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## From Containing Communism to Fighting Floods: The Louisiana Army National Guard in the Cold War, 1946-1965

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From Containing Communism to Fighting Floods: The Louisiana Army National Guard in the  
Cold War, 1946-1965

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
University of New Orleans  
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requirements for the degree of

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by

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## Abstract

In the decades following World War II, the Louisiana National Guard evolved due to world, national, and local events. In response to the United States' Cold War policies to contain Communism, the Guard expanded, professionalized, and was occasionally called to federal service. In conjunction with Cold War fears of external attack and internal subversion, a civil defense mission brought coordination between federal, state and local response agencies. Despite the lack of large scale war service or an attack on the U.S. homeland , the skills and responsibilities acquired by the Louisiana Guard during this time period resulted in an enhanced ability to respond to Louisiana's biggest practical threat, i.e. natural disasters.

Keywords: National Guard, Louisiana, Military, Cold War, Civil Defense, Emergency Response

## Introduction

On November 11, 1946, in a publicized Armistice Day ceremony at the Municipal Auditorium in New Orleans, Major General Raymond H. Fleming accepted the return of the regimental colors of the Louisiana National Guard from the U.S. Army<sup>1</sup>. Most of the state's units, federalized in 1940, had been in training or fighting overseas since 1941. A return to state duty, however, did not mean a return to the pre-war status quo. The end of World War II eventually signaled a dramatic expansion of the peacetime U.S. armed forces, including the National Guard. Unlike the aftermath of the First World War, U.S. foreign policy did not return to non-intervention in European affairs. Although the United States had some involvement in the Western Hemisphere and parts of Asia since the late nineteenth century, the level of intervention increased as the bi-polar geopolitical nature of the Cold War developed. Immediately after victory, it seemed as though a retreat from foreign affairs might again occur as the military actually saw a massive demobilization through 1946. The passage of the National Security Act in 1947, combined with reaction to the new Soviet nuclear capability and the rise of Communist China in 1949, began a buildup of military resources and direct engagement with the outside world.<sup>2</sup> While the threat of mutually assured nuclear destruction kept a direct conflict with the Soviet Union at bay, ideological and economic competition over the decolonizing Third World created occasional regional wars. Domestic civil defense, however, remained a high concern in the U.S. as fears of communist expansion and a potential nuclear attack influenced political dialogues and citizens' imaginations. Despite their combat record from both World Wars, Army

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<sup>1</sup> Evans J. Casso, *Louisiana Legacy: A History of the State National Guard* (Gretna: Pelican Publishing Company, 1976), 183.

<sup>2</sup> Abbott A. Brayton, "American Reserve Policies Since World War II," *Military Affairs* Vol. 36, No. 4 (Dec. 1972): 140.

National Guard units were generally placed in a strategic reserve status for most of the Cold War. Even so, the Guard's federal and state roles expanded during the early days of this period. The enhanced training, increased funds, and expanded mission of the Louisiana National Guard (LANG) during the Cold War were expressed in several ways. While adapting it to national needs and mandates, the Louisiana Guard commanders of the early Cold War period, Raymond Fleming and Raymond Hufft, shaped the organization for the decades ahead. These two adjutant generals alternated tenures four times between 1948 and 1964, coincident with gubernatorial elections and the rotation of rival factions in state government. During a period of thirty six years, Fleming and Hufft were the only two commanders of the Louisiana National Guard. While this thesis primarily focuses on the story of the organization itself, it is important to understand these leaders' personalities and backgrounds as well as the unique succession of command that occurred since their impact on the state's National Guard was so great.

Ray Fleming commanded a battery of New Orleans' 141<sup>st</sup> Field Artillery during World War I and was named adjutant general of Louisiana by Governor Huey Long in 1928.<sup>3</sup> He commanded the Louisiana National Guard through the Great Depression and World War II, forging relationships with other states as well as the U.S. Army.<sup>4</sup> Fleming emphasized the need for manpower procurement policies in the case of national emergency in the late 1930s. His efforts influenced selective service reform just prior to the U.S. entry into World War II.<sup>5</sup> His influence was also a factor in securing central Louisiana as a site for one of the largest training

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<sup>3</sup> The 141<sup>st</sup> Field Artillery is commonly known by its more traditional name, the Washington Artillery. With official lineage going back to 1838, it is Louisiana's oldest National Guard unit.

<sup>4</sup> Casso, *Legacy*, 234.

<sup>5</sup> General Malin Craig letters to Brigadier General Raymond Fleming, 7 March 1938, 9 March 1938, and 6 March 1939. Folder 20, Box 2, Raymond H. Fleming Collection, Louisiana National Guard (LANG) Archives, New Orleans, Louisiana. Craig was U.S. Army Chief of Staff from 1935 to 1939. Also see Fleming speech transcripts relating to emergency manpower procurement in the same folder.



maneuvers in United States history.<sup>6</sup> Fleming's "resignation" in 1948 was the result of a political imbroglio in which he offended Leander Perez, the political boss of Plaquemines Parish and power broker within the Louisiana Democratic Party.<sup>7</sup> The favored 1948 gubernatorial candidate, Earl Long, needed Perez' support and promised to name someone else Adjutant General. Despite resigning as Adjutant General, Fleming retained command of the 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, which LANG reported to at the time.<sup>8</sup> In 1950, he was named Chief of the National Guard Bureau in Washington, D.C.<sup>9</sup>

Upon his inauguration, Governor Earl Long named thirty-three year-old Raymond Hufft as adjutant general of Louisiana. Not only was Hufft the most decorated World War II veteran from the state, he was politically connected to Leander Perez, Congressman F. Edward Hebert, and former Governor Jimmy Noe.<sup>10</sup> To date, General Hufft is the youngest officer appointed adjutant general in Louisiana. His military career started in 1934 as a private in the Louisiana National Guard with the 108<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment, which was reorganized into the 105<sup>th</sup> Coastal Artillery Battalion in 1940. He commanded a battery of the 105<sup>th</sup> in the Pacific theater of the war before volunteering for the First Special Service Force, a predecessor to today's Special Forces.

<sup>11</sup> Hufft's service with the Force essentially launched his career. The unit, which was later known

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<sup>6</sup> Casso, *Legacy*, 23.

<sup>7</sup> F. Edward Hebert and John McMillan, "*Last of the Titans*": *The Life and Times of Congressman F. Edward Hebert of Louisiana* (Lafayette: University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1976), 265. In 1943, Louisiana Governor Sam Jones and Leander Perez faced off in a notorious political fight over the appointment of a Plaquemines Parish sheriff. Jones ordered General Fleming to send State Guard troops to enforce his appointment. Fleming complied with his boss' order, gaining the eternal enmity of Perez, who made sure he would not be re-appointed in 1948.

<sup>8</sup> Raymond H. Fleming 201 File, Folder 3, Box 1, Raymond H. Fleming Collection, Louisiana National Guard Archives, New Orleans, Louisiana.

<sup>9</sup> Michael D. Doubler, *Civilian in Peace, Soldier in War: The Army National Guard, 1636-2000* (Lawrence: Kansas University Press, 2003), 403.

<sup>10</sup> Hebert, *Last of the Titans*, 122-123.

<sup>11</sup> Robert H. Adleman and George Walton, *The Devil's Brigade* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1966), 246. The lineage from the First Special Service Force to modern Army Special Forces units is not a direct one because the FSSF ceased to exist in 1945. In 1960, during a special ceremony at Fort Bragg, the former commander of the First

as “The Devil’s Brigade,” specialized in dangerous missions behind enemy lines. Using his irregular training, Hufft led a reconnaissance mission over the Rhine the night before the Allied armies crossed into Germany. He was seriously wounded in the ensuing battle and finished his war service in a military hospital.<sup>12</sup> When Hufft’s Guard unit was federalized in 1940, he was a first lieutenant. He returned to Louisiana a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army in 1945. His awards included the Distinguished Service Cross, the Silver Star, the Bronze Star, and the Purple Heart, among many others.<sup>13</sup> While Hufft’s relation to influential politicians likely helped his appointment from Long, the officer clearly had combat credentials and command experience. He served as the adjutant general for Earl Long from 1948 to 1952 and then again from 1956 to 1960. In the years 1952 to 1956, anti-Long reformer Robert Kennon served as governor and brought back Fleming, who had retired from his federal position in D.C. Kennon served as an officer under Fleming prior to World War II.<sup>14</sup> In 1960, Fleming was again appointed by Governor Jimmie Davis.<sup>15</sup>

Fleming was an able administrator who had considerable experience and national influence. He had strong ties to the National Guard Bureau in Washington D.C. and was preferred by many of the older officers in the Louisiana National Guard. Meanwhile, Ray Hufft was a “maverick”, a strong personality who commanded with a wink and a smile, effective and

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Special Service Force, Major General (Retired) Robert Frederick, presented the colors of the unit to Colonel Edwards, commanding officer of the 7<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group.

