

SPECIAL ISSUE



# THE HORNET

VOL. I

NORTH CAROLINA NATIONAL GUARD

## JOINT TASK FORCE NORTH CAROLINA RESPONDS







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## NCANG DELIVERS



## HELENE RELIEF EFFORTS



## NCNG RESTORES ROADS



## ON THE COVER

Sgt. Isaac Bradshaw, a combat medic with C Company, 230th Brigade Support Battalion, shields an older couple from debris and strong winds as a CH-47 Chinook lands in Burnsville, NC, on Oct. 10, 2024. The Chinook crew delivered crucial supplies in the aftermath of Helene, helping those stranded by floodwaters. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jon Soucy)

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# FOREWORD

As I reflect on the incredible efforts of our Soldiers, Airmen, and dedicated partners in response to Hurricane Helene, I am filled with pride and gratitude. This special issue of The Hornet highlights the resilience, professionalism, and dedication that defines the North Carolina National Guard in times of crisis.

Hurricane Helene presented immense challenges. The storm devastated communities, displaced families, and tested the limits of our resources. Yet, in the face of adversity, the men and women of the North Carolina National Guard answered the call with unwavering commitment. Joint Task Force North Carolina (JTF-NC) rapidly mobilized, working alongside state and local agencies to restore hope and provide life-saving assistance. Whether delivering critical supplies to isolated areas or coordinating complex rescue operations, every action taken was a testament to our readiness and resolve.

Our response was not just about clearing roads or delivering commodities; it was about standing shoulder-to-shoulder with our fellow citizens when they needed us most. It was about embodying our mission—to serve and support the people of North Carolina. The stories and photographs in this issue capture the human side of the operation, from the teamwork on the ground to the resilience of the communities we serve.

As we look to the future, we must continue to build on these experiences. We are constantly learning, improving, and evolving, ensuring that we are prepared for whatever challenges lie ahead. Our success in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene is a direct result of the hard work, discipline, and collaboration of every member of this team.

To our Soldiers and Airmen, thank you for your selfless service. To the families and communities impacted by the storm, we stand with you in solidarity as you rebuild. And to the citizens of North Carolina, know that your North Carolina National Guard is always ready, always there.



Brig. Gen. Wes Morrison  
Commander, Joint Task Force- NC

The North Carolina National Guard (NCNG) has been actively engaged in Hurricane Helene response efforts since its activation on September 25th, preparing for the storm's impact and immediately deploying Soldiers and Airmen to conduct lifesaving emergency evacuations by air and high-water rescues on the ground. Now operating as a large-scale joint mission, Joint Task Force North Carolina (JTF-NC) is working alongside North Carolina Emergency Management (NCEM) to restore and rebuild western North Carolina.

Our top priority remains the safety, security, and wellbeing of our communities. Since before Helene made landfall, NCNG personnel have been conducting 24-hour operations, and we will continue working day and night until the mission is complete. JTF-NC remains focused on distributing life-sustaining supplies to isolated areas, clearing routes, and ensuring a unified effort with state and federal agencies to support recovery operations.

# JTF-NC RESPONDS



Data reported November 08, 2024





Volunteers and soldiers assigned to Joint Task Force-North Carolina form a line to offload cases of water from a UH-60 Blackhawk to help affected citizens on Oct 3, 2024.. National Guard aviation crews from 17 Army and Air National Guard states, Federal response agencies, Emergency Management and active duty compose Joint Task Force-North Carolina to support citizens affected by Hurricane Helene.  
U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Leticia Samuels





North Carolina Air National Guard hauls over 100,000 pounds of supplies from the Federal Emergency Management Agency in a C17 to Western North Carolina as a part of Tropical Storm Helene support. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Maj. Monica Ebert)

# NC Air National Guard Delivers Over 100,000 Pounds of Essential Supplies to Western North Carolina in Helene's Aftermath

Tech. Sgt. Juan Paz  
Photos by Maj. Monica Ebert

ASHEVILLE, North Carolina- In the wake of Helene's devastating impact on Western North Carolina, the North Carolina Air National Guard (NCANG) has stepped up to deliver essential supplies to affected communities. As part of a coordinated relief effort with FEMA, the delivery included 48 pallets of Meals Ready to Eat (MREs) and 24 wooden pallets of water, all loaded on 463L Pallets totaling over 100,000 pounds of critical goods. These vital supplies were flown on a C-17 Globemaster III from Charlotte-Douglas International Airport to Asheville Regional Airport, which has become a central distribution hub due to impassable roadways caused by flooding and debris.

