



**REPORT ON THE JOINT USE OF FEDERAL
FOREST FIRE FIGHTING ASSETS/C-130
FIRE FIGHTING CAPABILITIES**

SUBMITTED IN RESPONSE TO THE
EXPLANATORY STATEMENT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE
ON DEFENSE OF THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS OF THE HOUSE
OF REPRESENTATIVES ON THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2010

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REPORT ON THE JOINT USE OF FEDERAL FOREST FIRE FIGHTING ASSETS/C-130 FIRE FIGHTING CAPABILITIES

PURPOSE

This report responds to the explanatory statement regarding the Department of Defense (DoD) Appropriations Act for 2010 by the Chairman of the Subcommittee on Defense of the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives, which requested a report on the Joint Use of Federal Forest Fire Fighting Assets/C-130 Fire Fighting Capabilities, and provides a formal DoD position on such joint use. The relevant language from the explanatory statement is provided at TAB A.

INTEGRATED WORKING GROUP

As requested in the explanatory statement, an Integrated Working Group (IWG) was formed to coordinate the joint use of Federal forest firefighting assets. The IWG was also used to develop the report. IWG membership included representatives from DoD, including the Office of the Secretary of the Air Force, the Air Force Reserve, and the National Guard Bureau, as well as from the Departments of Agriculture and Interior.

KEY OBSERVATIONS & FINDINGS

The Department of Defense believes that the mission proposed in the explanatory statement is not viable. DoD has critical concerns regarding the additional manpower and financial resources that would be required for the Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard to accomplish this mission in other than a secondary role.

- This proposed mission comes with a significantly increased cost to DoD, as well as to the supported U.S. Government department or agency. This discussion comes at the same time that DoD must find \$100 billion in savings over the next five years to ensure U.S. warfighters continue to have the resources they need to defend the nation now and into the future.
- The Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard would be adversely affected by having to maintain trained and certified aircraft and crews on alert status year-round to meet U.S. Department of Agriculture/ Forest Service (USDAFS) requirements as the nation's primary air tanker fleet.

- There are significant personnel requirements that must be met to achieve these new mission requirements. DoD is currently able to utilize Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve personnel when sourcing National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) requests for Modular Airborne Fire Fighting System (MAFFS)-equipped C-130 aircraft and crew assistance in a supporting role. All part-time Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve personnel would have to volunteer to perform this new mission. Although volunteerism has not been an issue to date with eight aircraft in a supporting role, these new requirements, including additional aircraft, could place significant stress on the force.
- Although current USDAFS procedures normally call for the use of commercial assets first, for this proposed requirement, military assets would replace commercial assets in this new primary air tanker option.
- This primary, year-round requirement is a significant change from the current USDAFS supporting requirement that DoD be prepared to provide eight certified (MAFFS)-equipped C-130 aircraft and crews to arrive not later than 48 hours after the receipt of a NIFC request for assistance.¹
- USDAFS indicated during IWG discussions that DoD aircraft and crews, as the primary large tanker fleet, would have to arrive at a designated location not later than one hour after the request is received from the NIFC. These aircraft also must be available to meet all North American and some international requirements, such as those in Canada and Mexico. These aircraft must be available to meet this requirement 365 days per year. This is a significant change to DoD's current role of providing domestic support only.
- None of the existing analyses developed by the USDAFS or the Department of the Interior specifically point to the best course of action for national fire fighting fleet recapitalization, including the role of DoD.
- There are other options that are proven as effective wildland fire aerial suppression solutions, such as the use of refurbished surplus military aircraft and use of private sector capabilities. The C-130 J Model aircraft only recently began flying over fires in southern California, and the MAFFS II is also a new fire fighting technology.
- DoD has conducted no analyses in the past ten years concerning the recapitalization of the national firefighting fleet.

¹ Although the explanatory statement does not designate a specific number of new C-130 aircraft for the requirement, USDAFS personnel assigned to the IWG stated that 25 aircraft would be an appropriate figure for discussion.

TAB A

CONFERENCE REPORT LANGUAGE

The explanatory statement by the Chairman of the Subcommittee on Defense of the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives, accompanying H.R. 3326, the Department of Defense Appropriations Act of Fiscal Year 2010, which became Public Law 111-118, requested that the Secretary of the Air Force, the Chief of the Air Force Reserve, and the Director of the National Guard Bureau create an Integrated Working Group for the purpose of coordinating the joint use of Federal forest firefighting assets, and submit a report on the joint use of Federal forest firefighting assets. The full text provides:

“The Secretary of the Air Force, the Chief of the Air Force Reserve and the Director of the National Guard Bureau, are directed, within 60 days of enactment of this Act, to create an Integrated Working Group (IWG) in conjunction with the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service (USDAFS) and the Department of the Interior for the purpose of coordinating the joint use of Federal forest firefighting assets, and, within 90 days after formation of the IWG, to submit a report to the congressional defense committees; the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations, Subcommittees on Interior; the House Energy and Commerce Committee and Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, detailing the following:

1. The viability of the Air National Guard, the Air Force Reserve, and the USDAFS to jointly operate a fleet of new C-130s procured for the primary purposes of firefighting duties at the request of the USDAFS, and equipped with the latest proven firefighting technology.
2. Any and all prior analyses done in the past ten years by the Department of the Air Force, the National Guard Bureau or the USDAFS concerning the recapitalization of the national firefighting fleet.
3. A new business case analysis which examines the cost and operational effectiveness of procurement of new C-130 aircraft and joint cooperation between the Department of the Air Force, the National Guard Bureau and the USDAFS for the firefighting mission as compared to the present approach of utilizing the current fleet of aging firefighting aircraft available via commercial operator contracts.
4. Any existing legislative impediments to interagency cooperation and joint operation of a dedicated firefighting fleet by the Department of the Air Force, the National Guard Bureau and the USDAFS.
5. An assessment and accounting of public-private property losses as well as taxpayer expenses spent annually fighting forest and wildfires and how such losses can be mitigated by the described joint firefighting business model with respect to the Department of the Air Force, the National Guard Bureau and the USDAFS.

An interim report shall be submitted to Congress not later than 90 days after enactment of this Act detailing the progress made on the final report.”