia Army National Guard. "This allows the facilities to input critical data needed by the DPH and used to make important decisions to combat the spread of the virus."

The information includes the number of residents, staff, rooms, and suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 at a facility and enables the Ga. DPH and Ga. DoD to prioritize facilities for



: At the Forefront Force Protection

disinfecting and other resources. No names or medical information is shared on the database.

Throughout the COVID-19 response, the G6 has refined its processes and established partnerships with agencies and academia. Through dialogue with stakeholders and partner agencies dedicated to reduce the spread of COVID-19, the G6 has continued to refine the database to provide information requirements as part of the coordinated response effort.

The G6 is not only innovating solutions to assist the state effort to battle the Coronavirus, it is also playing a vital role in protecting the force. In the early days of the Coronavirus response, Maj. Gen. Tom Carden, Georgia's Adjutant General, emphasized the importance of teleworking and social distancing to maximize the safety of the nearly 15,000 servicemembers while allowing essential services to continue. To enable personnel and employees to work from home

while maintaining access to secure DoD networks, the G6 increased the virtual private network capacity 800 percent. To facilitate teleconferences, the G6 doubled the call-in capacity on dedicated lines and implemented Skype for business across the force. The G6 also supported the teleworking force with collaboration tools like Microsoft TEAMS and Cisco WebEx.

"We have more than doubled our capacity while improving call quality," said Strickland. "At the same time, we have provided additional wireless and phone platforms for the field and staff sections to help them continue to work".

With daily information synchronization requirements, the Ga. DoD could not safely coordinate with all staff members while maintaining social distancing. The communications improvements have enabled the Ga. DoD to continue to provide maximum capability to respond to mission requests while minimizing the risk to personnel.

LUCKY VET

Story and photos by: Sfc. R.J. Lannom Jr. | Public Affairs |
78th Troop Command

Georgia Army National Guardsmen from the Marietta-based 138th Chemical Company, currently activated in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, had a unique opportunity to serve one of their own in Kennesaw, Ga., on May 7, 2020.

The Guardsmen are serving as infection control team specialists, with the mission to prevent the spread of the coronavirus in at-risk communities. Elderly residents of long-term care facilities are among the most susceptible to the virus. The Georgia National Guard has performed virus mitigation at more than 700 of these facilities since the initiation of the ICT mission on April 1, 2020.

The Georgia Guardsmen of the 138th drew the assignment of mitigating the Gaines Park Senior Living Center located in Kennesaw, a small town just north of Atlanta. There they met resident, Millard C. Neeley.

Neeley, a 97-year-old World War II B-17 Flying Fortress door gunner, enlisted in the Army Air Corps on Nov. 2, 1942, at 19. After basic training, he shipped to England with the 8th Army Air Force, who performed the daylight bombing raid missions over Nazi Germany throughout the war.

Neeley's aircrew completed the tour-required 35 bombing missions during the campaign. To put that in perspective, the odds of surviving any given mission over Europe were one in ten. If a crew had completed ten successful missions, the odds were stacked against the aircrew for the next 25.

So rare was the accomplishment, 8th Army Air Force performed ceremonies for a very rare military club, irreverently called, "The Lucky Bastard Club" honoring the courage, skill and luck of the aircrews to finish a tour in the European Theater successfully.

Meeting "M.C.," as Neeley goes by, allowed the Guardsmen to learn first-hand about a Soldier's experiences in World War II while filling a critical need to prevent COVID-19 infection at the residence.

"That was really cool," said Spc. Weldon Whitlock, chemical operations specialist, 138th Chemical Company. "To meet someone from World War II who is still around today is an honor."

The visit also allowed Georgia Army National Guardsman, Brig. Gen. John T. Gentry, commander, 78th Troop Command, the opportunity to thank him for his service and show Neeley once you are a Soldier, you are a Soldier for Life.

Gentry spoke with Neeley and the Guardsmen about the importance of honoring members of the Greatest



Generation and learn what they can from World War II veterans. They answered the call to service from across the country shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941.