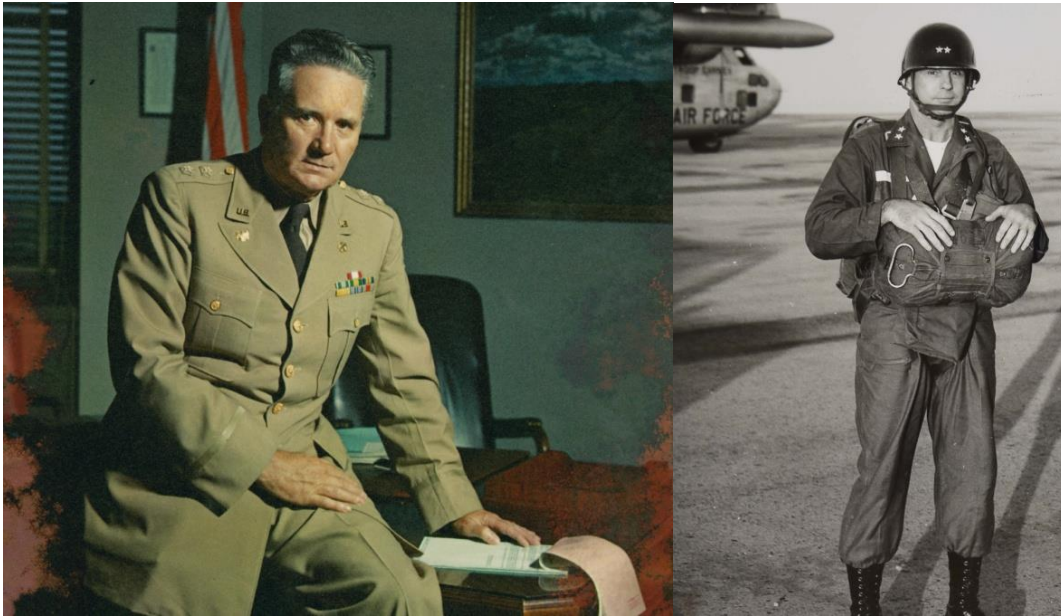
<sup>12</sup> George A. Fisher, *The Story of the 180<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment* (Oklahoma City: George A. Fisher, 1947). A self-published memoir with no page numbers, this was written by a soldier of the 180<sup>th</sup> Infantry. Raymond Hufft was commanding a battalion of the 180<sup>th</sup> when he was wounded after crossing the Rhine. Fisher offers a first-hand account toward the end of the work.

<sup>13</sup> Casso, *Legacy*, 236-240.

<sup>14</sup> Francis C. Grevemberg, *My Wars: Nazis, Mobsters, Gambling, and Corruption* (Lafayette: Beau Bayou Publishing Company, 2004), 63-66.

<sup>15</sup> Casso, *Legacy*, 235

inspiring to younger soldiers. The combination of Fleming's administrative acumen and Hufft's charisma ultimately proved effective for the organization during the period discussed.<sup>16</sup>



*Major General Ray Fleming 1950, left. Major General Ray Hufft 1959, right. Photos courtesy Louisiana National Guard (LANG) Archives.*

It was a transitional period for the Louisiana Army Guard. Its traditional roles connected to the US military and the state were redefined and, in some cases, evolved during the time period discussed. This is reflected in the areas of federal military involvement, domestic civil defense, and emergency response. The federal government occasionally called up Guard units to federal duty, but overseas activity was not common. The adjutant generals were also made directors of Louisiana's Selective Service system, which affected the relationship between the

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 233-240

Guard and the regular Army in terms of manpower management.<sup>17</sup> The Louisiana Army National Guard's further involvement in federal Cold War issues included the organization of specialized warfare units and international refugee aid. Civil defense support was an almost entirely new role for the organization. This mission resided in an ill-defined area between federal and state duty. It involved training for the possibility of a conventional or nuclear attack on the homeland and working with civilian agencies and organizations in this regard. Emergency response was another traditional role that evolved between 1946 and 1965. A series of hurricanes, floods, and industrial accidents created a higher need for response capability. Expanded funding, more advanced equipment, and the training provided for war and civil defense resulted in a larger emergency related role that culminated with the Hurricane Betsy response in 1965. Ultimately, Major Generals Fleming and Hufft used national Cold War defense policy, the increased funding it brought, and civil defense resources to shape the Louisiana National Guard into an organization that could respond much more effectively to the frequent natural and man-made disasters that Louisiana would face.

The historiography of this period in Louisiana Army National Guard history is limited. Earlier treatments of Cold War developments were written for the National Guard as a whole, such as *The Minute Man in Peace and War* by Jim Dan Hill and John K. Mahon's *History of the Militia and National Guard*.<sup>18</sup> Hill wrote as a former Guardsman and showed clear bias toward the National Guard system, often in almost emotional terms. Mahon's book is much more objective and quite useful as a general National Guard history. More recently, multiple works by

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<sup>17</sup> Casso, *Legacy*, 233-234

<sup>18</sup> Jim Dan Hill, *The Minute Man in Peace and War: A History of the National Guard* (Harrisburg, PA: The Stackpole Company, 1964). John K Mahon, *History of the Militia and the National Guard* (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1983).

Michael D. Doubler offer an extensive survey of state militia and National Guard History. His writing, such as *Civilian in Peace, Soldier in War*, also cover the Guard as a whole in a scholarly way.<sup>19</sup> While Mahon and Doubler provide a substantive overview, they are general treatments, using occasional examples from specific state National Guard units but never providing a full case study or spending much time on any one state or on one era.

In the 1970s, Evans J. Casso wrote *Louisiana Legacy: A History of the State National Guard*, which relates Louisiana's militia and Guard history up through World War II.<sup>20</sup> Two chapters go beyond that, but they mostly consist of opinion and speculation on the future. Casso had access to the Louisiana National Guard archives, then referred to as the Adjutant General's Office library. The book is a good survey of Louisiana military history from the standpoint of the militia and National Guard, but was written for a popular audience and was apparently at one time used by some of the state's high schools in their civics curriculum.<sup>21</sup> As with other sources noted, Casso focuses almost entirely on the federal military role of the Guard. None of the aforementioned books cover much ground in relation to the National Guard's role in civil defense or disaster response. There are some contemporaneous journal articles about civil defense, but they tend to focus on political theory rather than the activities and preparations of the military and government agencies. While at least one journal article recognizes the changing role of the Guard regarding disaster response, most articles and books concerning natural disasters in the 1940s-1960s view them through a social, cultural, and/or political lens, but not many focus on the first responders themselves.<sup>22</sup> An understanding of the development of the Louisiana

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<sup>19</sup> Doubler, *Civilian in Peace*.

<sup>20</sup> Casso, *Legacy*.

<sup>21</sup> Multiple officers in the Louisiana National Guard, as of this writing, have mentioned this to the author.

<sup>22</sup> Philip H. Burch, Jr. and Bennett M. Rich, "The Changing Role of the National Guard," *The American Political Science Review* Vol. 50, No. 3 (September 1956): 702-706. This article directly, but briefly, talks about the Guard's growing disaster response responsibilities. For a good example of a social/political article examining disasters in the

National Guard in the second half of the twentieth century would not be complete without including the evolution of domestic capabilities, responsibilities, and missions. Flood and hurricane duty preceded World War II, but disaster relief responsibilities of the Louisiana Guard expanded during the Cold War period, typically in conjunction with the civil defense role. Hurricanes Flossie, Audrey, Hilda, and Betsy occurred in this era, as did a major levee break at Port Allen, Louisiana and several industrial disasters. This paper will use a combination of some of the above sources, other secondary sources, contemporaneous newspaper articles, primary source documents from the Louisiana National Guard Archives, and archival papers that prominent Louisiana Guardsmen have left with area university collections.

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period, see Andy Horowitz, "Hurricane Betsy and the Politics of Disaster in New Orleans' Lower Ninth Ward, 1965-1967," *The Journal of Southern History* Vol. 80, No. 4 (November 2014): 893-934.

## Chapter 1: Federal Mobilization and Training

The Louisiana Army National Guard's role within the U.S. Army shifted after World War II. There was significant debate inside the military over the organization and use of the National Guard. The Truman, Eisenhower, and Kennedy administrations all viewed the National Guard as an important component, but there was some debate within the military about abandoning the state based system in favor of a singular federal militia. There were also calls for universal military training for males. Ultimately, key military leaders favored the American tradition of the volunteer "citizen soldier" while state politicians and members of Congress did not want to lose favor with constituents back home.<sup>23</sup> Louisiana retained its state military apparatus, but exactly how the dual federal/state role would play out as part of a superpower's military was still unclear.

The most direct contribution of the Louisiana Army National Guard to the Cold War was through limited federal mobilizations. In both World Wars, the Guard was fully mobilized until the conflict was over and won. In the new global paradigm, "hot" conflicts would be limited, both in scope and expected outcomes. The first federal mobilization came with the Korean War. In September of 1950, Louisiana's 773<sup>rd</sup> Tank Battalion was called up to replenish the regular Army's strategic reserve in the continental United States at Fort Polk and, later, Fort Benning. The unit remained activated until November of 1954.<sup>24</sup> The military initiated an individual rotation policy geared toward a reliance on draftees, sending soldiers into one year commitments in Korea with no regard for continuity in Guard unit personnel. Despite the 773<sup>rd</sup>'s support

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<sup>23</sup> Doubler, *Civilian in Peace*, 219-225.

<sup>24</sup> 773<sup>rd</sup> Tank Battalion 1946-196 folders, Vertical File, LANG Archives. The unit remained active for that whole period, but the individual men who were initially mobilized with the unit were not. Typical service for an individual soldier was for a year.

mission within the continental United States, most individuals from the tank unit departed for overseas service in Korea.<sup>25</sup> As Chief of the National Guard Bureau in Washington, Fleming had to calm down fears of Guardsmen being unready for combat. He assured that they would receive proper training prior to deployment. This was indeed the case, as Guardsmen did require a period of combat training before departing for Korea.<sup>26</sup>

Issues arose surrounding personnel continuity within the activated National Guard units. As Louisiana personnel were levied to regular units in Europe or Korea, U.S. Army replacements filled the 773rd. By the third year of federal service, the unit no longer retained any of its original Louisiana members. Guardsmen returning home after a tour of duty had no home unit to return to because theirs was still active in federal service. This issue showed the lack of coordination and communication between “Big Army” and the National Guard. In an attempt to help maintain unit lineage so prized by state militias, the National Guard Bureau created a “mirror unit” with a smaller authorized personnel strength back in Louisiana, called the 773<sup>rd</sup> Tank Battalion (NGUS).<sup>27</sup> Units of the NGUS (National Guard-United States) were created as an ad hoc solution to the problem. After the unit on federal mobilization was redeployed to its state and returned to the command of the governor, it was officially merged with the NGUS “mirror unit.” The Truman Administration’s rotation policy and creation of temporary NGUS units was very unpopular with National Guard leadership and supporters because they believed it threatened the unit integrity inherent in the Guard.<sup>28</sup> Guard supporters felt it slighted the nation’s oldest

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<sup>25</sup> “773<sup>rd</sup> Tank Battalion,” Louisiana National Guard pamphlet, 1955, LANG Archives, New Orleans. Also see Curney J. Dronet, *A Perspective View – The Louisiana Brigade: The Evolvement of the 256<sup>th</sup> Mechanized Infantry Brigade (Separate), 1770-2004* (Sulphur, LA: Wise Printing, 2005), 39-40.

