

Illinois National Guard troops deploying to U.S. territory of Puerto Rico

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CHICAGO - Gov. Bruce Rauner is sending approximately 150 Illinois Army National Guard Military Police soldiers to assist the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria, he announced at a press conference today.



"The people of Illinois prove time and time again that we rally together in times of crisis," Rauner said. "Our fellow Americans need us. Many of them have lost everything. I'm proud that we can step up and send our Guard troops in to help relieve some of the pressure they're experiencing in Puerto Rico."

The deployment comes just one month after Rauner sent a letter to Ricardo Rossello, the governor of Puerto Rico, letting him know the people of Illinois were eager to assist and would mobilize troops immediately if and when more boots were needed on the ground.

Puerto Rico requested this assistance through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC), the nation's state-to-state mutual aid system. All 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam and the U.S. Virgin Islands are part of the compact. The request was coordinated in Illinois by the state's Emergency Management Agency (IEMA).

Under the EMAC agreement, Puerto Rico agreed to reimburse the state of Illinois for all deployment expenses, estimated at more than \$948,000.

"The recovery in Puerto Rico will be difficult and long, and it's likely more assistance will be needed in the coming months," said IEMA Director James K. Joseph. "We will continue to closely monitor the EMAC system for additional ways Illinois responders can help with the recovery."

Soldiers from the 933rd Military Police Company, based at Fort Sheridan, were flown to Puerto Rico by the Illinois Air National Guard's Peoria-based 182nd Airlift Wing and Scott Air Force-based 126th Air Refueling Wing this morning. They will provide additional security, escort relief convoys and conduct law-enforcement patrols on the hurricane-ravaged island.

"Hurricane Maria has caused terrible devastation in Puerto Rico," said Maj. Gen. Richard J. Hayes Jr., the adjutant general of the Illinois National Guard. "We are proud to respond to the needs of our fellow citizens as the Minutemen have done for more than 380 years."

The Illinois Air National Guard already has approximately 60 Airmen on the island assisting with relief efforts, including about 30 security forces personnel, 15 food services specialists and 15 communications specialists from bases in Springfield, Peoria and Edwardsville. The Guard also has troops assisting with hurricane relief efforts in the U.S. Virgin Islands.