

South Dakota National Guard

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

SD Guard reflects on Katrina aftermath ten years later

By Sgt. 1st Class Theanne Herrmann
SDNG Public Affairs Office

Ten years have passed since the South Dakota National Guard answered the call to help those in need after one of the deadliest hurricanes in the history of the United States swept through Louisiana.

Hurricane Katrina claimed the lives of nearly 2,000 people and misplaced one million more. The actual cost of the hurricane's damage was estimated to be \$95-\$125 billion.

The SDNG sent a task force of 213 Soldiers and Airmen to Naval Air Station Belle Chasse, south of New Orleans, to help with relief and recovery efforts.

Task Force Coyote service members stayed busy for 30 days removing debris from schools, stores, homes and churches, they filled 3,000 pound sandbags for levee breaches and provided medical aid to civilians and military personnel.

"I had the great fortune to lead this group of dedicated professionals supporting the hurricane relief effort," said Col. Marshall Michels, Task Force Coyote commander. "Everyone was grateful to be there and help out the folks in Louisiana. They treated them like family and that is what we as Guardsmen do best. We help others in their time of need."

From an operational perspective, this was the first time the Army Guard combined forces with the Air Guard for a domestic operation of this scale, said Michels.

"We have worked with the Air Guard on smaller emergencies and they assisted," said Michels. "Since Katrina, our partnership has been seamless and it's integrated in everything we do. We combine the best the Army and Air can offer for capabilities to accomplish missions."

Task Force Coyote wasn't the only group from the SDNG contributing to the relief effort.

Lt. Col. Reid Christopherson, public affairs officer with the South Dakota Air Guard, and the SDARNG's 129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment reported on the nearly 16,000 National Guard service members from across the nation rescuing citizens in need of help and rebuilding efforts.

"Our mission was a dual-purpose mission," said Lt. Col. Joe Jacobson. "Our primary mission was to tell the story of the National Guard Soldiers and Airmen assisting in the relief efforts of Hurricane Katrina. Our secondary mission was to assist in documenting the relief efforts by the National Guard for the National Guard Bureau.

The SDNG also sent a two-man crew to operate a C12 Huron turboprop aircraft, which can transport up to eight people.

Other SDNG units who supported the relief effort included: 1st Battalion, 147th Field Artillery; 727th Transportation Company; 665th Maintenance Company; Company B, 109th Medical Battalion; 153rd Engineer Battalion and medical personnel from the 114th Fighter Wing.

It was a privilege to serve the people of Louisiana, said Staff Sgt. Matt Wells, who volunteered with the 727th Transportation Company.

“Serving during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina was an opportunity to let the people know they had not been forgotten,” said Wells. “I learned the simple things can mean a lot to people so devastated by the hurricane such as lending a kind hand, a strong back and a South Dakota work ethic. We left knowing we made a positive impact on other people’s lives.”

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High resolution photos are available upon request.



050924-A-9937D-002: U.S. Army Pfc. Nicole Kueter, center, and Sgt. Mark Watson, both members of the South Dakota Army National Guard’s 129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, interview Col. Mike Ross, commander of Task Force Louisiana, about ongoing relief operations in southern Louisiana after Hurricane Katrina and Rita, Sept. 24, 2005. The SDNG sent a task force of 213 Soldiers and Airmen to Naval Air Station Belle Chasse, south of New Orleans, to help with relief and recovery from one of the deadliest Hurricanes in the history of the United States. (U.S. Army National Guard photo/Released)



051006-A-ZZ999-004: South Dakota Army National Guard Soldiers help fill 3,000 pound sandbags to help construct a levee during the Hurricane Katrina relief efforts, Oct. 2, 2005. The SDNG sent a task force of 213 Soldiers and Airmen to Naval Air Station Belle Chasse, south of New Orleans, to help with relief and recovery from one of the deadliest Hurricanes in the history of the United States. (U.S. Army National Guard photo/Released)



051014-Z-ZZ999-200: An aerial view of the destruction of homes caused by Hurricane Katrina in Louisiana, Oct. 14, 2005. (U.S. Army National Guard photo/Released)



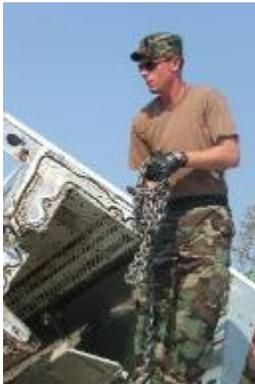
051014-Z-ZZ999-150: U.S. Army Sgt. Wes Nowitzi, front, of the South Dakota Army National Guard’s 129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, views flooding caused by Hurricane Katrina as he covers a search-and-rescue mission with Soldiers from the Massachusetts Army National Guard, Oct. 14, 2005. The SDNG sent a task force of 213 Soldiers and Airmen to Naval Air Station Belle Chasse, south of New Orleans, to help with relief and recovery from one of the deadliest Hurricanes in the history of the United States. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Mark Watson/Released)



051006-Z-ZZ999-005: A chinook helicopter attaches to two 3,000 pound sandbags and prepares to airlift them to a levee breach during the Hurricane Katrina relief efforts, Oct. 6, 2005 in Louisiana. The SDNG sent a task force of 213 Soldiers and Airmen to Naval Air Station Belle Chasse, south of New Orleans, to help with relief and recovery from one of the deadliest Hurricanes in the history of the United States. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Wes Nowitzki/Released)



051028-Z-ZZ999-110: South Dakota Army National Soldiers load cots after helping with the Hurricane Katrina relief efforts Oct. 28, 2005 in Louisiana. The SDNG sent a task force of 213 Soldiers and Airmen to Naval Air Station Belle Chasse, south of New Orleans, to help with relief and recovery from one of the deadliest Hurricanes in the history of the United States. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Mark Watson/Released)



051014-Z-6400F-001: U.S. Army Sgt. Mark Mahoney with the South Dakota Army National Guard's 665th Transportation Company unhooks a chain from a refrigeration unit after removing it from Fremin's Food Market in Port Sulphur, La., Oct. 14, 2005. The SDNG sent a task force of 213 Soldiers and Airmen to Naval Air Station Belle Chasse, south of New Orleans, to help with relief and recovery from one of the deadliest Hurricanes in the history of the United States. (U.S. Army National Guard photo/Released)



051014-Z-6400F-001: U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Reid Christopherson, public affairs officer in the South Dakota Air National Guard, speaks with a news station about the work the South Dakota National Guard is doing to help the relief efforts of Hurricane Katrina in Louisiana Oct. 14, 2005. The SDNG sent a task force of 213 Soldiers and Airmen to Naval Air Station Belle Chasse, south of New Orleans, to help with relief and recovery from one of the deadliest Hurricanes in the history of the United States. (U.S. Army National Guard photo/Released)



051002-Z-ZZ99-001: South Dakota Army National leadership discuss Hurricane Katrina operations at Camp Rapid, Rapid City, while Soldiers and Airmen are on their way to help with the relief and recovery efforts, Oct. 2, 2005. The SDNG sent a task force of 213 service members to Naval Air Station Belle Chasse, south of New Orleans, to help with relief and recovery from one of the deadliest Hurricanes in the history of the United States. (U.S. Army National Guard photo/Released)

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