

Youngkin visits troops before deployment

BY BRIAN CARLTON
The Farmville Herald

Issues on the U.S. border with Mexico affect all states, not just those nearby. That was Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin's statement on Thursday, July 6, after visiting with troops at Fort Barfoot in Nottoway County.

Youngkin signed Executive Directive Four last month, which calls for 100 soldiers from the Virginia

National Guard and 10 support personnel to head to Texas. Those soldiers left Saturday, July 8, just a few days after visiting with the governor.

"Just as the Virginia National Guard stands ready to assist our fellow Virginians in times of need, our Soldiers and Airmen are also ready to provide assistance to other states through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact process and will provide requested capabilities to help our fellow Americans," Maj. Gen. James W. Ring, the adjutant

general of Virginia, said in a statement.

The operation is being called Joint Task Force Cardinal, with Virginia troops working alongside National Guard and other law enforcement from Tennessee, Idaho and Nebraska, all of which committed support. The operation is set to last 30 days, according to the Virginia National Guard's statement and will cost Virginia taxpayers an estimated \$3.1 million.

And that's why Youngkin spent last Thursday with National Guard troops at Fort Barfoot. He prayed with them, he talked with them and overall told them thanks for their service to the country, as they prepared to head out. The visits were private, with no media allowed, so the troops could talk freely and not run into any potential security risks.

A PROBLEM WITH FENTANYL

The decision to send the Virginia National Guard troops came in response to a request from Texas Governor Greg Abbott, who in May asked for emergency help dealing with the border with Mexico. Back in April, Customs and Border Patrol agents seized 3.1 million doses of fentanyl, a drug Virginia residents are very familiar with. Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid, made in a lab. According to state records, fentanyl contributed to 76.4% of all overdoses in 2021, the last year for which we have data. And the drug keeps coming in over the Texas border. Customs officials reported seizing 107 pounds of fentanyl in 2019 and by the end of 2022, that yearly total had jumped to 692 pounds. It's because of this, Youngkin said Thursday, that he's sending Virginia National Guard troops to the border.

"Every state is a border state," Youngkin told reporters Thursday. "We have a fentanyl crisis in Virginia. Five Virginians are dying every single day. We have a human trafficking crisis here in Virginia. And it all emanates from the southern border."

The help is needed, based on the data provided by U.S. Customs. Last year, Customs reported 2,579,005 encounters at the border with Mexico. That includes traffic, vehicles that have to be searched and people that have to be searched, to seize drugs and cut down on overall smuggling. By June 1 of this year, Customs had reported 922,947 encounters.



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Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin visits with soldiers from the Virginia National Guard at Fort Barfoot.



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