



MEDIA RELEASE

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Tennessee National Guard earthquake exercise a success Army and Air Guard personnel and assets put to the test in TNCAT14

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – Soldiers, Airmen and civilian emergency response personnel throughout the state concluded the TNCAT14 Exercise on June 20, simulating the Tennessee Military Department's response to a catastrophic earthquake along the New Madrid Fault.

On 16 June, a simulated 7.7 magnitude earthquake scenario was declared, setting into action requests for military support requests from the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency (TEMA,) as local authorities in areas across the seismic zone began to test the capabilities of the Military Department. Soldiers and Airman of the Tennessee National Guard and Tennessee State Guard rapidly began to meet the challenges, providing numerous levels of assistance in simulated impacted areas from west to east Tennessee conducting numerous support missions.

“This capstone exercise provided an excellent opportunity to illustrate the interoperability of all the elements that comprise the Tennessee Military Department,” said Brig. Gen. Don Johnson, Assistant Adjutant General, Tennessee Air National Guard. “I am very pleased with the ability of the state’s emergency operations center to communicate with the Air Wings’ command and control centers across the state.” Johnson stated although inevitably there are issues exposed in exercises, those lessons learned are critical to ensure they are considered and dealt with prior to an actual emergency event.

Brig. Gen. Terry Ethridge, Director of the Tennessee Guard’s Joint Staff, reiterated, “TNCAT14 was a highly successful operation demonstrating the seamless spirit within all elements of the Tennessee Military Department.” Ethridge noted a key element tested during the operation was stressing lines of communication to their maximum and said that, “no communication failures occurred among military units due to the numerous redundant systems now available in the state. In an actual emergency, lines of communication, cellular towers and various systems are expected to experience serious degradation. Yet during the exercise, the ability to communicate was maintained at optimal levels to ensure critical response missions were accomplished.” Ethridge noted there are elements in the response that will need to be assessed and improved, yet, “the TNCAT14 exercise tested a very robust response plan and validated major elements that would prove to be vital in a real world situation.”

The Tennessee National Guard, in conjunction with the Tennessee State Guard, commanded by Brig. Gen. (TN) Kenneth Takasaki played an integral role with their Soldiers providing communication support and placing personnel in various staging locations across the state to assist in the Tennessee National Guard Emergency Response Plan, a series of specific requirements integrated with the statewide Tennessee Emergency Management Plan. The use of the Tennessee State Guard, whose members are strictly volunteers, was unprecedented and Guard leadership praised the professionalism and value added by these personnel.

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“We spend a lot of time on deliberate planning and working through multiple scenarios and then develop the best response for each event,” said Col. Robert Covert, the J-3, Operations Director for the Tennessee National Guard. “By having a deliberate plan, it allows us to excel at crisis/emergency planning. It is easier to adjust a plan to fit the unknown events that arise than it is to start from scratch each time,” said Covert.

Overall, Tennessee’s Military Department leadership expressed how successful and invaluable the exercise was for all involved. Using lessons learned from the capstone the Guard is now better prepared to assist fellow citizens during times of crises.

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

Photo 14-32-1: Tennessee National Guard Soldiers with the 194th Engineer Brigade in Milan, Tenn., train alongside Soldiers from the National Guard Joint Force Headquarters, Directorate of Information Management in Nashville, Tenn., to construct a High Frequency antenna to test remote communications likely to be needed in the event of a major disaster.

Photo 14-32-2: Tennessee National Guard Soldiers with the 194th Engineer Brigade in Milan, Tenn., and the National Guard Joint Force Headquarters, Directorate of Information Management in Nashville, Tenn., deploy an inflatable antenna mast in Milan, Tenn., to test mobile communications equipment available in the event a major disaster occurs.

Photo 14-32-3: Brig. Gen. Jeffrey Holmes, Assistant Adjutant General, Army (Traditional,) contacts the Tennessee National Guard’s Joint Force Headquarters using the Joint Incident Site Communication Capability System’s or (JISCC) mobile communication assets. Master Sgt. Chris Davenport with Tennessee Guard’s Directorate of Information Management in Nashville, Tenn., assists Holmes operate equipment to communicate with leadership and emergency responders outside the simulated disaster area.

Photo 14-32-4: Tennessee National Guard Soldiers with the 194th Engineer Brigade in Milan, Tenn., trained alongside Soldiers from the National Guard Joint Force Headquarters, Directorate of Information Management in Nashville, Tenn., during a weeklong earthquake exercise to test the mobile communications capability of the Joint Incident Site Communication Capability System’s or (JISCC.) Inside the vehicle is a wide array of mobile communication systems available when emergency events develop.

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