



**Francis Marion and Sumter National Forests
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Military Pilots Train For Wildland Firefighting

GREENVILLE, SC Military pilots from across the country will head to the Carolinas later this week for annual training that enables them to assist with wildland firefighting. The Francis Marion and Sumter National Forests are co-hosting the annual “Modular Airborne Fire Fighting System” (MAFFS) training, April 24 through May 1, at the South Carolina Technology and Aviation Center (aka Donaldson Center Industrial Air Park) in Greenville, South Carolina.

During the training up to 400 military pilots, civilian lead plane pilots and support personnel will participate. Military pilots flying C-130 airplanes will conduct up to 80 practice flights per day, dropping water on target sites on national forest lands within North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia.

MAFFS are portable fire retardant delivery systems that can be inserted into military C-130s to convert them into air tankers. Equipped this way, over 3,000 gallons of retardant or water can be dropped on wildfires. To slow the spread of the wildfire, retardant is actually dropped ahead of the burning area. Retardant contains a fertilizer that helps promote new plant growth after fire season. It also contains a bright red color that helps pilots determine the accuracy of their drops.

Trained military units with the MAFFS equipment are available to supplement other firefighting aircraft if needed during periods of high wildfire activity. Over the last ten years, military C-130s equipped with MAFFS systems have dropped a total of approximately 9.1 million gallons of retardant on wildfires, an average of about 910,000 gallons per year.

Military personnel that will participate in the MAFFS training in Greenville include air and ground crews from Wyoming, North Carolina, California and Colorado. Leading the training are MAFFS support specialists and aviators from the USDA Forest Service; U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management and Bureau of Indian Affairs; North Carolina Forest Service; and California Department of Forestry.

For more detailed information, contact Lynn Ballard, USDA Forest Service MAFFS Incident Information Officer, (208) 557-5765 or (208) 313-7737.

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