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### **NIFC MOBILIZES MAFFS TO ASSIST WITH WILDFIRE SUPPRESSION EFFORTS**

The National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group (NMAC) at the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) in Boise, Idaho is taking actions to ensure adequate airtanker capability by mobilizing two Department of Defense (DoD) C-130s equipped with Modular Airborne Firefighting Systems (MAFFS) to assist with wildfire suppression efforts in the Great Basin, California, Northwest and Northern Rockies Geographic Areas, and elsewhere in the West.

The two C-130 MAFFS will be provided by the 153rd Airlift Wing, Wyoming Air National Guard, based out of Cheyenne, Wyo., and the 302nd Airlift Wing, Air Force Reserve, Peterson Air Force Base, based out of Colorado Springs, Colo. They will initially be located in Boise, Idaho and are expected to be available to fly wildfire suppression missions beginning this Wednesday, August 3.

“We are mobilizing MAFFS to ensure that we continue to have adequate airtanker capability as we experience elevated wildfire activity in Idaho, Utah, Nevada, Montana, Oregon, Washington, California, and elsewhere in the West,” said Aitor Bidaburu, Chair of NMAC. “Maintaining adequate aerial firefighting capability is critical to provide support to the firefighters on the ground who are working so hard to protect lives, property, and valuable natural and cultural resources from wildfires.”

MAFFS are portable fire retardant delivery systems that can be inserted into military C-130 aircraft to convert them into large airtankers when needed. Military C-130s equipped with MAFFS can drop up to 3,000 gallons of fire retardant on wildfires. They can discharge their entire load in under five seconds or make variable drops.

Airtankers are used in wildfire suppression to deliver fire retardant to reduce the intensity and slow the growth of wildfires so that firefighters on the ground can construct containment lines safely, which is how wildfires are suppressed. Fire retardant is not typically used to suppress wildfires directly. Professional fire managers decide whether to use airtankers to deliver fire retardant, and where to use them, based on the objectives they have established to manage wildfires and the strategies they are using to achieve them. Airtankers are not requested for all wildfires.

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The MAFFS program is a more than 40 yearlong joint effort between the U.S. Forest Service and Department of Defense (DoD). The U.S. Forest Service owns the MAFFS equipment and supplies the retardant, while the DoD provides the C-130 aircraft, flight crews, and maintenance and support personnel to fly the missions.

The role of MAFFS, as outlined in an agreement between the DoD and the U.S. Forest Service, is to provide a “surge” capability that can be used to boost wildfire suppression efforts and maintain adequate initial attack capability when commercial airtankers are fully committed or not readily available. With the MAFFS mobilizations, the U.S. Forest Service currently has up to 24 airtankers available for wildfire suppression, including: 14 Next Generation Airtankers; six Legacy Airtankers; two C-130 MAFFS; and two CV-580s provided through an agreement with the state of Alaska.

The U.S. Forest Service has a total of eight MAFFS systems ready for operational use. Military installations in Wyoming, North Carolina, California, and Colorado provide C-130s to fly MAFFS missions. Specifically, the 153<sup>rd</sup> Airlift Wing, Wyoming Air National Guard, Cheyenne; the 145<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing, North Carolina Air National Guard, Charlotte; the 146<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing, California Air National Guard, Port Hueneme; and the 302<sup>nd</sup> Airlift Wing, Air Force Reserve, Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado.

Over the last 10 years, military C-130s equipped with MAFFS have delivered a total of approximately 9.1 million gallons of retardant on wildfires, an average of about 910,000 gallons per year. Additional information about the MAFFS program is available online at <http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/aviation/airplanes/maffs.HTML>

Each year, an average of approximately 73,000 wildfires burn an average of about 7 million acres of private, state, and federal land in the United States.

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