



# CALIFORNIA WILDFIRES

## 2007 - 2008



# ***CALIFORNIA WILDFIRES, 2007-2008***

An Expanded Chronology of Operations

22 Oct – 26 Nov 2007

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22 Jun – 13 Aug 2008

NORAD and USNORTHCOM

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## **Preface**

During 2007 and 2008 USNORTHCOM responded to requests for assistance to fight wildfires in the state of California. While the command can expect requests for wildland firefighting support from across the United States climatic conditions, residential expansion, and the challenges of terrain resulted in the necessity of Department of Defense support going to California.

This study is an expanded chronology of the daily requests, responses, and actions made and taken during that time. It is intended as a means to orient new members of the command to the unique demands and requirements of USNORTHCOM's mission and to refresh the memories of those who were present.

This is not intended as an after action review, nor a lessons learned product, or a best practices listing. Those have been done by others and several are cited in the footnotes.

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# California Wildfires, 2007-2008

## 2007

USNORTHCOM prepared for the 2007 Wildland Fire Fighting (WFF) season by releasing an Execution Order (EXORD) supporting the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) in April. The EXORD noted that the NIFC relied primarily upon civilian contracted land and air fire fighting capability and would request Department of Defense (DOD) assistance when it had exhausted these primary means. National Guard, Reserve, and Active Duty forces had provided “responsive and reliable wildland fire fighting support for over 30 years” and DOD expected NIFC WFF requests in 2007. The Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff standing Defense Support to Civil Authorities EXORD of 28 Apr 06 provided pre-approved assets that could deploy, upon receipt of a valid Request for Assistance (RFA) from NIFC. NORTHCOM expected the most likely initial RFA would include a request for a Defense Coordinating Officer (DCO) and up to eight Modular Airborne Fire Fighting Systems (MAFFS)-equipped C-130 aircraft with associated crews and mission support. While the CDRUSNORTHCOM anticipated NIFC RFAs at any time during the year, the likelihood of a short-notice RFA would significantly increase during the NIFC-defined fire season of 1 May to 31 October.<sup>1</sup>

By late-October it was appearing increasingly likely that no DOD assets would be requested for the year’s fire season. USNORTHCOM kept an eye on the weather throughout the month and assessed a high fire potential for Southern Alberta on Friday, 19 October, and for west Texas and eastern New Mexico on the 20th. The weather, however, had other ideas. Several large wildfires erupted across Southern California late Saturday, 20 October and early on Sunday, 21 October. The fires rapidly increased in size and intensity due to strong the strong, dry, offshore, and generally northeasterly “Santa Ana” winds blowing across the state as they typically do in late fall. Widespread winds of 30 to 50 mph occurred over the region, with isolated gusts in the mountains to over 80 mph. Along with the high winds, most of the region reported relative humidity in the lower teens and single digits. High winds and very dry conditions were expected to continue at least through Tuesday, 23 October.<sup>2</sup>

## USNORTHCOM Responds

### 22 Oct 07 – Monday

On 22 October California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger asked President Bush, under the provisions of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. § 5121 et seq. (the Stafford Act), to “expeditiously declare an emergency for the State of California.” Governor Schwarzenegger reported over twenty major wildfires in Southern California, burning over 267,000 acres, most of which were less than 20 percent contained. The wildfires caused the loss of human life and serious injuries to emergency personnel and others

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<sup>1</sup> Msg (U), NC, “CDRUSNORTHCOM DSCA EXORD Supporting the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) for Wildland Fire Fighting (WFF) Operations,” 09 1322Z Apr 07.

<sup>2</sup> Slide (U), N-NC, “Weather Details,” 20 Oct 2007; Order (U), FEMA, “Operations Order #06-2007 Southern California Wildfires,” 22 Oct 07.

and damaged or destroyed over 650 homes and numerous businesses and public landmarks. Additionally, tens of thousands of homes, businesses and public facilities were in immediate danger from the wildfires and over 250,000 people had evacuated their homes.<sup>3</sup>



CDRUSNORTHCOM issued his assessment of the fires to the Joint Staff on the same day, noting that a Presidential Declaration was anticipated, and FEMA had requested DCO support. DOD forces provided immediate response: Vandenberg Air Force Base with 29 personnel and 2 fire trucks, Navy Region Southwest provided 40 personnel and 10 fire trucks, while Marine Corps Installations West directed Camp Pendleton and Miramar to establish an Emergency Operations Center. USNORTHCOM directed Army North (ARNORTH) to deploy the FEMA Region IX DCO and supporting Defense Coordinating Element (DCE) to the Pasadena, CA Joint Field Office and the Region X DCO and DCE to the NIFC in Boise, ID, while ARNORTH's Commander's Assessment Element (CAE) was planning to deploy on 23 October. NORTHCOM tasked Air Force North (AFNORTH) to place an Air Component Coordination Element (ACCE) on be prepared to deploy orders and Joint Forces Command (JFCOM) to do the same with the Tier 1 and Tier 2 DSCA forces. USNORTHCOM also coordinated with Transportation Command (TRANSCOM) for airlift in support of the wildfires if needed. NIFC requested six MAFFS for support in Southern California. These aircraft would deploy from Wyoming, Colorado, and North Carolina, and were to be in-place and ready to fly missions by the morning of 24 October.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Ltr (U), Arnold Schwarzenegger to The President, 22 Oct 07.

<sup>4</sup> Msg (U), NC, "OPREP-3PCA USNORTHCOM CDR's Assessment of Southern California Wildfires," 22 0031Z Oct 07.

Helicopter operations began almost immediately. At 0520 PDT on 22 October I Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF) notified the 3rd Marine Air Wing (3d MAW), Camp Pendleton, CA, to place four helicopters (three CH-53 and one CH-46) with buckets and crews on alert in anticipation of aerial fire suppression missions. The MAW maintained helicopters and crews from June 1 to November 30 each year for aerial fire suppression support. However, flight operations could not be conducted from Camp Pendleton due to high winds. The California Department of Fires (CDF) requested Navy aerial fire suppression support at 0800 PDT. Commander, Helicopter Sea Combat Wing notified Helicopter Combat Support Squadron (HSC) 85 to activate the standing Letter of Agreement between the CDF and HSC-85. HSC-85 had fifteen MH-60 helicopters, eight fully trained crews, and five water buckets available. Two HSC-85 crews launched from Naval Air Station North Island, CA at 1230 PDT to support fire suppression missions. The Navy had more helicopters and crews to fly fire suppression missions, but only two CDF Fire Protection fire spotters were available to fly with HSC-85 crews. HSC-85 crews flew a total of four fire suppression missions, dropping 96 buckets.<sup>5</sup>

