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Tennessee National Guard surpasses half-million COVID-19 tests

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – The Tennessee National Guard reached a milestone this week in COVID-19 testing. Since the start of the pandemic, Soldiers and Airmen have administered over 500,000 COVID-19 tests to citizens throughout Tennessee.

“Administering half-a-million tests in support of our state department of health partners says a lot about the commitment and dedication of our Soldiers and Airmen,” said Maj. Gen. Jeff Holmes, Tennessee’s Adjutant General. “They have tackled every obstacle in their path and have continued to provide a great service for our fellow Tennesseans.”

On March 23, Gov. Bill Lee initially requested 250 Soldiers and Airmen from the Tennessee National Guard to help support Tennessee’s fight against COVID-19. As the need and pandemic grew, more than 500 guardsmen were activated, performing various tasks and missions to help stop the spread of COVID-19.

Guardsmen began by assisting the Department of Health in operating drive-thru rural assessment sites at 37 locations across the state. Many of those testing sites remain open and guardsmen continue to conduct testing there.

In addition to the testing at drive-thru sites, activated guardsmen are conducting special missions to provide testing at long-term care facilities, county and state corrections facilities, public housing complexes, temporary testing in hot-spot areas, and many other locations across the state. The goal has always been to provide free, convenient testing to any Tennessean that may need it.

With the pandemic lasting longer than many originally considered, these Soldiers and Airmen have had to stay flexible, fully sacrificing their normal lives for the betterment of the communities they serve.

“Our Soldiers and Airmen are fully committed to this fight,” said Holmes. “They have sacrificed their own well-being, while being away from families and the comforts of home, all so we can try to conquer this pandemic, and save lives. I’m extremely proud of their commitment and effort.”

Going forward, the Tennessee National Guard will continue to work with the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency and the Department of Health, and will continue to serve their communities, for as long as necessary.

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Sgt. Leann Roggensack, a field artilleryman with the 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment, works as a registered nurse in her civilian occupation. She is one of many Tennessee Guardsmen who have volunteered to help test Tennessee residents for COVID-19. (Photo by Sgt. Sarah Kirby).

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