“The enemy and location may change, whether it’s overseas against a physical enemy or here in Georgia against an invisible one,” said Gentry. “You are walking the path of Soldiers who had come before and answered the call to service.”

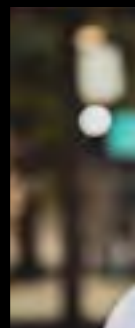
Gentry presented M.C. with his one-star commander’s coin honoring his service and dedication to the United States.

During this moment in time, M.C. appeared to be a young airman again. He was hanging out with Soldiers as he did over 75 years ago. He stood a little taller, his voice was steadier. He thanked the Guardsmen for their service and hard work during the pandemic. He reminded them, “I flew 35 missions and never got hurt, I’m entitled to a lifetime membership in the “Lucky Bastard Club.”

GEORGIA NATIONAL GUARD DEPLOYS INFECTION CONTROL T



STORY BY MAJ. WILLIAM CARRAWAY | PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE | GEORGIA ARMY NATIONAL GUARD | PHOTOS COURTESY



TEAMS TO FIGHT COVID-19



SY OF GEORGIA NATIONAL GUARD PUBLIC AFFAIRS



The Georgia National Guard is partnering with the Georgia Department of Public Health, the Georgia Department of Community Health, and the Georgia Healthcare Association to send infection control teams to nursing homes around the state. The first of these teams departed the Clay National Guard Center in Marietta, Ga. March 31, 2020 bound for southwest Georgia.

"Our mission is to assist in disinfecting nursing homes," said Col. John Till, safety officer for the Georgia Department of Defense who is training the teams. "We are going to help decontaminate and disinfect rooms in which these citizens are quarantined to prevent the spread of the Coronavirus."

Long-term care residents are vulnerable to illnesses that can be caused or exacerbated by COVID-19. The Georgia Department of Public Health notes that the number of cases in these facilities grows daily. Among the precautions advised by the Ga. DPH is frequent cleaning using disinfectants registered by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Till, and members of his team utilize a disinfectant process which incorporates a solution that is approved for use by the EPA, and the protocols for treatment are in accordance with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Department of Public Health. Till notes that his team can rapidly apply the disinfectant in facilities and has safely disinfected five buildings and more than 150 rooms at Georgia Guard facilities using the process.

"We are able to scale a number of teams as the demand requires" said Till. We will start with two teams who will then train all the teams that follow."

The infection control teams are the latest example of innovation by Georgia National Guard leaders and planners. These teams did not exist a week ago but were constituted specifically to fulfill a critical requirement to ensure the public health. They follow in the footsteps of the Georgia National Guard's medical support teams (MSTs) who are presently embedded at hospitals across Georgia. The MSTs, composed of Georgia National Guard Soldiers and Airmen with backgrounds in medicine and health, were created and employed over the last two weeks.

"The Georgia National Guard stands ready to assist any long-term care facility in this time of need through staff training and implementation of infectious disease control measures," said Maj. Gen. Tom Carden, the Adjutant General of the Georgia National Guard. "Our training has prepared us to fight this virus, and we are eager to lend a hand in this battle."

As of 9:00 am April 1, 2020, more than 600 service members of the Georgia Department of Defense are supporting Coronavirus response missions across the state. The Soldiers, Airmen, and State Defense Force volunteers are supporting MATs, foodbank operations, isolation facilities and staffing the Georgia Emergency Management Agency's State Operations Center in Atlanta.

The Georgia National Guard expects to send additional teams to nursing homes in south and northwest Georgia while continuing to work with state government and public and private institutions to save lives and alleviate suffering.



Georgia Guardsmen Fill the Gap at Local Food Banks

**Story by Spc. Tori Miller | Public Affairs Office | Georgia Army National Guard |
Photos Courtesy of Georgia National Guard Public Affairs Office**

Soldiers of the Winder-based 1st Battalion, 121st Infantry Regiment are giving back to Athens-area by providing support to the Food Bank of Northeast Georgia during COVID-19 public health response. This food bank is one of up to 12 food banks locations around the state of Georgia that have received support from the Georgia National Guard and Georgia State Defense Force.

