



TAFT TOURS DEVASTATION IN SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

Governor visits Ohio troops, helps deliver supplies to evacuees

COLUMBUS (September 13, 2005) – Governor Bob Taft today traveled to Southern Mississippi to tour the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina and visit Ohio troops assisting with recovery efforts near Kiln, Mississippi. The troops Taft visited today are part of Joint Task Force Buckeye, the Ohio National Guard’s operation to assist with Hurricane Katrina recovery efforts.

“I am proud that our Ohio National Guard is providing much-needed support for the families and communities that are trying to recover from the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina,” said Taft. “Ohio stands ready to assist in these efforts however we can, whether we’re helping residents and recovery efforts here in the Gulf states or welcoming evacuees who have come to Ohio.”

Joint Task Force Buckeye is responsible for security operations in parts of Mississippi and Louisiana and has been providing support to local law enforcement. The units are also involved in search and rescue, evacuation and delivering supplies to the local populations.

The Governor thanked the Ohio troops aiding in the Hurricane Katrina relief effort and helped the troops deliver supplies to evacuees outside Kiln, Mississippi. Taft visited the Army National Guard’s 73rd Troop Command (Columbus), the 371st Corps Support Group (Kettering), the 324th Military Police Company (Middletown), the Air National Guard’s 269th Combat Communications Squadron (Springfield) and the headquarters for Joint Task Force Buckeye.

On August 31, Taft authorized 1,500 Ohio National Guard soldiers and Airmen to assist in the rescue and recovery efforts for the Hurricane Katrina victims. Within 36 hours of deployment, 320 Ohio National Guard Soldiers were in New Orleans.

Major General Greg Wayt, the Adjutant General of Ohio, thanked the Governor for spending time with the soldiers and Airmen deployed to the hurricane response operation. “When the Commander-in-Chief arrives in theater, it shows the men and women he commands that he is proud of them, and that he appreciates their effort and their sacrifice. That means a great deal to a soldier or an Airman,” said Wayt.

Joint Task Force Buckeye has drawn personnel from many units of the Ohio National Guard, both Air and Army, drawing people from all over the State of Ohio to aid in Hurricane recovery efforts. More than 70 percent of the Ohio National Guard’s assets remain in Ohio, ready for deployment should the need arise.

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Editor’s note:

A satellite feed with video of the Governor’s visit will be available at 8:00 p.m. this evening.

For more information, please contact: Mark Rickel, Governor’s Press Secretary, at (614) 644-0957.