The rural communities in the storm's path have been cut off from regular supply routes due to severe damage to roadways, making ground transportation nearly impossible. The choice to utilize the C-17 Globemaster III was strategic, allowing the NCANG to deliver the equivalent of three fully loaded semi-trucks in just 30 minutes of flight time—a stark contrast to the seven hours it would have taken for ground vehicles to navigate the hazardous conditions.



"It was a big effort by the Aerial Port and some augmented personnel we had here in Charlotte", said USAF Master Sgt. Jesse Huneycutt, 145th Logistic Readiness Squadron, Air Transportation Specialist. "All cargo had to be prepped, loaded onto 463L pallets, inspected, and planned for safety before we could load it on the jet. Completing all of this in just a few hours took a lot of people working long hours at a fast pace."

Once at Asheville Regional Airport, which is currently operating on generator power due to storm-related outages, the cargo was unloaded by an advance team in place tasked with receiving and staging the supplies. The supplies will now feed into the NC National Guard helicopter network, distributing goods directly to isolated communities still struggling in the aftermath of the hurricane.







Asheville has become a vital distribution center for the humanitarian aid being provided to Western North Carolina. The relief operation has been hindered by blocked roads, downed power lines, and widespread flooding, necessitating air support for rapid response. The C-17 Globemaster III, known for its immense cargo capacity and ability to land in austere conditions, was the most efficient solution for transporting large quantities of life-saving supplies to areas that trucks could not reach.

As the relief efforts continue, the NCANG will remain actively involved, working hand-in-hand with FEMA, local authorities, and emergency response teams to ensure that food, water, and essential goods reach every corner of the region affected by Helene.

As North Carolina recovers from Helene, the rapid response of the NC National Guard underscores the crucial role the Guard plays in disaster relief. Their swift actions have made a significant impact on communities across the region, ensuring that those most in need have access to food and clean water during this critical time.



Mark Snodgrass, a member of the Indiana Task Force One Urban Search and Rescue team, carries a wet American flag that was recovered during a search and recovery mission in Marion, North Carolina, Oct. 3, 2024. Joint Task Force North Carolina has been working 24 hours a day, across a dozen counties to get North Carolinians the help they need. U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Joe Roudabush





North Carolina National Guardsmen, assigned to the 130th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, used culverts to restore roadways for local residents in Burnsville, N.C., Oct. 19th, 2024. Joint Task Force-North Carolina deployed military capabilities in support of Tropical Storm Helene relief efforts. U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Hannah Tarkelly





North Carolina National Guard Soldier Diana Campuzano assigned to Bravo 5th Battalion, 113th Field Artillery Regiment sweeps mud and provides help with hurricane relief efforts at Cove Creek Baptist Church in Watauga County October 12, 2024 (U.S Army National Guard Photo by Cpl. Nigel Hatcher)



U.S. Army Soldiers with the 30th Armored Brigade Combat Team and 65th Field Artillery Brigade move chairs from the Old Fort Elementary School in Old Fort, North Carolina, Oct. 8, 2024. The elementary school is relocating as a result of damage from Tropical Storm Helene. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Denne Allen)



Sgt. Diana Campuzano, assigned to 5th Battalion, 113th Field Artillery Regiment, sweeps muddy water into a storm drain while helping church members and volunteers clean out a flooded church basement at Cove Creek Baptist Church in Vilas, North Carolina, Oct. 12, 2024. Joint Task Force North Carolina has been working 24 hours a day, across a dozen counties to get North Carolinians the help they need. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Joe Roudabush)



