

Newsroom

State Defense Forces: The Guard's Ready Reserve

The National Guard and Reserve forces have earned the nickname of America's citizen soldiers. But there's another set of dedicated men and women who share in that duty, yet receive comparably scant recognition. In fact, many Americans don't even know they exist.

They're the State Defense Forces, separate military branches that operate under the complete control of state governments. There are currently active State Defense Forces in 20 states and the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico. While they're known by different names — some are called the State Guard, others go by State Military Reserves — they serve similar missions: to support, assist and augment their state's National Guard forces and civilian authorities such as police and fire departments.

State Defense personnel are as diverse as the population itself. From business professionals and tradespeople to doctors and lawyers, they stand ready to set their civilian responsibilities aside and help where they're needed most. Many members, but not all, have prior U.S. military experience.

"We're simply a group of people who want to serve our state and our communities," said Maj. Eddie Williams, headquarters public affairs officer of the Georgia State Defense Force. "The SDF gives us the opportunity to make a significant contribution while maintaining our regular jobs most of the year."

It's a level of patriotism beyond reproach, especially because service in the State Defense Forces is completely voluntary. That is, members receive no compensation for their work. They pay for their own uniforms, equipment, and training. Only when members are called up for abnormally long or far-off missions do some states provide reimbursement.

Ready for Anything

State Defense Forces are trained and organized to spring into action quickly for a wide variety of jobs: security and crowd control at major events, search and rescue missions, and natural disaster relief, among others.

The Georgia SDF, for example, recently assisted local authorities in a hunt for two missing hikers, and helped to contain a rash of wildfires along the Florida border. In Texas, the State Guard formed a medical brigade of doctors and nurses who provided free vaccinations to more than 13,000 disadvantaged citizens. In Alaska, SDF members have helped to secure the major oil pipeline that supplies fuel to much of the country.

Similar stories come from around the nation, where SDF members give of themselves for the sake of others.

"Our motto is Texans serving Texas, and that's very fitting," said Maj. Michael Spraggins, public affairs officer of the Texas State Guard. "When someone comes up to you and says you've made them feel safe again, it's a very rewarding feeling."

A Growing Force

The ranks of State Defense Forces have grown substantially in the years since 9/11, as more people have been inspired to play a role in homeland security. At the same time, the units have become increasingly valuable in states where National Guard troops have been deployed overseas.

Unlike the National Guard, State Defense Forces cannot be federalized. Their services are at the discretion of the state adjutant general and the governor. And their readiness has been put to the test in many cases where, in earlier years, the National Guard might have handled it alone.

Perhaps the most visible example came in 2005, when Hurricane Katrina ravaged the Gulf Coast. Defense Forces in at least eight states were called upon to assist preparedness and relief efforts. Thousands of SDF volunteers worked security, rendered first aid to victims and operated shelters for displaced families.

Maj. Williams was one of 150 Georgia SDF personnel on duty at Dobbins Air Reserve Base, where many of the hurricane victims had been transported.

"Though we serve in many capacities, major events like Katrina have given the State Defense Forces a higher profile," he said. "We feel like the people of Georgia recognize and appreciate our service. And we are proud to represent our state."

Learn more and find links to the State Defense Force website of your state.

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THE NEW MEXICO STATE GUARD

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NMSG NEWS

RESOURCES

LIBRARY

THE NEW MEXICO STATE GUARD IS A STATE FORCE PROVIDER. BY BEING A SOLDIER IN THE STATE GUARD, YOU CAN GAIN MILITARY EXPERIENCE AND TRAINING WHILE SERVING THE INTERESTS OF HOMELAND SECURITY IN THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO.

STATE GUARD SOLDIERS ARE PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL EXPERTS WHO CONTRIBUTE TO THE SUPPORT OF THEIR COMMUNITIES AND THE NEW MEXICO ARMY NATIONAL GUARD BY HELPING WITH THE MAIN MISSIONS OF MEDICAL SUPPORT, RADIO COMMUNICATIONS, PUBLIC AFFAIRS, TRANSPORTATION, CHAPLAIN SERVICES, HONOR GUARD DUTIES FOR MILITARY FUNERALS, AND GENERAL SUPPORT FOR THE NATIONAL GUARD.

