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Murfreesboro National Guard unit joins Tennessee Maneuvers 2016

TULLAHOMA, Tenn. – More than 110 Soldiers with the 269th Military Police Company from Murfreesboro got a chance to exercise their skills from May 13-16 in the first phase of Tennessee Maneuvers 2016. The Tennessee Military Department's largest statewide disaster preparedness exercise in history, the maneuvers is designed to exercise the Guard's ability to respond to catastrophic natural disasters and aid the citizens of Tennessee.

For the maneuvers, the 269th joined more than 500 Tennessee Army National Guardsmen and eight other state and local agencies in a series of exercises in Tullahoma testing their ability to respond to severe weather scenarios. The military policemen conducted 24-hour operations to secure two emergency staging areas, establish and exercise a quick reaction force, and provide force protection and access control for emergency personnel.

But for the Soldiers of the 269th, it was nothing that they couldn't handle.

"Our first mission was to conduct route reconnaissance on the main roads involved in the scenario," said Capt. Tim Butler, the company commander. "Determining if routes are clear of debris, bridges are safe to cross, and roads can be traveled is just one of many missions that we can perform."

The unit also spent the three days training on skills which are vital to responding to natural disasters.

They trained for search and rescue of missing citizens, assisting law enforcement, and helping people trapped in their homes in the event of severe weather.

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According to Butler, the Murfreesboro unit is one of the state's National Guard Response force teams. They are one of the first units called in case of a real emergency and can respond to anywhere in the state within 24 hours.

For many of the Soldiers, it's not the first time they've been involved in disaster relief. Since 2005, the company deployed for Hurricane Katrina to discourage looting, made two rotations to the southwest border for Operation Jump Start, supported law enforcement following the Gallatin tornado in 2006, and established food and water distribution sites during the Nashville floods in 2010.

The unit has also deployed to Iraq twice, in 2003 and 2009, where it earned the Valorous Unit award (a unit award equivalent to the Silver Star) and just returned from a year in Afghanistan in December 2014.

"This is one of the busiest units in the state," said Staff Sgt. William Broersma, the unit's Training Officer. "But that's the way we like it."

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Photo #1: A Military Police team in a humvee from the 269th Military Police Company conducts area security patrols during Tennessee Maneuvers 2016 at the Volunteer Training Site-Tullahoma on May 14.



Photo #2: 1st Lt. Aaron Johnson briefs one of his squad leaders on an upcoming mission as part of Tennessee Maneuvers 2016 at the Volunteer Training Site-Tullahoma on May 14.