U.S. Army Soldiers with the 30th Armored Brigade Combat Team and 65th Field Artillery Brigade move chairs from the Old Fort Elementary School in Old Fort, North Carolina, Oct. 8, 2024. The elementary school is relocating as a result of damage from Tropical Storm Helene. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Denne Allen)





North Carolina National Guardsmen, assigned to the 130th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, move pallets of Army cold weather clothing in Hickory, N.C., Oct. 20th, 2024. The N.C. Guard worked with N.C. Emergency Management to distribute approximately 15,000 pieces of military cold weather clothing to residents and first responders in Western N.C. in support of Joint Task Force-North Carolina following Tropical Storm Helene. U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Hannah Tarkelly





North Carolina National Guard Soldiers from the 130th MEB team of engineers work to replace a washed out bridge inserts a culvert after Tropical Storm Helene in Yancey County, North Carolina October 19, 2024.  
U.S Army National Guard Photo by Cpl. Nigel Hatcher





Soldiers from the 1-130th Attack Battalion - AB, 449th Combat Aviation Brigade, load pallets of equipment onto a CH-47F Chinook from the Maryland National Guard needed for State Active Duty efforts in response to Tropical Storm Helene. (Photo courtesy of Maj. Eric Juarez)

# Guardians of the State

## NC Guard Deploys for State Government Helene Missions

Sgt. 1st Class Robert Jordan

RALEIGH, N.C. – “Call out the Guard”, a cliché in 1950’s movies, but a call to action for hundreds of North Carolina National Guard (NCNG) Soldiers and Airmen deployed for the North Carolina Government's Hurricane Helene response. Their mission, provide military capabilities in support of State authorities in order to protect the lives and properties of fellow Citizens.

“Help is on the way, we are going to be there until the mission is finished,” said U. S. Army Brig. Gen. Wes Morrison, NCNG assistant adjutant general for maneuver.

Before the hurricane made landfall in Florida, North Carolina state and local government leaders prepared for the worst. Across the state, public safety and emergency management leaders prepped for catastrophic flooding, infrastructure failure, evacuations, blocked roads and highways, widespread damage, and disruption of basic services.



A maintenance package with Soldiers from 30th Armored Brigade Combat Team (ABCT) leaves the Burlington emergency management central office on the way to Morganton NC to support ongoing Tropical Storm Helene relief in Western NC. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Denne Allen)



Soldiers with the 236th Brigade Engineer Battalion Armory Support team in Burlington assists the 1454th Transportation Company to ensure a smooth mission in Western NC. (Courtesy Photo)

“Our National Guard is embedded at the local level working with emergency management, they know the needs,” Morrison said.

Faced with such a task the state leaders asked for NCNG support. On order by the Governor, the NCNG called for volunteers for State Active Duty to report to armories and readiness centers and other NCNG facilities or report direct to civilian leadership statewide at warehouses, emergency management sites, community colleges, airports, and many, many other local and state government sites.

“They help fill in the holes, we work with the Guard all the time,” Jay Joyster, an emergency planner with North Carolina Emergency Management.

Senior NCNG leaders kept in constant contact with civilian government superiors preparing NCNG force packages, preselected teams of Soldiers and Airmen able to provide skills and services matched to the local government needs. Armory Support Packages prepare NCNG facilities to quickly process and deploy Soldiers and Airmen, All Hazards Response Teams with High Mobility Multi Wheeled Vehicles able to cross rugged terrain and washed-out areas issued radios designed to integrate with local government leadership, Truck Force Packages with long haul trucks to deliver much needed supplies on demand from local and state government agencies, and many other teams.

“We are very qualified to do the job, we are logistics, anything that has to be moved, that's what we do,” U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Leslie Cook, noncommissioned officer in charge small air terminal at the Charlotte Air National Guard Base.

All these Soldiers and Airmen planned, prepared, and deployed with one overall goal, to save lives and property of North Carolinians.

“It is what you raise your right hand for, it is home,” said U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Stonehouse, North Carolina Emergency Management Central Branch NCNG command and control noncommissioned officer in charge.