Danah Craft, Executive Director of the Georgia Food Bank Association, saw that her organization would need assistance during COVID-19 and acted quickly.

“Our office knew from staying in contact with our sister food bank in Washington state that the food banks would need Guardsmen because they would lose their volunteers,” said Craft. “So, we requested through the Georgia Emergency Management Agency, and the response was almost immediate. The food banks identified what they might need in certain position or specializations to complete the tasks that may come up, and within two hours of the request, Georgia Guardsmen were scheduled to deploy

to the food banks.”

As of April 20, 2020, the Georgia National Guard has activated over 2,500 Soldiers, Airmen and Georgia State Defense Force volunteers to assist in food banks, medical facilities, long-term care facilities, security and testing.

“We are preparing blind donation boxes for agencies that cannot request through federal funds, such as churches. We also have been preparing food bags for school children and food bags for seniors that are food insecure,” said Sgt. Steven Langford, an infantryman from 1-121st Infantry Regiment. “The block of instruction for this process has been pretty straight forward. There will be days that we will be packing food, there will be days that we will be distributing food with the mobile food bank, they are also talking about using us to help with other volunteer-based programs and in the warehouse.”

The Georgia Food Bank Association oversees eight food banks. These food banks work with smaller locations and organizations throughout the state. The Food Bank of Northeast Georgia supplies 14 counties from their Athens location. Without the

assistance of volunteers, or in this instance, the Georgia Guardsmen, families in these surrounding areas would struggle to receive the assistance needed to put food on their tables.

While food banks around Georgia have had select programs suspended, such as the Agency Shopping Center, the organization has seen an increase in need of 40 percent in certain communities. Programs such as Food 2 Kids, Senior Brown Bag Program, and Mobile Pantries have been able to maintain operations during COVID-19 state of emergency as a result of assistance from the Georgia Guardsmen.

“The Agency Shopping Center, which is our in-house grocery pick up, has been closed during this time, but with the help of the Guardsmen, we have been able to continue packing the standard boxes and allowing our senior shoppers to order online,” said Chuck Toney, executive director of the Food Bank of Northeast Georgia. “We have also added two mobile food bank locations.”

The Georgia Food Bank Association has taken guidance from sister organizations in states like Washington and Ohio and created a “no touch” or “low touch” food delivery system. The system has been implemented with Georgia Guardsmen packing and providing to citizens in the local communities.

“The directors that run the food banks love having guardsmen around and could not continue to distribute food without their help,” said Craft. “The organizations “no touch” or “low touch” distributions models require a lot of food pre-boxed and pre-bagged, and we have a lot more food moving through the system than manpower. Having Georgia Guardsmen that are driven and disciplined gets the food distributed quickly.”

The goal of the Georgia Food Bank Association is to keep distributing food to Georgians in need. With the help of Georgia Guardsmen, the Georgia Food Bank Association will continue to put meals on the tables of citizens facing food insecurity. Soldiers and Georgia State Defense Force volunteers will continue to provide manpower to food banks during the COVID-19 response until no longer needed.

Craft said, that the food banks should use food as a tool to help stabilize and alleviate some stressors in households, and although the future is uncertain, food banks will continue to meet the needs of the Georgia communities as necessary.

“The assistance of Georgia Guardsmen has been helped us meet and exceed our commitment to get food to the community,” said Toney. “They have filled the gap and has been very beneficial to the communities in need.”





Georgia National Guard Infection Control Teams Battle Coronavirus Statewide

Nearly 250 Soldiers and Airmen of the Georgia National Guard are employed in teams across the state disinfecting establishments with high-risk population such as nursing homes and long-term care facilities. The first infection control team mobilized the afternoon of March 31. Since then, ICTs have completed 15 missions and are conducting operations currently at 59 priority nursing homes, but will surge to treat all 363 like care facilities in the state.