THE NEW MEXICO STATE GUARD (NMSG) IS EXPANDING ACTIVITIES IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS AND SEEKS OFFICERS AND ENLISTED PERSONNEL TO JOIN DETACHMENTS THAT HAVE THESE FOCUS AREAS:

- **HELPING THE ARMY NATIONAL GUARD (ARNG) WITH ITS YOUTH CHALLENGE PROGRAM.**
- **ARNG FACILITIES INVENTORY ASSISTANCE.**
- **WORKING WITH LOCAL OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT OFFICIALS TO COORDINATE EMERGENCY INTER-AGENCY RESPONDING.**
- **BEING READY FOR ACTIVATION BY THE GOVERNOR OF THE STATE FOR ANY STATE MILITARY EMERGENCY SERVICE.**

NMSG SOLDIERS CAN ONLY BE DEPLOYED WITHIN THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO OR TO ANOTHER STATE IF NM IS HELPING SUCH A STATE WITH A MAJOR CRISIS. NO NMSG SOLDIER CAN BE DEPLOYED OUTSIDE OF THE UNITED STATES.

NMSG SERVICE PROVIDES A PERFECT OPPORTUNITY FOR STUDENTS, PROFESSIONALS AND OTHERS WHO NEVER SERVED IN THE MILITARY BEFORE TO OBTAIN MILITARY TRAINING AND ACCOMPLISHMENT. IT ALSO PROVIDES AN OUTSTANDING WAY FOR THOSE NOW RETIRING OR RECENTLY RETIRED FROM ANY BRANCH OF THE UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES TO CONTINUE THEIR MILITARY SERVICE AND STAY INVOLVED WITH OTHERS WHO SHARED THEIR COMMITMENT TO SERVICE, DUTY, AND HONOR.

WHETHER YOU ARE A LAWYER, PHYSICIAN, MEDICAL TECHNICIAN, DENTIST, CLERGY PERSON, STUDENT, PERSON WITH TRADE SKILLS, LOCAL POLICE OFFICER, PROFESSOR, SCHOOL TEACHER, SALES PERSON, TRUCK DRIVER, COOK, CARPENTER, OR PLUMBER, WE HAVE A PLACE FOR YOU IN THE NEW STATE GUARD.

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NEW MEXICO STATE GUARD SEARCH AND RESCUE SUCCESS, CARLSBAD, MAY 2010



At 1915 hrs on 14 May assistance was provided by the New Mexico State Guard in the formation of a ground search team needed to look for an 11 year-old boy that was missing from the family campsite in the Guadalupe Mountains of Eddy County in the Robenson Canyon.

At approximately 2100 hrs CPT Nelson , 1LT Spencer, SGT Cassels and CPL Peterson convoyed in three POVs with full field gear to the USFS Administrative site at Queens NM in the Guadalupe Mountains. DET 6, NMSG is among the first organized search teams to report in to the command post around 2200 hrs. At approximately 2200 hrs, DET 6, began a search from the campsite in conjunction with the canine and handler.

Approximately 0130 hrs all DET 6 troops and the canine met back at campsite to regroup and allow the dog to rest. AT 0230 CPT Nelson and SGT Cassels accompanied a local landowner to a location about 2 miles SW of the camp (Gordon Tank) to try and locate footprints, that might have belonged to the 11 yr old boy. Turns out footprints were destroyed by ATV. 1LT Spencer and CPL Peterson go back into the field with the canine handler to resume the search in a southern direction from the family camp in Robertson Draw.

At approximately 0400 search was called off for the evening. The canine was unable to continue with search. Still believed the boy was is SW from camp, proves to be true the following morn. DET 6 troops get about 1-2 hrs sleep and stay at the original campsite at the Incident Commanders request.

Approximately 0700 hrs DET 6 troops report to the command post for a briefing and new search assignment. CPT Nelson reports in to LTC Bowers by phone. 0730 hrs a reports is received that the boy was found by one of the vehicle search teams in a locations 2-2.5 miles SW of the campsite. He was tired and cold, but in otherwise good condition.

After the boy was reunited at the Command Post with his parents, DET 6 members checked out and returned to Carlsbad arriving approx 0930 hrs . This was the end of a happy and successful mission.

SGT Cassels, PIO, Carlsbad

The Virginia Defense Force HIGHLAND BRIGADE

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Calendar

VDF Ranks

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About VDF



COL Thomas E. Grier
Commander

- 34th BN
- 24th BN
- 31st BN

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TRAINING

The Highland Brigade generally drills on the 4th Saturday of the month. Some months we go to Ft. Pickett for MUTA or other events. So please check our online calendar for up to date information.



