

REPORT
OF
The Adjutant General
OF THE
STATE OF FLORIDA
For the Years 1925 and 1926



- (3) Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 124th Infantry, from Sanford to Miami.
- (4) Company "A," 124th Infantry, from Daytona Beach to Hollywood.
- (5) Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion, 124th Infantry, from Tarpon Springs to Orlando.
- (6) Company "L," 124th Infantry, from St. Petersburg to Bradenton.

ACTIVE STATE SERVICE.

At Palm Beach:

Company "C," 124th Infantry, was employed in active State service on the occasion of a large fire at Palm Beach on March 18, 1925. A report of the Commanding Officer of that organization on the service performed is submitted herewith, under Appendix A.

At La Belle:

Just before midnight May 12, 1926, the Governor communicated with this office by telephone, advising that the Sheriff of Hendry County had need for troops at La Belle, Fla., to assist him in maintaining the public peace and enforcing the law. This situation developed as a result of the lynching of a negro by certain white men of that community. Just after midnight instructions were received to call out the nearest body of troops and direct them to report to the Sheriff of Hendry County. Whereupon orders were issued by telephone to the Commanding Officer, Battery "F," 116 Field Artillery, to proceed overland to LaBelle and report to the Sheriff at that point as promptly as possible. These orders were carried out and the Battery, with its full quota of officers and forty enlisted men, arrived at LaBelle before daylight the following morning.

The report of the Commanding Officer of these troops is submitted herewith as a part of Appendix A.

It should be stated that the services performed by this organization were especially commendable and that officers used the utmost tact and good judgment in dealing with the situation. A number of arrests were made and the prisoners removed to points of safety in other counties. The excitement was abated and further difficulties avoided by the presence of the military.

In the Storm Area of South Florida:

On the morning of September 19th a relayed radiogram was received from the Sheriff of Dade County, briefly advising of the devastation created by the hurricane that visited South Florida on the day previous and requesting that troops be sent to his aid for the protection of property and maintenance of the public peace. Preparatory orders were immediately issued to a number of the nearest and most available units. At two o'clock that afternoon communication with the Governor was obtained by long distance telephone. All organizations in the storm area on the lower east coast were immediately placed on duty, and directed to report to Major Robert N. Ward, 124th Infantry, at Miami. After further telephonic conference with the Governor, an hour later, supplementary orders were issued adding to the number of troops placed on duty.

The organizations called out on September 19th, and points to which they were ordered, were as follows: To Miami—Colonel Vivian B. Collins, with his field and staff officers, and companies "A," "B," "D," and "K;" the Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion; the Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion; the Service Company (less band section), and the Medical Detachment, all of the 124th Infantry; also, the Medical Detachment, 116th Field Artillery. To Fort Lauderdale—Company "C," 124th In-

tion for the very efficient manner in which your men aided in fighting the fire and guarding the property in our neighboring city, at Palm Beach. Without your able assistance there would have, undoubtedly, been hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of personal property stolen in that community, besides the possibility of numerous accidents, and other violences due to the darkness which prevailed on the streets, because of the lack of street lights.

Will you kindly convey to your State officers our thanks for this wonderful service?

Very sincerely yours,

C. A. BINGHAM,

City Manager.

At La Belle:

POST, FLORIDA NATIONAL GUARD,

Arcadia, Florida.

May 22, 1926.

Subject: *Report of duty performed at LaBelle, Fla.*

To: *The Adjutant General.*

In compliance with telephone instructions received on or about 12:15 A. M., May 13, 1926, Battery "F" was assembled at the Armory at Arcadia, Florida, pending receipt of instructions for riot duty at LaBelle, Fla. Instructions were received on or about 1:30 A. M., from the office of the Adjutant General to proceed to LaBelle and report to the Mayor of LaBelle and the Sheriff of Hendry County, Fla. Battery "F" with its full complement of officers and approximately forty (40) enlisted men, with the undersigned left Arcadia at 4:00 A. M., in automobiles and arrived at LaBelle about 6 A. M., where we were met by the

Sheriff and proceeded to the city square opposite the court house. Position was organized by mounting two machine guns and distributing the men in position about the park. Immediately after arrival in the city we got in touch with the Mayor, Mr. Magill, then the County Judge and Prosecuting Attorney were interviewed and the situation talked over, with a fairly large number of the more substantial and prominent citizens of the city, including Representative of the State Legislature, Honorable Mr. Doty.

The situation as we found it was that the people were apparently very much intimidated by the mob which formed and they still had the people very much afraid that a repetition might occur, as numerous threats had been made that if any action was taken by the Court toward prosecuting the offenders they might expect some reprisals taken against them. The population of the city seemed to be very much relieved at the presence of the troops, and the County Judge and Prosecuting Attorney told me they felt that with the presence of the troops they would be able to secure testimony from witnesses, who, the day before we arrived would not give any testimony whatsoever. The reason they gave for not doing so was that they were afraid. This officer, or one other officer of the Battery sat in the court room while the proceedings were going on. This was based upon the request of the County Judge and Prosecuting Attorney, and also the jury. This seemed to reassure them and also the witnesses testifying, as on this date the jury found four parties guilty and ordered them arrested. The sheriff stated that he was unable to deputize people, as those in whom he had confidence would not agree to serve. He requested that we furnish him soldiers to assist him in making the arrests. At this point it may be well to state that the soldiers took no part in any of the business of the county, except what was based upon request. The only part taken was to assist the sheriff in carrying out his duty in making

arrests and holding prisoners, as they had no jail there, and delivering the prisoners to the jail designated by the Judge. No resistance was made in any manner to the soldiers and apparently everything was very quiet all the time we were there, although there was a tense feeling that something might happen all the time, especially as long as the court was in session and arrests pending. Seventeen (17) arrests were ordered by the Judge, which were made and these prisoners delivered—ten of them to the jail in Arcadia and seven to the jail at Fort Myers.

On Saturday afternoon half of the troops were relieved, with two of the officers. The remaining troops were relieved on Tuesday, May 18, and reported back to their station at Arcadia, Fla.

The County Judge and Prosecuting Attorney showed the utmost zeal and endeavor, together with the coroner's jury, to go into the facts and, in my opinion, made a thorough and impartial investigation.

These two gentlemen are to be commended for their zeal in carrying on their investigation.

RUPERT SMITH,

STANHOPE C. SMITH,

*Capt. F. A. N. G., FLA.,
& Adjutant, 56th F. A. Brig.
Comdg. Post.*

*Capt. 116th F. A.,
Comdg. Battery F.*

In Storm Area:

HEADQUARTERS, FLORIDA NATIONAL GUARD

Miami, Florida

September 29, 1926.

Subject: *Report on duty performed by National*