### **23 Oct 07 – Tuesday**

The wildfire forecast for Southern California for 23 October called for widespread, strong, Santa Ana winds combined with well above normal temperatures and very dry conditions. Several fires had merged and now fifteen fires currently scorched the region and were only about 10 percent contained. While six MAFFS were en-route to Point Mugu/Channel Islands airfield, Navy and Marine Corps helicopters continued to support firefighting efforts.<sup>6</sup> On Tuesday, October 23, two HSC-85 crews flew a total of ten sorties dropping 248 buckets in support of fire suppression missions while 3d MAW flew on-base aerial fire suppression operations in support of the Ammo Horno Fire at Camp Pendleton, as California Department of Forestry (CDF) Fire Protection fire spotters were not required for on-base aerial missions. Off-installation aerial fire suppression missions could not be conducted as no CDF Fire Protection fire spotters were available, but that night the requirement for fire spotters to accompany fire suppression helicopters and coordinate water or retardant drops was waived by the State.<sup>7</sup>

As immediate response assistance operations continued and forces flowed into the region, USNORTHCOM released a Southern California fire EXORD on 23 October. The order tasked JFCOM to identify and place on 24-hour prepare-to-deploy-orders (PTDO) a number of Tier 2 capabilities. These included 8 light or medium helicopters, 4 medium or heavy helicopters, select communications support, planning support teams, a liaison officer communications package, forward surgical team, and a search aircraft capable of conducting imagery and an assessment of the affected area. TRANSCOM was also to identify and place on 24-hour PTDO patient movement capability, and personnel to staff a Joint Deployment and Distribution Operations Center. USNORTHCOM ordered ARNORTH to deploy the Region IX DCO/DCE to Pasadena in anticipation of the FEMA Joint Field Office (JFO) stand-up and the Region X DCO/DCE to the NIFC. The EXORD also authorized ARNORTH to deploy the CAE to co-

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<sup>5</sup> Info Paper (FOUO), NC, "Department of Defense Aviation Support to Southern California Fire Suppression Operations Helicopter Support, 29 Oct 07.

<sup>6</sup> Brfg (U/FOUO), N-NC, "Current Operations: California Wildfires," 23 Oct 07.

<sup>7</sup> Info Paper (FOUO), NC, "Department of Defense Aviation Support to Southern California Fire Suppression Operations Helicopter Support," 29 Oct 07.



locate with the JFO and be prepared to deploy an Operation Command Post (OCP) to Pasadena within 48 hours in order to provide command and control of Title 10 forces. AFNORTH was to assume tactical control (TACON) of the MAFFS while the services were tasked to deploy their FEMA Region IX Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers (EPLOs) and be prepared to provide requested installations to serve as FEMA Operational Staging Areas (FOSA), Base Support Installations (BSI), or mobilization centers.<sup>8</sup>

By the end of the day the situation was becoming clearer and NORTHCOM's ability to support was increasing. FEMA had activated the JFO with Mike Hall as the designated Federal Coordinating Officer (FCO). FEMA had 21 shelters open, occupied by 13,082 evacuees and was pushing supplies from the FEMA logistics center at Moffett Federal Airfield, near San Jose, CA. The fires had burnt approximately 330,000 acres, damaged 1,350 structures, and threatened 75,250 more, but only one death was accountable to the fires. DCO Region X COL Gary Stanley was at Boise, ID with four personnel in his DCE and was linked with NIFC. The NIFC RFAs received for the DCO/DCE at NIFC and six C-130 MAFFS were in execution. NIFC was reporting no requirement for ground fire fighting units from DOD. DCO Region IX COL Mark Armstrong had arrived at the JFO in Pasadena with six members of his DCE and four EPLOs and would link up with the FCO upon his arrival. FEMA mission assignments received for the DCO/DCE at Pasadena and use of March Air Reserve Base (ARB), CA as a FOSA were already in execution, as was the vocal order (VOCO) mission assignment for cots to Qualcomm stadium and other shelters. VADM (Ret) Johnson, FEMA Director, had 'VOCO'd' mission assignments for Full Motion Video (FMV) and Mobile Aeromedical Staging Facility (MASF) to facilitate anticipated patient movement requirements, which Gen Renuart 'VOCO'd' execution. Fleet Forces Command (FFC) took the P-3 FMV and Rover download site to support the California Office of Emergency Services (OES) and FEMA JFO for action. The NORTHCOM Surgeon took the MASF requirement for action, in coordination with USJFCOM, military services, and USTRANSCOM.<sup>9</sup>

The ARNORTH CAE of 15 personnel led by MG Tom Matthews (USAR) was to deploy from Lackland AFB to Pasadena, but was delayed due to C-130 maintenance and was expected to depart late that night. CDRUSNORTHCOM was evaluating movement of OCP II with approximately 60 personnel via two C-17s from Lackland AFB, TX, to March ARB, CA, on 24 October and looking at decision points to move the OCP, establish it as a Joint Task Force (JTF), and establish a Joint Area of Operations (JOA) for Title 10 forces. If required, the JTF Commander could be the CAE Commander until the OCP arrived and the JOA would likely incorporate the 7 affected counties of San Diego, San Bernardino, Riverside, Orange, LA County, Santa Barbara, and Ventura. FFC reported its two MH-60 helicopters flew in support of immediate response and flew two SH-60 helicopters for 5.7 hours with Forward Looking Infrared Radar (FLIR) in support of firefighters. FFC also had 13 fire trucks with 59 personnel supporting immediate response, one Navy EPLO (NEPLO) deployed to San Diego, and 4 additional NEPLOs en-route to JFO. FFC had postured one P-3 with Full Motion Video, four heavy lift helos, and one combat camera team on 24 hour PTDO. CDRUSNORTHCOM called the P-3 forward for FMV and combat camera to provide imagery of MAFFS employment.

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<sup>8</sup> Msg (U/FOUO), NC, "USNORTHCOM Southern California Wildland Fire EXORD (Oct 07)," 23 0700Z Oct 07 (info used is Unclassified).

<sup>9</sup> Rpt (U), NC, "Operational Update," 23 Oct 07.

AFNORTH was preparing to deploy an ACCE of eight personnel led by Brig Gen Tarter to co-locate with ARNORTH OCP at March ARB and would deploy two liaison officers to support MAFFS flight operations at Point Mugu/Channel Islands. AFNORTH was also working with Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and California officials to ensure airspace coordination and integration of Global Hawk Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) coverage. Marine Forces North (MARFORNORTH) reported Marine Corps assets were assisting firefighting efforts on Camp Pendleton with three CH-53s and one CH-46 flown. MARFORNORTH had 12 Marine EPLOs assigned across the area of operations at key nodes and I MEF reported having one Infantry Battalion certified to NIFC standards in fire fighting operations, as well as all helicopter aircrews certified to NIFC standards.<sup>10</sup>

MAFFS continued to arrive at Naval Air Weapons Station (NAWS) Point Mugu/Channel Islands Air National Guard Base. The 302nd Air Wing, Air Force Reserve, Peterson AFB, CO sent two MAFFS (#5 and #2) to Channel Islands with a third support C-130. The 145th Air Wing, NC Air National Guard, deployed MAFFS #8 and #7 with one support C-130. The 153rd Air Wing, WY Air National Guard, had MAFFS #1 on the ground at Channel Islands, but MAFFS #3 was down for maintenance at Cheyenne, WY. Estimated time of return to operations was unknown, with flight expected no earlier than 1000 PDT, Wednesday, 24 October. The 153d also had one support C-130 en-route to Channel Islands with an estimated time of arrival as 2000 PDT. The earliest missions could be scheduled for Wednesday, 24 October at 1300 PDT as the teams were waiting for NIFC personnel arrive at the MAFFS location.<sup>11</sup>