<sup>26</sup> *Times Picayune* clipping, 1950, Specific date clipped out, National Guard Publicity scrapbook 1950, 170, LANG Archives.

<sup>27</sup> “773<sup>rd</sup> Tank Battalion” pamphlet

<sup>28</sup> Doubler, *Civilian in Peace*, 231-235, also see Mahon, *History of Militia*, 208-212.



military traditions while Guard detractors felt it illustrated the antiquated notions of a state militia.<sup>29</sup> General Hufft was firmly in the camp of the former. He was not afraid to publicly criticize President Truman's policies on this, or any number of issues. By the time Fleming returned to the Louisiana adjutant general position in 1953, the Korean War was winding down and the Army was no longer calling up guardsmen. He was, however, the Chief of the National Guard Bureau from 1950-1953, a position which gave him some influence within the U.S. military. He was also powerful within the National Guard Association of the United States (NGAUS), called by some the "Guard lobby," as a former president of the organization.<sup>30</sup> Both critics and supporters of the National Guard admit that the NGAUS was typically successful in currying favor with the U.S. Congress.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Doubler, *Civilian in Peace*, 231-235.

<sup>30</sup> *The National Guardsman*, Feb. 1948, 12.

<sup>31</sup> Martha Derthick, *The National Guard in Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), 119-122.



*773<sup>rd</sup> Tank Battalion, circa 1950s. Courtesy Louisiana National Guard Archives*

In 1952 and 1955, Congress passed two Armed Forces Reserve Acts that laid out more clearly the responsibilities, regulation, and composition of military reserve forces. The National Guard was generally placed in a higher position than the U.S. Army Reserve, although the Reserves made gains as well. Eisenhower’s “New Look” emphasized the possibility of nuclear warfare, which put the reserve components into a more prominent role.<sup>32</sup> Congress amended Title 10 and Title 32 of the U.S. Code, which more clearly delineated the National Guard’s state obligations versus national obligations and service for future actions.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> William F. Levantrosser, *Congress and the Citizen Soldier* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1967), 63-69.

<sup>33</sup> Doubler, *Civilian in Peace*, 238-239. Title 10 outlines the role of the United States Armed Forces. It regulates federal mobilization of National Guard personnel under the command of the President of the United States. Title 32 more specifically outlines National Guard issues, focusing on domestic activation under the command of a state governor.

The next major federal mobilization came under the Kennedy Administration. During the Eisenhower years, the military had been reorganized to react to a nuclear conflict. After Kennedy came into office in 1961, he moved toward a strategy of “flexible response,” one capable of handling a range of different contingencies, from nuclear warfare to small guerilla operations.<sup>34</sup> The Berlin Crisis of 1961 was an event that occurred during the formulation of this new strategy. Perhaps hoping to intimidate the young President into submission, Russian Premier Nikita Khrushchev renewed his demand that U.S. forces withdraw from West Berlin. Kennedy’s response was to prepare for confrontation.<sup>35</sup> He put the military on alert, increased defense expenditures, and requested permission from Congress to mobilize the National Guard and the Reserves. On July 31, Congress passed a joint resolution that authorized mobilization of up to 250,000 Guardsmen and reservists for a year.

The resulting activation was not without complications for the Guard. Many of the manpower and training issues from the Korean conflict reappeared. The overall National Guard response was uneven. Some units were ready within three months while others were not fully prepared by the demobilization almost a year later.<sup>36</sup> Some Guard critics argue that the mobilization of the Guard and Reserves was simply a political tool by Kennedy to symbolize resolve and support from the nation by using its “citizen soldiers.”<sup>37</sup> This partial mobilization of Guardsmen as a tool of foreign policy was unpopular among some of the personnel activated because it demanded a year of service for what some felt amounted to political showmanship.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> George Fielding Eliot, *Reserve Forces and the Kennedy Strategy* (Harrisburg: The Stackpole Company, 1962) 1-2.

<sup>35</sup> Campbell Craig and Fredrik Logevall, *America’s Cold War: The Politics of Insecurity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 199.

<sup>36</sup> Doubler, *Civilian in Peace*, 251.

<sup>37</sup> Martin Binkin, *U.S. Reserve Forces: The Problem of the Weekend Warriors* (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1974), 20.

<sup>38</sup> Mahon, *History of the Militia*, 228-230.

Louisiana's representing units were generally well prepared. The LANG command staff took the position that it showed Louisiana's readiness and willingness to engage the communist threat. Louisiana Army National Guard units federalized included the 159<sup>th</sup> Evacuation Hospital, the 3628<sup>th</sup> Ordnance Company and the 204<sup>th</sup> Transportation Group at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. The 415<sup>th</sup> Ordnance Company was sent to Fort Campbell, Kentucky while Baton Rouge's 769<sup>th</sup> Signal Battalion maintained strategic readiness at Fort Polk, Louisiana.<sup>39</sup> The result of this international incident was the construction of the Berlin Wall, but neither side was compelled to engage in armed conflict. Diplomatic advances, combined with military backup, maintained a status quo, although Khrushchev was able to stem the tide of refugees fleeing Communist East Berlin.<sup>40</sup>

For the Louisiana Guard, however, it signified that enhanced training over the previous decade created a force prepared for an almost immediate activation.<sup>41</sup> The 159<sup>th</sup> Evacuation Hospital and the 204<sup>th</sup> Transportation Group received a "Superior" rating on the Strategic Army Command Readiness Test. Major General Samuel T. Williams of the 4<sup>th</sup> Army Field Training Inspection Board sent 204<sup>th</sup> commander Colonel Francis Grevemberg a letter commending the unit's performance.<sup>42</sup> The 769<sup>th</sup> Signal Battalion was recognized for its performance in a large Army exercise designated "Iron Dragon" and won the award for "Most Outstanding" non-divisional unit in training at Fort Polk during its time federalized.<sup>43</sup> Unlike the complication-plagued activation of the 773<sup>rd</sup> Tank Battalion for the Korean War, these units had a much

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<sup>39</sup> Casso, *Legacy*, 191-192.

<sup>40</sup> Jussi M. Hanhimaki and Odd Arne Westad, eds., *The Cold War: A History in Documents and Eyewitness Account*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 328-331.

<sup>41</sup> "Berlin Crisis, LANG 1946-1969" Vertical Files, LANG Archives.

<sup>42</sup> Major General Samuel T. Williams to Colonel Francis C. Grevemberg, August-September folder, Box 211-4, Francis C. Grevemberg Collection, University of New Orleans, New Orleans, Louisiana.

<sup>43</sup> State of Louisiana Adjutant General's Office press release, 2 August 1962, Louisiana National Guard Press release collection, LANG Archives

smoother and more successful mobilization. Since no combat resulted, the regular Army had no opportunity to levy individuals from the units. Therefore, unit personnel cohesion remained. Also, based on the ratings given by Army commanders, the Louisiana units seemed to be well prepared for this strategic reserve duty relative to many other Army Guard units.

Increasingly integrated combat training was another aspect of the Guard's military evolution during the Cold War. In the years 1949-1951, the 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, consisting of the Louisiana and Arkansas National Guard, trained together in massive maneuvers, usually around Fort Polk, Louisiana. During this time, Major General Fleming was in command of the 39<sup>th</sup> Division while Brigadier General Hufft commanded the Louisiana National Guard.<sup>44</sup> The two Louisiana generals were able to work together for the betterment of the organization, despite their differences in age, political affiliations, and temperament. The encampment combined infantry, artillery, armor, various support functions, and even air power into a massive joint operation. "The single objective of this stepped up training program is to crowd as much military training as possible into as little time as possible without interfering with the jobs or studies of Louisiana's Guardsmen."<sup>45</sup> It is a reminder that for most of their time, these soldiers and airmen were citizens who maintained normal jobs or went to school with other civilians.

In addition to the military training, Hufft wanted to provide some morale to the annual commitment. In 1949 and following years, he had Lieutenant Harold "Hoss" Memtsas, head football coach at Warren Easton High School and former Tulane University football star, run an

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<sup>44</sup> State of Louisiana Adjutant General's Office press release, 1 July 1949, LANG Archives.

<sup>45</sup> State of Louisiana Adjutant General's Office press release, 17 January 1951, LANG Archives

athletics program. After the battle simulations, soldiers were given the opportunity to play basketball, softball, and volleyball as well as participate in swimming and boxing competitions.<sup>46</sup>

Several advances in training at the national level would have improved the overall readiness of the Guard for federal mobilization as well as domestic activations. Authorized strength for the National Guard increased in the late 1940s and early 1950s. It is likely Hufft was using the highly publicized Louisiana training events as a recruitment tool. During the Korean War, in particular, these activities might have attracted young men to the Guard as an alternative to being drafted into the regular Army. In 1947, the personnel strength of the Louisiana National Guard was 3,636 officers and enlisted men. By 1955, it was up to 9,796. After 1955, it decreased slightly and fluctuated between 7,000 and 8,500 up to 1965.<sup>47</sup>

The 1955 Reserve Forces Act indicated a need for stronger, more ready reserves. The US Army had to ensure viable units in case they were called up for active duty. One major policy shift was that all Guard recruits had to go through a standard six month basic training, conducted by “Big Army.” The National Guard Association protested in Congress on the basis that this policy would hurt recruiting efforts and cause issues with employers. Recruiting did take a slight and temporary hit. An unintended benefit, however, is that the National Guard was freed from all individual basic training obligations. This allowed states to focus on unit development and training for domestic activation scenarios in addition to typical drill and annual exercises. Concurrently, states created or improved on their own Officer Candidate Schools. Many states, including Louisiana, eventually instituted Non Commissioned Officer training schools as well.

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<sup>46</sup>State of Louisiana Adjutant General’s Office press release, 30 June 1949 and 26 July 1951, LANG Archives.

