

SNAKE GUYS: TRUMP'S INVASION OF CALIFORNIA RISKS A LITERAL FIRESTORM IN CALIFORNIA [UPDATED]

In Jimmy Kimmel's attack on Trump's authoritarian interference in California last night, he recalled how, earlier this year, Trump claimed California had so many fires because they don't sweep its forest floors.

It was a funny dig. Except it is also dead serious.

As laid out in California's bid for an emergency Temporary Restraining Order filed Tuesday, among the problems with Trump's federalization of the California National Guard is not just that Trump usurped Gavin Newsom's authority to command the Guard and incited further unrest.

It also steals resources that California relies on to combat forest fires (and fentanyl trafficking).

Defendants' unlawful federalization of 4,000 California National Guard members, over the repeated objections of Governor Newsom, diverts necessary state resources. See Eck Dec. ¶ 32 (noting the California Military Department has "has identified and committed 4,600 service members to achieve state specific missions, which is 38% of the available strength"); id. ¶ 33 ("In 2025, there have already been 3,332 services members activated for 89,061 duty days, indicating the state will need every available service member to meet the State's operational needs."). Most members of the California National Guard serve in a reserve capacity, meaning

they work in civilian roles when not serving as part-time militia forces, often in specialized positions. Eck Dec. ¶¶ 21, 37. As one pertinent example, 2,500 California National Guard members were activated in response to some of the most destructive fires in Los Angeles County that occurred in early January 2025. Eck Dec. ¶¶ 35-36. Likewise, the federalized force includes elements of the 79th Infantry Brigade Combat Team that serve in Taskforce Rattlesnake, the State's specialized fire combat unit. Eck Dec. ¶¶ 14, 39-40. The 79th Infantry Brigade Combat Team also includes Counterdrug Taskforce members that specialize in providing support to stop the trafficking of fentanyl at the U.S.-Mexico Border. Id. ¶¶ 15, 42-43. Members of the California National Guard also serve key roles in a variety of functions, from defending the state from cyber threats to conducting emergency traffic control. Id. ¶¶ 44-46. In short, Defendants' federalization of the California National Guard jeopardizes vital resources on which the State depends to protect itself from emergencies, including the 79th Infantry Brigade Combat Team's specialized fire suppression and drug interdiction teams. Id. ¶¶ 47-50.

In short, Defendants' unlawful federalization of a significant subset of the California National Guard for 60 days at the expense of state resources jeopardizes the safety and welfare of the state's citizens on two fronts: **first**, it removes these servicemembers from their vital roles combating drug trafficking in California's border zones and fighting wildfires and **second**, their deployment risks inflaming an unstable and dangerous situation of Defendants' own making, putting property and countless lives at unnecessary risk. See

id. ¶¶ 13-16. [emphasis original]

The Deputy General Counsel in California's Military Department, Paul Eck, described the specialized roles the Guard plays in combatting fires in a declaration accompanying the TRO request. There are 14 Task Force Rattlesnake crews that focus full-time on wildfire prevention (the kind of mitigation Trump demanded in January) and response.

38. For example, the California National Guard operates FireGuard, a wildfire satellite detection mission. During the last 18 months, FireGuard activated at least fire Emergency State Active-Duty Force Packages, consisting of 360 personnel total, in support of the Bridge Fire, Line Fire, and Park Fire in California. One hundred-forty additional Emergency State Active-Duty Military Police Soldiers were also activated to operate and augment Traffic Control Points at the Line Fire and Bridge Fire.

39. The California National Guard also operates Joint Task Force Rattlesnake, a joint taskforce with CalFire to mitigate and prevent fires through fuels mitigation projects and direct fire suppression. **Task Force Rattlesnake provides 14 full-time, year-round Type I Hand Crews to reduce fuels and respond to fire incidents and other emergencies across the State. Each Task Force Rattlesnake crewmember is trained to Firefighter 1C standards, which require at least 540 hours of training. Each of California's 14 Crews are staffed with a minimum of 22 California National Guard personnel and maintain a minimum of 22 Firefighter 1C trained crewmembers (308 personnel in total).**

40. Over the past 18 months, Task Force Rattlesnake responded to at least 738 wildland firefighting response missions,

covering 10,243 acres of land. [my emphasis]

Best as I can tell, those filings were submitted around 11AM on Tuesday.

Around 1:30PM, a wildfire in Apple Valley was reported. The now-4,200 acre fire is currently just 10% contained.

Having predicted that Trump's usurpation of control over California's National Guard might deprive the state other other emergency response resources on Tuesday, yesterday at 9AM (my screen cap is Irish time, so ET+5 and PT+8), Newsom pointed to the way Trump's federalization of the Guard has depleted those dedicated fire response Guardsmen.



Gavin Newsom ✓
@GavinNewsom

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The Ranch Fire in San Bernardino is 4,000 acres and growing.

Meanwhile, 5 of California's 14 National Guard fire crews are understaffed... because Trump deployed them for a political stunt in LA.

This isn't just illegal. It's dangerous.

5:10 PM · Jun 11, 2025 · **2.4M** Views

Trump's bozo-the-clown response to the TRO request (which forgot to include its Table of Authorities and cited a Fox News story that misrepresents when Newsom and Trump spoke, all the while hiding that Trump can't even remember when that happened) mentions fires or fireworks nine times – claiming at one point that protestors "lit fires in dumpsters and trans bins," whatever "trans bins" are. (Whatever they are, they don't seem like the kind of federal property to which Whiskey Pete Hegseth can assign Guardsmen and Marines.)

TABLE OF AUTHORITIES

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But Trump's response doesn't address how he'll undermine efforts to combat fentanyl trafficking and wildfires. Trump's response doesn't address how his actions will make California less safe.

In January, Trump lectured California about preventing fires; then he manufactured an emergency to steal the personnel who perform that role.

In January, Trump declared emergencies because (he claims) Mexico, Canada, and China aren't doing enough to combat fentanyl trafficking. Then he manufactured a different emergency via which he stole some of the personnel California uses to respond to that threat.

Even on Trump's own terms, Trump is making California less safe.

Update: Paul Eck filed an updated declaration to accompany the state's reply. He describes over half of the specialized firefighting members.

6. Task Force Rattlesnake, California's highly trained fire mitigation and ' prevention and direct fire suppression unit, **lost 190 out of its total 340 members to the Title 10 federal activation. A reduction of 55.88% of California National Guard's fire prevention and fighting force.**

7. The negative impacts of the reduction in force to Task Force Rattlesnake are imminent.

8. Prior to the Title 10 Federal activation of California National Guard forces, Task Force Rattlesnake (Rattlesnake) maintained Fourteen (14) Type 1 Wildfire Handcrews. Post the mobilization, Rattlesnake has been

whittled down to Nine (9) Type 1 crews.

9. The reduction in the number of Rattlesnake Type 1 crews has limited the CMD's, and consequently Cal Fire's, ability to conduct ground fuels reduction missions, and more importantly, it has negatively impacted CMD's ability to respond to wildfires.

10. The consequences may be felt soon. As of June 11 there are 13 fires over 10 acres burning in California, including the Ranch Fire in San Bernardino which has consumed over 4,200 acres. If it continues to grow at its current rate of spread, it would necessitate the use of Rattlesnake. [emphasis mine]

He also described that 31% of CA's drug interdiction team has been affected.

Docket Newsom v. Trump