U.S. Army Soldiers with the 30th Armored Brigade Combat Team clear debris in downtown Marshall, North Carolina, Oct. 23, 2024. Joint Task Force- North Carolina deploys military capabilities in support of State authorities in order to protect the lives and properties of fellow Citizens.

U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Denne Allen





An aircrew member with the Minnesota Army National Guard leans out the crew door of a CH-47 Chinook helicopter to keep watch for obstacles as his crew taxis to take off in Salisbury, North Carolina, to drop off food, water, and other supplies in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene, Oct. 7, 2024. National Guard units from 18 states have responded to areas impacted by the storm and have been taking part in food and water distribution, search and rescue, debris clearance and other tasks as needed. U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jon Soucy



# Helene Relief Efforts

## The NCANG delivers 450,000 pounds of cargo and counting

2nd Lt. Mary McKnight

CHARLOTTE-DOUGLAS INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT BASE, N.C. – Seven days after Tropical Storm Helene devastated Western North Carolina, the North Carolina Air National Guard delivered an additional 80,000 pounds of food, water, and other critical supplies to the Asheville Regional Airport, Asheville, N.C.

“We are standing in front of 18 pallets of cargo that’s been prepped for delivery to Asheville, North Carolina,” said Chief Master Sgt. Jeremy Mullins, 145th Airlift Wing (145 AW) command chief.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency coordinated with the NCANG to drop off food, water, and supplies to be loaded onto a C-17 Globemaster III to be distributed throughout Western Carolina assisting those impacted by Tropical Storm Helene.

“Airmen of all AFSCs (Air Force Specialty Code) have been working all day; civil engineers, first sergeants, loadmasters, and Airmen have stepped up outside of their AFSC skillset to ensure the mission is completed,” said Mullins.

The 145 AW has activated 119 service members from the following units within their organization: the 145th Wing Staff, the 145th Operations Group, the 145th Medical Group, the 145th Maintenance Group, the 145th Mission Support Group, the 145th Logistics Readiness Squadron, the 145th Security Forces Squadron, the 145th Force Support Squadron, the 145th Operations Support Squadron, the 145th Civil Engineer Squadron, the 145th Maintenance Squadron, the 145th Communications Squadron, the 118th Air Support Operations Squadron, the 263rd Combat Communications Squadron, the 156th Airlift Squadron and the 145th Comptroller Flight; all multi-capable Airmen, ready to aid the citizens of Western Carolina.

“On the first day of the storm we activated our first response teams,” said Col. Marshal T. Haylett, 145 AW commander. “Since then, we’ve been adding capabilities daily. We have road clearance teams as well as teams in Asheville receiving cargo from multiple agencies, organizing and distributing supplies further into Western North Carolina where they are in the most need.”

Since Helene touched down, the 145 AW has completed four C-17 missions, delivering 228 pallets equaling 50,000 pounds of various supplies and more than 400,000 pounds of water, meals ready to eat and medication.

“The men and women of the 145th Airlift Wing remain an essential part of Helene relief efforts,” said Haylett. “We will continue to be a part of the response for as long as we are needed.”



U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Heath A. Houston, 156th Airlift Squadron loadmaster, left, and Airman 1st Class Eric S. Gumpert, 156th Airlift Squadron loadmaster, right, palletize hurricane relief commodities for delivery to Western North Carolina following Tropical Storm Helene in support of humanitarian efforts at the North Carolina Air National Guard, Charlotte-Douglas International Airport, Oct. 3, 2024. The pallets aboard a C-17 Globemaster III consisted of Meals Ready to Eat (MREs), water, medication and other vital supplies. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Reanna Hartgrove)







U.S. Air Force Airmen and U.S. Army Soldiers deliver 80,000 pounds of food and water to a logistics hub in Asheville, North Carolina. The pallets will be broken down by Soldiers and Airmen from the 113th Sustainment Brigade, 30th Armored Brigade Combat Team, 145th Airlift Wing, 449th Combat Aviation Brigade, 130th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade delivered with CH-47 Chinooks by the 82nd Airborne Division.  
U.S. Army National Guard photo by Capt. Shamari Pratt





