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New York’s Javits Center completes transformation into 1,200 bed emergency hospital:
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National Guard turns Times Union Center into critical food hub (video):
CBS 6, Monday, March 30, 2020
National Guard at Times Union Center to help with food distribution (Video): WNYT, 3/30/20

National Guard to Help Deliver Food to Quarantined People in Albany County: Spectrum News, March 30, 2020

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo seized the moment with his rousing speech to the National Guard: Upworthy.com, March 30, 2020

Read Gov. Cuomo's moving speech about defeating the novel coronavirus: ABC News, March 28, 2020

Rep. Max Rose deployed with National Guard to assist coronavirus response "I am just trying to do my duty and my small part," he said.: Politico, March 31, 2020

Emergency Response

Latest Guard update: 18,500 troops mobilized for COVID-19 response, 11 states, 2 territories and DC on Title 32 status

Military Times, April 2, 2020:

The number of Guard troops mobilized in the effort to cope with the coronavirus pandemic continues to grow.

As of Thursday afternoon, more than 18,500 Air and Army National Guard professionals are supporting the COVID-19 crisis response at the direction of their governors.

That’s an increase of about 1,250 Guard troops since Wednesday.

In addition, 11 states, two territories and the District of Columbia have been approved for use of federal funds for state missions under Title 32, with another 26 requests moving through the approval process, Guard officials say.

That list includes California, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, New York and Washington and the territories of Guam and Puerto Rico. That’s one more state receiving federal funds since Wednesday.

In addition, 22 states and two territories have approved use of Dual-Status Commanders.

Governors across all 50 states, Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Washington D.C. have each mobilized components of their Army and Air National Guard to assist in their state’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
“This response isn’t just about delivering food or supporting COVID test centers. It’s about protecting our children, parents and grandparents,” said Air Force Gen. Joseph Lengyel, Chief, National Guard Bureau. “Our nation is looking to the National Guard to help and we can’t let them down.”

On March 27, Secretary of Defense Secretary Mark T. Esper modified and accelerated the process by which the Department of Defense authorizes the use of National Guard forces under Title 32 Section 502(f). The modification creates a conditional pre-authorization in response to Federal Emergency Management Agency requests that ensures quicker federal funding for state National Guard forces mobilizing to aid in whole-of-government COVID-19 response efforts.

“This authorization enables [governors] timely use of the National Guard to save lives and protect public health and safety,” Esper said in a March 27 letter to each governor. “The men and women of the National Guard are Citizen-Soldiers who stand ready to serve their communities as we fight COVID-19.”

National Guard support focuses on supporting a wide variety of mission sets ranging from community-based testing sites and creating enhanced medical capacity, to facilitating logistical support.

National Guard support focuses on supporting community based testing sites and creating enhanced medical capacity. Guard officials once again repeated that this is not an effort to enforce martial law.

“We are here to protect our communities, not police them,” said Lt. Gen. Daniel R. Hokanson, Director of the Army National Guard.

Louisiana National Guard Soldiers and Airmen wearing protective gear collect nasal swabs from patients during a drive-through community based COVID-19 testing site located at Louis Armstrong Park, New Orleans, La., March 20, 2020. Governor John Bel Edwards has activated over 300 Louisiana Guardsmen so far to assist with the COVID-19 response. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Senior Master Sgt. Dan Farrell)

No, the National Guard will not be used to enforce martial law, says its leader

As it stands now, the 9,000 and counting troops mobilized in every U.S. state and territory are sticking to mobile testing, logistics, transportation and other non-law enforcement support to civilian authorities, National Guard bureau chief Air Force Gen. Joe Lengyel told reporters Tuesday.

Last week, President Donald Trump ordered Guard troops in New York, California and Washington be placed under Title 32 status, meaning states maintain control, but the federal government picks up the tab.
Army Spc. Reagan Long, left, a horizontal construction engineer with the New York Army National Guard’s 827th Engineer Company, and Army Pfc. Naomi Velez, a horizontal construction engineer with the New York Army Guard’s 152nd Engineer Support Company, register people at a COVID-19 mobile screening center in New Rochelle, New York, March 14, 2020. More than 1,500 National Guard members in 22 states have been activated in support of state and local authorities responding to the COVID-19 outbreak. In addition to operating mobile screening centers, Guard members have been disinfecting public spaces, providing logistical and transportation support and coordinating with state and local health officials. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Amouris Coss)

Trump provides federal funds for National Guard in three states; they keep control, federal government foots bill as COVID-19 cases rise

The move will make it easier for states, already facing increasing costs as a result of the pandemic, to call in the guard if needed to help deal with the problems caused by COVID-19.

Lengyel told reporters last week that he expects more governors to seek that status, as it helps speed up the mobilization process and provides better benefits for the troops.

Current National Guard COVID-19 response missions include, but are not limited to:

*Full time 24 hour state Emergency Operations Center staffing to synchronize National Guard efforts with local and state mission partners to plan and execute an effective response;

*Working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to increase medical capacity;

*Supporting warehouse operations and logistics efforts to help deliver critical supplies;

*Delivering food in hard-hit communities;

*Manning call centers to be a knowledgeable and calming voice.

*Providing critical Personal Protective Equipment training and delivery to civilian first responders;

*Performing sample collection and delivery to medical personnel;

*Providing support and symptoms screening to testing facilities and passenger terminals;

*Providing transportation and assessment support to healthcare providers.

In addition, Guard missions also include Weapons of Mass Destruction - Civil Support Teams (WMD-CSTs), Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) training and sample collection; response planners; support to medical testing facilities; response liaisons and support to state Emergency Operations Centers; support to healthcare professionals - assessments, transportation; logistics support; assisting with disinfecting/cleaning of common public
spaces; providing transportation support for health care providers; collecting and delivering samples; and assisting with sample administration.

“We expect multiple states to use their WMD-CSTs to assist in sample collection, donning and doffing PPE techniques and decontamination techniques,” said Lt. Col. Jennifer Cope, Chief, National Guard Bureau Weapons of Mass Destruction Program Office.

The National Guard Bureau (NGB) on the federal level assists in “synchronization” and planning between the states, and their coordination center is a “24/7 operation working at increased capacity in anticipation of COVID-19 requirements,” the bureau said.

Here are the latest updates of National Guard actions across the United States and its territories:

Arizona:

Arizona Guard members are unloading trucks at grocery stores, keeping products available to people in the communities.

Arkansas

The Arkansas National Guard is providing triage support at the University of Arkansas Medical Center. The mobile triage center has improved operations flow and decreased patient volume into the emergency department. Additionally, 107 patients were triaged by Arkansas National Guard personnel.

California

The California National Guard is leveraging some of its highly-trained leaders to manage food banks.

Florida

There are 1,615 Florida National Guardsmen have been activated in support of COVID-19 as of Thursday afternoon, according to 1st Lt. Tahisha Coleman, a spokeswoman. The state’s request for 502(f) funding was approved March 31 for 30 days and up to 3,000 Guardsmen.

The Florida National Guard continues to support the state’s COVID-19 response through operational support of community-based testing sites, augmentation to airport screening measures, statewide logistics support, coordination, planning and operational mission sets.
The Florida National Guard supports CBTS in Broward, Miami/Hard Rock Stadium, Orange County, Miami-Dade/Marlins Park and Palm Beach County continued sampling operations. To date, the FLNG has assisted in the testing of more than 18,250 individuals for the COVID-19 virus.

Additionally, the FLNG continues to conduct a wide variety of operations in support of the state’s COVID-19 response:

*Supporting the Florida Department of Health and airport authorities in application of the Governor’s order to conduct screenings at airports in Miami, Fort Lauderdale, Tampa, Orlando, Jacksonville, Palm Beach International and Fort Myers.

*Activating medical professionals, Army Combat Medic specialists and Air Force Medical technicians in support of the Florida Department of Health’s community-based testing sites. Florida Guardsmen have reported in and formed Task Force Medical.

*Augmenting the State Logistics Readiness Center, the State’s Logistics Branch, as well as facilitate statewide logistics needs.

*Augmenting the State Emergency Operations Center and local emergency management offices across the state.

*Logistics professionals continue to support the State’s Emergency Operations Centers as well as sustaining mobilized FLNG personnel.

In efforts to ensure the health and safety of our personnel, Florida Guard members, performing duties at the SLRC, are now receiving screenings and temperature checks two times a day.

