

The Virginia volunteer tradition goes back to the earliest days of Colonial Virginia. From the 1600s until the World War I, our state was defended largely by state-raised militia units. During World Wars I and II, while the Virginia National Guard was called into Federal Service, the Virginia State Guard served as the “Home Guard”.

From 1917 until 1921, Virginia Volunteers guarded bridges, waterways, fuel storage areas and public buildings and facilities with surplus weapons dating back to 1876. With the return of the National Guard units after the war's end, the last company of the Virginia Volunteers was deactivated in 1921. 1,300 Virginian Volunteers served during World War I.

Following the Nazi defeat of the French army in 1940, Virginia's Governor ordered the establishment of the Virginia Protective Force on January 2, 1941. Dressed in blue-gray wool uniforms (colors of the VA State Police) and armed with surplus M-1917 Enfield rifles, the Virginia Protective Force assumed the in-state missions of the National Guard when it was sent overseas. In 1944 the General Assembly changed the name of the Virginia Protective Force to the Virginia State Guard. With the return of the Virginia National Guard from overseas service, the Commonwealth deactivated the State Guard in June 1947. A total of 16,885 served in the VA State Guard from 1940 until 1947.

After the Vietnam War, the “Total Force Policy” of the Army caused the US Army, US Army Reserve, and Army National Guard to be considered as a single force. Federal Law was amended

in the mid-1980s to allow states to establish their own military forces to assume the missions of the National Guards in the event they were called away on Federal Service. The VA State Guard was re-activated in 1985 and renamed the Virginia Defense Force (or VDF) in early 1986.

The VDF has a target strength of 1,200 soldiers. On orders of the Governor, our organizational structure can be augmented to a strength of seven to twenty thousand soldiers in an emergency. As a partner in the Joint Operations Command with the VA Army & Air National Guard, the VDF has an expanding homeland security responsibility.

The Lafayette Brigade is the second of three Light Infantry Brigades in the George Washington Division The Brigade Command Section is located at the Norfolk Armory and is made up of a headquarters section, a security company and two battalions. The 21st Battalion is located on the Eastern shore and the 22nd Battalion is on the Peninsula.

OUR MISSION includes such things as providing:

- ❑ Notification and traffic control during the evacuation and recovery phases of a disaster
- ❑ Security in disaster areas with patrols, and light duty urban search and rescue
- ❑ Emergency communications and relaying disaster messages anywhere within Virginia
- ❑ Aerial damage assessment with our member-owned aviation support

- ❑ Emergency transportation with member-owned four wheel drive vehicles and airplanes
 - ❑ Coordination efforts with other emergency response agencies, law enforcement agencies, fire, and rescue, relief agencies such as the Red Cross and Salvation Army
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