



Georgia State Defense Force

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2BN/1BDE Leads Independence Day Mission Supporting the Acworth Police Department

Inclement weather tested the mettle of 2nd Battalion troops and other GSDF personnel tasked to manage pedestrian and vehicle traffic and ensure the safety of civilians gathered for the City of Acworth's annual 4th of July celebration.

ACWORTH, GA – July 4, 2011

As in past years, 2nd Battalion, 1st Brigade of the Georgia State Defense Force (GSDF) was handed the task of leading the GSDF's mission to augment the Acworth Police Department in safely managing the flow of people and vehicles throughout the Acworth Beach area during the City of Acworth's annual Independence Day event on July 4th, 2011.

Seventy-six troops from 2nd Battalion and other units within the GSDF – inclusive of 1st and 3rd Battalions, 1st Brigade headquarters and medical elements, and the GSDF's 76th Support Brigade – put their training to work manning traffic posts, roving the beach, and providing a uniformed presence throughout the day and into the evening. Troops specially trained in advanced first-aid and life-saving skills assisted visitors with a few mild heat exhaustion cases. Other troops reunited children and parents temporarily separated from one another in the crowd. All troops kept an eye out for unsafe or hazardous activities or conditions.

Operations were hindered by bad weather in the form of passing thundershowers, but the weather was not enough to stop the assembled soldiers from continuing their mission. When the first storm cell broke in the afternoon, bringing with it high winds, heavy rains, and cloud to ground lightning, troops dashed into action, directing civilians away from exposed areas and anything – such as tall trees – that might be particularly attractive to lightning.

At one point, tents positioned over the shuttle waiting line were blowing erratically due to the winds. Several troops immediately held the tents in place over the walkway where the civilians were lined up. As Sgt. 1st Class Wade Price of 1st Brigade Headquarters and one of the senior non-commissioned officers overseeing troops responsible for manning traffic control points accounted: *“These soldiers, with complete disregard for their own safety, held onto the metal framework of these tents against the wind, lightning, and driving rain thus ensuring shelter for civilians seeking cover from the storm.”*

Although no emergency was declared, plans for facilitating the departure of civilians from the beach area were successfully put into action earlier than scheduled due to the weather which, unfortunately for attendees gathered for the main event – led to the City Manager's decision to cancel the day's main

event – the fireworks show that was to start at 9:15PM. Undaunted, and despite continuing wind, rain, and lightning, soldiers continued to assist with shuttling civilians back to their cars and directing vehicles out of the park.

The GSDF soldiers present for the mission put forth their best efforts and made good use of their skill set in supporting the City of Acworth, the Acworth Police Department and helping ensure the safety of civilians gathered for the day's celebration. At the close of the mission, Acworth Police Department Chief Michael Wilkie made a point of assuring Cpt. Michael Kent, 2nd Battalion's commanding officer, that the GSDF's participation was indeed vital to ensuring a safe experience for all who attended the day's event.

The Georgia State Defense Force is the all-volunteer, military branch of the Georgia Department of Defense, a state agency, and serves alongside the Georgia Army and Air National Guard. Constituted under state and federal laws, when directed by Georgia's governor and adjutant general, the mission of the GSDF is to provide an organized, trained, disciplined, rapid response volunteer force to assist state and local governments and civil relief organizations during emergencies to ensure the welfare and safety of the citizens of Georgia.

For more information about the Georgia State Defense Force or to request an interview, please contact 2nd Lt. Timothy Wheeler at 404-644-1844 or timothy.wheeler@gsdf.us. For those interested in volunteering with the GSDF, please contact Cpl. Bobby Haygood at 404.384.0282 or bobby.haygood@second2none.us.