Hawaii

As of Thursday afternoon, the Hawaii National Guard has about 150 soldiers and airmen on State Active Duty supporting contingency planning and operational planning (medical support, security, traffic control, assistance at airports) and conducting Joint Reception Staging, Onward movement and Integration processing of large groups coming on to State Active Duty.

Additionally, the HING is assisting with passenger screening at the Honolulu International Airport and providing medical support to the Hawaii healthcare system.

The HING Joint Staff has established a Joint Operations Center to manage its response and is preparing to stand up Joint Task Force and a Dual Status Command, if required.

Illinois
The Illinois National Guard is supporting Community Based Testing Sites on the Northwest side of Chicago. The testing is specifically for medical personnel and first responders on the front lines of the COVID-19 response.

Iowa

Iowa National Guard activates regional support group and continues COVID-19 response efforts with the activation of approximately 75 soldiers from the 734th Regional Support Group, based at Camp Dodge in Johnston, on March 27.

Additionally, soldiers assigned to the Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment of the 734th Regional Support Group and its subordinate units, the 1034th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, out of Camp Dodge, and the 1133rd Transportation Company, out of Mason City, will provide additional logistical and transportation assets to the fight against COVID-19.

The Iowa National Guard continues deliveries of vital medical personal protective equipment to more than 20 distribution sites. In conjunction with the Iowa Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, soldiers delivered approximately 32 pallets to 23 county distribution centers, bringing the total distribution of 166 pallets to more than 75 counties across the state since distribution missions began March 24.

In addition, eight soldiers from the 186th Military Police Company, out of Camp Dodge, delivered and assembled two tents to the Central Iowa Veterans Administration Healthcare System in Des Moines Friday. These tents will be used to help screen those entering the hospital for COVID-19.

Currently there are now more than 120 Soldiers and Airmen on duty supporting a variety of COVID-19 response missions across the state.

Louisiana

The Louisiana National Guard has more than 1,200 Soldiers and Airmen assisting with COVID19 response, to include distributing critical medical supplies statewide.

*The commodities distribution mission has yielded more than 360,000 N95 masks, 1.2 million gloves, 300 ventilators, and nearly 50,000 Tyvek suits delivered to testing sites throughout the state.

*In this instance, rather than saving lives in Louisiana using high water vehicles and helicopters, Guard men and women are saving lives by ensuring critical medical supplies like ventilators get where they need to go in a timely fashion.

Michigan
Presently 347 Michigan National Guard soldiers and airmen are actively supporting the state's COVID-19 response and an additional 6,600 Guard members stand ready to assist. Additionally, approximately 160 MING members are mobilized federally under the operational control of U.S. Army North to FEMA in regions V, VI, and VII.

Across eight counties MING members are supporting requests from local communities and state agencies with a variety of response missions that include: food distribution, Strategic National Stockpile support, screening operations, reception and staging, supply and logistics management, state Emergency Operations Center staff augmentation, and alternate care facility planning.

Joint Task Force – Michigan includes more than 100 National Guard members who are responsible for the coordination of Guard response efforts across the state.

Minnesota

The Minnesota National Guard has 150 soldiers and airmen supporting COVID-19 response in some way.

New York

The New York National Guard has more than 2,800 personnel on mission across the state. Six Joint Task Forces are operating on Long Island, New York City, the Hudson Valley, Capital Region, Syracuse and Buffalo to support state and local governments. An additional Dual Status Command Task Force leads efforts to employ active and National Guard military resources primarily in New York City.

The Dual Status Command continues supporting the care for patients at the Jacob Javits Center FEMA field hospital. U.S. Army medical personnel from the 9th and 531st Hospital Centers, part of the 44th Medical Brigade, staff the center for patient treatment. NYNG members continue to manage the site as the unified command post for the multi-agency response at the Javits Center.

Additional NYNG missions include:

*The Guard continues support at seven drive-thru testing sites.

*Food packaging and distribution in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens, and Manhattan in New York City; as well as similar missions in Westchester County in New Rochelle and Albany County for the City of Albany.

*Logistics missions in support of the state response, including warehousing and commodity distribution at sites in the Hudson Valley, the Albany area, and Mohawk Valley. Hand sanitizer warehousing and deliveries continue today across the lower Hudson Valley.
*Logistics support to the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner of New York City, NYNG personnel are working with members of the Medical Examiner’s Office to assist in the dignified removal of human remains when required.

*Providing support to the New York State Coronavirus Hotline by working call centers in Rotterdam, Schenectady and Brooklyn to offer updated information to the public.

*Soldiers are also on call to assist Department of Health officials at the Wadsworth Laboratory in Albany for packaging COVID-19 test kits.

**Pennsylvania**

Over the weekend, 25 Pennsylvania National Guardsmen on state active duty provided logistical assistance to FEMA at the Glen Mills School as they unloaded federal equipment to establish a federal medical station.

Federal, state and local assets are coming together to open this facility which can house non-COVID 19 patients with less severe conditions if and when regional hospitals become full.

The Soldiers are from the 103rd Engineer Battalion, a unit which traces its origins to the Associators, constituted in 1747 in Philadelphia by Benjamin Franklin. They spent two days unloading trucks, unpacking boxes and setting up beds.

“We were one part of a team of teams coming together to support the local community,” said Maj. Joseph D. Martinkis, commander of the 103rd Engineer Battalion. “Being able to work alongside these civilian authorities is part of the diverse skill set held by our National Guardsmen.”

**Puerto Rico**

Puerto Rico National Guard has 544 soldiers and airmen working directly in support of the COVID-19 response.

The PRNG is collaborating with island medical schools, and more than 60 medical students are supporting the screening and triage mission in the five airports around the island.

As of Thursday afternoon, there have been 45,646 people medically evaluated and temperatures screened by PRNG soldiers and airmen at all five airports on the island. Of those, 153 passengers were referred for additional screening at the airports triage areas; 55 passengers were tested for COVID-19, counseled and sent home under the PR Department of Health supervision and their family doctor; and 130 passengers have been referred for home domiciliary quarantine.

In coordination with FEMA, PRNG soldiers installed a portable mobile hospital in Mayaguez, on the west side of the island.
Washington

The Washington National Guard has 130 soldiers and airmen that will be supporting food banks starting this week through the month of April. Citizen airmen and soldiers will support 11 food banks throughout the state. Guardsmen are assisting during this health crisis by transporting, packaging and distribution of food to homes, community-based locations and partner agencies in neighboring communities.

Washington also has a Dual Status Commander and our Joint Task Force activated to support activities in the state.

West Virginia

Currently, more than 420 members of the West Virginia National Guard are serving the state of West Virginia.

*Over the last 24 hours, experts from the WVNG Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Response Enterprise task force conducted 20 training missions today for retailers, food establishments and convenience stores in proper cargo, box handling and PPE wear.

*Food bank missions — packed and distributed 2,007 meals from two locations using refrigerated trucks to deliver 5,500 meals today.

Data analysis and contact tracing for 430 engagements and eight expedited specimen transfers to the West Virginia state lab. Soldiers are working two drive-through testing sites in the state.

*The state logistics team delivered critical personal protective equipment to all 55 counties in West Virginia, yesterday.

This story will continue to be updated as the National Guard Bureau releases daily reports on National Guard activities nationwide. If you or someone you know has been called up to State Active Duty status, please contact Military Times managing editor Howard Altman, haltman@militarytimes.com, if you are interested in sharing about your experience.


Military personnel to handle coronavirus patients at facilities in NYC, New Orleans and Dallas
Military personnel will begin treating coronavirus patients at new medical facilities that have popped up in the cities of New York, New Orleans and Dallas, the White House said Thursday, marking a shift in policy for how the Pentagon is aiding in the medical response to the pandemic.

Vice President Pence said at a White House briefing on the virus that President Trump had directed the Department of Defense to use military personnel to operate facilities fully focused on coronavirus patients.

The move comes one day after Defense Secretary Mark Esper said in response to a question from The Hill that the military would not be treating coronavirus patients unless "push comes to shove," asserting the Pentagon's resources are better used building hospitals and treating trauma patients to lighten the load on hospitals.

Instead, the military will operate the Javits Center in New York City, the convention center in New Orleans and the convention center in Dallas.