## **24 Oct 07 – Wednesday**

Wednesday began with a Major Disaster Declaration for Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, Santa Barbara, and Ventura counties. By this time 11 major fires had burned 417,983 acres. DHS/FEMA was deploying teams and commodities, while coordinating the federal response effort. FEMA had several issues outstanding, including post-fire air quality and housing. In a rare piece of good news requirements for firefighters and equipment had been reduced. Potential patient movement from threatened health care facilities remained as an issue, which FEMA reported DOD was positioned to fulfill. Finally, FEMA released three mission assignments (MA) on 24 Oct for DOD. One ended a requirement to transport support vehicles and personnel from Texas to California and another covered the ongoing delivery of 10,000 cots (on loan) to the Qualcomm Shelter, Del Mar Shelter, and other shelters as requested. The third was to provide remote sensing imagery support using available platforms for the Grass Valley Fire, Witch Fire, and Poomacha Fire on a non-reimbursable basis. Products were to be provided to the FEMA JFO Pasadena, CA and FEMA NRC, Washington DC.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Rpt (U), NC, "Operational Update," 23 Oct 07.

<sup>11</sup> Rpt (U), NC, "Operational Update," 23 Oct 07.

<sup>12</sup> Rpt (U), FEMA, "California-FEMA-1731-DR-Wildfires," 24 Oct 07; Brfg (U), FEMA, "Southern California Wildfires – FEMA-1731-DR," 24 Oct 07; MA (U), FEMA, "3279EM-CA-DOD-03," 24 Oct 07; MA (U), FEMA, "3279EM-CA-DOD-04," 24 Oct 07; MA (U), FEMA, "1731DR-CA-DOD-01," 24 Oct 07.



With the Presidential Declaration the Joint Staff (JS) released its EXORD. DOD would support DHS/FEMA and the NIFC in operations in Southern California to augment local, state, and federal disaster response capabilities. The order designated USNORTHCOM as the supported command which would provide assistance as requested and approved by Sec Def and accept and exercise OPCON of deploying DOD forces and equipment, except for USTRANSCOM forces, which would only be TACON. NORTHCOM was also to conduct joint reception staging, onward movement, and integration (JRSOI) of forces in the JOA. JFCOM, TRANSCOM, PACOM, STRATCOM, and SOCOM were designated as supporting commands to NORTHCOM and were tasked to be prepared to provide personnel, units, equipment, airlift, and/or other support as requested. JS also released a modification (MOD) to its EXORD later on the 24th, which had JFCOM transfer OPCON to NORTHCOM a U-2 and a RQ-4 Global Hawk for seven days or until mission completion to provide imagery. Within 90 minutes JFCOM released a MOD to its 23 Oct Base Order transferring OPCON of the requested aircraft, which would fly from Beale AFB, CA. JFCOM also deployed four public affairs personnel to NORTHCOM to assist in planning and strategic communications development.<sup>13</sup>

JFCOM's actions answered part of one of USNORTHCOM's request for forces (RFF) messages. RFF 001 requested Combat Camera capability, 002 two 15-personnel JRSOI teams, 003 the Global Hawk and a Civil Authority Information Support Element (CAISE), and 004 a Public Affairs Detachment (PAD), seven additional Rover systems, a Tactical Communications Data Link (TCDL), and another Combat Camera that was qualified to accompany MAFFS flights. NORTHCOM also released MOD 1 to its EXORD, establishing the Joint Operating

<sup>13</sup> Msg (U), JS, "JOINT STAFF EXORD 08-01," 24 0210Z Oct 07; Msg (U), JS, "MOD 1 TO EXORD 08-01," 24 2107Z Oct 07; Msg (U), JFC, "CDRUSJFCOM MOD 001 TO SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA WILDFIRES," 24 2245Z Oct 07; Msg (U), JFC, "DEPLOYMENT OF THE USJFCOM JOINT ENABLING CAPABILITY PACKAGE ISO USNORTHCOM," 24 2009Z Oct 07.



Area, placing two Theater Sustainment teams, one Combat Camera, one Critical Care Air Transport Team (CCATT), four heavy and eight medium helicopters on prepare to deploy orders (PTDO). The MOD ordered the deployment of the Mobile Aeroevacuation Staging Facility (MASF), ARNORTH's OCP 2 and CAE, and AFNORTH's ACCE. It tasked FFC to establish a Joint Forces Maritime Component Commander (JFMCC) for the JOA and provide a P-3 for Incident Assessment and Awareness (IAA) and Full Motion Video (FMV). The EXORD also included the Commander's Communications Strategy to reassure public confidence in Federal and DOD capabilities and inform public, state, and local authorities and designated March ARB as FOSA and BSI.<sup>14</sup>

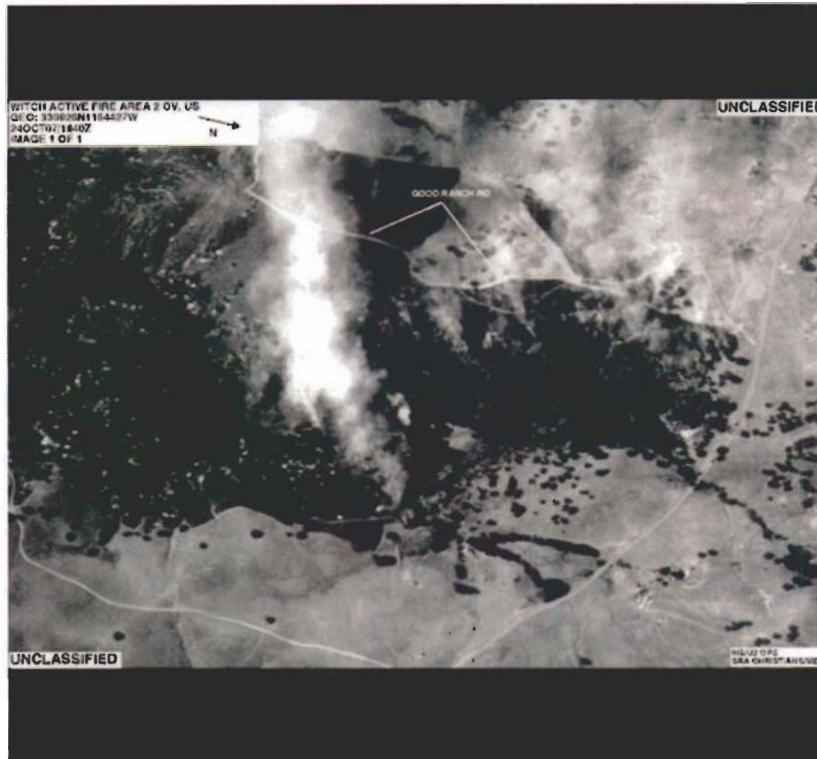


The Santa Ana winds that had driven the fires were expected to gradually decrease during Wednesday, but this increased the potential for erratic wind behavior, local fire-induced winds, and wind reversals. With warm and dry conditions, single digit humidity, and no significant precipitation in the forecast for the next ten days or more, NORTHCOM and FEMA remained concern about the ability to detect, locate, and report on fire conditions. With FEMA releasing the MA for full motion video and JFCOM and FFC providing the assets, NORTHCOM released an EXORD for full motion video to support incident assessment and awareness. The order tasked AFNORTH to develop a collection deck, based upon commander's guidance, which would be passed to local, state, and federal responders through ARNORTH's communication equipment. USNORTHCOM also expected FEMA to request medical evacuation support. The NORTHCOM Medical Operations Cell (MOC) was tracking multiple assets enroute to March ARB on PTDO status, including a Mobile Aeromedical Staging Facility (MASF), an Aeromedical Evacuation Liaison Team (AELT), and other Aeromedical Evacuation assets.

