



National Guard

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National Guard Ramping Up COVID-19 Response

By David Vergun | DoD News | March 19, 2020

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Air Force Gen. Joseph L. Lengyel, chief of the National Guard Bureau, briefs Pentagon reporters on the National Guard's response to the coronavirus March 19, 2020. The general said 2,050 National Guard Soldiers and Airmen in 27 states have been activated to support COVID-19 response efforts, with the number expected to double by the weekend and eventually reach the tens of thousands.

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ARLINGTON, Va. – About 2,050 National Guard Soldiers and Airmen in 27 states have been activated to support COVID-19 response efforts, the chief of the National Guard Bureau said Thursday.

Air Force Gen. Joseph L. Lengyel told reporters at a Pentagon briefing that number most likely would double by the weekend, and it is even possible that tens of thousands of Guard members could be activated as the situation unfolds, depending on the needs of communities.

There are about 450,000 Guard troops in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and three U.S. territories, he noted, with logistical and other capabilities that include airlift, ground transportation, command and control, and more.

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engineering, kitchens, tents and medical personnel.

Lengyel provided a snapshot of what the Guard is already doing.

The New York National Guard is helping local officials distribute food, much of it in the hard-hit area of New Rochelle.

A Tennessee Air National Guard C-17 Globemaster transport aircraft delivered 500,000 swabs to be added to COVID-19 test kits in Memphis Wednesday.

More than 500 soldiers are assisting with collecting samples from drive-through testing in Broward County, Florida.

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

The Wisconsin National Guard is supporting transportation missions for the Wisconsin Department of Health Services.

In Louisiana, Guard liaison officers are assisting the New Orleans Office of Homeland Security in emergency preparedness.

Across the U.S., civil support teams are supporting the local departments of health with drive-through testing stations.

"We remain flexible and committed for whatever mission we may be called to do," Lengyel said. He noted that the governors of each state have the flexibility to use the Guard in ways they deem most fit and productive.

So far, six members of the Guard in the U.S. have tested positive for COVID-19, he said. Force health protection measures are in place to prevent more from contracting the virus.

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