All three facilities were turned into makeshift hospitals by the Army Corps of Engineers and National Guard to help deal with the surge in patients, though they were initially expected to only house people dealing with illnesses other than coronavirus to help ease the burden on existing hospitals.

The Pentagon has also deployed Naval hospital ships to New York City and Los Angeles to provide additional hospital bed capacity for non-coronavirus patients.

But The New York Times reported on Thursday that the USNS Comfort in New York has only taken on 20 patients, infuriating hospital executives who were grappling with a lack of space in their own facilities.

The increased participation by the military reflects the reality that cities across the country are scrambling to find as many hospital beds as possible to treat coronavirus patients as cases surge in certain metro areas.

There were more than 245,000 confirmed coronavirus cases in the U.S. as of Thursday night, according to Johns Hopkins University data, and more than 5,000 Americans had died from the virus.


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UVA student activated by National Guard nearly forced to withdraw from school

WIVR, April 2, 2020:

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. (WVIR) - One University of Virginia law student is doing more than just getting used to online classes: she’s also helping the Army National Guard’s relief efforts in New York City. However, when the university found out, it said she was in violation of academic policy and said she would have to withdraw from school.

Frannie Skardon, a “1-L” or first-year law student, is a member of the New York Army National Guard. When she informed the university that her unit had been activated, the school said she would have to withdraw, citing a portion of the law school’s academic policies prohibiting students from working during the school year, in order to keep them focused on their legal studies.

Skardon filed an appeal and authored a petition, asking UVA Law students and faculty for support.

“Because campus is closed, I am learning and engaging in the law school community in the same format as students scattered across the nation,” Skardon said in her petition. “I am tracking the rapid spread of the virus to support my unit’s mission, but I am also given at least six hours a day for law school.”

The petition gained nearly 6,000 signatures. In an announcement Thursday, April 2, UVA Law’s Academic Review Committee reversed its decision and granted Skardon an exception to the policy. She will be allowed to continue her work with the National Guard, while also continuing classes online.

“I would like to thank every person who signed my petition, wrote a letter, or shared my story,” Skardon said in a follow-up statement. “I am very moved at the outpouring of support and cannot thank each one of you enough.”

In a statement, UVA Law apologized for any uncertainty the process may have caused. It said it is thankful for the service of men and women in uniform, and thrilled at the decision of the Academic Review Committee.

The 1,000-Bed Comfort Was Supposed to Aid New York. It Has 20 Patients.:
“It’s a joke,” said a top hospital executive, whose facilities are packed with coronavirus patients.

New York Times, April 3, 2020:

Such were the expectations for the Navy hospital ship U.S.N.S. Comfort that when it chugged into New York Harbor this week, throngs of people, momentarily forgetting the strictures of social distancing, crammed together along Manhattan’s west side to catch a glimpse.

On Thursday, though, the huge white vessel, which officials had promised would bring succor to a city on the brink, sat mostly empty, infuriating executives at local hospitals. The ship’s 1,000 beds are largely unused, its 1,200-member crew mostly idle.

Only 20 patients had been transferred to the ship, officials said, even as New York hospitals struggled to find space for the thousands infected with the coronavirus. Another Navy hospital ship, the U.S.N.S. Mercy, docked in Los Angeles, has had a total of 15 patients, officials said.

“If I’m blunt about it, it’s a joke,” said Michael Dowling, the head of Northwell Health, New York’s largest hospital system. “Everyone can say, ‘Thank you for putting up these wonderful places and opening up these cavernous halls.’ But we’re in a crisis here, we’re in a battlefield.”

The Comfort was sent to New York to relieve pressure on city hospitals by treating people with ailments other than Covid-19, the illness caused by the coronavirus.

President Trump left a nine-day sequester in the White House last week to travel to Norfolk, Va., to personally see off the ship as it set sail for New York, saying it would play a “critical role.” The ship’s arrival on Monday was cheered as one of the few bright moments in a grim time for the city.

But the reality has been different. A tangle of military protocols and bureaucratic hurdles has prevented the Comfort from accepting many patients at all.

On top of its strict rules preventing people infected with the virus from coming on board, the Navy is also refusing to treat a host of other conditions. Guidelines disseminated to hospitals included a list of 49 medical conditions that would exclude a patient from admittance to the ship.

Ambulances cannot take patients directly to the Comfort; they must first deliver patients to a city hospital for a lengthy evaluation — including a test for the virus — and then pick them up again for transport to the ship.
At a morning briefing on Thursday, officials said three patients had been moved to the Comfort. After The New York Times published an article with that number, Elizabeth Baker, a spokeswoman for the Navy, said the number had increased to 20 by late in the day. “We’re bringing them on as fast as we can bring them on,” she said.

Hospital leaders said they were exasperated by the delays.

Mr. Dowling said he has had to tear his hospitals apart, retrofitting any unused space, including lobbies and conference rooms, into hospital wards. His facilities now house 2,800 so-called Covid patients, up from 100 on March 20, he said. About 25 percent of those are in serious conditions in intensive care units.

Across the city, hospitals are overrun. Patients have died in hallways before they could even be hooked up to one of the few available ventilators in New York. Doctors and nurses, who have had to use the same protective gear again and again, are getting sick. So many people are dying that the city is running low on body bags.

At the same time, there is not a high volume of noncoronavirus patients. Because most New Yorkers have isolated themselves in their homes, there are fewer injuries from car accidents, gun shots and construction accidents that would require an emergency room visit.

Ultimately, Mr. Dowling and others said, if the Comfort refuses to take Covid patients, there are few patients to send. And given the pernicious spread of the disease in New York City, where nearly 50,000 were infected as of Thursday, dividing patients into those who have it and those who do not is pointless, he said.

The solution, he and others said, was to open the Comfort to patients with Covid-19.

“It’s pretty ridiculous,” he said. “If you’re not going to help us with the people we need help with, what’s the purpose?”

Asked about Mr. Dowling’s criticisms, the Defense Department referred to Mr. Trump’s statements about the Comfort at his daily briefing. The president said only that the ship was not accepting patients with the coronavirus.

Late Thursday, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo of New York reached an agreement with Mr. Trump to bring Covid patients to the Javits Convention Center in Manhattan, another alternative site operated by the military, with 2,500 hospital beds.

“I asked President Trump this morning to consider the request and the urgency of the matter, and the President has just informed me that he granted New York’s request,” Mr. Cuomo said in a statement.

There was no word about doing the same with the U.S.N.S. Comfort.
Capt. Patrick Amersbach, the commanding officer of the medical personnel aboard the Comfort, said at a news conference that, for now, his orders were to accept only patients who had tested negative for the virus. If ordered to accept coronavirus patients, he said, the ship could be reconfigured to make that happen.

“If our mission shifts, we do what we can to meet that mission,” he said.

From the outset, readying the hospital ship for use in a pandemic proved a challenge. The Comfort was built to operate in battlefield conditions, and its physicians accustomed to treating young, otherwise healthy soldiers suffering from injuries related to gunshots and bomb blasts. Most people who are hospitalized with Covid-19 are older and infected with a novel pathogen that even the world’s top medical researchers do not fully understand.

Any outbreak on board could quickly spread and disable the ship’s operations. As a precaution, the ship’s crew isolated for two weeks before embarking on their mission to New York. They must remain onboard for the duration of their mission in New York.

The ship has struggled to fulfill civilian missions in the past. After Hurricane Maria pummeled Puerto Rico in 2017, the Comfort was sent to relieve overextended hospitals, but ended up treating only a handful of patients each day.

A military physician who had previously served on the Navy’s hospital ships said in an interview that conditions on board were suitable for soldiers, but, with its narrow bunked cots instead of modern hospital beds, it was not ideal for treating civilians.

Though military physicians are accustomed to battlefield situations, they are well-trained, and should be able to handle strains of the pandemic if ordered to treat patients with the coronavirus, he said.

“As military doctors,” he said, “they would absolutely do their best.”


**Troopers: Women pretended to have COVID-19 at Cicero store, pepper-sprayed employees**

WSTM, April 2, 2020 :

CICERO, N.Y. (WSTM) -- New York State Police say two women caused quite a scene at a store in Cicero, coughing in employees' faces, saying they had COVID-19 and then allegedly pepper-sprayed the staff members trying to report them to police.
Troopers say the two women, Lenaysia Myles, 28, of Syracuse and Imani Huggins, 23, of Cicero, went into Ollie's Bargain Outlet on Frontage Rd. in Cicero Wednesday afternoon and started coughing in the faces of employees. The women said they had coronavirus, state police said.