<sup>14</sup> Msg (U/FOUO), NC, "RFF 001," 23 1141Z Oct 07; Msg (U/FOUO), NC, "RFF 002," 24 0348Z Oct 07; Msg (U/FOUO), NC, "RFF 003," 24 0455Z Oct 07; Msg (U/FOUO), NC, "RFF 004," 24 1505Z Oct 07; Msg (U/FOUO), NC, "EXORD MOD 1," 24 0532Z Oct 07.



While there was no National Disaster Medical System (NDMS) support for the MASF nor any requests or rumors of potential requests for patient movement support, DOD medical resources were leaning forward as far as possible and the Department of Health and Human Services was “happy” with the existent preparations.<sup>15</sup>



U-2 Imagery of the Witch Fire, 24 Oct 07

ARNORTH released Fragmentary Order (FRAGO) number 2 to its OPORD on 24 Oct, transferring OPCON of the CAE to USNORTHCOM upon arrival at JFO Pasadena and tasking it to provide recommendations on transferring OPCON of Title 10 forces conducting operations under Immediate Response Authority to NORTHCOM. DCO Region IX was tasked to receive TACON of two JRSOI teams and a Combat Camera team upon arrival, but transfer TACON to OCP 2 upon its arrival, as the FRAGO tasked it to deploy. This was welcome news to the Region IX DCO at JFO Pasadena who had his hands full fully supporting the local, state, and federal authorities, coordinating a FMV link to FEMA and the state, improving situation awareness and communications with the JFO, accurately tracking the Title 10 response, and establishing effective liaison with the CAE and then OCP. The Region X DCO at NIFC in Boise, ID, reported at the start of the day that MAFFS operations were on track, that NIFC did not anticipate a request for DOD ground forces and would only process a RFA for USMC rotary wing assets assigned to 3d MAW, Miramar, CA, if requested by authorities in Southern

<sup>15</sup> Slide (U), N-NC, “Southern California Wildfire Synopsis,” 24 Oct 07; Msg (U), NC, “FMV IAA EXORD” 24 1903Z Oct 07; Notes (U), NC/J7, “Observation: Medical Operation Cell (MOC),” 24 Oct 07.

California. DCO Region X closed out his 24 Oct report stating that NIFC had no other shortfalls based on existing resource requests.<sup>16</sup>

FFC released an order on 24 Oct deploying a Navy Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officer (NEPLO) to ARNORTH's headquarters to report requests for Navy support. Meanwhile 3d MAW continued on-installation aerial fire suppression missions. The wing took delivery of four additional water buckets from East Coast installations, making a total of eight buckets available for aerial firefighting. Fire suppression efforts remained focused on Camp Pendleton, CA. A Navy P-3 did provide seven hours of FMV coverage on the 24th; the next mission was scheduled 1600 MDT, 25 Oct.<sup>17</sup>

AFNORTH released two orders on the 24th. One was a DEPOD for the ACCE to the JFO Pasadena to serve as the direct representative of the Joint Forces Air Component Commander (JFACC)/Commander, AFNORTH in support of the wildfires. The other was an EXORD supporting the NIFC by establishing the 153d Air Expeditionary Group (AEG) under COL Stephen Rader at Boise, ID that would exercise TACON over Title 10 air expeditionary forces and coordinating authority over Title 32 forces. The MAFFS would remain as air expeditionary squadrons at Point Mugu under the 153 AEG. And the MAFFS got into the action on the 24th, as required in the original NIFC RFA. The Forest Service put Tanker Base Operations on-line at 1300 PST and dispatched five MAFFS aircraft to the Stable Fire near Camp Pendleton. All were diverted en-route and eventually dropped one load each on the Poomacha Fire.<sup>18</sup>



MAFFS Fire Situation Brief, 24 Oct 07



MAFFS Launch Order, 24 Oct 07

<sup>16</sup> Msg (U), ARNORTH, "FRAGO 2 TO OPORD," 24 1300Z Oct 07; Rpt (U), DCO Region IX, "Blue 4 (DCO Daily Status)," 24 Oct 07; Rpt (U), DCO NIFC, [sitrep], 24 Oct 07.

<sup>17</sup> Msg (U), FFC, "NEPLO DEPOD," 24 1900Z Oct 07; Info Paper (FOUO), NC, "Department of Defense Aviation Support to Southern California Fire Suppression Operations Helicopter Support," 29 Oct 07; Paper (U), NC, "CDR Talking Points for 25 Oct CA Trip," 25 Oct 07.

<sup>18</sup> Msg (U), AFNORTH, "DEPOD FOR ACCE," 24 0130Z Oct 07; Msg (U), AFNORTH, "WFF EXORD," 24 0027Z Oct 07; Msg (U) 153 AEG-WFF (P), "SITREP 001," 24 0100Z Oct 07.





MAFFS #2 Poomacha Fire Drop,  
Final Approach, 24 Oct 07



MAFFS #5 Poomacha Fire Drop, 24 Oct 07

## 25 Oct 07 – Thursday



By the morning of 25 Oct, 18 fires were currently active in Southern California, 12 of which were listed as priority fires. Diminishing winds would have a positive impact on the fire fighting activities during the day. The California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (CA OES) reported approximately 459,877 acres burned and more than 2,300 structures damaged or destroyed. The State reported one fatality as a direct result of the fire and 45 injuries. FEMA

reported an estimated 321,000 evacuees from the affected area and 54 shelters open with over 19,000 occupants.<sup>19</sup>

FEMA did release a mission assignment tasking DOD and USNORTHCOM to conduct full motion video flights in support of the California Wildfires, using U-2, Global Hawk, or P-3. The imagery would be provided at no cost to all parties – local, state and federal – involved in the response to Presidential Major Disaster Declaration. FEMA also issued another MA to provide FMV and high altitude still images of the Grass Valley Fire, Witch Fire, and Poomacha Fire in order to conduct incident awareness and assessment and also plan for emergency response and recovery, but it soon canceled this requirement. At the day's Command Coordination Board (CCB) the DCO Region IX noted FMV was requiring lots of attention from his end, so much it was "almost distracting." CA OES feedback through the state's National Guard was that they had no desire or need for DOD FMV.<sup>20</sup>