Will Wilson assigned to the North Carolina Urban Search and Rescue Task Force 11 loads pallets of water onto a CH-47F Chinook piloted by soldiers assigned to the Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 104th Aviation Regiment from the Connecticut Army National Guard working with the 2-130 Airfield Operations Battalion from the North Carolina National Guard Armory located in Salisbury, NC on Sept 27, 2024. National Guard Aviation crews from Connecticut, Maryland, Pennsylvania and Iowa are supporting the NC Emergency Management and the NC National Guard in response to citizens affected by Hurricane Helene. U.S. Army National Guard photos by Sgt. 1st Class Leticia Samuels





Jimmy Hight, President of the National Guard Association-Oklahoma, along with employees from Cudd Pressure Control and Thru Tubing Solutions, deliver goods to the North Carolina National Guard Association in Charlotte, N.C., Oct. 16, 2024. The donation, consisting of over 80 pallets of essential supplies, were gathered from Cudd Pressure Control and Thru Tubing Solutions' locations across the country to support communities in Western North Carolina affected by Helene.

U.S. Air Force National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Juan Paz





North Carolina National Guardsmen, assigned to the 113th Sustainment Brigade, knock on doors to assess community needs and provide resources in Waynesville, N.C., Oct. 14th, 2024. Joint Task Force-North Carolina deployed military capabilities in support of Tropical Storm Helene relief efforts. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Hannah Tarkelly)



HHC, 1-120 Infantry Regiment reported that since hitting the ground, they have participated in search and rescue, commodity distribution, water purification, debris cleanup, and security operations in close coordination with local emergency management teams. (Photo courtesy of HHC, 1-120, 30th Armored Brigade Combat Team)



U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Derick Bauman, a flight engineer with B Company, 2nd Battalion, 238th Aviation Regiment, Ohio Army National Guard watches for obstacles from the rear ramp of a CH-47 Chinook helicopter while landing in a field to distribute food, water, and other supplies to communities in western North Carolina in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene, Oct. 4, 2024. National Guard units from 17 states have responded to areas impacted by the storm and have been taking part in food and water distribution, search and rescue, debris clearance and other tasks as needed. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jon Soucy)



U.S. Army Sgt. Daniel Twomey, a CH-47 Helicopter Repairer assigned to Charlie Company, 1-126th Aviation Regiment, gives a fist bump and a unit patch to a North Carolina citizen family while his counterpart talks with local first responders about commodities needed in the local community on Sept 30, 2024. National Guard Aviation crews from, CT, MD, PA and IA are supporting the NCEM and the NCNG in response to citizens affected by Hurricane Helene. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Leticia Samuels)





U.S. Air Force Airmen and U.S. Army Soldiers deliver 80,000 pounds of food and water to a logistics hub in Asheville, North Carolina. The pallets will be broken down by Soldiers and Airmen from the 113th Sustainment Brigade, 30th Armored Brigade Combat Team, 145th Airlift Wing, 449th Combat Aviation Brigade, 130th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade and delivered with CH-47 Chinooks by the 82nd Airborne Division. U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Denne Allen





U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Todd Hunt, the Adjutant General of the North Carolina National Guard, engages with soldiers activated in support of relief efforts for Tropical Storm Helene at the Asheville Regional Airport in Asheville, N.C., Oct. 6, 2024. The NCNG deployed military capabilities in support of State authorities in order to protect the lives and properties of fellow Citizens. (Courtesy photo)

# Joint Task Force-North Carolina, 82nd Airborne Division Join Hands

Staff Sgt. Denné Allen

ASHEVILLE, North Carolina- Soldiers and Airmen from Joint Task Force-North Carolina and 82nd Airborne Division have joined forces to increase relief in western North Carolina after Tropical Storm Helene.

While atypical for active-duty to augment The National Guard in this way, the 82nd Airborne Division has provided vital personnel as well as seven additional Chinooks for commodity transport; Increasing the reach and impact of all members of JTF-NC.