According to New York State Police, the women were suspected of shoplifting, and as they were leaving the store, they began coughing in employees' faces.

When the women went out to their car, state police say the employees followed, attempting to get their license plate number. That's when Myles allegedly pulled out pepper spray and sprayed the employees.

The women drove off and were later caught by North Syracuse police. Both have a criminal history, troopers said.

“As history has taught us, a national crisis can bring out the very best in Americans and sadly sometimes the very

Myles is charged with first-degree harassment, third-degree criminal possession of a weapon, menacing and unlawful possession of noxious material. She was taken to the Onondaga County Justice Center and is being held on $5,000 bail.

Huggins is charged with first-degree harassment and was issued an appearance ticket. She's scheduled to appear in Cicero Town Court on June 16.

The employees were not hurt, state police said.


In times of crisis, the National Guard is deployed. Here's what troops are doing amid the coronavirus pandemic.

USA Today, 4/2/20:
More than 17,250 National Guard troops have been deployed in all 50 states and territories to help battle the coronavirus pandemic in a wide variety of assignments from disinfecting nursing homes in Georgia to removing the bodies of victims in New York City to helping police in Rhode Island pull over motorists with New York tags entering the state.

Defense Secretary Mark Esper said Tuesday that increasing numbers of states will be using the guard, and they have the option of using troops to enforce stay-at-home orders.

“I'm very proud of what our guardsmen are doing, but we have a whole lot more capacity out there in the guard right now to do more,” Esper said on CBS News.

Most recently, Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp said Wednesday that he is deploying his state's National Guard to assisted living facilities and nursing homes to thoroughly clean them and train staff on employing more aggressive infectious disease control measures.

"If we can keep these populations as healthy as possible, we will be able to conserve precious medical supplies and hospital bed space in the coming days and weeks," Kemp said. More than 100 guard members will be deployed in the effort.

Calling up the guard

The National Guard, which is community-based, reports to the governor of a state unless called to protect U.S. domestic interests in times of conflict or natural disaster, or even internationally alongside full-time service members.

Members of the Army or Air National Guard, which number almost 450,000 across the U.S. and its territories, hold civilian jobs or attend school while training part-time for the military.

In most cases, the governor calls them up after declaring a state of emergency, such as a severe storm or a domestic disturbance.

They also can be federalized by the president, who can then deploy them to other states, such as during natural disasters like Hurricane Katrina.

In 1958, President Dwight Eisenhower federalized Arkansas National Guard troops to take them out of the hands of Gov. Orval Faubus, who had called them out to block court-ordered integration of a public school in Little Rock. Eisenhower, acting as commander-in-chief, not only took control of the troops, he paired them with 101st Airborne to escort African American students to school.

What the guard is doing nationwide

Amid the coronavirus pandemic, the guard has been mobilized in all 50 states, as well as Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Washington, D.C.
In a move that speeds up mobilization, President Donald Trump has placed at least 12 states or territories under Title 32 status, which allows states to maintain control of the troops while the federal government picks up the tab.

April Cunningham, spokeswoman for the National Guard Bureau, told USA TODAY that the number of mobilizations is "moving so rapidly" it is difficult to provide a state-by-state breakdown. But as of Tuesday morning, she said, more than 17,250 Air and Army National Guard professionals were operating at the direction of their governors.

To qualify for Title 32 status, states must, among other things, have a major disaster declaration for the COVID-19 response or have requested such a review by the Federal Emergency Management Agency and have explained how the troops would be used.

Here's how the guard has been deployed across the country:

- In Michigan, about 3,000 National Guard troops will help run mobile screening facilities, distribute food and medical supplies and disinfect public spaces. Gov. Gretchen Whitmer also plans to deploy guard members to work with the Federal Emergency Management Agency to build a temporary medical center inside Detroit’s TCF Center.
- In New York, the state hit hardest by the pandemic, more than 27,000 guard members are putting up a temporary hospital, delivering supplies, clearing roads, taking coronavirus samples at testing centers and even manning call centers.
- "Although staffing a call center is not what many of us foresaw when we joined the National Guard, it is a way for us to assist our fellow citizens and connect them with the information they need," said Army 1st Lt. Michel Flickinger, the officer in charge of the Schenectady call center, according to the guard's national website.
- The New York deployment was one of the earliest during the outbreak to help with residents of New Rochelle, which was under quarantine.
- In New York City, guard members also will be working with members of the New York City Medical Examiner's office to help remove bodies, said Col. Richard Goldenberg, New York Army National Guard public affairs officer.
- In Arizona, a team of 19 National Guard soldiers built a 50-bed federal medical station overnight Sunday to begin supporting the Navajo Nation in the fight against the pandemic.
- In Iowa, eight National Guard troops set up two tents last week at a Department of Veterans Affairs hospital to screen visitors for the virus.
- In Kentucky, troops have been stationed outside Louisville hospitals, and Gov. Andy Beshear has mobilized 70 members to food bank warehouses around the state to assist in sorting, packing and distributing food.
- In West Virginia, about 350 guard members are delivering medical supplies to health care workers, educating big-box retail stores, restaurants and convenience stores on protective measures, and even directing traffic at drive-through testing sites.
'It is not a police activity'

In some cases, the guard has been used to bolster police efforts to enforce quarantines.

In Rhode Island, guard troops joined police to man checkpoints on Interstate 95 and other routes into the state to stop cars with license plates from New York, which is the epicenter of the outbreak.

In an executive order, Gov. Gina Raimondo said New York residents entering Rhode Island for a nonwork purpose for a period of time must self-quarantine for 14 days. That was later expanded the order to anyone entering the state.

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo called the order “reactionary” and unconstitutional, saying he’d sue Rhode Island if the policy isn’t rescinded but believed the two states could “work it out.”

In the coastal town of Westerly, a guard member also accompanied a police officer door to door to get contact information from visiting New Yorkers and to tell them they must self-quarantine. They were expected to visit 1,000 homes with that message.

“This is more of an education tool to make people aware and comply with what we are asking them to do,” Westerly police Chief Shawn Lacey said. “We certainly hope it doesn’t get to enforcement action that has to happen.”

In Westerly, six teams went “driveway to driveway,” as Lacey put it, to identify cars, SUVs and trucks with New York license plates. Then the pairs, one police officer and one guard member, approached whomever was living in the house.

On Friday, a spokesman for the guard, Capt. Mark Incze, stressed that information gathered by guard personnel will go to the Rhode Island Department of Health and not to federal immigration authorities, he said.

National Guard bureau chief Air Force Gen. Joe Lengyel stressed in a meeting with reporters and in a livestream town hall meeting with guard members Tuesday that they would not be used in a law enforcement role.

He specifically sought to dispose of what he said were rumors of martial law.

“Some of it is just people are just concerned, and scared and anxious,” he said. “And then we probably have external actors – countries that want to sow chaos in the United States and are injecting some of this into the ecosystem, if you will.”

Lengyel said there has been no discussion at the highest levels either of a national quarantine, of using troops to enforce any local restrictions “or any of the other nonsense that’s out there.”
In New Rochelle, New York, local officials took pains to stress that guard troops were there to clean and sanitize public areas and hand out food, not to enforce the quarantine.

"It is not a police activity. They are not in tanks, they are in regular vehicles. They are not armed," said New Rochelle City Manager Charles Strome, NY1.com reported.

National Guard Bureau spokeswoman Cunningham said troops can be used for everything from traffic control to crowd control, but there is no plan to use them to impose quarantine, enforce shelter-in-place operations, "or any kind of large-scale lockdown capacity."

"In any scenario where National Guard are called upon to conduct law enforcement operations, they are paired with civilian law enforcement that has appropriate jurisdictional control for that area," Cunningham said.

In Washington state, Gov. Jay Inslee said the guard was being mobilized to "ensure our critical food banks remain stocked and operational." He asked residents to "welcome them in our communities as they process, package and distribute meals."

His spokesman, David Postman, took pains to try to reassure residents nervous of such deployments.

“I would not expect the National Guard to be playing any law enforcement or road closure role or anything of that sort,” Postman said. “There is nothing alarming. It’s not being done because of any increased threat. It’s not being done because of any increased restrictions that the governor is going to announce. It’s just to help some of the operations that are going on today in a support role.”