The Joint Staff released MOD 2 on the 25th. This provided a combat camera team from the Air Force to NORTHCOM. It also authorized NORTHCOM to provide strategic patient movement planning support to FEMA. The planning would encompass aircraft, equipment, and personnel for movement of patients from the San Diego, CA area to other locations. USTRANSCOM was to provide subject matter expertise as requested. U.S. Army Forces Command (FORSCOM) deployed additional PA assistance to OCP from Fort Hood, TX while PACOM identified, sourced, and placed on 24-hour PTDO helicopters, aircraft, combat camera teams, and an infantry battalion in order to be prepared to answer requests from NORTHCOM. STRATCOM too issued a warning order (WARNORD) for its components and task forces to identify capabilities and forces to support NORTHCOM requests.<sup>21</sup>

USNORTHCOM released MOD 2 to its fire fighting EXORD on 25 Oct. The order noted the approval of an MA for preliminary planning and support for strategic patient movement and a verbal RFA from the FEMA Deputy Administrator to deploy the MASF off of March ARB to support movement preparations. The MOD deployed four more Rover Teams and directed ARNORTH to be prepared to establish a Joint Forces Land Component Command and a JTF, and propose a command and control structure. DCO Region IX was tasked to assume the responsibility as Joint Force Commander in the JOA and accept TACON of ground forces. Finally, the order tasked the Air Force to provide Channel Islands Air National Guard Base as a FOSA in support of FEMA Region IX.<sup>22</sup>

General Renuart visited the JOA on the 25th, visiting both the JFO in Pasadena, where he met with President Bush, and the MAFFs base at Point Mugu. He departed Peterson AFB, CO armed with a set of talking points. CDRUSNORTHCOM emphasized that the command was supporting both fire fighting and emergency management in support of, and in coordination with, all levels of government. NORTHCOM was supporting the Department of the Interior and NIFC

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<sup>19</sup> Slide (U), DHS/NOC, "Multiple Wildfires – Los Angeles – San Diego, CA," 25 Oct 07.

<sup>20</sup> MA (U), FEMA, "1731DR-CA-DOD-02," 25 Oct 07; MA (U), FEMA, "1731DR-CA-DOD-04," 25 Oct 07; Notes (U), NC, "Meeting Notes," 25 Oct 07.

<sup>21</sup> Msg (U), JS, "MOD 2 TO EXORD 08-01," 25 1613Z Oct 07; Msg (U), FORSCOM, "DEPLOYORD," 25 Oct 07; Msg (U), PACOM, "DEPORD," 25 0501Z Oct 07; Msg (U), STRATCOM, "WARNORD IN SUPPORT OF USNORTHCOM MOD 1," 25 1900Z Oct 07.

<sup>22</sup> Msg (U/FOUO), NC, "EXORD MOD 2," 25 0352Z Oct 07.



in fighting fires with six C-130 MAFFS from the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve with accompanying command and control capability that were conducting missions in Los Angeles County. A Navy P-3 was providing FMV to the state to better monitor, track and prioritize the fire fighting response. NORTHCOM had command and control elements at the Point Mugu tanker base, the Pasadena Joint Federal Office, and NIFC to synchronize and integrate all DOD efforts with state, local, and federal responders. Local military bases were providing immediate response and mutual aid to civil authorities with over 20 trucks and nearly 100 fire fighting personnel and five aircraft remained on standby to move more NIFC fire fighters into the region if needed.<sup>23</sup>



USNORTHCOM was also supporting FEMA and other Federal Agencies in emergency management. It was supporting state and local evacuation efforts by providing approximately 10,000 cots, blankets, food, water and other necessities to numerous shelters and was attempting to anticipate state requirements with two Combat Camera teams at Pasadena and NAS North Island and one Public Affairs Augmentation Team at Pasadena. Three command and control helicopters would be available no later than NLT 31 Oct and a Mobile Aeromedical Staging Facility was ready at March ARB, CA. Four Rover Teams were deployed to support streaming video from airborne assets. Joint Task Force Civil Support (JTF-CS) had a Joint Planning and Augmentation Cell (JPAC) in route to Sacramento, CA to support JTF CA and were expected to arrive that day. DOD assets had been affected by the fires. Some 2,200 Navy and Marine Corp members and their families had evacuated four housing areas to adjacent DOD facilities, 40 aircraft had relocated from Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, and three fires had consumed 7,500 acres at Camp Pendleton, one fire was contained, but one housing area reported fire damage. The National Guard, in Title 32 or State Active Duty status, was providing tremendous support to the state and USNORTHCOM actions were fully coordinated with the National Guard and state assets. Such a unified effort in collaboration with DHS, FEMA, and the National Guard was unprecedented.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Paper (U), NC, "CDR Talking Points for 25 Oct CA Trip," 25 Oct 07.

<sup>24</sup> Paper (U), NC, "CDR Talking Points for 25 Oct CA Trip," 25 Oct 07.

To support the potential JTF in Southern California ARNORTH issued a RFF on 25 Oct. The request was for three (two primary, one back-up) dedicated command and control helicopters with aircrew and maintenance personnel to allow the JTF commander the ability to conduct aerial command and control as well as conducting assessments of the incident site. The CAE, now reporting directly to NORTHCOM, was in position at the JFO by the 25th. The CAE was joined with the ACCE and efforts were underway to provide full motion video capability. CAE members attended the DCO shift change briefing to gain situational awareness upon arrival and held a brief meeting with the FCO, Mr. Hall. With the deployment of the OCP, the CAE would become OCP-FWD (forward) at the JFO, operating with the ACCE, while the OCP-MAIN would establish operations at March ARB.<sup>25</sup>

DCO Region IX and his DCE continued to provide support. The DCE established effective coordination and communication with the CAE and ACCE on site at the JFO and OCP at March ARB. The DCO had fully coordinated within the JFO and now recommend redeployment of the MASF. Bob Fenton, Deputy FCO, also provided the same recommendation to the USNORTHCOM FEMA LNO. On the 25th the DCE had successfully identified the firefighting priorities where FMV was desired and designed a prioritized dissemination plan for the FMV products throughout the state from field, state and federal level, providing details to key leaders on how to access the FMV products for evaluation. The DCO felt the coordinated response activities were having a positive effect and the likelihood for significant DOD resources was reduced; however, the DCE remained vigilant to anticipate requirements.<sup>26</sup>



<sup>25</sup> Msg (U//FOUO), ARNORTH, "RFF #004," 25 0215Z Oct 07; Rpt (U), NC/CAE-SOCAL, "INITIAL ENTRY REPORT (CAE)," 24 2359Z Oct 07.

<sup>26</sup> Rpt (U), DCO Region IX, "Blue 4 DCO IX Daily Status," 25 2100U Oct 07.