The service members from all components involved are ready to restore Western North Carolina to the place it once was.

“Help is on the way”, said Spc. Aaron Hunt, a soldier with Delta Company, 236 Brigade Engineer Battalion, 30th Armored Brigade Combat Team. “We are doing day and night operations all the time and will be here as long as they need us.”

Soldiers from the 82nd express the same sentiments, many of them never experiencing State Active Duty operations.

“It's a horrible thing that happened”, said Staff Sgt. Antonio Stafford, a soldier with Delta Company 382, 82nd Airborne Division. “ We will do everything that we can to accommodate and it's one of the proudest things you can do as an American.”

JTF-NC will continue to support Tropical Storm Helene relief by way of rescues, commodity drops, and the rebuilding of infrastructure, in the hardest hit areas of North Carolina.



# Northern Command Leader at Joint Task Force North Carolina

Sgt. 1st Class Robert Jordan

Gen. Gregory Guillot, Commander, North American Aerospace Defense Command and U.S. Northern Command, left, speaks to U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Todd Hunt, the Adjutant General of the North Carolina National Guard, right, during a visit to North Carolina National Guard Joint Task Force Headquarters in Raleigh, North Carolina, Oct. 7, 2024. Active-duty troops joined the North Carolina National Guard in support of North Carolina State response to Tropical Storm Helene.





U.S. Army Sgt. Garrett Tester, Bravo Co, 3rd Battalion, 238th Aviation Regiment, and U.S. Army Spc. Diego Effinger, Bravo Company, 638th Aviation Support Battalion, also supporting Joint Task Force- North Carolina, observe the terrain of western North Carolina in the back of a CH-47 Chinook helicopter during a supply distribution mission in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene on Oct. 14 2024. Joint Task Force- North Carolina support various missions to include constant re-supply distribution of commodities throughout many areas still affected Helene in western North Carolina.

U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Justin Stannard



North Carolina National Guard Soldiers help local citizens and provide help with hurricane relief efforts at Cove Creek Baptist Church in Watauga County October 12, 2024.  
U.S. Army National Guard photo by Cpl. Nigel Hatcher



North Carolina National Guardsman Staff Sgt. Swick, assigned to the 130th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, moves debris during debris clean-up operations at Lake Lure, N.C., Oct. 8th, 2024. Joint Task Force-North Carolina deployed military capabilities in support of Tropical Storm Helene relief efforts.  
U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Hannah Tarkelly







U.S. Army Spc. Talib Brooks, an M1 Armor Crewman in Alpha Company, 252nd Armor Regiment, 30th Armored Brigade, delivers cleaning supplies to local citizens at a donation distribution point in Old Fort, North Carolina, Oct. 8, 2024. Joint Task Force-North Carolina ensures the safety, security, and wellbeing of our western North Carolina Neighbors through commodity delivery. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Denne Allen)

## Joint Task Force- North Carolina: Working at Donation Distribution Centers

Staff Sgt. Denné Allen

OLD FORT, North Carolina - Spc. Talib Brooks' day looks a little different than usual. He has been working at a donation distribution center in Old Fort, North Carolina, handing out food, water, cleaning supplies, and much more to residents of Old Fort and surrounding areas as part of Joint Task Force- North Carolina.

Brooks is an M1 armor crewman in Alpha Company, 252nd Armor Regiment, 30th Armored Brigade Combat Team, and has been working at the distribution center for a week.

Brooks is incredibly thankful for the opportunity to help the Western communities that need it the most.

"I want to make sure people have what they need to make it through", said Brooks. "Especially in times like this."



The center is typically a forestry warehouse, owned and operated by Bo Cooper. After Tropical Storm Helene hit, Cooper opened his warehouse to donations and soon had Soldiers there to help.

Every day, ten to fifteen soldiers are there, building care packages to fulfill the needs of the local population. They also work with civilian volunteers sorting donated goods. On average, 500-700 cars come to the donation center to receive assistance.

