

## **VIRGINIA NATIONAL GUARD PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE**

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#### **Virginia National Guard to support 56<sup>th</sup> Presidential Inauguration**

More than 500 Virginia National Guard Soldiers will be on duty supporting the 56<sup>th</sup> Presidential Inauguration on Jan. 20 by assisting federal, state and local agencies with security, communications, traffic control and other general support requirements.

“Virginia has been working on plans to assist with a major event in the National Capital Region for the last three years,” said Maj. Gen. Robert B. Newman, the adjutant general of Virginia. “This is going to be a complex multi-agency, multi-jurisdictional operation, but I am confident that our planning efforts with our partner state agencies as well as local authorities and the Department of Defense will pay off when we put our Soldiers and Airmen on the ground in support of the Inauguration.”

Approximately 250 Soldiers of the Lynchburg-based 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 116<sup>th</sup> Brigade Combat Team will gather at Fort Pickett and then head north to assist the DC National Guard with their mission supporting the Secret Service and National Park Police with security operations. Other Virginia Guard units will be stationed in various locations across the state for support and contingency operations. Soldiers and Airmen supporting the Inauguration come from all over Virginia.

“It is an honor for these Soldiers to be asked to do this,” said Lt. Col. Scott Smith, commander of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion. “It is amazing what these Soldiers have been through. Most of them have either recently returned from combat duty in Iraq or peacekeeping operations in Kosovo, but it says something about these Soldiers that they continue to make themselves available for duty.”

Soldiers from 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion are no strangers to stepping up to answer the call of duty. Right after their drill weekend in February welcoming Soldiers back from a year of duty in Kosovo, more than 100 Soldiers went on duty to assist with the firefighting efforts in Southwest Virginia. Soldiers from the battalion also geared up to provide support in anticipation of Tropical Storm Hanna in early September.

Smith also said the support Soldiers receive from their employers is critical. “Their employers have been nothing short of amazing in their support so these Soldiers can accomplish their missions for not just the Commonwealth, but for their country as well,” Smith said.

“This mission says a lot about the unique nature of the National Guard and the willingness of Soldiers to choose this as profession to be ready to go at almost a moments notice,” Smith said. “At the end of the day they feel a sense of worth that you can only get with serving in the Virginia National Guard.”

According to the National Guard Bureau, more than 10,000 National Soldiers and Airmen will support the 56th Presidential Inauguration, the Guard's largest contribution to an inauguration in its 372-year history.

Other contributing National Guard states include Delaware, Florida, Iowa, Kentucky, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Tennessee and West Virginia. In addition to communications, transport, traffic control and medical and logistical support, some Guard units will be playing music and marching in the inaugural parade.

The National Guard Bureau participates in Armed Forces Inaugural Committee efforts while coordinating the support provided by the National Guard with federal and state civil authorities. A joint operations center is being staffed around the clock through the inauguration.

The National Guard has a long history of supporting presidential inaugurations. Local militia units marched with George Washington as he proceeded to his first inauguration on April 30, 1789, according to Guard historians.

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