The NIFC DCO reported coordinating with the Southern California Geographical Area Coordination Center (GACC) to position an LNO there on 25 Oct. , Based on the 100 Type-2 crews (equivalent to 4 battalions) available, NIFC did not anticipate a request for DOD ground forces at the time. If requested by the Southern Area GACC, NIFC would process an RFA for both USMC helicopters assigned to 3d MAW at Miramar, CA and USAR assets assigned to the 801st Engineering Company. However, NIFC had no other shortfalls based on existing resource requests. The 153 AEG reported on 25 Oct that MAFFS aircraft made 19 drops on two separate incidents. Twelve drops occurred on the Poomacha Fire and seven drops on the Witch Fire. All aircraft returned to base fully mission capable. General Renuart, CDRUSNORTHCOM, LTGEN Blum, NGB, MGEN Lucas, CAANG, Congressman Elton Gallegly, and CAPT Brad Connors NAWS Point Mugu commander all visited the MAFFS operation on the 25th. The crews anticipated another full day of operations on the 26th.<sup>27</sup>

## 26 Oct 07 – Friday



On Friday, 26 Oct, nine fires remained active throughout Southern California, although all were at least 30% contained and several were 60-80% contained. The California Governor's Office of Emergency Services reported 487,873 acres had burned, 2,098 structures had been destroyed, 424 structures damaged, 21,450 structures threatened, 4,512 sheltered within 41 facilities, 7 deaths, and 61 injuries. The long range forecast indicated diminishing Santa Ana winds with seasonal temperatures, but no rain. FEMA continued to use March ARB as a staging area to park trailers, but requested on the 26th to use a small building with phone lines for operations, a dedicated gate for trucks to access the site, and material handling equipment as

<sup>27</sup> Msg (U), NIFC DCO, "[sitrep]," 25 0400Z Oct 07; Msg (U), 153 AEG-WFF, "SITREP 003," 25 0100Z Oct 07.

required. FEMA also cancelled an MA for NORTHCOM to conduct preliminary planning for strategic patient movement, but planned to recreate the request later with more detail.<sup>28</sup>

The Joint Staff deployed more forces into the JOA and placed several units on 24-hour PTDO during the day. JFCOM was to deploy a mobile tactical data link ground station and a Public Affairs Detachment to March ARB and place a Civil Authority Information Support Element from a Tactical Psyops company on 24-hour PTDO. The National Guard Bureau (NGB) was to place two JRSOI Teams from the 167th Theater Support Command on a 24-hour PTDO. SOCOM put a mobile print section on a 24-hour PTDO.<sup>29</sup>

USNORTHCOM released MOD 3 to the EXORD on 26 Oct, deploying more support to OCP 2; a six person media operations team from JFCOM, three utility light or medium lift helicopters from PACOM, and a JPAC from JTF-CS. Further, ARNORTH was to establish as the JFLCC for Southern California Firefighting Operations. NORTHCOM was also considering future operations and plans including synchronization of future planning with a FEMA operational planning unit and developing triggers to return to normal operations. The command was assessing MASF redeployment, but needed FEMA concurrence from VADM Johnson. It was also assessing transition from Immediate Response to DSCA operations for those DOD assets from bases currently fighting fires.<sup>30</sup>

By the morning of the 26th the CAE reported very little activity regarding requests for assistance concerning use of DOD assets, although dialogue and planning continue at the DCO and OCP levels. Due to this the CAE recommended terminating the CAE effort and returning selected personnel to OCP 2 at March ARB. A small command element would remain at the JFO to continue close coordination and liaison with DCO Region IX and the FCO. Should conditions change that result in significant DOD assets deploying in support of FEMA efforts, the command element would move to the OCP. For this same reason DCO Region IX I had begun the process of looking at transition trigger points and timelines by 26 Oct. While the DCO/DCE was still prepared to surge should conditions take a turn for the worse, it appeared that additional requests for significant DOD support were unlikely. The DCO was prepared to conduct a "Battle Handoff" for command and control of Title 10 ground forces in the JOA to Commander, OCP2.<sup>31</sup>

The NIFC DCO reported a cooling trend and an increase in humidity caused the potential for large fires to decrease across the region on Friday. The potential for large fires would increase once again over the weekend and into the early next week as temperatures become well above normal and humidity became very low. High Risk Days were not anticipated because the winds would only be light offshore. The NIFC DCO expected initial attacks would decrease through Friday and then increase across weekend through early the next week, but the MAFFs were now fully integrated into the firefight. The 153 AEG reported the MAFFS aircraft made 16

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<sup>28</sup> Brfg (U) FEMA, "Southern California Wildfires – FEMA-DR-1731-CA," 26 Oct 07; MA (U), FEMA, "1731DR-CA-DOD-05," 26 Oct 07; MA (U), FEMA, "3279EM-CA-DOD-05," 26 Oct 07.

<sup>29</sup> Msg (U), JS, "EXORD 08-01.3," 26 1930Z Oct 07; Msg (U), JS, "EXORD 08-01.4," 26 1940Z Oct 07.

<sup>30</sup> Msg (U), NC, "EXORD MOD 3," 26 0420Z Oct 07; Paper (U/FOUO), NC, "Commander Talking Points," 26 Oct 07.

<sup>31</sup> Msg (U), CAE, "CAE Situation Report," 26 0200Z Oct 07; Rpt (U) DCO Region IX, "Blue 4 Region IX DCO Daily Status," 26 2100 Oct 07.



drops on the Poomacha Fire during the day, having flown 38 sorties since starting operations two days prior, with 40 drops for a total of 108,105 gallons. A communication connectivity problem between the AEG and the tanker base was handled by personnel from the Idaho ANG. All in all, “it was another productive day for MAFFS Operations today.”<sup>32</sup>

## 27 Oct 07 – Saturday

By Saturday the winds died down, the temperature dropped, and humidity increased, making conditions conducive for fighting fires, most of which were at least 30% contained. The increasingly steady-state operation was reflected in FEMA’s MAs for the day. FEMA requested DOD representation at the Multi-Agency Coordination Center as decisions were being made without DOD consult. FEMA also requested to extend the use of March ARB to 27 Dec and officially requested DOD, at the direction of and in coordination with Health and Human Services (HHS), to provide transportation support to move hospitalized NDMS patients in a 48-hour window after operations begin from air evacuation hubs as designated by HHS to patient reception medical facilities. The movement was to begin upon request of the State of California and end upon completion of mission of transporting patients.<sup>33</sup>



USNORTHCOM released MOD 4 to the EXORD on 27 Oct. The order tasked JFCOM to deploy a media operations team and a mobile tactical data link to March ARB and a Public Affairs Detachment to NAS North Island. JTF-CS was to deploy a Public Affairs Officer to the JFO in Pasadena, a planning team to Joint Force Headquarters California in Sacramento, and a JPAC to March ARB. With establishment of ARNORTH as the JFLCC, DCO Region IX was to transfer command and control.<sup>34</sup>

