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Missouri National Guardsmen Provide Flood Response Assistance

APRIL 23RD 2013 BY BETH FARRAH

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Submitted by

Beth Farrah, SMT Writer

Dutchtown, Missouri - About 100 Missouri National Guardsmen from units in St. Louis, Hannibal and Cape Girardeau joined community volunteers to work in support of flood relief operations in affected areas.

After more than five inches of rain fell in parts of Missouri last week, Gov, Jay Nixon mobilized the National Guard on Friday to help protect lives and property from rising flood waters, especially along the Mississippi.

In addition to the weekend Guard response in Clarksville, about fifty soldiers were also called Monday to help with sandbagging operations in Dutchtown, about 150 miles down river, near Cape Girardeau.

"Missouri's Citizen-Soldiers and Airmen have proven themselves as true leaders during times of need, and they again are meeting the challenges of this year's floods," said Nixon, who toured Clarksville on Saturday with Maj. Gen. Steve Danner, adjutant general of the Missouri National Guard.

"Winning these fights to protect lives and property takes close cooperation and coordination between state and local officials, Missouri Guardsmen and volunteers from

across the region, and that is what is taking place right now on the Mississippi," Nixon added.

"We are always happy to come to the aid of our fellow Missourians," said Danner. "We will work directly with the Department of Public Safety, other state agencies and local authorities to answer this call. We are going to ensure that we strengthen that levee wall and do anything else we can to assist."

Within one hour of being mobilized Airmen from the St. Louis-based 121st Air Control Squadron, the 131st Civil Engineer Squadron and Soldiers from the 70th Troop Command were on their way to Clarksville. There, Guardsmen immediately began to assist with construction of a 1,500 foot sandbag levee protecting the historic city of 442 people.

Soldiers from the Hannibal-based 2175th Military Police Company were also called up to help with the effort.

"Our primary mission is to fill a lot of sandbags," explained Capt. Wesley Dickman, of Columbia, commander of the 2175th. "My troops have been working throughout the night to build up the main levee and the side levees protecting some of the buildings. The effort here is really impressive."

 area residents, Boy Scouts and even prison inmates worked around the clock to build-up the levee wall.

The Guard's arrival in Clarksville was a welcome site to volunteers who had been working on the sandbag levee since Wednesday.

"With this kind of manpower we can really get things done," said Ray Wagner, of St. Louis, one of numerous AmeriCorps volunteers working on the wall. "We really appreciate the Guard's help because we have several projects that we have not started yet."

"When AmeriCorps arrived on the scene we breathed a huge sigh of relief and when the National Guard arrived we breathed a bigger sigh of relief," added Clarksville Mayor, Jo Anne Smiley. "Their arrival has relieved us in so many ways I can't even describe it. This effort would not be successful without them."

Founded in 1817, Clarksville is no stranger to flooding and has adapted an impressive flood management plan that clearly impressed everyone who saw it implemented.

"This town has been here a long time and I expect that when the waters recede, Clarksville, Missouri will be open for business as usual," said Nixon.

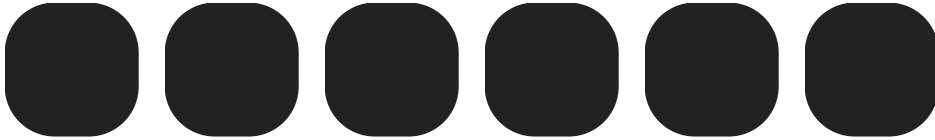
Soldiers of the Cape Girardeau-based 1140th Engineer Battalion and the Perryville-based 880th Engineer Team - both part of the 35th Engineer Brigade, based at Fort Leonard Wood -were called to fight floodwaters in Dutchtown.

"This is one of the reasons we put the uniform on; it's our way of giving back and protecting our community, and we are ready and prepared to help the community and people of Dutchtown," said 1st Sgt. Haskel Rooker, of the 1140th Forward Support Company.

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