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Tennessee Guardsmen responding to Louisiana wildfires

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – Tennessee’s Adjutant General, Brig. Gen. Warner Ross, announced today that two UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters from Knoxville’s 1-230th Assault Helicopter Battalion have departed this morning for Louisiana to support state, county, and local emergency responders battling the Tiger Island wildfire burning in Beauregard Parish, the largest wildfire in the state’s history.

The 12-person team, to include the flight crews and ground maintenance team, departed from McGhee Tyson Air National Guard Base in Knoxville and are flying to Esler Regional Airport in Rapides Parish, Louisiana. For the next week or more, the Tennesseans will be based out of Esler and using Bambi Buckets, a specialized bucket system suspended from the helicopter, to deliver hundreds of gallons of water from the air to fight the wildfires. The Blackhawks will pick up water from nearby water sources and drop it directly on needed areas.

Gov. Bill Lee authorized the Tennessee National Guard to provide this critical air-firefighting support to Louisiana in coordination with the Tennessee and Louisiana Emergency Management Agencies. Through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact, states can request relief and recovery support from other states during and after disasters.

The Tennessee National Guard will continue to work with local and state emergency management officials to assist in the firefighting efforts and will regularly provide public updates.

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