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NY National Guard staffing call center to fight COVID-19

Army.mil ,By Tech. Sgt. Ryan Campbell | New York National Guard March 31, 2020:

LATHAM, N.Y. – Nearly 100 New York National Guard Airmen and Soldiers are staffing three telephone call centers as part of New York state's response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

The Guard members are taking calls placed to New York's Novel Coronavirus Hotline, answering questions about COVID-19 at call centers in Brooklyn, Rotterdam and Schenectady. Guard Soldiers also staffed a call center in Hawthorne in the Hudson Valley for two weeks.
Along with the other unique challenges presented by the virus, taking phone calls from residents of New York is a first for the New York Guard.

Guard Soldiers and Airmen traditionally turn out in emergencies to deliver supplies, clear roads, make health and wellness checks or direct traffic. The COVID-19 response has 2,700 Guard Airmen and Soldiers undertaking new tasks like taking samples at COVID-19 testing centers and putting up a temporary hospital.

Working in the call centers is a unique mission, Maj. Gen. Timothy LaBarge, commander of the New York Air National Guard, said after visiting the Rotterdam center.

"COVID-19 is a unique situation that directly threatens our communities," said Army 1st Lt. Michel Flickinger, the officer in charge of the Schenectady call center. "Although staffing a call center is not what many of us foresaw when we joined the National Guard, it is a way for us to assist our fellow citizens and connect them with the information they need."

Soldiers assigned to the 53rd Troop Command, operating out of Camp Smith Training Site, were the first with a call center mission. The state set up a call center in the Hudson Valley Transportation Center in Hawthorne March 11.

When that call center was closed, the Soldiers who had worked at the Hawthorne center moved to the center in Rotterdam.

The call centers have seen a vast fluctuation in daily calls as new information is put out by political leaders, explained Army 1st Lt. Amanda Hart, the officer in charge of the Rotterdam call center.

"The fluctuation is usually somewhere between 5,000 (calls a day) to the highest, which was approximately 28,000," Hart said. "It is a grand total to date of approximately 260,000 calls in the past couple weeks."

The Soldiers and Airmen are not working the call centers by themselves. Around 590 people – mostly state employees who work in call centers or handle calls from home – are also answering the state's 1-888-364-3065 information number.

But the Guard call-takers have played a big part, according to state officials.

Before the Guard members showed up, wait times on hold to speak to someone at the call centers was over an hour, explained Army Staff Sgt. Michael Alvarez, the noncommissioned officer in charge of the Rotterdam call center.

Alvarez said they all realize how crucial the information is that the call centers are providing.

"When we first arrived and before we got started, call volumes and wait times were through the roof," Alvarez said. "As we integrated into the call center, they drastically dropped and leveled out, ensuring stress and anxiety of the public were being helped tremendously."
"Knowing test sites and areas, also guidelines on what to do if known symptoms are showing," Alvarez said. "Professionalism and honesty will end up saving lives, and I think we have been on the right path to that."

"We've made a huge impact on the call center," Hart said. "Within a couple days of getting there, we learned that the civilians that also volunteer to do this were doing 16 hour days with no day off and minimal breaks because of the high call volume."

Adding Guard members to the call centers reduced average wait times to about 6 minutes and decreased the stress of the work environment, Hart said.

Apart from providing information and guidance about COVID-19, the Guard members have found that some people just needed someone to talk to about what they're experiencing.

Flickinger said his team has adjusted to these unique circumstances in a way that gives him confidence they are ready to face whatever comes next.

For Hart, who joined the Guard after active Army service, this experience is providing a feeling he wasn't sure he would get in the National Guard.

"After having a 13-month deployment in Afghanistan on active duty, I was skeptical about going into the National Guard and not being able to participate for my country," Hart said. "But I was greatly mistaken!"

Hart said that along with the current state activation for COVID-19, she also participated in the October 2017 response to Hurricane Maria by going to Puerto Rico with elements of the New York National Guard.

"I've definitely found my new passion," Hart said. "Just because you're not overseas doesn't mean you're not giving it all that you can for your country."

The Airmen and Soldiers volunteered for state active duty for this mission.

"It's my job to volunteer and help communities, states and my country," Alvarez said. "Every time I put this uniform on, no matter how small or big the mission is, it's always about the bigger picture."

As of the end of March, New York has 2,750 personnel on missions across the state between the New York Air and Army National Guard, the New York Guard; the State Defense Force and the New York Naval Militia.

"When this is all over, I hope New York, America as a whole will be resilient as they've always been and come back stronger than ever, which we all know it will," Alvarez said. "I'm proud of everyone and every essential worker, nurses, doctors, military, everyone."

Ft. Bragg soldiers help build massive temporary medical station in downtown NYC

WBTV, 4/1/20:

NEW YORK, N.Y. (WBTV) - Soldiers from Fort Bragg in North Carolina were among those helping to build a massive temporary medical station in New York City.

The help comes as hospitals in New York City are over being overwhelmed with patients due to the coronavirus. New York authorities rushed to bring in an army of medical volunteers on Tuesday as the death toll in the city climbed past 1,000.

According to Fort Bragg’s Facebook page, 3rd Expeditionary Sustainment Command and 44th Medical Brigade from the base joined Civil Support from Fort Eustis, Va., contractors, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers personnel and New York National Guard service members to help build the temporary station.

The medical station was set up in the Jacob Javits Convention Center in downtown New York City in support of the Department of Defense COVID-19 response.

Other groups based in North Carolina have also joined organizations from across the country to help New York City deal with the outbreak.

After transporting materials from North Carolina to New York and moving quickly to assemble them, Samaritan’s Purse has opened a field hospital in Central Park.

What the Christian organization calls its “emergency relief hospital” has been used for hurricane and war relief, but it is now being used to help fight the pandemic.


UB nursing student called to active duty with National Guard

UB Now, 4/1/20:

A UB nursing student who is also a lieutenant with a National Guard medical unit based in Buffalo is among those called to active duty by the Guard in mid-March in response to the COVID-19 crisis.
Lt. A. Fox [first name withheld by request] is a medical services officer assigned to Charlie Company, 427th Brigade Support Battalion, based at the Connecticut Street Armory.

The National Guard medics have been sent to the New York State downstate region to assist at COVID-19 testing sites.

“I was among those in our unit who were assigned to Stratton Air National Guard Base in Schenectady,” Fox said on Friday. “We were assembling test kits — biohazard bags, swabs and vials — to be sent where they were needed around the state.

“Other medics from my unit have been assigned to drive-in testing sites on Staten Island, and in The Bronx and New Rochelle, conducting testing with the swabs.”

Fox, who is from Lockport, graduated with a BS in animal behavior, ecology and conservation from Canisius College in 2017. She is enrolled in the Accelerated Baccalaureate Degree in Nursing (ABS) Program in the School of Nursing.

“I have been in the Guard for several years and have done volunteer activations before, but this is my first mandatory active duty mission,” she said.

Fox said her unit was assigned on a support mission, coordinating people and supplies and then delivering them where they are needed.

“We put the kits together pretty rapidly, in assembly-line fashion. We were there for more than a week and assembled 24,000 kits, with requests coming in from around the state.”

As her unit’s second-in-command, Fox said much of what she is focused on is day-to-day operations.

“Coordinating soldiers, meals, rest cycles — this is going to be a long mission and addressing and fixing small problems before they become big ones is important,” she said.

Dan Ryan, director of UB’s Veteran Services office, explained that many service members today “have the expertise to assist with medical care, build field hospitals, provide shelter or transport food, medical equipment and people to meet the needs of the public in a crisis. That is now happening in New York, as well as other states.

“UB students who are veterans in the National Guard or members of the reserves who are called to active duty are an integral part of our campus community,” Ryan said.

“UB honors and supports the men and women of the United States Armed Forces.”

On Friday, Fox spoke to UBNow as her unit was packing up to move to a new assignment.

“We will be setting up a field hospital at an air base near Syracuse,” she said. “Our medics are trained in basic medical procedures, like EMTs, so that is what we are set up for.”
Asked for her reaction to what she is seeing and doing on active duty, Fox said, “Young people need to take this seriously and pay attention to what is happening in their communities. This is a novel virus, meaning it is a new strain and therefore spreads very easily. It affects everyone and not just older people.