“These teams also provide educational services to train nursing home staffs on techniques for working in an infectious environment as well as how to properly wear and use (personal protective equipment),” said Brig. Gen. Randall Simmons, commander of the Georgia Army National Guard. “I am very proud of the work our service members are doing.”

The first ICTs were composed of Soldiers of the Marietta-based 201st Regional Support Group. These teams mobilized to Albany, Ga. where they trained additional service members composed of Soldiers from the Forsyth-based 2nd Battalion 121st Infantry Regiment, who returned from Afghanistan in 2019. More than 60 Soldiers of the Calhoun-based 1st Squadron 108th Cavalry were trained April 1 and mobilized to disinfect facilities in northwest Georgia.

The Georgia Department of Public Health notes that long-term care residents are vulnerable to illnesses that can be caused or exacerbated by COVID-19. Among the precautions advised by the Ga. DPH is frequent cleaning using disinfectants registered by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Recognizing the risk, and anticipating the need, the Georgia Department of Defense organized infection control teams from existing units. Like the 18 medical support teams deployed to hospitals across the state, these units did not exist two weeks ago. Major General Tom Carden, Georgia’s Adjutant General, notes that these teams are the result of mission analysis, planning and agile adaptation to ensure that “the Georgia National Guard is never late to need.”

As of 9:00 a.m. April 3, more than 1,200 Georgia National Guard Soldiers, Airmen and State Defense Force volunteers are supporting missions across the state, from Valdosta in the south to Dalton in the north.

The Georgia National Guard expects to continue to support the coordinated statewide response with ICTs and MSTs as well as providing support to food banks and other tasks assigned by the Georgia Emergency Management Agency until the mission is complete.

**Story by Maj. William Carraway | Public
Affairs Office | Georgia Army National
Guard | Photo courtesy of 1st Lt.
Nelson Moraga**



Virtual Town Hall Series: COVID-19

Story and Photos by: Spc. Tori Miller | Public Affairs Office | Georgia Army National Guard

The Georgia National Guard hosted a series of virtual town hall events on Facebook Live in response to the Georgia state of emergency for COVID-19.

The town halls gave leadership of the Georgia National Guard a platform to discuss important topics, stop the spread of misinformation and share locations of testing sites around the state. The town halls also gave Georgia citizens the opportunity to ask the Maj. Gen. Tom Carden, Adjutant General of Georgia, Brig. Gen. Randall Simmons, Commanding General of the Georgia Army National Guard and Brig. Gen. Thomas Grabowski, Commanding General of the Georgia Air National Guard, questions regarding the Georgia Guards response to COVID-19.

During COVID-19, the Georgia National Guard mobilized more than 3,000 Soldiers, Airmen and State Defense Force Volunteers for missions around the state. Carden, Simmons and Grabowski discussed the status

of the mobilization of their Citizen-Soldiers and Airmen and their continuous missions during the response. Topics included the development of the infection control teams, mobile testing teams, specimen point of collection sites, the mobilization of Soldiers and State Defense Force to local food banks around the state and other responses and assistance to local communities needs during COVID-19.

The production of the virtual town halls are overseen by the Georgia National Guard State Public Affairs Office. A team effort of videographers, social media, and photojournalists conducted the audio and produced the live video recording of the event. The State PAO also oversaw the post-production release of photos and videos that are shared through multiple social media platforms after the events concluded.

The Georgia National Guard will continue to provide additional information on their community assistance during the statewide response to COVID-19.

VIRTUAL TOWN HALL

MEETING



Today
11:30AM

- > MAJ GEN Thomas Carden
Georgia's Adjutant General
- > BRIG GEN Randall Simmons
Commander, Georgia Army National Guard
- > BRIG GEN Thomas Grabowski
Commander, Georgia Air National Guard



Stay in the know!
Follow us on social media!



