Arkansas Deploys National Guard Soldiers to the US-Mexico Border

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The Governor of Arkansas, Sarah Huckabee Sanders, has announced the deployment of Arkansas National Guard soldiers to the southern border of the United States, in Texas, to assist state authorities in combating illegal immigration.

About 40 members of the Arkansas National Guard will be deployed from April 1 to May 30 in Eagle Pass, Texas, as confirmed by the governor's office.

The deployment was anticipated following Sanders' visit to the border last month, along with 14 other Republican governors, in a show of support for Texas Governor Greg Abbott.

Members of the 142nd Field Artillery Brigade of the Arkansas Guard will assist the Texas National Guard in surveillance and reconnaissance operations.

"*With his policy, President Biden has opened our southern border to an invasion of illegal immigrants, drugs, and human trafficking and now criticizes Texas for taking action where his administration has failed,*" Sanders stated. "*I have seen firsthand the crisis created by our*

president and know that the extraordinary men and women of the Arkansas Guard can help bolster Texas's efforts to keep our border and our states safe."

Texas authorities have sought to intensify policing operations along the Lone Star State's border with Mexico, as tensions with the federal government over immigration law enforcement escalate and the number of migrants and asylum seekers reaches historic levels.

Sanders' office announced the deployment shortly before the United States Supreme Court lifted the suspension of a controversial Texas state law, allowing — at least during the ongoing appeal — the arrest and deportation of migrants who entered the state without authorization. Traditionally, the power to enforce immigration laws belongs to the federal government, and the Biden administration has argued that the Texas law is unconstitutional because it violates that authority.

The case has remained in limbo following a legal back-and-forth after initially being declared unconstitutional.

Nevertheless, Texas has erected barbed wire fences along the Rio Grande and installed buoys across the river to prevent people from crossing.

Last July, about 80 soldiers were sent to the border to assist Texas authorities.

Last year's deployment cost the state an estimated $1.3 million. Next month's mission is expected to cost the state $1.01 million, although a spokesperson noted that the figure could vary based on several variables.

The National Guard had already sent 40 members to the southern border in 2021 for 90 days, in a mission primarily aimed at recovering and repairing vehicles belonging to a Texas task force at the border.

The Arkansas Guard also deployed troops between 2006 and 2008 in support of the federal Operation Jump Start under former President George W. Bush, providing over 750 soldiers and airmen in support of the Border Patrol.

"*The Arkansas National Guard has a long history of assisting neighboring states in times of crisis,*" said Maj. Gen. Jonathan Stubbs, Commanding General of the Arkansas Guard. "*We assisted Texas last year and in the past under various administrations. Our soldiers will be well-prepared and ready to assist in the Texas National Guard's operations.*"

National Guard members will remain under Governor Sanders' command while in Texas, but the Texas National Guard will lead the mission. This deployment underscores the joint commitment and collaboration between states in addressing national security challenges and managing the complex dynamics at the southern border of the United States.

Arkansas National Guard, Who They Are

The Arkansas National Guard (ARNG), commonly known as the Arkansas Guard, is a component of the Government of Arkansas and the United States National Guard. It consists of Army and Air National Guard units. The office of the adjutant general is located at Camp Robinson MTC, in North Little Rock.

National Guard units can be mobilized at any time by presidential order to supplement regular armed forces and by declaration of a state of emergency by the governor of the state in which they serve. Unlike Army Reserve members, National Guard members cannot be mobilized individually (except through voluntary transfers and temporary duty assignments (TDY)), but only as part of their respective units. However, since 2001, several individual activations have been made to support military operations.

Federal Mission

When National Guard troops are called to federal service, the President serves as Commander-in-Chief. The federal mission assigned to the National Guard is: "*To provide properly trained and equipped units for prompt mobilization in case of war, national emergency, or as otherwise needed*". For much of the late 20th century, National Guard personnel typically served "*one weekend a month, two weeks a year*", with some working for the Guard full-time. Current U.S. force training plans call for the typical National Guard unit (or Guardsman) to serve one year of active duty for every six years of service.

During the Little Rock school crisis in 1957, President Eisenhower issued Executive Order 10730, placing the Arkansas National Guard under federal control. In this context, the National Guard was used to ensure racial integration in schools, marking a significant moment in American civil rights history. As of February 2023, Executive Order 10730 has not been revoked.

State Mission

The Governor can call up individual members or units of the Arkansas National Guard for state service during emergencies or to assist in particular situations that lend themselves to the use of the National Guard. The state mission assigned to the National Guard is: "*To provide trained and disciplined forces for domestic emergencies or as otherwise provided by state law.*" When not activated for its federal mission, the Governor commands the Guard forces through the State Adjutant General. The Governor can mobilize the Guard during local or state emergencies, such as storms, droughts, and civil disturbances, to name a few, as well as in this case to defend the state's borders.