<sup>47</sup> *Biennial Reports*, years 1946-1947, 1948-1949, 1950-51, 1952-1953, 1954-1955, 1956-1957, 1958-1959, 1960-1962, 1963-1964, LANG Archives.

The maintenance of an internal state training for officers and NCOs provided dedicated and continuous leadership.<sup>48</sup>

Monthly drill policies were improved. Prior to changes in the mid-fifties, drills were two hours a week, forty eight times a year, and capped with a two week annual training program. Not a great deal could be accomplished within these short weekly drill periods. This changed to one weekend a month with longer sessions. Longer drill periods, while not necessarily changing the quantity of training hours, provided an opportunity for higher quality and productivity in training and drills. Furthermore, the Army authorized additional drills to enhance more specialized training. Brigadier General (Retired) Curney J. Dronet, a lifelong Guardsman, mentioned in his history of the Louisiana infantry that these factors progressively improved state Guard training from the mid-nineteen fifties into the sixties.<sup>49</sup>

Unit diversity, with accompanying military occupation specialties, was allowed to expand. Prior to World War II, Guard units were generally tied to traditional infantry roles, including artillery and cavalry. After World War II, the Army's technological advancement and increasingly diverse needs required more of its reserves. The 1950s saw a proliferation of anti-aircraft units, probably connected to the Guard's civil defense role. More lasting types of units that were formed or expanded in the Louisiana Guard included medical, transportation, aviation, and engineering.

A good example of unit specialization is the LANG Special Forces. Unhappy with the Eisenhower administration's emphasis on nuclear warfare, the Command and General Staff College drafted a strategy for combatting Communist insurgencies. Using both military and

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<sup>48</sup> Mahon, *History of the Militia*, 217-220.

<sup>49</sup> Dronet, *Perspective View*, 38-42.

political capabilities, small units would be trained in guerrilla warfare, counter insurgency techniques, civil disturbances, counterintelligence, psychological warfare, and civil affairs assistance. Senator John F. Kennedy, a presidential candidate at the time and a member of the Senate Foreign Relations committee, supported special operations as part of a more diverse strategy that would eventually evolve into his future administration's "flexible response" stance.<sup>50</sup>

Louisiana was one of five states to organize Special Forces units in their Army National Guard as part of a larger Special Operations force that expanded further when Kennedy became president.<sup>51</sup> Beginning in 1959, the unit went through a few re-designations before being known as Company D, 20<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group. The unit had three detachments, one each at New Orleans, Baton Rouge and Breaux Bridge.

Hufft's prior service with the First Special Service Force and continued affiliation with some of the policy proponents in Washington may have put Louisiana on the short list. Some soldiers from the unit say he was personally acquainted with Kennedy.<sup>52</sup> Hufft was directly involved in the recruiting and organization of this specialized outfit. He probably stationed the third detachment in Breaux Bridge, a small Cajun hamlet, because his good friend Lieutenant Colonel Patin was a native there. Patin, who commanded the Breaux Bridge unit, had been an airborne soldier during World War II who had become close with Hufft. Lieutenant Colonel John Boh, another airborne veteran and Office of Strategic Services member now in the Louisiana Guard, also helped General Hufft recruit officers and enlisted men. Prior to the unit's first

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<sup>50</sup> Andrew J. Birtle, *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine 1942-1976* (Washington: Center of Military History, 2006), 159-165.

<sup>51</sup> Doubler, *Civilian in Peace*, 244-245, 250-251.

<sup>52</sup> Command Sergeant Major (Retired) Ed Perrett, Oral history interview by author, Metairie, Louisiana, August, 2013, DVD/CD holdings, LANG Archives.



qualifying jump at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, Hufft had custom jump boots made for the men and made sure he was the first one off the plane in the ensuing training exercise. This sort of bravado is what made many look up to Hufft while it turned others off.<sup>53</sup>



*Courtesy Louisiana National Guard Archives*

Earlier training missions had the unit jumping in Louisiana and training in the Deep South states of Florida, Georgia, and Alabama. Tensions heated up in Latin America as a result of Fidel Castro's takeover of Cuba and the Special Forces units received more attention. The Kennedy Administration's entry into the Vietnam conflict also beefed up Special Forces training. Rather than the woods of Alabama or Louisiana, Company D began training in the jungles of

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<sup>53</sup> Major (Retired) Vernon Blanchard, Command Sergeant Major (Retired) Lennet Guidry, Command Sergeant Major (Retired) Ed Perret, Chief Warrant Officer 4 (Retired) John Harrison, Colonel (Retired) Richard Kuntz, and Colonel (Retired) Robert Moreau, separate interviews by author, Metairie and New Orleans, August and September, 2013, DVD/CD holdings, LANG Archives.

Panama and Puerto Rico. President Johnson's escalation put the unit on alert for a deployment to Southeast Asia. Policy shifted in 1968, however, putting the brakes on such a mobilization. Several members of Company D voluntarily transferred to the regular Army for Vietnam service, some paying the ultimate price.<sup>54</sup>

While active federal involvement for the Louisiana National Guard was limited during the years 1946-1965, development during that time was critical. Readiness capabilities appeared to improve over the decade from the Korean War to Kennedy's Berlin Crisis. Reforms at the federal level did not necessarily create more training hours but effected a more efficient use of drill. Hufft, in particular, sought to maximize unit training within whatever small windows were available. Six month Army basic training for individual recruits enhanced readiness, while allowing the Guard to maximize annual training and monthly drill for unit development and inter-operability within the LANG itself. While personnel strength fluctuated, the size of the LANG remained much higher than it was prior to or immediately after World War II. More bodies were available for federal mobilization or domestic activation. Unit specialization showed an increase in professionalism and training beyond the traditional infantry role. Louisiana's Congressional delegation was often fighting for its Guard as well. Powerful Congressmen Overton Brooks and F. Edward Herbert, in particular, were almost always in support of the "Guard lobby."<sup>55</sup> Political competition between certain factions supporting "Big Army" and those supporting the National Guard in some ways created a more professional force. Winston Wilson, Chief of the National Guard Bureau, said that the National Guard had moved from being

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid. Captain Marvin "Buddy" Roberts and Captain Anthony Lavitte were both killed in action during the Vietnam War. They transferred from the Baton Rouge detachment of Company D, 20<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group.

<sup>55</sup> Mahon, *History of the Militia*, 219, 232-233.

“near professional” in the recent past toward being “the full professional” organization by 1963.<sup>56</sup>

The Cold War may not have required most Louisiana Guardsmen to enter a “hot conflict,” but these developments directly and indirectly benefited the organization in its domestic roles. Quicker reaction times, integrated training of different types of units, unit diversification, and better individual training could only enhance the Guard’s roles in civil defense and emergency response.

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<sup>56</sup> Mahon, *History of the Militia*, 221-231.

## Chapter 2: Civil Defense

While the mission as a reserve force for the U.S. Armed Forces has always been the tradition of the Guard and the state militias that preceded it, domestic civil defense against potential foreign enemy action was something not seen since the War of 1812. Civil defense during the Cold War entailed defending the homeland from a potential Soviet attack. The assumption was that the U.S. Army would be either crippled or otherwise occupied in foreign territory to deal with the aftermath of an attack on the continental U.S. Domestic forces would be necessary to deal with the situation.<sup>57</sup> The National Guard was an ideal choice but the primary role of the organization was to act as a reserve for the regular military branches. Therefore, it was possible that the Guard would also be unavailable to defend local populace from bombings and/or deal with the after effects of a nuclear attack. Efforts in the late 1940s and early 1950s were to enlist the general public as civil defenders.<sup>58</sup>

American culture was in the midst of a “Red Scare.” The public underwent air raid drills and schoolchildren were trained to “duck and cover” under their desks when the alarms sirens wailed.<sup>59</sup> The notion of every citizen being responsible for civil defense was partially tied into cultural concerns over the “nuclear family” and maintaining gender roles in the post-war, non-communist world. Practical policies regarding the military defense of the United States were culturally connected to fears of internal subversion by left wing forces.<sup>60</sup> Pro-American

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<sup>57</sup> Walter E. Todd, Willard S. Paul, and Val Peterson, “National Defense Against An Atomic Attack,” *The Scientific Monthly* Vol. 80, No. 4 (April 1955): 240-249.

<sup>58</sup> *Army Advisory Committee Bulletin*, Vol II, No 2 10 March, 1948, Washington DC. Also see “Civil Defense Plans Revamped,” *Times Picayune*, June 27, 1949.

<sup>59</sup> Mary Lou Widmer, *New Orleans in the Fifties* (Gretna: Pelican Publishing, 1991), 33.

<sup>60</sup> Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1988), 94.

sentiment became synonymous with anti-communism.<sup>61</sup> This manifested in ways that could be seen as positive as well as negative. Ray Hufft was a classic “Cold Warrior” and typified the conservative American ideal during the time period. On one hand, he provided temporary housing for refugees from the Soviet crackdown on Hungary in 1956.<sup>62</sup> On the other hand, his incendiary Memorial Day speech about the United Kingdom’s trade policies with Communist China provoked protest from the British Consul in New Orleans.<sup>63</sup> Ray Fleming took a more moderate tone. For example, in 1954 he joined local officials at a dinner honoring Ethiopian leader, Haile Selassie.<sup>64</sup> A proponent of the non-alignment movement of third world nations and the savior of the Rastafarian religion, Selassie was not communist but tended to irk the more conservative elements in the U.S. It is doubtful that Hufft would have been at that dinner were he the adjutant general in 1954. As a combination of viable homeland defense strategy and a reflection of the anti-communist cultural trend of the period, Fleming and Hufft were heavily involved with civil defense efforts in Louisiana.

The idea of a state level civil defense agency predated the Cold War. Fleming directed preparation for a plan prior to World War II under the administration of Governor Sam Jones.<sup>65</sup> It was years, however, before formal organizing began. Named by Earl Long as Louisiana’s Civil Defense Director in 1950, Hufft set out to establish more permanent civil defense plans. After attending conferences with federal officials and members of the National Guard

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<sup>61</sup> Ryan Prechter, “‘The Highest Type of Disloyalty’: The Struggle for Americanism in Louisiana during the Age of Communist Ascendancy, 1930s-1960s,” Master’s Thesis, University of New Orleans, 2011.