SOCIAL MEDIA SPOTLIGHT

GA National Guard @GeorgiaGuard · Apr 6
Soldiers from the 1177th Transportation Company help to ensure Georgians in need are fed during #COVID19 by supporting the @ACFB, #YourGaGuard, #SharedPurpose



8 101 294

Georgia National Guard

"Expanding #COVID19 testing is an important step in flattening the curve. Please help us get this new information to those that need a test. The Georgia National Guard is now partnering with the Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency and the Georgia Department of Public Health to increase sample collection and testing." - The Adjutant General of Georgia, Major General Thomas Carden Jr. #SharedPurpose #SharedValues #SharedVictory #GeorgiaStrong



SPOTLIGHT

The Georgia National Guard Social Media and coverage of the

GA National Guard @GeorgiaGuard · Apr 8
Our Georgia National Guard Infection Control Teams continue their mission every day and night helping to protect our most vulnerable population in the fight with #COVID19. #InThisTogether #YourGaGuard



TAGofGA @TAGofGA · Apr 11
Our Governor & our citizens appreciate the @GeorgiaGuard. I know that residents in nursing homes across our state are safer because of your hard work & sacrifice. What you are doing today for your neighbors is a crystal clear representation of our organizational values!

Governor Brian P. Kemp @GovKemp · Apr 11
@GeorgiaGuard members are actively working to protect our most vulnerable population. So grateful for their service! #COVID19 #gagol bit.ly/2wjzd0



EDIA LIGHT

edia Spotlight reflects the importance
COVID-19 response.



LOOKING BACK:

30 DAYS OF GEORGIA DOD CORONAVIRUS RESPONSE OPERATIONS

STORY BY: MAJ. WILLIAM CARRAWAY | PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE | GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE



THE BEGINNING

In just one month, the Georgia Department of Defense moved from contingency planning, in preparation for COVID 19 operations, to full engagements in 10 different missions encompassing locations across the state. On March 10, the Clay National Guard lodging facilities were cleared and prepared to receive guests from the Grand Princess Cruise Ship. On that day, the Ga. DoD issued a warning order advising the force that the Ga. DoD would “begin pandemic response operations in order to protect the force, assist local and state authorities with the protection of life and property, and with the preservation of peace, order, and public safety.”

At the time WARNO 1 was issued, Georgia had reported 18 cases of COVID-19 and no deaths. The next day more than 250 cruise ship passengers arrived at Dobbins Air Reserve Force Base to begin observation for COVID-19 symptoms. The Clay National Guard

Center received its first passengers the evening of March 13.

THE RESPONSE RAMPS UP

On March 14, Governor Brian Kemp authorized the activation of 2,000 Georgia National Guard Soldiers and Airmen. The next day, the first Soldiers were on mission transporting patients while Georgia State Defense Force volunteers augmented operations at the headquarters of the Georgia Emergency Management Agency alongside Georgia’s Citizen Soldiers and Airmen. At first, the battle rhythm of operations had the familiarity of a hurricane or severe weather response, but key differences soon became apparent. The state surgeon of the Ga. DoD was an early key staff augmentee at the State Operations Center where civilians and service members worked in coordination with the Department of Public Health.





MEDICAL SUPPORT TEAMS

During the update brief for commanders and senior staff on March 18, Maj. Gen. Tom Carden, Georgia's Adjutant General, tasked the Ga. DoD joint staff with developing a unit-manning document for a new kind of unit that did not exist anywhere within the force structure. As described by Carden, teams of medical personnel would be assembled in order to supplement hospital staff.

"The people who will populate that unit will be people with medical skill sets who are not first responders, not working in a hospital," said Carden, addressing commanders and staff at the Joint Force Headquarters in Marietta. "We are not waiting for someone to ask for this information, we need to anticipate the need and be prepared."

The concept of the joint medical unit evolved into medical support teams, comprised of Soldiers, Airmen, and Ga. SDF Volunteers who had civilian or military training in the medical field. Less than two weeks from the first expression of concept, more than 200 personnel were employed at 19 regional medical centers across the state.

VENTILATORS

By March 23, the Ga. DOD coordinated the placement of the first medical support team which embedded two days later. Based on reports fielded from hospitals and input from the state surgeon, Carden tasked the Ga. DoD to inventory all units for ventilators and prepare to transfer them to civilian hospitals.

