

Monday, October 17th, 2011

Written Testimony to the House Committee on Homeland Security's
Subcommittee on Oversight, Investigations and Management

"Texas Wildfire Review: Did Bureaucracy Prevent a Timely Response?"

Testimony of Major General John Nichols, Adjutant General, Texas
National Guard:

Mr. Chairmen, members, thank you for having me here today.

As you know the National Guard is unique in that we serve dual missions: first, to provide the President and the country with ready and trained combat forces in support of the defense of the nation; secondly, we provide the Governor and the citizens of Texas with a mission ready force in support of civil authorities.

The mission of the Texas National Guard is to provide the manpower and equipment to support the Texas Department of Emergency Management in responding to state and local emergencies. Our role as a supporting agency to TDEM, which is the single point of contact for planning and execution, allows Texas to act quickly in response to any need.

Additionally, we continue to coordinate with the planners and first responders to improve our capability through training and enhanced infrastructure to respond to the emergency needs of the citizens of Texas.

Regarding the Central Texas fires in Bastrop the Texas National Guard provided:

Eight Blackhawk helicopters which flew a total of 67.2 hours and dropped 456,060 gallons of water

Three Chinook helicopters flew a total of 80.4 hours and dropped 913,000 gallons of water

One Chinook Bambi Bucket was provided by Fort Hood to replace a TXNG Bambi Bucket damaged during the fire.

A total of 181 personnel supported this effort.

One Ground Wildfire Suppression Force Package composed of four D7 Bulldozers with supporting vehicles and equipment was employed on the fire and cut five miles of fire break. All 16 personnel were on State Active Duty during the event. In addition, one Liaison Officer supported the Incident Command Post.

Texas State Guard provided 60 Soldiers to establish shelters and support civilians displaced by the Bastrop County Complex Fire. All personnel were in a State Active Duty status.

Two Texas Interoperable Communication Package trailers supported the Incident Command Post. Personnel were in a State Active Duty status.

Four Texas State Guard Soldiers of the Resource Team were assigned to the Logistics Section of the State Operations Center.

One Aviation Liaison Officer served in Merkel, TX, to assist the Texas Forest Service in coordinating TXMF Aviation assets supporting the Texas Forest Service throughout the state.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss how the Texas National Guard will continue to support the Texas Department of Emergency Management in working to keep Texans safe by ensuring our readiness at the time of need.