LINKS

- › Division Website
- › Lafayette Brigade
- › Blackhorse Brigade
- › Aviation Battalion
- › SGAUS
- › Virginia National Guard
- › VDEM
- › VA Dept of Health
- › Virginia.gov
- › NETCOM/9th Army Signal Command

MEMS Academy



Our Values



LTC Roberts and LTC Zollar at CP1 and CP 2 during CERF-P support for the VNG and VaNG at Fort Pickett, Virginia.

Brigade News

Division MUTA at Ft. Pickett

The Highland Brigade participated in the annual DIV MUTA during 21 SEP thru 23 SEP 2007. The FTX was a great success and the VaNG and The Virginia Defense Force worked very well together. The VDF support of the FTX includes Triage, Security, General, Communications and Aviation.

The Virginia Defense Force has a new domain name for it's website.



The Virginia Defense Force has acquired a new domain name. <http://www.vdf.virginia.gov>. Please update your bookmark for The Virginia Defense Force on your web browser.

Photo Gallery

Photos from the Fall MUTA



COL Wheelus and GEN Thompson at Fort Pickett.

OUR MISSION

Assume Control of National Guard Facilities

Assist In National Guard Mobilization

Support the National Guard with Family Assistance

Perform All Tasks Currently Performed by the National Guard to Protect Life and Property

Perform Tasks Unique to the Post Mobilization Environment

RECRUITING

The Highland Brigade is actively seeking new recruits.

Skills needed are in administrative support, supply, medical, communications, chaplain service, military police and in other areas. If you have a desire to volunteer you are invited to obtain more information by calling 276-202-0440.

Membership in the Virginia Defense Force is open to Virginia residents aged 16-64. Applicants under age 18 must have written parental or legal guardian consent. All applicants must possess a valid social security number.

VaDF members drill one day a month at Virginia National Guard armories. Members provide their own uniforms, pay for transportation to and from their drills, and do not receive monetary compensation for duty unless called to state active duty by the Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

If you are looking for a way to give back to Virginia, enhance your current job skills, or learn a new skill.....then the Virginia Defense Force can help you.

Brigade Communications

One of the Brigade Assets is one of 4 Mobile Command Post (MCP). These trailers are equipped with ALE capable High Frequency radios to wireless email.



Overview & Frequently Asked Questions

Q: WHAT IS THE WASHINGTON STATE GUARD?

A: A state defense force is authorized by Title 38 of the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) and is authorized by Federal law, Title 32 of the United State Code. The Washington State Guard, (hereinafter WSG), is a bona fide all volunteer, uniformed public service organization which serves under the command of the Governor as Commander-in-Chief and directed by the Adjutant General.

The Washington State Guard is a component of the authorized military forces of the State of Washington, and stands separate and apart from the National Guard. Unlike the National Guard, the Washington State Guard is to be used for service exclusively within the State of Washington. All WSG members take an oath of allegiance to the United States of America and the State of Washington, and to obey the orders of the Governor of the State of Washington and the officers appointed over them. Members serve for a period of not less than one year.

Q: WHO CAN JOIN THE WASHINGTON STATE GUARD?

A: Any United States citizen who is a resident of the State of Washington between the ages of 18 and 64, whether or not a prior service veteran. Current members of the Active or Reserve Components of the United States Armed Forces and individuals who have been convicted of a felony or who have received a less than honorable discharge from the Armed Forces are excluded.

Q: WHAT OBLIGATION OF TIME WOULD I BE EXPECTED TO GIVE?

A: Members are required to attend a monthly drill (meeting). Drills are training sessions and are also used to coordinate activities. Drills usually last 8 hours and are held on Saturdays. Your particular assignment may require additional hours of work to organize your section or staff, complete necessary projects, or recruit. These additional hours may be done at home according to your own schedule and at your leisure.

Q: WILL I BE PAID FOR MY TIME AND OUT OF POCKET EXPENSES?

A: Generally, no. Only if the Governor calls you to State Active Duty. When that happens, members are considered State employees and are paid at the same rate of pay for their rank or grade as their regular Army or National Guard counterparts. Occasionally, missions may allow for per diem and reimbursed expenses. However, the only reimbursable expenses are those to which prior approval is given. While there may be certain tax benefits for non-reimbursed expenses, you should check with your tax advisor.

Q: AM I REQUIRED TO PASS A PHYSICAL EXAMINATION?

A: Applicants are required to submit a Report of Medical History on a standard form. You must be able to perform all assigned tasks without endangering yourself or others.

Q: WHAT OTHER OBLIGATIONS WOULD I HAVE?