“It may be hard to think about it when it is not directly around you,” she said. “This one of those times when everyone can make a difference.”


Newburgh Cafe feeding hungry National Guard troops

March 31, 2020:

TOWN OF NEWBURGH – About a week ago, the owners of Hudson Street Café in Newburgh received a call of duty to prepare 500 meals a day for members of the National Guard responding to the coronavirus crisis.

The call came not long after a man with the National Guard stopped into the small restaurant on South Plank Road for breakfast.

Anne Pavek, co-owner of the cafe, said he was on his way to his deployment and mentioned the restaurant should become involved with making meals for them.

“He must’ve said something,” Pavek said Tuesday.

Hudson Street Café received a call about a week later from the National Guard asking for their help.

Since then, a small staff at the café has worked day and night to prepare hundreds of breakfast, lunch and dinner meals.

Pavek said she does not know exactly where the meals are going – if they are going to the National Guard working in New York City or Rockland County or elsewhere.

“We didn’t feel it was our place to ask,” Pavek said, but noted all National Guard members they are feeding are responding to the COVID-19 battle.

On Tuesday, Hudson Street Café provided 600 meals, including 100 breakfasts, which required them to start working at 2 a.m.

They won’t continue providing breakfasts because of the strain on the small staff working from early in the morning until 7 p.m.
But they are grateful and honored to help in any way they can, Pavek said, in-part because this work will save the café.

All of the Times Herald-Records’s coverage of coronavirus is being provided for free to our readers. Please consider supporting local journalism by subscribing to the Record at recordonline.com/subscribe.

Business had slowed in the weeks leading up to Gov. Andrew Cuomo’s announcement restricting business operations because of the coronavirus.

We had very loyal customers doing takeout, but it’s not the same as what we’re usually doing,” Pavek said.

Pavek and co-owner and chef Donna Hammond decided to operate the restaurant alone and lay off their employees because they would make more money by collecting unemployment than they would with reduced work hours.

Pavek said the restaurant will be reimbursed a certain amount of money from the federal government for each meal they provide.


N.Y. Rep. Max Rose deploys for National Guard service in war against coronavirus

Daily News, March 31, 2020 ::

New York Rep. Max Rose is going to war against the coronavirus — literally.

The freshman Democrat announced Tuesday he’s reenlisting in the U.S. military to be deployed as part of a National Guard platoon fighting the virus on his native Staten Island.

Rose, a U.S. Army combat veteran of the war in Afghanistan, said in a statement that he’s shipping off Wednesday and will work at facilities in the fifth borough over the coming weeks to assist in “coronavirus response efforts.”

“Over the past month I have seen acts of incredible bravery and sacrifice by our first responders,” Rose, 33, said. “My activation and deployment is nothing compared to what our city, state and country has asked of all them. And it’s certainly nothing compared to the other men and women serving in uniform both here at home and overseas. I am just trying to do my duty and my small part.”
Among other emergency services on Staten Island, the National Guard is offering drive-
through COVID-19 testing in the parking lot of the South Beach Psychiatric Center in the Ocean Breeze neighborhood.

Rose, who represents all of Staten Island and a sliver of south Brooklyn, said he will continue his day job as a member of the House of Representatives and return to Capitol Hill for votes as necessary.

“That’s a privilege and responsibility that I take very seriously,” he said. "I’m also grateful to have an amazing staff who will continue their work on behalf of Staten Islanders and South Brooklynites. Together, I know we will overcome this pandemic.”

Latest coronavirus updates: Click here for our roundup of the most important developments from NYC and around the world.


NY Governor praises National Guard members for dedication

Army.mil, March 28, 2020 :

NEW YORK — New York Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo praised the courage, skill and dedication of members of the New York Army and Air National Guard during a press conference at the Javits Convention Center in New York City on Friday, March 27.

“You are the best of us, and when we call on you, you are there,” Cuomo told Guardsmen in the audience during his daily press briefing on New York efforts to contain the COVID-19 coronavirus.

The governor’s comments came during a press conference held at the Javits Center to mark efforts to convert the facility into a 1,000-bed hospital to ease the strain on city hospitals coping with coronavirus patients.

“If we had a year to do this we wouldn’t have been able to get it done, “said Col. (Dr.) Jamie Green, the New York Army National Guard medical liaison at the Javits Center. “But we’ve gone and created a hospital in just four to five days. From scratch.”

Members of the New York National Guard 133rd Composite Supply Company helped unpack, layout and assemble the hospital facilities.
“Every time the National Guard has been called out, they have made every New Yorker proud and I am proud to be with you yet again and I am proud to fight this fight with you,” the governor said.

“I bring you thanks from all New Yorkers who are so proud of the sacrifice you are making, the skills you are bringing and the talent you are bringing and you give New Yorkers confidence.”

The governor also emphasized that the Guard men and women were part of an historic moment.

“Ten years from now, you'll be talking about today to your children or your grandchildren and you will shed a tear because you will remember the lives lost. You'll remember the faces and you'll remember the names and you'll remember how hard we worked and that we still lost loved ones,” he said.

“And you'll shed a tear and you should because it will be sad. But, you will also be proud. You'll be proud of what you did. You'll be proud that you showed up. You showed up when other people played it safe. You had the courage to show up. You had the skill and the professionalism to make a difference and save lives. That's what you will have done,” Cuomo said.

1st Lt. James Rucinski, a member of the 104th Military Police Battalion, said the governor’s comments summarized the mission for him.

“I am from New York City, born and raised from Manhattan, and I’ve never seen anything like this. And this is quite an amazing operation to be part of,” he said.

“The governor’s press conference really summed it up well when he said it was an historic event,” he said.

New York Army National Guard Sgt. Andrew Golson, a member of the 133rd Composite Supply Company from Brooklyn, said he and other members of the company were proud to be part of the mission.

“As a military member we are here for the people. So any time we can assist and help in any capacity, we are all ready for the call. I think that is something that is going to be a mark in history that we are all proud to be a part of,” he said.

Getting the hospital up and running “is just the beginning of the fight,” said. Col. Dennis Deeley, who has been tapped to head a National Guard led unified command post at the Javits Center.

In his remarks to the Guard Soldiers in his audience, the governor emphasized that this effort will be long term.
“This is a different beast that we're dealing with,” the governor said. “This is an invisible beast. It is an insidious beast.”

“This is not going to be a short deployment. This is not going to be that you go out there for a few days. We work hard and we go home. This is going to be weeks and weeks and weeks,” he emphasized.

The governor also stressed that he would be demanding more of National Guard members than he normally does.

“This is going to be a long day and it's going to be a hard day, and it's going to be an ugly day, and it's going to be a sad day,” Cuomo said.

“The rescue mission is to save lives and as hard as we work, we're not going to be able to save everyone. And what's even more cruel is this enemy doesn't attack the strongest of us. It attacks the weakest of us,” he added.

The governor also promised his support to the National Guard Soldiers and Airmen and their efforts.

“I promise you I will not ask you to do anything that I will not do myself. And the same is true here. We're going to do this and we're going to do this together,” he said.

“At the end of the day, nobody can ask anything more from you,” Cuomo said. “That is your duty, to do what you can when you can. You will have shown skill and courage and talent.”

“You'll be there with your mind, you'll be there with your heart and you'll serve with honor. That will give you pride and you should be proud. I know that I am proud of you,” he said.

“So I say, my friends, that we go out there today and we kick coronavirus' ass, that's what I say. And we're going to save lives and New York is going to thank you. God bless each and every one of you,” Cuomo said.


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Regional food bank delivers nearly 10 tons of food for those in coronavirus quarantine:Albany County Executive says IDAs get OK to provide quick loans, grants to small businesses

Times Union: March 30, 2020:
ALBANY — The Regional Food Bank of Northeastern New York delivered over 19,000 pounds of food Monday to the Times Union Center, where it will be divided for distribution to families under mandatory and precautionary quarantine due to coronavirus.

The state's National Guard will deliver the food, which includes pasta, peanut butter, soup, canned vegetables, rice, pork, chicken, apples and eggs, among other items, said Albany County Executive Daniel McCoy. The deliveries are expected to start Tuesday.

In addition to giving meals to people in quarantine, the 25 National Guard members on the assignment will also provide food to senior citizens and people who cannot afford to buy food, McCoy said.

"Thank you to all the guard members that have volunteered to step up and go out into the community, not just here in the Capital District but through the whole state and especially downstate to get them ready for what's coming," he said.