<sup>62</sup> *New Orleans States-Item*, 11 January, 1957, 1.

<sup>63</sup> *Times Picayune*, Saturday May 31, 1952, National Guard Publicity scrapbook, 1952-1953, LANG Archives. With the Consul in the audience at New Orleans’ City Park, Hufft accused the United Kingdom of providing the People’s Republic of China with strategic supplies. The Consul rushed the stage and argued that British trade with China was completely non-military.

<sup>64</sup> Invitation and envelope addressed to General and Mrs. Raymond Fleming, Program for Haile Selassie visit, Raymond H. Fleming Collection, LANG Archives.

<sup>65</sup> *Biennial Reports, 1952-1953: Military Department, Civil Defense Agency and Selective Service System of the State of Louisiana*, 163, Louisiana Adjutant Generals Report Collection, LANG Archives.

Association in Washington, Hufft went on a public relations blitz in Louisiana that combined genuine attempts to create a sense of civic duty with outright “red baiting.” He stressed that the civil defense plans were for war only, and that they would not be concerned with disaster relief. He also expressed a concern of subversive infiltration, “We certainly don’t want communists and other traitors to be in a position to sabotage the civil defense functions in some future emergency.”<sup>66</sup> Hufft spoke to several organizations, including the Rotary Clubs of Alexandria and New Orleans and veterans groups statewide, concerning the evils of communism and leftists. He promised that civil defense outlets will be screened at the local and state level “to prevent the infiltration of communists into this extremely important organization.”<sup>67</sup> Hufft urged the state’s residents to participate in civil defense programs such as the Ground Observers’ Corps and volunteer “ham” radio warning networks.<sup>68</sup>

President Truman created The Federal Civil Defense Administration by Executive Order 10186 in 1950. The Louisiana Civil Defense Agency was established by the state legislature the same year. Between 1950 and 1952, most of the state agency’s efforts under Hufft were directed at public awareness of the importance of civil defense. It was not until after Fleming’s return to Louisiana in late 1952, however, that the Agency was fully active as an organization. According to the 1952-1953 biennial report, “The primary mission of the Louisiana Civil Defense Agency is to minimize the effects of enemy action upon the civilian population and to thus enable a continuation of the war effort.”<sup>69</sup> It goes on to outline the responsibilities, including education, communications with the federal and local levels, and the establishment of an adequate

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<sup>66</sup> State of Louisiana Adjutant General’s Office press release 10 April 1950, LANG Archives.

<sup>67</sup> State of Louisiana, Adjutant General’s Office press release 11 April, 1950, LANG Archives.

<sup>68</sup> State of Louisiana, Adjutant General’s Office press release April 1950, LANG Archives. The Ground Observers Corps previously existed during World War II. It was revived at the beginning of the Cold War. It ceased to exist in 1958 due to lack of civilian participation as well as the development of better defense technology.

<sup>69</sup> *Biennial Reports, 1952-1953*, 163.

organization to control and direct all resources of the state, parishes, and municipalities to cope with emergency conditions that may result from enemy action. This 1952-1953 report briefly mentions that disaster response was a secondary mission.<sup>70</sup> Despite the existence of the Federal Civil Defense Agency, state, local, and private efforts remained at the forefront since federal programs for things such as evacuation and shelter administration were impractical and deemed inefficient.<sup>71</sup>

The National Guard was closely connected to the state's civil defense program and the adjutant general of Louisiana selected the director. Fleming named one of his assistant adjutant generals, Brigadier General Francis Woolfley to the post. Woolfley was a highly respected veteran of World War I who served a successful active duty career before joining the Guard, including time as the chief of staff for U.S. Army forces in Turkey.<sup>72</sup> Other prominent Guardsmen who became planners, coordinators, and directors in the Louisiana Civil Defense Agency were Colonel Frank Spiess, Colonel Anees Mogabgab, Colonel John Boh, and Colonel Numa Avendano.<sup>73</sup> Colonel Francis Grevemberg, commander of the 204<sup>th</sup> Anti-Aircraft Group and 204<sup>th</sup> Transportation Group, was the head of the Louisiana State Police, which was also closely coordinated with the Civil Defense Agency. While all these men had proven able in the field of battle or as effective organizers and administrators in the military, their appointment undermined the idea of civilian control of civil defense. Indeed, as the decade wore on, the

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> May, *Homeward Bound*, 103.

<sup>72</sup> Brigadier General Francis Woolfley biographical data folder, Vertical files, LANG Archives.

<sup>73</sup> *Biennial Reports*, years 1952-1953, 1954-1955, 1956-1957, 1958-1959, 1960-1962, 1963-1964, LANG archives. Spiess, a longtime Guardsman and recognized World War II hero with the 773rd Tank Destroyer Battalion, also served as an assistant adjutant general for the Louisiana National Guard under Fleming and Hufft. Anees Mogabgab was commander of Louisiana's 61<sup>st</sup> Infantry Brigade prior to World War II and remained influential in the Louisiana Guard after his retirement. Boh was involved in the creation of the LANG Special Forces with Hufft. Avendano was previously a prominent commander of the 141<sup>st</sup> Field Artillery Regiment, "The Washington Artillery," Louisiana's oldest and most historic Guard unit.

National Guard's role in civil defense seemed to grow as the reliance on civilians faded. After the Korean War wound down and there were no enemy attacks on U.S. soil, Louisiana's civilian population became less concerned about nuclear holocaust or an impending Russian attack. Local author Mary Lou Widmer writes that New Orleanians, in particular, went on with their lives and "forgot about not being able to build bomb shelters, and then concentrated instead on building barbecue pits."<sup>74</sup> Despite media and government hype, the Louisiana public seemed to become apathetic about civil defense.<sup>75</sup> Between the carnival of New Orleans culture, the booming post-war economy, and the "Sportsman's Paradise" provided by the rest of the state, there was likely too much else to focus on than a Soviet nuclear threat.

By the mid-1950s, the Louisiana Civil Defense Agency and the Louisiana National Guard seemed to merge their missions. In 1952, the Louisiana National Guard opened enlistment of anti-aircraft units to men over 35. Colonel Grevemberg's 204<sup>th</sup> Anti-Aircraft Group expanded. Its three anti-aircraft battalions were given increased responsibility. They cooperated with regular Army units as part of the country's master defense plan in case of a conventional attack by the USSR or other aggressors. The raising of age limits allowed soldiers with experience to fill out the enhanced units.<sup>76</sup> No longer were the civilian Ground Observers Corps as integral to the nation's air defenses as military functions picked up.

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<sup>74</sup> Widmer, *New Orleans in*, 34. South Louisiana's swampy topography prevents digging more than a few feet before water fills the hole. Underground bomb shelters, a phenomenon in drier or higher parts of the nation, were largely impossible in this area.

<sup>75</sup> Gregory J. Schloesser, "The Bomb on the Bayou: Nuclear Fear and Public Indifference in New Orleans, 1945-1966" (master's thesis, University of New Orleans, 2010), 1-3.

<sup>76</sup> State of Louisiana, Adjutant General's Office press release 20 November, 1952, LANG Archives. The release also mentions that the 204<sup>th</sup> AAA Group armory was headquartered at 1700 Moss Street, at the time called "Camp Nichols." The same site served as The Confederate Veterans Home, a World War I training site, and a New Orleans Police Department training area immediately before Hurricane Katrina. In 2013, it was acquired by the Deutches Haus, a German American social society in New Orleans.



Another event that heralded the National Guard's enhanced civil defense role was "Operation Minuteman" in 1955. This was a surprise nationwide test mobilization for the National Guard. It was an experiment ordered by the Pentagon to test the domestic readiness of state Guard units to mobilize domestically in the event of a nuclear attack on U.S. soil. Out of the 9,773 Guardsmen in Louisiana, 8,380 of them, or 86% of the state's forces reported to their armory within a couple of hours. Bogalusa's 105<sup>th</sup> Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion had 96% personnel quickly show up for the surprise mobilization, one of the best performances in the nation. The overall national percentage was about 67%. General Fleming directed the operation in Louisiana by contacting unit commanders via short wave radio. Individual Guardsmen were, in turn, notified by telephone and by local media cooperation.<sup>77</sup> Similar to the traditional military role, the Louisiana Guard's domestic activation performance seemingly improved over the decade due to training and effective leadership. At least part of this came from the increased militarization of civil defense due to lack of public volunteerism as well as the close ties between the Louisiana Civil Defense Agency and the Louisiana National Guard.

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<sup>77</sup> "Operation Minuteman1955" folder, "LANG General 1946-1969" drawer, Vertical files, LANG Archives. The folder contains many Louisiana newspaper clippings covering the event, including *The Times Picayune*, *The New Orleans States-Item*, *The Alexandria Town Talk*, and *Bogalusa Daily News*.



*Louisiana's 935<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battalion, circa 1950s. Courtesy Louisiana National Guard Archives.*

This trend was further reflected at a national level when President Eisenhower merged the Federal Civil Defense Administration with other agencies to form the Office of Civil and Defense Mobilization (OCDM). This agency had more of a military presence than Truman's FCDA. Public interest in civil defense waned through the late fifties and early sixties, with a brief surge during and immediately after the Cuban Missile Crisis.<sup>78</sup> President Kennedy transferred civil defense responsibilities to the Defense Department and OCDM was renamed the Office of Emergency Planning (OEP).<sup>79</sup> In 1964, the Pentagon officially connected the federal

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<sup>78</sup> Margot A. Henriksen, *Dr. Strangelove's America: Society and Culture in the Atomic Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 223.

