

## Six States Send Troops to Flood Duty in North Dakota

By Air Force Master Sgt. Mike R. Smith  
American Forces Press Service

ARLINGTON, Va., March 30, 2009 – Governors in six upper Midwestern states have sent more than 2,400 National Guard members and some much-needed equipment to help fight flooding for a second week in North Dakota.

North Dakota Gov. John Hoeven said on March 28 that his state was continuing to fight rising waters in Fargo and at other locations with the help of Guard members from Iowa, Minnesota, Montana, Wisconsin, Missouri and South Dakota.

“We are mustering all of our state agencies and working with federal and local officials to meet this unprecedented event, as well as other flooding around the state,” Hoeven said. “Historic levels on the Red River are testing our resources, but not our resolve to do everything in our power to meet the challenge and protect this community.”

The National Weather Service said today that strong spring storms will continue bringing freezing rain, heavy snow and blizzard conditions to western and central North Dakota today and tonight.

National Guard Bureau officials reported a wide array of equipment was being used to assist state responders, including more than two dozen helicopters, generators and high-water vehicles, among other equipment.

Three of those helicopters and 17 soldiers are from the 832nd Medical Company; the 1st Battalion, 147th Aviation; and Detachment 1, Company B, 248th Aviation Support Battalion, all of the Wisconsin National Guard.

Once in North Dakota, the soldiers expect to conduct search-and-rescue operations and provide air transportation, according to a news release from state officials. They also have the ability to provide medical evacuation if needed.

A news release from the Missouri National Guard said two C-130 Hercules cargo aircraft with 14 airmen from the 139th Airlift Wing in St. Joseph, Mo., and a helicopter maintenance team with 20 soldiers from the 1107th Theater Aviation Sustainment Maintenance Group in Springfield, Mo., headed to Grand Forks on March 28.

Grand Forks also was the staging area for two UH-60 Black Hawks and two CH-47 Chinook helicopters and about 26 soldiers from the 248th Aviation Support Battalion and 2-211th General Support Aviation Battalion of the Iowa Army National Guard.

Guardmembers also will conduct sandbagging and snow-removal operations, work at traffic control checkpoints, help in evacuations and assist local law enforcement in dike and shelter security.

More than 340 South Dakota Guard members have been sent to North Dakota on state active duty to assist with the response efforts, Army Maj. Brendan Murphy, of the South Dakota National Guard, said.

“We are performing our mission, helping prevent property damage and threats to life and limb of the citizens,” said Army Sgt. Theanne Tangen, a member of the 129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment from Sioux Falls, S.D.

The South Dakota Guard has provided personnel and resources to key flood-fighting areas. They’re filling, storing and distributing sandbags, patrolling dikes, breaking ice jams, providing security and operating traffic control points, and helping or rescuing stranded citizens threatened by flood waters.

“It’s a shock to see the amounts of water they have to deal with, especially when you see street signs and stop lights within a few feet of being completely submerged,” Army Sgt. 1st Class Chris Schimke said. “It feels great to be here and help out our neighbors in need.”

These soldiers, along with leadership from the 153rd Engineer Battalion, conducted a reconnaissance

mission over the weekend to become familiar with the dikes they are assigned to patrol during their 12-hour shift to report leaks or breaches to the North Dakota joint operations center.

Five 5-ton dump trucks from the 842nd Engineer Company with more than 10 personnel also deployed to Fargo, Murphy said.

(Air Force Master Sgt. Mike R. Smith serves with the National Guard Bureau.)