McCoy made the announcement at his daily news briefing on coronavirus cases in the county. He said cases rose overnight to 199 from 187 on Sunday. Fifteen people are currently hospitalized with the virus, he said, and seven of them are adults in intensive care units. The county announced its first death over the weekend — a man in his 70s with underlying medical conditions died at St. Peter's Hospital.

McCoy said 559 people are now under mandatory quarantine, up from 505 on Sunday, and 223 are under precautionary quarantine, down from 233 on Sunday.

Albany County Health Commissioner Elizabeth Whalen again reminded the public that the lack of widespread testing for coronavirus is masking the number of actual cases in the county.

"It leaves us a little bit in the dark about how this is evolving in the county," she said.

McCoy said he will "hopefully" have news on community testing to announce in the coming days.

Whalen said it's hard to predict when the Capital Region will see a peak in cases, but that it's probably safe to assume it will occur in the week or so after New York City hits its peak, which has been predicted for one to two weeks from now.

"This remains a very active situation," she said. "I don't think people understand that we have not yet reached where we could be in the coming weeks, so the important message is to stay home and to avoid contact with others, especially if you are in the vulnerable groups."

Help for small businesses

McCoy also announced Monday that the governor's office has agreed to let industrial development agencies (IDAs) issue quick loans and grants to help small and medium-sized
businesses get through the mandatory shutdowns that have put them out of work. He said he's already working with the county Legislature, IDA and Capital Resource Corporation to get a relief program up and running quickly.

It's unclear how much relief may be granted, but in a letter sent to the governor on Thursday McCoy requested waivers for IDAs to issue direct loans to businesses of up to $50,000 each.

McCoy said Monday that he spoke to several companies who noted that the application process alone for relief through the Small Business Administration has been time-consuming, and the fear is that money could take weeks or months to flow out.

"The SBA has over 25,000 people that applied," McCoy said. "How quickly are they going to move through the red tape to get the money in people's hands? Because people need the money today. They don’t need it tomorrow, they need it today. So that’s one thing we’re trying to address through all this is to make sure the money gets out quicker."

The hope, he said, is that the grants will be a raft that enables businesses to keep more employees on, especially those who live paycheck to paycheck.

"This is going to help us be a little bit quicker to get money out there, to keep these businesses going, maybe have them employ a few more people to help work in the kitchens and get food out into the community," he said.


**New York’s Javits Center completes transformation into 1,200 bed emergency hospital**

The Architects Newspaper, March 30, 2020:

A 1,200-bed field hospital, established in response to the dire need for additional hospital beds as the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) overwhelms New York City’s existing medical infrastructure, opened today at the Jacob K. Javits Center.

The Army Corps of Engineers, along with civilian staff and members of the New York National Guard, executed the dramatic transformation of the Javits Center from a normally bustling venue for trade shows and conventions to a fully equipped overflow medical facility in just one week.

If needed, the makeshift hospital at the Javits Center can be expanded to accommodate 2,910 beds. This would make it one of the largest hospitals in America, regardless of ephemerality,
according to ABC News. By comparison, New York-Presbyterian, the city’s largest hospital, has a 2,600-bed capacity.

First floated as a potential field hospital earlier this month, the Javits Center, a vast green-roofed, glass-encased complex on Manhattan’s far West Side designed by Pei Cobb Freed & Partners, is the first of several Army Corps-identified facilities across the five boroughs to be adapted into a temporary medical hub.

Late last week, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo announced that the Army Corps, pending approval from the White House, will also convert four other facilities with considerable square footage into field hospitals: The Aqueduct Racetrack in Queens, the New York Expo Center in Bronx, CUNY Staten Island, and the Brooklyn Cruise Terminal in Red Hook. These four facilities will have the capacity for a combined 4,000 additional hospital beds as even more sites, including the Brooklyn Center Nursing Home and a Marriott hotel in downtown Brooklyn, are considered by state health officials as having overflow-need potential according to the Brooklyn Daily Eagle.

Cuomo has also stressed the need for temporary hospitals in New York City-adjacent counties including Westchester, Suffolk, Nassau, and Rockland. As of this writing, 59,742 cases of the coronavirus have been confirmed in New York, the most of any state. Nearly 800 people have perished from the virus in New York City alone.

Over the weekend, a non-Army Corps-initiated field hospital also began to take shape in Central Park’s East Meadow.

Designed specifically as a respiratory care unit, the 68-bed Central Park tent hospital is being constructed by volunteers enlisted by the faith-based humanitarian aid organization Samaritan’s Purse in partnership with Mount Sinai Health System. Unlike the field hospital at the Javits Center, which will only provide care to those suffering from a range of health issues that aren’t coronavirus in order to take the mounting burden off of established hospitals grappling with New Yorkers stricken with the highly contagious viral disease, the Central Park facility is dedicated to treating “patients seriously ill with COVID-19,” per a statement released by Mount Sinai Hospital to BuzzFeed News.

Back at the Javits Center, the transformation of the 1.8-million-square foot building’s cavernous exhibition halls into a Federal Emergency Management Agency-operated medical facility has been met with a positive response. And for those skeptical that the United States was capable of speedy, China-style turnaround in creating makeshift hospitals, the swift transformation of the Javits Center has proven that the Army Corps, when called upon, can get things done and get them done in an expeditious manner. (New York’s urgent need for ventilators and other supplies, however, is a whole other story.)

All things considered, the temporary hospital at the Javits Center appears clean and comfortable. Individual beds contained within semi-enclosed “rooms” are shielded by three temporary walls and a curtained entrance made from seemingly the same materials formerly used to host booths in the space, while floor lamps, folding chairs, medical supplies, and side
tables topped with (faux) potted plants complement the spaces. While the transformation doesn’t appear to allow for individual treatment areas to include private plumbed fixtures, some online commentators have pointed out that a deficit of toilets at the Javits Center shouldn’t be a problem.

“'The Javits Center is an amazing facility,'” ABC News reported Gen. Todd Semonite, head of the Army Corps of Engineers, as telling reporters at a press conference held last week. “Every 10 feet there’s a great big steel door in the floor, you open it up in there is all the electrical; there’s cold water, there’s hot water and there’s a place for sewers, so you can actually do things like sinks, right in the middle of a convention center to be able to make that happen.”

Outside of New York City, the Los Angeles Convention Center, which was due to host the AIA Conference on Architecture 2020 in May, is in the process of being converted by the National Guard into a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services-run field hospital as demand for hospital beds in the greater L.A. area begin to surge. Hard-hit Santa Clara County, in the San Francisco Bay area, is also turning a large convention center into a temporary treatment center for COVID-19 patients presenting on-life threatening symptoms. Similar efforts are also planned or already underway at convention centers in Detroit, New Orleans, Baltimore, Dallas, Chicago, Seattle, and elsewhere.

To help with this unprecedented effort, the American Institute of Architects (AIA) has launched a special task force to inform and offer guidance to public officials, architects, and healthcare facility operators as they convert existing buildings into temporary medical hubs at a pace never experienced before. The task force, according to a press statement, will develop a COVID-19 Rapid Response Safety Space Assessment for AIA members that includes “considerations for the suitability of buildings, spaces, and other sites for patient care. The assessment will be developed by architects with a wide range of expertise, including healthcare facility design, urban design, public health and disaster assistance.”

“On a daily basis, I am hearing from our architects who feel a deep sense of moral duty to support our healthcare providers on the frontlines of this pandemic,” said AIA 2020 president Jane Frederick, FAIA. “As our communities assess buildings to address growing surge capacity, we hope this task force will be a resource to ensure buildings are appropriately and safely adapted for our doctors and nurses.”


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National Guard turns Times Union Center into critical food hub (video)

CBS 6, Monday, March 30, 2020:
ALBANY NY (WRGB) - The Times Union Center--usually a hot spot for entertainment and sports- Now it's serving a hugely important purpose as a food hub!

We first told you about the Albany County Food Distribution Plan last week.

They've teamed up with the regional food bank of northeastern New York to make sure community members don't go hungry while quarantining.

The food is being packed and delivered by national guard members, fully in uniform, ready to serve.

If you would like to help during the crisis - the food bank says they're in need of financial donations to keep their supply up -- and they need volunteers.