<sup>79</sup> National Archives and Records Administration website: <http://www.archives.gov/research/guide-fed-records/groups/396.html> (accessed September 3, 2015).

mission of civil defense to the National Guard and specifically named disaster relief one of the functions of this role.<sup>80</sup>

Reports of the Louisiana Civil Defense Agency in the late 1950s into the 1960s show that it progressively moved away from an active response role and a recruiter of patriotic civilians toward more of a coordinating agency, facilitating communications between the Louisiana National Guard, other state first response agencies, the Red Cross, and, if necessary, the federal government and active military. The Agency also gravitated toward a funding role, managing federal grants to public facilities damaged in disasters.<sup>81</sup> While mobilization in the face of an enemy attack was named as the primary reason for civil defense plans and agencies in the period, civil defense and disaster response can be seen to merge as the Cold War progressed. Increased federal funding from the federal civil defense agencies, combined with the Louisiana state government's efforts to coordinate various agencies for emergency response, proved useful to a state with a propensity for disaster. Despite earlier attempts to separate these two functions, Mother Nature and industrial accidents seemed to pose a greater threat to Louisiana citizens than the communists could. In 1966, a U.S. Army officer affiliated with national civil defense summarized it best by stating, "Our main effort is designed to help state and local government achieve a level of competence to survive enemy attack. If we accomplish this, we also attain a highly respectable and effective capability to cope with a natural disaster."<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Annual Report of the Chief, National Guard Bureau, Fiscal Year 1964, Washington DC.

<sup>81</sup> *Biennial Reports*, 1952-1953, 1954-1955, 1956-1957, 1958-1959, 1960-1961, 1962-1963, Adjutant Generals Reports, LANG archives.

<sup>82</sup> "Anti-Hurricane Plans Told," *Times Picayune* April 27, 1966.

### Chapter 3: Emergency Response

The 1958 report of the Louisiana Civil Defense Agency shows a marked shift from a concern over enemy attack to one of dealing with natural and man-made disasters. While sections still existed referring to plans in case of nuclear or conventional offensives by another nation, one of the longer sections describes the agency's new "Natural Disaster Relief Plan" and its longest entry in the Operations Section is about the state response to Hurricane Audrey.<sup>83</sup> As the Louisiana National Guard became a more important factor in civil defense readiness and improved its effectiveness regarding military efficiency and coordination, the afterthought of emergency response moved more and more to the heart of the organization's mission.

Even as hurricanes and floods began to replace Soviet intercontinental ballistic missile systems as the major threat to the state's citizenry, emergency response was not a new role for the Guard. As early as 1890, Louisiana governors had been activating the state militia for hurricanes and floods.<sup>84</sup> The Great Flood of 1927 was the pinnacle of Guard response efforts prior to the Cold War. Fleming commanded the 141<sup>st</sup> Field Artillery (Washington Artillery) during the Great Flood. His field report to then Adjutant General Louis Toombs typifies the Guard response at that time. It included patrols to ensure that no one sabotaged the levee upstream from their own residence, rescue of stranded civilians, evacuation support and refugee support. In today's lexicon, "refugee support" would equate to delivery of food, water, and other commodities to evacuee shelters and individuals, i.e. "commodity distribution." The Guard also assisted the Red Cross in organizing and administering the refugee shelters.<sup>85</sup> This went far

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<sup>83</sup> *Biennial Reports 1958-1959*, Adjutant Generals Report Collection, LANG archives.

<sup>84</sup> Casso, *Legacy*, 104. In 1890, Governor Francis T. Nicholls first mobilized the Louisiana militia for flood response. The soldiers patrolled danger areas and helped citizens evacuate.

<sup>85</sup> Adjutant General Report 1927, Adjutant General Report Collection, LANG archives.

beyond previous emergency responsibilities. Given the resources and technology of the time, guardsmen were extremely active during that event. Despite the impressive effort in 1927, though, the lack of post-World War II technology, travel infrastructure, and federal funding limited the possibilities of response. The 1930s and early 1940s saw some emergency response efforts, but nothing on the level of the 1927 flood.<sup>86</sup>

After World War II, the Army National Guard was given surplus Army vehicles and equipment, including high water trucks, jeeps, and the amphibious DUKWs, pronounced “ducks.”<sup>87</sup> Beyond that, they also worked with the Louisiana Air National Guard for aerial survey and eventually built up an inventory of helicopters. Higher national training standards required for a potential World War III scenario made the Guard units quicker to respond, and gave them practice working together. Civil defense initiatives connected Guard leadership to other state and federal agencies and resources. This situation also gave the Guardsmen some training with perspective to such things such as damaged infrastructure, looting, maintaining effective communications, search and rescue, and other symptoms of social/political breakdown that might result from a nuclear attack. As natural or man-made disasters took the place of nuclear war fears, the National Guard, along with other agencies and organizations, became more practiced in response initiatives. Even some of the critics of the National Guard system admit that the organization saw an increase in domestic responsibilities into and through the 1960s.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Red Cross Disaster map of Louisiana, 1922-1943, “Flood of 1927” Folder, “State Activation” drawer, Vertical files, LANG archives.

<sup>87</sup> *Michigan manufacturer and financial record* 73 (Detroit: Manufacturer Publishing Co. 1944), 104. The name DUKW comes from its manufacturer, GMC. D= designed in 1942. U= utility. K= all-wheel drive. W=dual rear axles. The amphibious nature of the craft lends itself to the pronunciation “duck.”

<sup>88</sup> Binkin, *Weekend Warrior*, 21.

The period also saw a progressive increase in the size of engineer units within the Louisiana National Guard. The 225<sup>th</sup> Engineer Aviation Battalion was formed in 1954 in the Louisiana Air National Guard but was quickly re-allotted to the Army Guard. Headquartered at Jackson Barracks, the engineers' role in disaster response grew with each disaster. In 1963, it was expanded to the 225<sup>th</sup> Engineer Group, consisting of multiple battalions.<sup>89</sup> Cranes, dump trucks, bulldozers and other equipment were added to the Guard's arsenal. While engineer units certainly had value in a combat setting, they also had obvious advantages for disaster response, including infrastructure repair, road clearing, communications support, transportation, and other missions.

A clear line of positive development in emergency response can be seen from 1946 through Hurricane Betsy in 1965. In 1947, floods inundated southwest Louisiana and a hurricane struck near New Orleans. The Guard response was robust in each case, but remained similar to traditional actions, such as waterborne rescue, evacuation support, and security from looting.<sup>90</sup> In 1948, the Mississippi River levee burst at Port Allen, creating a major flood disaster. The area deluged was sparsely populated but the Guard response was quick and effective. The 769<sup>th</sup> Anti-Aircraft Battalion used DUKWs and high water trucks to rescue three hundred people who were in harm's way. Six Army and Air Guard units immediately assisted with aerial reconnaissance, sandbagging efforts, communications, and the transportation and distribution of meals to evacuees and relief laborers. The coordination between different types of units is notable in the reports, as are the communications used.

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<sup>89</sup> "Lineage and Honors, Headquarters and Headquarters Company 225<sup>th</sup> Engineer Group," 29 April 1968, Vertical files, LANG Archives.

<sup>90</sup> *Biennial Reports 1946-1947*, Adjutant General Reports Collection, LANG Archives. Hurricanes were not named until 1953.

In 1949, General Hufft broadened the Guard's emergency role when he ordered Guard units to help with drought relief in St. Bernard, Plaquemines, and Jefferson parishes. Guard tank trucks delivered over 250,000 gallons of potable water to citizens until sufficient rainfall ended the drought. In 1950, Hufft sent members of his staff to the scenes of disasters elsewhere in the United States to study and report on the successes and failures of others in emergency response. The resulting state disaster plan was one of the more comprehensive in the U.S. at the time. Liaisons and/or close communications were set up with state agencies, parish governments, the Coast Guard, and the Red Cross. In addition to "Operation Drink" (above), 1950 saw the Guard evacuate 2,700 people from river floods in central Louisiana and assist the Red Cross with tornado victims across communities in Northwest Louisiana. When a hurricane again threatened Southeast Louisiana, Hufft's civilian "ham" radio network aided the Adjutant General's Office in getting accurate information and filtering out "wild rumors of loss of life and destruction of property." This short lived civil defense initiative was helpful after all.<sup>91</sup>

When Fleming returned to Louisiana in 1952, he continued and expanded on Hufft's disaster plans. Coordination and communication, both internally and with all state and federal agencies, was further solidified. The next year, heavy rains produced more flooding in central and southwest Louisiana. The Louisiana Army National Guard assisted the Coast Guard with the evacuation of 8,900 people in 25 parishes. When Hurricane Flossie hit in 1956, the Guard took similar actions, but engineering operations were added as Guard cranes removed boats and large debris from roadways in the aftermath of the storm.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> State of Louisiana Adjutant General's Office press releases, 23 July 1951, LANG Archives.

<sup>92</sup> *Biennial Reports*, 1952-1953. Adjutant General Reports Collection, LANG Archives.

In 1957, Hurricane Audrey hit the state. Louisiana's first storm to have its name "retired" by the National Weather Service, it was the first truly horrific emergency of this time period. Others resulted in damaged property and occasional loss of life, but Audrey completely devastated Cameron and Vermillion parishes. It brought about one of the largest death tolls prior to Hurricane Katrina in 2005. The storm covered coastal portions of those parishes with water and shut down communication infrastructure there. Guard aerial reconnaissance was the only way to immediately survey the destruction. National Guard vehicles quickly transported doctors, nurses, medical supplies and food as close to the flooded areas as they could. DUKWs went out into the floodwaters to pluck survivors from trees, rooftops, and floating debris. Perhaps the most gruesome expansion of responsibilities involved the collection of decomposing bodies and transportation to an icehouse that was acting as a temporary morgue. While this response involved the usual coordination with state agencies and the Coast Guard, the severity of Audrey also brought cooperation with the regular Armed Forces, including the Army and Air Force.<sup>93</sup>

Works based on civilian oral histories and memoirs recall caravans of DUKWs and helicopter rescues. The National Guard cordoned off the hardest hit areas until debris clearing and body recovery could take place. Rushing storm victims to hospitals and makeshift medical facilities was another aspect of civil defense and military units. According to Cameron Parish resident, Cathy C. Post, "Diesel fumes from the army vehicles filled the air."<sup>94</sup> Another civilian account recalls military helicopters working day and night to aid survivors. Waters were moving so swift around Arvin Primeaux's rooftop sanctuary, DUKWs had a difficult time rescuing him, but eventually did.<sup>95</sup> Among other shelters, such as McNeese Cowboys stadium and Chennault

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<sup>93</sup> Biennial Reports, 1956-1957, Adjutant General Reports Collection, LANG Archives.