When families arrive, they are approached by a Soldier or civilian volunteer and explain their needs. Quickly, the car is packed with food, cleaning supplies, animal food, baby formula, diapers, fuel, toys, and paper goods, all under five minutes.

Cooper appreciates the support the North Carolina National Guard has given him and his warehouse.

"We wouldn't be able to do what we're doing without them," said Cooper. "I call them all my friends and I mean that I truly do."





Spc. Pedro Mora-Cortes, assigned to 5th Battalion, 113th Field Artillery Regiment, carries a bag of wet garbage while helping church members and volunteers clean out a flooded church basement at Cove Creek Baptist Church in Vilas, North Carolina, Oct. 12, 2024. Joint Task Force North Carolina has been working 24 hours a day, across a dozen counties to get North Carolinians the help they need. U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Joe Roudabush





U.S. Army Pfc. Stephanie Key, India Company, 230 Brigade Support Battalion, 30th Armored Brigade Combat Team in-processes soldiers in Hickory, North Carolina, October 4, 2024. Pfc. Key is on State Active Duty supporting relief efforts for Tropical Storm Helene. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Denne Allen.)

## Joint Task Force- North Carolina: Working at Donation Distribution Centers

Staff Sgt. Denné Allen

HICKORY, North Carolina - U.S. Army Pfc. Stephanie Key is a North Carolina National Guardsman currently serving on State Active Duty for Tropical Storm Helene relief. Originally from Columbus, Georgia, she joined the NCNG in 2022 and is a fueler in India Company, 230th Brigade Support Battalion, 30th Armored Brigade Combat Team. Key volunteered for SAD, ready to support her state and the citizens affected by Hurricane Helene.

Key's grandfather was a Vietnam Veteran and she says that he inspired her to serve her country.

"Something he always taught me was if you could lend a hand, lend it", said Key. "The state that I live in needs my help and that's what I'm going to do."

Initially, Pfc. Key was assigned twenty-four hour fuel duty in Hickory, North Carolina. The NCNG had set up multiple locations around the state to dispatch soldiers, and her mission was to refuel military vehicles coming in and out of her hub. When she arrived on Sept. 27 she began her mission but soon identified a gap; with such a large influx of soldiers coming in and out of her hub, tracking them was becoming extremely difficult with the limited personnel available. At first, NC Emergency Management was handling the logistics but they were unfamiliar with the military protocols that the NCNG follows, making it difficult to take care of soldiers and enhance their readiness ahead of their missions.

Key stepped in, becoming one of the most important personnel managers in the Western Branch of Joint Task Force North Carolina, a position that typically calls for a senior noncommissioned officer. Keys provides lodging accommodations, including the cleanliness of the rooms, confirms the numbers for meal reservations, and conducts the in processing, and out processing for 100 to 120 soldiers a day. All while still providing fuel when necessary.

Key believes her newly adopted role is essential to soldier readiness during such an unprecedented time.

"If the Soldiers don't have fuel, don't have the energy, don't have the proper sleep, they can't go out and fight the fight to help these people.", explained Key.



Brigadier General Wes Morrison, Dual Commander for Joint Task Force -North Carolina, immediately wanted to honor Keys after learning of her commitment and sacrifice. On October 3, 2024, Morrison awarded Keys the North Carolina Achievement medal.

As of October 8, 2024, the North Carolina National Guard has delivered 3,882 tons of commodities to affected areas, cleared 1060 obstacles, and has cleared 2,000 routes.

Pfc. Key is proud of the support she has been able to give the citizens of North Carolina affected by Tropical Storm Helene and will do whatever it takes to continue to support them.

"It's not the end of the fight," said Key. "But that's what we're here for, to give them the support they need."





North Carolina National Guardsman Pfc. Miriam Herrera, assigned to the 30th Armored Brigade Combat Team, assists a citizen at a resource distribution point in Burnsville, N.C., Oct. 19th, 2024. The N.C. Guard partnered with local organizations to provide donated goods to the community in support of Joint Task Force-North Carolina following Tropical Storm Helene.  
U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Hannah Tarkelly