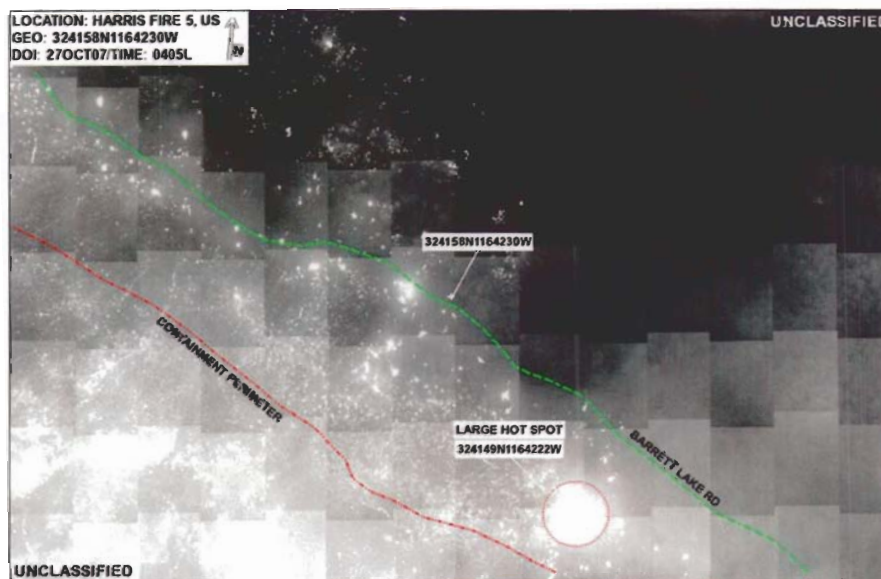
<sup>32</sup> Msg (U), NIFC DCO, “[sitrep],” 26 0400Z Oct 07; Msg (U), 153 AEG-WFF, “SITREP 004,” 27 0400Z Oct 07.

<sup>33</sup> Slide (U), N-NC, “Weather Details,” 27 Oct 07; MA (U), FEMA, “1731DR-DA-DOD-06,” 27 Oct 07; MA (U), FEMA, “1731DR-CA-DOD-05,” 27 Oct 07; MA (U), FEMA, “1731DR-CA-DOD-07,” 27 Oct 07.

<sup>34</sup> Msg (U/FOUO), NC, “EXORD MOD 4,” 27 0450Z Oct 07.

The establishment of ARNORTH as JFLCC altered command relations in the JOA. ARNORTH assumed OPCON of the CAE, which augmented OCP2. CDRARNORTH assumed responsibilities as Joint Force Commander (JFC) in the JOA and would take command and control of Title 10 forces after battle handover with DCO Region IX, who would keep TACON only of his DCE, EPLOs, and augments. CDROCP2 would become Deputy JFC with TACON of all other forces after a battle handover with the JFC. He was also to prepare to redeploy the MASF.<sup>35</sup>

DCO Region IX transferred command and control to the OCP at 0930 on the 27th, but remained postured to provide support, while continuing future planning for the re-deployment of the DCE. He noted that there continued to be growing interest in FMV, particularly live feed. He was also working with the Deputy FCO to work out an arrangement for the reimbursement for Task Force Bulldozer. TF Bulldozer consisted of 16 vehicles and 41 personnel formed by Commander Navy Region Southwest at MCAS Miramar to complete CAL Fire training 25-26 Oct. The commander anticipated a potential RFA from San Diego civil authorities. On 27 Oct TF Bulldozer deployed to El Cajon under Immediate Response to cut fire breaks for three to four days, but no RFA had been received. MAFFS aircraft made two drops on the Poomacha Fire in on the 27th. A third MAFFS aircraft had an inadvertent dump of retardant during takeoff. No further launch orders were issued for the day.<sup>36</sup>



Global Hawk Infrared Imagery of the Harris Fire, 27 Oct 07

## 28 Oct 07 – Sunday

After a week of fighting the fires, the situation now appeared well in hand. FEMA cancelled its MA for patient movement, prompting NORTHCOM to release the MASF. The

<sup>35</sup> Msg (U/FOUO), ARNORTH, "FRAGO 5 to OPORD 1," 21 1220Z Oct 07.

<sup>36</sup> Rpt (U), DCO Region IX, "Blue 4 (DCO Daily Status)," 27 2100 Oct 07; Slide (U/FOUO), N-NC, "Task Force Bulldozer," 27 Oct 07; Msg (U), 153 AEG-WFF, "SITREP 005," 28 0400Z Oct 07.

command also released PACOM and JFCOM Tier II DSCA forces from their 24-hour PTDO on the 28th. However, with OCP2 now in control of Title 10 forces, NORTHCOM requested joint manning document individual augments (IAs) to provide critical skills and specialties not resident in ARNORTH's staff.<sup>37</sup>

Firefighting efforts went on, however. The MAFFS aircraft were launched immediately following the morning briefings. They made 24 drops on the Poomacha Fire, the record flying day for the week.<sup>38</sup>

## **NORTHCOM Stands Down**

### **29 Oct 07 – Monday**

By the second Monday of the fires, weather conditions continued to be favorable for fire fighting with an onshore flow expected for the first half of the week with cooler temperatures, higher humidity, increased clouds with areas of welcome drizzle. California reported 23 wildfires had burned over 500,000 acres with 6 fires still active. Containment of all fires was anticipated by 31 Oct and they were expected to be extinguished by 5 Nov. NORTHCOM's support continued. Twenty-one IAA sorties producing 16,491 images had already been flown and while the U-2 and P-3 were not scheduled to fly on the 29th the Air Force Global Hawk, NASA Predator, and National Guard RC-26 all had windows for the day. Yet, with the fires increasingly under control USNORTHCOM began to release more assets. FFC reported standing down the Immediate Response helicopters, as USTRANSCOM alert aircraft stood down. TF Bulldozer was mission complete and redeploying, JTF-CS JPAC was mission complete and redeploying, and the MASF had closed upon home station. PACOM stood down the eight utility light or medium lift helicopters, but kept four medium/heavy lift helicopters on a 24-hour leash. The three helicopters deployed to support OCP2 were redeployed back to PACOM, but returned to a 24-hour PTDO. NORTHCOM MOD 6 tasked the JFLCC, in accordance with the JFO and OCP2, to provide recommended triggers for release of forces based upon accomplishment of FEMA mission assignments and the NIFC DCO reported that while areas of uncertainty remained, such as the Poomacha Fire, remained, NIFC indicated that if current trends continued MAFFS redeployment could be expected within the next 7-10 days. However, the commander reiterated that NORTHCOM was committed to completion of all assigned support tasks and would not leave "a moment too soon."<sup>39</sup>

### **30-31 Oct 07 – Tuesday-Wednesday**

On 30 Oct the Joint Staff deactivated its Crisis Action Team (CAT) established for the wildfires. It also denied NORTHCOM's RFF 005, the request for IAs to support OCP2, until it

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<sup>37</sup> MA (U), FEMA, "1731DR-CA-DOD-08," 28 Oct 07; Msg (U), NC, MOD 5 TO EXORD," 28 0330Z Oct 07; Msg (U), JFCOM, "RELIEF OF TIER II FORCES," 28 1228Z Oct 07; Msg (U/FOUO), NC, "RFF 005," 28 0415Z Oct 07, info used is Unclassified.

<sup>38</sup> Msg (U), 153 AEG-WFF, "SITREP 006," 29 0400Z Oct 07.