<sup>94</sup> Cathy C. Post, *Hurricane Audrey: The Deadly Storm of 1957* (Gretna: Pelican Publishing 2007), 213-244.

<sup>95</sup> Susan McFillen Goodson and Nola Mae Wittler Ross, *Hurricane Audrey* (Sulphur: Wise Publications 1996), 94-129.



Air Force base, the armory headquarters of the Louisiana Guard's 3-156<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion housed thousands of storm victims.<sup>96</sup> In 1961, the lessons of Audrey led to Louisiana's largest evacuation of coastal territories up to that time. The National Guard assisted the LCDA and other state agencies in evacuating an estimated 50,000 to 80,000 residents before Hurricane Carla struck the area.<sup>97</sup>

Louisiana disasters were not just of the natural variety. The National Guard responded to multiple industrial accidents between 1946 and 1965. In 1954, a gas well explosion in St. Martin Parish resulted in unsafe conditions around the site. Area units assisted local law enforcement in cordoning off the zone. In 1957, an oil refinery fire in Meraux created a hazard for the residents of the area. Heavy rains turned the ground into thick, sludgy mud, complicating the situation. Guardsmen from Jackson Barracks not only cordoned off the area and helped with firefighting, but the military jeeps proved effective in the transportation of foamite from trucks on nearby roads to the immediate refinery site. Engineering operations were brought in as Guard bulldozers created a dam to trap the leaking gasoline and prevented the fire from spreading. Helicopters were used to transport fire-fighting equipment and foamite from the airport to St. Bernard Parish.<sup>98</sup> By the mid-sixties, the Louisiana National Guard's experience with disasters was broad.

In 1964, the aging Ray Fleming retired from the adjutant general position for the third and final time, and Governor John McKeithen passed over Hufft for a former Army Reserve commander from southwest Louisiana, Major General Erbon Wise. Most of the Guard command

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<sup>96</sup> Donald Menard, *The Untold Story of Hurricane Audrey* (Lafayette: Acadiana Publishing, 2007), 18.

<sup>97</sup> *Hurricane Carla: Sept 3-14, 1961*. Department of Defense, Office of Civil Defense, Region 5, Denton TX (Washington DC: US Government Printing Offices, 1961), 9.

<sup>98</sup> Biennial Reports 1956-57, Adjutant General Reports collection, LANG Archives. Foamite is a preparation consisting of two chemical solutions that on mixture generate a tough foam of carbon dioxide for extinguishing fires.

staff and leadership remained the same, however, as did the personnel in the Louisiana Civil Defense Agency. The emergency systems and procedures established by Fleming and Hufft remained in place. In the years leading up to the onslaught of Hurricane Betsy, the Louisiana National Guard had established itself as the main line of first response, supplemented by the Coast Guard, assisting state agencies, and the Red Cross. When Hurricane Betsy struck on September 9, 1965, it proved to be “The Big One” as heavily populated areas near and inside New Orleans found themselves in its path. The storm surge over-topped levees, flooding most of Plaquemines and St. Bernard Parishes. The densely populated Ninth Ward of New Orleans flooded as well. Baton Rouge and parts of Acadiana were also affected. Betsy was the worst storm to hit Southeast Louisiana since 1915. It killed 81 people, injured over 17,600, and left 250,000 homeless.<sup>99</sup> The first storm to cause over a \$1,000,000,000 in damages, it was nicknamed “Billion Dollar Betsy.”<sup>100</sup> The activation called up about 3,200 Guardsmen, making it the largest up to its time. It encompassed thirty five of the state’s sixty four parishes.<sup>101</sup>

The Adjutant General’s staff set up an Emergency Operations Center at State Headquarters in Jackson Barracks. Betsy’s fast and erratic movement created some confusion, but trucks and DUKWs were sent into the nearby New Orleans and St. Bernard Parish neighborhoods as well as into Plaquemines Parish. Rescue operations began immediately. Guard vehicles brought survivors to the St. Claude Avenue Bridge where they were subsequently

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<sup>99</sup> Senate Report 109-322, *Hurricane Katrina: A Nation Still Unprepared*, Special Report of the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, (Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2006), 77.

<sup>100</sup> <http://www.hurricanescience.org/history/storms/1960s/betsy/> (accessed August 28, 2015).

<sup>101</sup> Report on Hurricane Betsy, 8-11 September, 1965. US Army Corps of Engineers, New Orleans District, 1965, Hurricane Betsy Folder, Vertical files, LANG Archives.

moved again to public buildings in the city. Other inundated areas requiring search and rescue were Gentilly and New Orleans East.<sup>102</sup>

Missions varied widely for the Guard during Hurricane Betsy. Security operations included support of New Orleans Police Department as businesses and homes were being looted in the drier parts of town. Guard duty at shelters was also considered necessary as fears of civil unrest abounded. Two hundred Guardsmen provided security at a large consolidated refugee center in Algiers. Military police waded in chest high water in some cases to direct the traffic of rescue vehicles. Commodity distribution played a greater role than it ever had before. Guardsmen hauled food, clothing, and ice into the affected area from North Louisiana. In addition to water and food rations, units provided portable bathing capability, electric generators, and set up field kitchens for civilians and soldiers alike.<sup>103</sup> Medical missions increased as medics provided immunizations and first aid for storm victims and incoming soldiers. Hay was transported to stranded cattle and horses in rural areas.<sup>104</sup> Many Guardsmen from the New Orleans metropolitan area suffered considerable personal loss in the event, yet remained on duty for the duration of the activation.<sup>105</sup>

Despite a full activation of units in the Southern portion of the state, New Orleans required extra help. 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the 156<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment came all the way down from the Shreveport area for storm duty. Commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Ansel Stroud, it provided help to some of the hardest hit sections of the city. One of its more unpleasant duties entailed

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<sup>102</sup> Biennial Reports, 1964-1965, 50-54. Adjutant General Reports collection, LANG Archives.

<sup>103</sup> "Louisiana Guardsmen Toil Long Hours in Betsy's Terrible Wake," *The National Guardsman*, November 1965, 39-40.

<sup>104</sup> "Diary of Daily Activities Kept on General Erbon Wise," Erbon Wise Collection, LANG Archives.

<sup>105</sup> After Action Report: Hurricane Betsy, Hurricane Betsy folder, Natural Disaster drawer, Vertical files, LANG Archives.

animal control operations. Some neighborhoods were over run by snakes, rats, and feral dogs. The soldiers cleared those zones as tasked.<sup>106</sup> Units from around the state moved five thousand refugees from City Hall to the Municipal Auditorium which had more room and was easier to manage. Jackson Barracks itself was partially flooded by Betsy. Areas closer to the Mississippi River stayed dry while other parts of post got up to four feet of water. Residents of the Ninth Ward, Arabi, and Chalmette were evacuated to the dry area of the Barracks and subsequently to other public buildings and shelters.<sup>107</sup>

The Guard collaborated with a wide array of other organizations due to the scope of the disaster. State Headquarters maintained contact with the governor's office, 4<sup>th</sup> Army Headquarters, and the federal Office of Emergency Preparedness, in addition to the state and parish civil defense agencies. Requests were made to other states and to the regular Armed Forces for helicopters and pilots to assist rescue operations. Louisiana's 39<sup>th</sup> Aviation Battalion had limited resources to effect search and rescue on its own. Guard helicopters were used primarily for transportation, reconnaissance, and communications. An emergency heliport was established inside Jackson Barracks, near the levee. Colonel Numa Avendano, former commander of the Washington Artillery, coordinated the Louisiana Civil Defense Agency with the National Guard, the federal Office of Emergency Preparedness and other agencies. The Guard partnered with The Salvation Army and The Urban League for commodity distribution in New Orleans. The Louisiana Guard also worked with the 4<sup>th</sup> Army, based out of Fort Polk,

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<sup>106</sup> Major General (Retired) Ansel M. Stroud, Jr. interviewed by Major Maria LoVasco, October 16, 1997, DVD and video collection, LANG Archives.

<sup>107</sup> Scrapbook 8, 254, Erbon Wise Collection, LANG Archives.

Louisiana. 4<sup>th</sup> Army units administered refugee shelters and assisted with commodity distribution for almost 2 weeks in multiple parishes.<sup>108</sup>

In some cases, local governments proved uncooperative with each other or the federal government, causing the Louisiana Guard to intervene. In Grand Isle, for example, municipal and parish officials bickered with each other about responsibilities, causing delays in aid to residents. The Guard ultimately took care of commodity distribution there and helped with evacuation and shelter. Another complication was the notorious leader of Plaquemines Parish. Leander Perez would not accept direct aid from the federal government. He was a strident advocate for “local rule” and a harsh opponent of the federal government’s recent efforts at racial integration. Regardless of his ideology, parish residents needed assistance. Federal agencies relied solely on the Louisiana Guard to evacuate the victims in Plaquemines. This “compromise” was acceptable to Perez because the Guard activation was under the command of Governor McKeithen and not any federal entity.<sup>109</sup> Lower Plaquemines was so affected that it was temporarily sealed off. Guardsmen blockaded roads entering the area until debris clearing and other recovery operations could take place.<sup>110</sup> Similar to 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion in New Orleans, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the 156<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment had the heartbreaking task of capturing starving and aggressive dogs in Venice, Louisiana. Most were sick from drinking salt water and had to be euthanized. Lieutenant Roy Bailey managed to save and adopt a female Sheppard mix, naming her “Betsy.”<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> “Diary of Daily Activities Kept on General Erbon Wise,” 252-268, Erbon Wise Collection, LANG Archives.

<sup>109</sup> “Diary of Daily Activities Kept on General Erbon Wise,” 252-268, Erbon Wise Collection, LANG Archives.

<sup>110</sup> Scrapbook 8, 254, Erbon Wise Collection, LANG archives.