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National Guard at Times Union Center to help with food distribution (Video)

WNYT, 3/30/20:

The National Guard will be at the Times Union Center in Albany on Monday.

Members of the guard will be helping box up and deliver donated food to those quarantined and in need in Albany County. The Times Union Center is serving as a hub for this big operation.

More than 500 people are under mandatory quarantine in Albany County, with nearly 200 positive cases.

Albany County reported its first death linked to the virus over the weekend. A man in his 70s died at St. Peter’s Hospital. The county says he had underlying health conditions.

The county executive is taking action against restaurants and bars not following the rules and still allowing people to eat and drink at tables inside. He says he promises to go after these businesses for putting people’s health at risk.

Albany police say that information circulating on social media saying the city is enforcing a 6 p.m. curfew and fining people who don’t follow it- is not true.

National Guard to Help Deliver Food to Quarantined People in Albany County

Spectrum News, March 30, 2020:

As the number of confirmed coronavirus cases in Albany County approaches 200, Albany County is getting help from the National Guard in its push to keep quarantined people fed.

The Regional Food Bank of Northeastern New York has 19,000 pounds of food to deliver, with the distribution being handled from the Times Union Center.

It's expected the National Guard will help in distributing the food out of the T-U Center.

The number of confirmed cases in the county is at 199 as of Monday morning, with 559 under mandatory quarantine and 223 under precautionary quarantine. Albany County Executive Dan McCoy noted that the precautionary figure is down from Sunday’s total.

County Health Commissioner Dr. Elizabeth Whalen said a lack of COVID-19 testing “leaves us a little bit in the dark” on how the virus is spreading in the county. She reiterated the need for frequent hand washing, disinfecting, and social distancing, echoing state and federal protocol.

"We have not yet reached where we could be in the next couple weeks," Dr. Whalen said. "The important message is to stay home and avoid contact."

Financially, McCoy said the county is working with the Small Business Administration and trying to expedite the process of funding through the state to aid small businesses.

“We requested a change in the way our IDAs do loans,” McCoy said. “Why's that important? Companies are shut down. They're trying to keep people working. We need to address that quickly [with relief].”


New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo seized the moment with his rousing speech to the National Guard

Upworthy.com, March 30, 2020:
At a time when the President of the United States is bragging about his television ratings instead of providing the steady leadership the country desperately needs, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo is taking up the slack.

New York is the state hardest hit by the COVID-19 virus with over 1,000 deaths.

On Friday, Cuomo seized the historical moment by giving a powerful speech to the National Guard at a press conference at the Javits Center in Manhattan.

He first praised the National Guard for their work in creating the first of five temporary hospitals in New York City.

"Now, you did such a good job, that I'm asking you for four more [hospitals] from the president," Cuomo said. "That's the downside of being as good as you are at what you did."

He then outlined the importance of the moment from a historical perspective.

"In ten years from now, you will be talking about today with your children or your grandchildren. And you will shed a tear because you will remember the lives lost and you'll remember the faces," Cuomo said.

"But you'll also be proud," he added. "You'll be proud of what you did. You'll be proud that you showed up when other people played it safe, you had the courage to show up."


New York Army National Guard

Read Gov. Cuomo's moving speech about defeating the novel coronavirus

ABC News, March 28, 2020:

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo's daily press briefings have become a source of comfort, calm and inspiration as the novel coronavirus pandemic intensifies.

New York has become the epicenter of the pandemic. With over 44,000 diagnosed cases, New York has by far the most cases of any state in the nation.

At least 519 have died in the state, and Cuomo warned, "That is going to continue to go up."
Cuomo sounded his most dire warning yet about the coronavirus pandemic, saying the infection rate in New York is accelerating and the state could be as close as two weeks away from a crisis.

The coronavirus crisis is the moment Andrew Cuomo has prepared for all his life

The battle against the virus will "be weeks and weeks and weeks," the governor said Friday, adding, "I'm proud to fight this fight with you."

Here's a partial transcript of the governor's Friday remarks:

I want to make two points to you and I want to make two promises to you. This is a different beast that we're dealing with. This is an invisible beast. It is an insidious beast. This is not going to be a short deployment. This is not going to be that you go out there for a few days. We work hard and we go home. This is going to be weeks and weeks and weeks. This is going to be a long day and it's going to be a hard day, and it's going to be an ugly day, and it's going to be a sad day.

This is a rescue mission that you're on - the mission is to save lives. That's what you're doing. The rescue mission is to save lives and as hard as we work, we're not going to be able to save everyone. And what's even more cruel is this enemy doesn't attack the strongest of us. It attacks the weakest of us. It attacks our most vulnerable which makes it even worse in many ways. Because these are the people that every instinct tells us we're supposed to protect.

These are our parents and our grandparents. These are our aunts, our uncles. These are a relative who was sick and every instinct says protect them. Help them, because they need us. And those are the exact people that this enemy attacks. Every time I've called out the National Guard I have said the same thing to you: I promise you I will not ask you to do anything that I will not do myself. And the same is true here. We're going to do this and we're going to do this together.

My second point is, you are living a moment in history. This is going to be one of those moment they're going to write and they're going to talk about for generations. This is a moment that is going to change this nation. This is a moment that forges character, forges people, changes people -- make them stronger, make them weaker -- but this is a moment that will change character.

Ten years from now, you'll be talking about today to your children or your grandchildren and you will shed a tear because you will remember the lives lost. You'll remember the faces and you'll remember the names and you'll remember how hard we worked and that we still lost loved ones. And you'll shed a tear and you should because it will be sad.

But, you will also be proud. You'll be proud of what you did. You'll be proud that you showed up. You showed up when other people played it safe. You had the courage to show up. You had the skill and the professionalism to make a difference and save lives. That's what you will have done.
At the end of the day, nobody can ask anything more from you. That is your duty, to do what you can when you can. You will have shown skill and courage and talent. You'll be there with your mind, you'll be there with your heart and you'll serve with honor. That will give you pride and you should be proud. I know that I am proud of you.

And every time the National Guard has been called out, they have made every New Yorker proud. I am proud to be with you yet again. I'm proud to fight this fight with you. And I bring you thanks from all New Yorkers who are just so appreciative of the sacrifice that you are making, the skill that you're bringing, the talent that you're bringing. You give many New Yorkers confidence.

So I say, my friends, that we go out there today and we kick coronavirus' a--, that's what I say. And we're going to save lives and New York is going to thank you. God bless each and every one of you.


Rep. Max Rose deployed with National Guard to assist coronavirus response "I am just trying to do my duty and my small part," he said.

Político, March 31, 2020:

Freshman Rep. Max Rose announced Tuesday he has been deployed to the front lines of the nation’s coronavirus epicenter in New York as a member of the National Guard.

The New York Democrat will work in facilities in his own district in Staten Island — which he has represented since January 2019 — where 2,091 cases have been reported as of Monday. New York City overall has more than 38,000 cases.

Rose will join more than 2,200 other troops who have been deployed in New York, tasked with assisting test sites, field hospitals, supply warehouses and other essential services in the nation’s worst hot spot for the virus.

“Over the past month I have seen acts of incredible bravery and sacrifice by our first responders, nurses, doctors, and essential workers who never thought they’d be on the frontlines of a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic,” Rose, who once served as an Army platoon leader in Afghanistan, wrote in a statement.

“My activation and deployment is nothing compared to what our city, state, and country has asked of all them. And it’s certainly nothing compared to the other men and women serving in uniform both here at home and overseas. I am just trying to do my duty and my small part.”
Before he was called up by the National Guard, Rose was already shoulder-deep in his state’s response to the outbreak. Earlier this month, Rose helped secure New York City’s first drive-through testing site in his district.

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo activated the National Guard on March 10. As of Monday, the state reported more than 67,000 coronavirus cases and 1,200 deaths.

It’s the first time Rose has been deployed to the National Guard since being elected to Congress. He was last called up in 2018, when he took a two-week leave from the campaign trail for training exercises.

Rose said he will be able to return to Washington, if needed, to vote on legislation to help combat the outbreak and the economic devastation left behind.

The House is expected to be out of session until April 20, with lawmakers working from their districts. But House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-Md.) has advised that votes are possible before then on additional relief related to the outbreak.

“Like many Guardsmen and women across the country, I am leaving my day job to serve our nation. Unlike them, I will be able to return to it in order to vote if needed,” Rose wrote in a statement.


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