



Photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. Jeffrey T. Barone, Louisiana National Guard

Soldiers of the Louisiana Army National Guard's 844th Engineer Company dump sand on a geotextile fabric liner reinforcing a rock wall on Elmer's Island in support of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill cleanup efforts in Grand Isle, La., July 6. A geotextile fabric is a permeable textile material used to increase soil stability, provide erosion control or aid in drainage.

Military support to mitigate oil spill in Gulf of Mexico continues

BY SGT. 1ST CLASS
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WASHINGTON – Military efforts along the Gulf Coast continued July 15 as part of the federal response force to clean up the oil spill.

About 1,900 Defense Department and associated personnel are deployed to the Gulf. They are providing ongoing support to contain the leak and clean up the spill, including military-owned skimmers and pollution control equipment, Pentagon spokesman Lt. Col. Robert L. Ditchey II said July 15.

The military also is providing funding for National Guard support to state governors in the region, as well as staging areas for boom and logistical coordination along the coast and at sea, Ditchey said.

The Coast Guard has been leading the federal response there since April when the Deepwater Horizon oil rig exploded. The explosion resulted in hundreds of millions of gallons of oil gushing from the sea floor.

“We have been working together closely with the U.S. Coast Guard from the beginning,” Ditchey said. “We are committed to supporting the response effort for as long as we are needed.”

The Navy, he said, has 19 skimmers and 29 tow boats in the Gulf to help soak

up the oil. The Naval Sea Systems Command has oversight over those vessels and equipment. The command expects additional assets in the region in the coming weeks, Ditchey said.

The Naval Oceanographic Office has deployed 24 drifting buoys and 10 profiling floats to monitor wafting oil, he said. The buoys process data for ocean forecast models, he added, which are conducted daily.

Navy aircraft are conducting reconnaissance to detect oil that can be skimmed, Ditchey said. The aircraft direct suitable vessels to those sites for skimming, he added.

Meanwhile, National Guard troops are supporting local, state and federal authorities with aviation transportation, reconnaissance, security, hazardous materials training and other assets, he said. The Guard has 15 dedicated helicopters for transportation and reconnaissance missions, he added.

National Guardsmen are also assisting BP to take claims from Gulf residents affected by the spill, Ditchey said.

In May, the Defense Department transported 150,000 feet of BP boom and 250 short tons of Navy pollution control and salvage equipment from Alaska to Louisiana, he noted.

The Air Force's 910th Air Wing out of Youngstown, Ohio, flew numerous sorties for about a month through May.

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