A: You take an oath when you join, and you are expected to live up to that oath. When they are required, you are expected to attend your monthly drills. If for any reason you cannot attend a drill, you must call your commander or supervisor and explain the situation. Repeated unexcused absences are not acceptable and will result in discharge. You must wear the assigned uniform correctly, and otherwise conform to the personal and grooming standards according to established Army Regulations. You may only wear your uniform at drill or at other WSG functions. While in uniform, all rules of military courtesy must be observed.

Q: WHAT UNIFORM WILL I WEAR?

A: Pursuant to National Guard Regulation 10-4, you will wear Class "A", "B", and "C" uniforms similar to standard Army uniforms, but with distinctive insignia designating you as a member of the Washington State Guard.

Q: AM I ISSUED UNIFORMS OR EQUIPMENT?

A: Currently, all officers and enlisted personnel are required to purchase and maintain their own uniforms and accessories.

Q: HOW WILL MY RANK BE DETERMINED?

A: Applicants are interviewed, evaluated, and enlisted or appointed to an appropriate rank based on the availability of an authorized billet (job position) for the applicant within the unit, as well as on the basis of prior military service, education, civilian occupation, and other factors in accordance with established laws and regulations, and without regard to race, religion, sex, or national origin.

Q: ARE THESE "REAL" OFFICER AND ENLISTED RANKS?

A: According to Washington law, State Guard officer and enlisted personnel normally rank amongst themselves. However, when called to State Active Duty, State Guard soldiers rank equally among State Active Duty members of the National Guard. All appointments, commissions, warrants, and enlistments are subject to recognition by the Governor of the State of Washington through the Adjutant General. All WSG members may be called to State Active Duty, may be given the legal authority to command troops, and may participate in real-world missions when ordered to do so by the Governor through the Military Department of the State of Washington.

Q: CONSIDERING THAT I AM NOT PAID, PROVIDE MY OWN UNIFORMS AND EQUIPMENT, AND HAVE TO DO SOME ACTUAL WORK--WHY SHOULD I JOIN THE WASHINGTON STATE GUARD?

A: For the same reason that people join civic organizations, pay dues, and contribute their time and talent-- for the benefit of their community. While the Washington State Guard is not a civic club, it is a uniformed public service organization for the benefit of the people of the State of Washington and requires an obligation on the part of its members. Further, you will be carrying on the unique American tradition of volunteer militia service which dates back to 1636, before the creation of the United States. You will serve with other patriotic people who have a knowing respect for military

preparedness. You will work with other WSG members to accomplish missions important to the safety and security of the people of the State of Washington. Lastly, but perhaps most challenging, you will have the opportunity to utilize the training you acquired in the military and in civilian life to develop, maintain, and build the cadre of the Washington State Guard as the officially recognized and sanctioned military force of the State of Washington. Simply stated, you are a patriot who lives what you believe.

Q: WHERE WILL I SERVE?

A: You may serve anywhere in the State. To best serve the needs of the people of the State of Washington, WSG members serve throughout the State often in their own communities.

Q: CAN I USE THE PX AND COMMISSARY?

A: Currently, there are no provisions for this.

Q: HOW DO I APPLY?

A: Please use the contact information provided on this website.

Q: WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

A: The following persons are eligible for enlistment or appointment:

- Applicants who are between 18 and 64 years of age, whether or not a prior service veteran;
- Applicants who are a citizen of the United States* and a resident of the State of Washington (*Applicants who are aliens must show proof that they have made a legal declaration to become a United States citizen and must present a United States Department of Homeland Security, BCIS Form N-300, authenticated by a Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services Local Office);
- Applicants who have a demonstrated understanding and proficiency in the English language;
- Applicants who are either a high school graduate or have passed the GED test;
- Applicants who are medically qualified.

Q: WHO IS INELIGIBLE?

A: The following persons are considered ineligible for enlistment or appointment:

- Convicted felons;
- Persons adjudged as a youthful offender;
- Persons on parole or probation;
- Persons with prior military service who have an RE-4 re-enlistment code on their DD-214;
- Persons with prior military service whose discharge is characterized as other than "Honorable";
- Persons adjudged as a security risk;
- Conscientious objectors;
- Persons not meeting acceptable height and weight standards;
- Current members of any Active or Reserve Component of the U.S. Armed Forces;
- Persons convicted of any offense involving moral turpitude;
- Persons with significant medical disorders which could endanger themselves or others;
- Persons with a medical disability which exceeds an RE-3 profile;
- Persons required to register for Selective Service, but who have failed to do so.