



# MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE  
DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **The Tennessee National Guard provides disaster recovery support Military Police Company assist first responders in Southern Tennessee**

**FAYETTEVILLE, Tenn.** –Soldiers from the Tennessee National Guard’s 253rd Military Police Company assisted local authorities across storm stricken areas of Lincoln County, Tenn., after a powerful tornado devastated the region on the evening of April 28. Local responders requested support from the Guard through the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency with Soldiers on site by 4 a.m. on April 29.

“We are assisting in search and recovery efforts by conducting door to door checks of residents in the damaged area. Our role is to provide local responders with additional manpower to aid victims of this tragedy,” said the Tennessee Guard’s Noncommissioned Officer in Charge of the mission, Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Bryan Graves. “We will be here for as long as we’re needed.”

“One of the missions of the Tennessee Military Department is our domestic obligation of saving lives and mitigating the losses to the citizens of our state during events such as the Lincoln County tornado,” said Maj. Gen Max Haston, Tennessee Adjutant General. “The seamless operation between the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency and the Tennessee National Guard gives us a distinct advantage in response operations not enjoyed by some states. I am very proud of the men and women who serve and demonstrate the professionalism I witnessed during my visit to the disaster site today.”

Haston and Governor Bill Haslam visited the disaster site on April 30, to obtain an aerial and ground perspective of the damage inflicted in southern Tennessee.

Staff Sgt. Eric Heitz, a team leader with the 253rd, coordinated efforts with Graves and emergency management personnel to provide a thoroughly planned search pattern of areas where the storm damage was most extreme. The teams were well prepared to remain self sufficient for upwards of three days and traverse the dangerous debris ravaged area using HUMMV’s to reach citizens and homes in the tornado’s path.

Radio communications were established among the supporting National Guard personnel as well as with civilian emergency responders in the incident area established by Lincoln County officials. Cooperation between the military personnel and multiple response agencies from across the region was quickly established and even as threatening weather conditions continued to plague the area, search and rescue operations and wellness checks continued into the late afternoon of the first day following the storm.

The mission of the Tennessee soldiers was conducted over a widespread area. Based upon the size of the tornado and the distance it travelled, many damaged or destroyed homes needed to be reached to ensure the welfare of those living in the area. Beyond the requirements of the mission, National Guard members often spoke of bringing a sense of hope to the area by their contribution. Although military members knew they could not fully ease the massive loss to members impacted in the community, they all desired to do their best to ease the suffering of their fellow Tennesseans with their sense of duty in this vital mission.

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**PHOTO CAPTIONS:**

**Photo 1:** Tennessee National Guard Spc. Tyler Vineyard with the 253rd Military Police Company speaks with a tornado victim in Lincoln County, Tenn., on April 29, 2014 after the location was ravaged the night prior by a large tornado that impacted a large portion in the southern areas of the county.

**Photo 2:** Members of the Tennessee National Guard's 253rd Military Police Company assist in motor vehicle traffic control on April 29, 2014 in areas impacted by a deadly EF-3 tornado that devastated southern portions of Lincoln County, Tenn., on the evening of 28 April 2014.

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