<sup>111</sup> *Daily World* (Opelousas), November 16, 1965.

The Guard was active in other parts of Louisiana for Betsy. Company C of the 769<sup>th</sup> Signal Battalion performed constant operations for eleven days in Lafourche Parish. The 119 man unit rotated shifts for various jobs including clearing roads, removing debris, directing traffic, distributing ice and providing security from potential looters.<sup>112</sup> Units performed missions in Houma and Donaldsonville as well. Near Baton Rouge, Betsy's wrath included industrial accident response as a chlorine barge sank, creating a potential chemical event, hazardous to the nearby population.<sup>113</sup> LANG supplied six hundred soldiers with personnel transport vehicles in case a speedy evacuation was necessary.<sup>114</sup> Company A of the 769<sup>th</sup> reported to Morganza as ruptured gas lines created a fire and explosion hazard. They supported utility crews in shutting down the gas mains and in keeping civilians clear of the danger areas.<sup>115</sup>

Even the former commanders of the earlier Cold War period did not miss out on Betsy's action. The retired Fleming, now 76 years old, was allowed residency at Jackson Barracks. He and his wife were evacuated from the facility by Guard forces during the response. General Hufft, appointed regional customs collector by President Kennedy in 1962, communicated with the state Guard headquarters during Betsy. The Daily Staff Journal maintained during the activation mentions his name several times but does not indicate specifics about his involvement. It is unsurprisingly, however, that the relatively young Hufft would want a "piece of the action" during such a dramatic response operation.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> *Betsy: The Story of the Most Devastating Storm to Ever Strike Louisiana* (Lafourche: *The Lafourche Comet* and *The Lafourche Press-News*, 1965), 4-13.

<sup>113</sup> After Action Report on Hurricane Betsy, Appendix A: Salvage of Chlorine and Barge MTC 602 from the Mississippi River Near Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Department of the Army, New Orleans District, Corps of Engineers, New Orleans, Louisiana, July 1966.

<sup>114</sup> Biennial Report 1964-1965, 55, Adjutant General Reports Collection, LANG Archives.

<sup>115</sup> Scrapbook 8, 252, Erbon Wise Collection, LANG Archives.

<sup>116</sup> Daily Staff Journal, Hurricane Betsy folder, Disaster response drawer, Vertical files, LANG Archives.

The official activation period for Betsy was from Thursday September 9 to Tuesday September 21. Round the clock operations occurred during that window of operation.<sup>117</sup> The National Guard and other first responders were praised by most officials following the Betsy response. When visiting New Orleans in the aftermath, President Lyndon Johnson explicitly commended the local first response efforts.<sup>118</sup> Several letters to General Wise from various officials and local business owners in southeastern Louisiana showed appreciation of LANG actions. There was, however, some criticism. Dr. Edward Teller, a prominent nuclear physicist and government advisor, criticized the response as confused and ineffective. His criticism was based largely on the premise of civil defense abstractions. The failure of state and local authorities to evacuate the area before Betsy's landfall was a bad indicator of what would happen in case of a nuclear attack. Perhaps more grounded in the immediate needs of his constituents and having actively participated in first response efforts, New Orleans Mayor Victor Schiro characterized Teller's statements as "ridiculous and irresponsible."<sup>119</sup> US Army documents and the Louisiana National Guard's own after action reports included more practical criticism. One of the main complaints was a dearth of effective communication. While this was somewhat true of internal communications, the problem was particularly bad for inter-agency coordination during the event. Most, however, came to the conclusion that without the Guard and other agencies' quick response efforts, Betsy's impact would have been much worse.<sup>120</sup>

A later twentieth century government study came to a specific set of conclusions about the use of National Guard forces in emergency response. Civilian volunteers are often very

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<sup>117</sup> After Action Report: Hurricane Betsy, Hurricane Betsy folder, Vertical files, LANG Archives.

<sup>118</sup> Senate Report 109-322, 77.

<sup>119</sup> Scrapbook 8, Erbon Wise Collection, 258. Teller was known as the "father of the H-bomb."

<sup>120</sup> Colonel William L. Boylston to Major General Erbon Wise, 21 September, 1965, Hurricane Betsy folder, Vertical Files, LANG Archives.

helpful but one cannot always rely on them to put thoughts about their own property and families aside. Guardsmen are trained to be organized and disciplined. Their training for combat gives them an edge up on most civilians in terms of maintaining command and control during prolonged periods of intense stress and disorder. Members are conditioned to endure discomfort and dangerous conditions. Guard equipment, such as the amphibious vehicles, 2 1/2 ton trucks, helicopters, and rugged terrain vehicles, can serve in an emergency response role as well as traditional military ones. They can put forward a show of force to dissuade potential looters or those who may otherwise take advantage of chaotic situations. Some would also say that state military organizations also embody a certain symbolism that can be seen in a hard or soft light, as helpers to those in need and also as a force to maintain order. While the latter role can be manifested in negative ways, most citizens have a sense of relief when seeing a military presence during a crisis situation. With or without symbolism, the practical aspects of using military personnel and resources in an emergency situation become obvious as they are applied.<sup>121</sup> A National Guard commander from a later period summarized the point:

If I tell my troops to go out and secure an area, prevent looting, clean the streets of debris and provide people with shelter, food, and water, I only have to give that order once, even if the conditions are miserable. No one will say they don't want to do it because it is unsafe, raining, dark, cold, too difficult, or will take more than eight hours to accomplish.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> *The Role of the National Guard in Emergency Preparedness and Response* (Washington D.C.: National Academy of Public Administration, 1997), 11.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid*, 9-11.



One should not downplay the sacrifices of Red Cross workers, local law enforcement, or citizen volunteers, but the commander does make a valid point.

Why entrust the National Guard with civil defense or emergency response missions instead of a federal force or the regular Army? Community based units and their headquarters are prepositioned all over the state, with resources on hand. Through liaison and shared experience, commanders are often familiar with their counterparts in local government and other state agencies.<sup>123</sup>



*Hurricane Betsy Activation. Courtesy Louisiana National Guard Archives*

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<sup>123</sup> Benet D. Gellman, "Planning for a National Nuclear Emergency: The Organization of Government and Federal-State Relations," *Virginia Law Review* Vol. 52, No. 3 (April, 1966): 435-462.

The perceived threat of war with the Soviet Union gave the United States defense establishment a perfect foil to improve overall readiness. Improvements in training and organization, combined with the preparation for a defense of the homeland, created the tools, skills, and readiness that the Louisiana National Guard would need in the eventuality of a major disaster. As the early Cold War period progressed, the emphasis changed from preparedness for a nuclear attack to the more practical concern of disaster response. As it turned out, Betsy was more of an immediate danger than Nikita Khrushchev or Fidel Castro.

## Conclusion

The three roles of the Louisiana National Guard during the early Cold War interacted and affected each other despite their differences. While federal expansion of the Guard and mandatory improvements in training were not intended to affect civil defense or emergency response roles, they improved readiness in those areas regardless. The Guard, on a national level, had uneven improvement in federal mobilization readiness throughout the fifties and sixties. The Louisiana National Guard, however, seems to have progressed more evenly in comparison to the national average as seen through the high marks given to Louisiana units during the Berlin Crisis. Similarly, 1955's Operation Minuteman was a success in the state for civil defense purposes. The LANG's commanders, Ray Fleming and Ray Hufft, effectively managed federal and state resources to improve the professionalism and readiness of the Guard throughout the period.

Federal mandates increased manpower and made training practices more efficient and effective. Civil defense initiatives improved the Louisiana National Guard's interoperability within its own ranks as well as with other agencies in the case of a domestic emergency. Military and civil defense training and policy created diverse units that could activate with speed and operate well with each other and with other agencies and organizations. As a series of natural and manmade disasters hit Louisiana from 1946 to 1965, these skills were applied to those immediate threats. Major General Ansel M. Stroud, Jr was the commander of the 4-156<sup>th</sup> Infantry during Betsy and later became adjutant general of the LANG. He remarked in a 1997 interview that he and the Guard learned a lot about response for a major emergency in that summer of

1965. The lessons learned from the previous decades of training and other disasters were applied to deal with Hurricane Betsy.<sup>124</sup>

Louisiana National Guard disaster response operations continue to evolve. After the series of disasters in the 1950s and 1960s, major emergencies became more isolated until the twin impact of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005 made even Betsy seem mild. In a similar vein, traditional military activity ramped up again as a result of the multi-front Global War on Terror. This time, however, the National Guard became an operational force in overseas combat, with units constantly deployed overseas from 2002 through 2015. After the 9/11/2001 terror attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, civil defense agencies again became a major part of federal, state, and local government. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, “Homeland Security” became the accepted term, but these agencies and efforts retained many of the elements developed by the civil defense initiatives of the Cold War. Emergency response activations for Hurricanes Katrina and Rita were quickly followed by Hurricanes Gustav, Ike, and Isaac as well as a river flood emergency and a disastrous oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Once again, war service, civil defense, and disaster response missions overlapped. The Cold War evolution of these different, but related, functions of the National Guard led to continued development in all categories.

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<sup>124</sup> Interview with Major General Ansel M. Stroud, Jr. by Major Maria LoVasco, October 16, 1997. DVD and video collection, LANG Archives.

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## Vita

Rhett Breerwood was born in Metairie, Louisiana. After graduating from Brother Martin High School in New Orleans, he attended Louisiana State University and the University of New Orleans, where he achieved a Bachelor's Degree in History. Rhett bartended and managed in the service industry for years, occasionally working as a film production assistant in southern Louisiana. Temporarily displaced to Colorado after Hurricane Katrina in 2005, Rhett returned to the Crescent City with employment in the car rental business. In 2007, he was hired by the Louisiana National Guard to work on FEMA funded reconstruction efforts at Jackson Barracks in the Ninth Ward. Rhett also tried his hand at bar ownership during this time. Café Prytania was not a success but it did introduce Rhett to his future wife, Heather. The National Guard position, meanwhile, involved research of Louisiana's military history. This circumstance led to Rhett's current job as the Louisiana National Guard's historian.