"Knowing (the number of COVID-19 cases) is not

what really matters," said Carden during a planning meeting with senior leaders. "What really matters is when we hit capacity at hospitals. When will we run out of ventilators?"

With ventilators identified as critical equipment, commanders in the Georgia and Army National Guard requested immediate inventory and calibration. Those in need of calibration were transported to Tobyhanna Army Depot by aviators of the 78th Aviation Troop Command. By March 24, the Ga. DoD logistics officer reported the Ga. DoD could make 41 ventilators available to hospitals.

In his closing comments to commanders and staff March 24, Carden recognized the herculean efforts of the Ga. DoD and reminded all in attendance to always plan ahead.

"What we are doing now is different than anything we have ever done before," said Carden. No one in this room has experience with pandemic response. This is where we live our values. Your entire career has built your ability to respond now. Since the day you put the uniform on, you have learned to be adaptive and agile. We have got to know not only what is going on now, we have to think about what is next."

Infection Control Teams

On March 26, Brig. Gen. Randall Simmons, Commander of the Ga. ARNG and Joint Task Force Commander Ga. COVID-19 Response Force, traveled to Albany Ga. to meet with community leaders and



hospital staff. In addition to visiting patient isolation facilities and speaking with medical support team personnel, Simmons visited a local nursing home where he learned that multiple residents had tested positive for COVID-19.

Recognizing the potential health crisis, Simmons suggested the Georgia National Guard could provide assistance to the facility.

Soldiers of the Forsyth-based 2nd Battalion 121st Infantry Regiment were dispatched to assist at the Albany nursing home and to supplement patient observation sites in Albany and Forsyth on March 28. Identifying the vulnerability of nursing homes to COVID-19, Carden tasked commanders and staff with anticipating a mission to assist. Colonel John Till, safety officer of the Ga. DoD informed senior leaders that his office had conducted disinfecting operations at Ga. DoD facilities and that the techniques and protective equipment could be adapted to disinfect critical facilities in the state.

In the coming days, Carden briefed members of the Governor's Task Force on the Coronavirus regarding the risk and potential for the Ga. DoD to assist. Carden briefed the capability to Governor Kemp while Till assembled personnel from the 138th Chemical Company to constitute the first infection control team.

"We are going to generate the capability and be prepared to provide the service," said Carden. "The critical discussion will have to be had between DPH and GEMA to determine how we are to be employed. Our job is to lean forward as far as we can."

On the morning of March 31, Brig. Gen. Simmons directed the 201st Regional Support Group to dispatch the first ICT to Albany and to take with it personal protective equipment for nursing home workers. Simmons also directed the joint staff to establish a planning team for disinfecting operations.

In the coming days, the Ga. DoD established a list of 383 nursing homes across the state. The first ICT trained a follow-on team at the Albany nursing home. On April 1, sixty Soldiers of the Calhoun-based 1st Squadron, 108th Cavalry Regiment had trained for the disinfecting mission.

30 Days of Operations

On the morning of April 10, nearly 1,000 Soldiers and Airmen comprising 58 ICTs had cleaned nearly 120 facilities and were continuing to work into the Easter weekend to alleviate human suffering. More than 200 of Georgia's Citizen Soldiers and Airmen were working shoulder to shoulder with medical

personnel at 19 hospitals across the state. Georgia State Defense Force Volunteers provided support to food bank operations in Valdosta, one of nine foodbanks supported by the Ga. DoD across the state. Logisticians supported GEMA and DPH warehouse operations and isolation facilities while more than 70 personnel provided health screenings at hospitals in Athens, Atlanta, Albany, Macon, and Gainesville, freeing nurses and medical support personnel to care for patients.

As the Ga. DoD passes 30 days of Coronavirus response operations, the role these Citizen Soldiers, Airmen and State Defense Force Volunteers play continues to expand. These missions continue into the Easter weekend. As Maj. Gen. Tom Carden has said on numerous occasions, "We will never be late to need."



**Stay tuned for the next COVID Chornicles Vol. II edition
of the Georgia Guardsman Magazine!**



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