<sup>39</sup> Paper (U/FOUO), N-NC, "Commander Talking Points," 29 Oct 07; Msg (U), PACOM, "DEPORD MOD 3," 29 2246Z Oct 07; Msg (U), NC, "EXORD MOD 6," 29 0246Z Oct 07; Msg (U), NIFC DCO, "[sitrep]," 29 0400Z Oct 07.

was properly submitted. However the IAs would not be needed as NORTHCOM ordered both ARNORTH and AFNORTH to redeploy their forces as appropriate on the 30th and released JFCOM forces and the PACOM helicopters from the 24-hour PTDO in a MOD to a newly released EXORD.<sup>40</sup>

AFNORTH directed redeployment of the ACCE and Rover assets and released TACON of all the Title 10 IAA forces in the JOA. ARNORTH ordered OCP2 to redeploy, after it conducted a battle handover back to the DCO Region IX on 30 Oct.<sup>41</sup>

Though the MAFFS had no activity, they expected to remain in-place through the weekend. This was a precautionary measure due to expected higher winds. A decision on deactivation was to be made early Monday morning by the Forest Service.<sup>42</sup>

### **01-07 Nov 07 – Thursday-Wednesday**

With all but five fires having been contained and civil authorities providing the necessary sustainment and recovery operations, USPACOM relieved all its components of wildfire support. The combat camera team stood-down from 24-hour PTDO, the P-3 redeployed, and the four heavy and eight medium helicopters were relieved from their 24-hour PTDO.<sup>43</sup>

The MAFFS and AEG remained on “Alert Alpha” but received no launch orders from 1 Nov onwards. On 4 Nov the NIFC released all six MAFFs as of 0100Z 5 Nov. The MAFFS received the notification at 1800L on Sunday, 4 Nov, and by the 6th all had departed the tanker base and returned to home station. The ANG and AFRC MAFFS crews flew 74 sorties, totaling 103 hours, and dropping 207,600 gallons of retardant in 79 drops during their week-long deployment.<sup>44</sup>

With the release of the MAFFS, the NORTHCOM support was all but at end. On 5 Nov the command released MOD 2 to EXORD 08-02 disestablishing the Southern California JOA. JFCOM forces on 24-hour PTDO were no longer required. ARNORTH was directed to redeploy the DCO Region IX and his DCE from the Pasadena JFO and the DCO Region X and DCE from the NIFC, disestablish the JFLCC, and redeploy all Title 10 forces from fire fighting activities. All the communications teams, augments, and service EPLOs were also released.<sup>45</sup> The 2007 fire season appeared to be over for NORTHCOM.

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<sup>40</sup> Msg (U), JS, “Deactivation of JCAT for California Wildfires,” 30 1417Z Oct 07; Msg (U), JS, “RESPONSE TO USNORTHCOM RFF 005,” 30 1141Z Oct 07; Msg (U), NC, “EXORD 08-02 MOD 1,” 30 2108Z Oct 07.

<sup>41</sup> Msg (U), AFNORTH, “REDEPLOYMENT OF ACCE,” 30 2347Z Oct 07; Msg (U), AFNORTH, “RELINQUISHING TACON OF DOD TITLE 10 IAA FORCES,” 30 2344Z Oct 07; Msg (U/FOUO), ARNORTH, “FRAGO 9 TO OPORD 1,” 30 2325Z Oct 07.

<sup>42</sup> Rpt (U), 153 AEG-WFF, “SITREP 009,” 01 0400Z Nov 07.

<sup>43</sup> Msg (U), PACOM, “DEPORD MOD 04,” 01 0553Z Nov 07.

<sup>44</sup> Rpt (U), 153 AEG-WFF, “SITREP 010,” 02 0400Z Nov 07; Ltr (U), NIFC to NC, “MAFFS Release, Southern California,” 4 Nov 07; Rpt (U), 153 AEG-WFF, “SITREP 015,” 07 0400Z Nov 07.

<sup>45</sup> Msg (U), NC, “EXORD 08-02 MOD 02,” [5 nov 07].



## Flare-Up

### **16 Nov 07 – Friday**

On 16 Nov the NIFC reported Southern California was expecting off shore winds speeds to 70 mph and low relative humidity starting Tuesday, 20 Nov through Thursday, 22 Nov that would create critical fire weather conditions and an elevated fire potential. NIFC therefore requested a DCO and DCE if requested by the DCO, to locate at NIFC no later than (NLT) 0800 MST 19 Nov. The DCE would also place a DOD LNO at the Southern California GACC NLT 1200 PST 19 Nov. NIFC also requested four C-130 air tankers capable of transporting and employing the MAFFS, along with appropriate command, control and support personnel to assist in fire fighting. The MAFFS were to deploy once again to Channel Islands ANGB, Port Hueneme, California, arriving no earlier than 15:00 PST 18 Nov and be fully mission capable no later than 12:00 PST 19 Nov. NIFC asked that the four MAFFS be equipped with Blue Force Tracker, to allow real time flight following by NIFC and the affected wildland fire Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs) when dispatching MAFFS aircraft. NIF anticipated duration of need of 14 days, unless released earlier. A few hours later an updated weather forecast, which pushed the conditions back to Wednesday, 21 Nov through Saturday, 24 Nov, caused the NIFC to ask for a delay in the MAFFS deployment. The aircraft, crews, and support personnel were to arrive no earlier than 12:00 PST 20 Nov and be fully mission capable no later than 09:00 PST 21 Nov.<sup>46</sup>

### **17 Nov 07 – Saturday**

The NIFC requests set off another long weekend of work for USNORTHCOM. Before it received the NIFC's request for a delay in the MAFFS deployment, the command issued its second fire fighting EXORD for the season late on 16 Nov. While the EXORD answered the NIFC's requests by directing TRANSCOM to deploy the MAFFS with Blue Force Trackers and the AEG, designating AFNORTH as the JFACC with OPCON over Title 10 air assets and coordinating authority over Title 32 assets, and tasking ARNORTH to deploy the Region X DCO and DCE to the NIFC and an LNO to the Southern California GACC, NORTHCOM also used the EXORD to try to anticipate future requirements based on operations in October.<sup>47</sup>

The EXORD thus tasked JFCOM, in the event the fires developed like they had the previous month, to anticipate a NORTHCOM request for an IAA contingent, upon reception of a valid mission assignment. The IAA contingent would have a situational awareness module consisting of platforms or systems with FMV sensors for both day and night, up to five ROVER capable Joint Terminal Attack Controller (JTAC) Teams equipped with All-Terrain Vehicles to receive FMV and provide it to firefighting decision makers, and one Tactical Common Data Link (TCDL). The damage assessment module of the IAA contingent was to provide wide area and point imagery to aid in the assessment of damage to critical infrastructure. The module

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<sup>46</sup> Ltr (U), NIFC to NC, "Request for Department of Defense Support, November 2007," 1600Z 16 Nov 07; Ltr (U), NIFC to OSD, "Request for Department of Defense Support, November 2007," 2100Z 16 Nov 07.

<sup>47</sup> Msg (U), NC, "EXORD for WFF Preparation in California," 17 0048Z Nov 07.

would include 12 hours of on-station Global Hawk time per day, one U-2 sortie per day, and a processing, exploitation, and dissemination capability.<sup>48</sup>

NORTHCOM also tasked PACOM to place four heavy lift helicopters on 24-hour PTDO NLT 2000Z 19 Nov. The helicopters were to be prepared to execute fire suppression missions with external ‘Bambi Buckets’ and the crews had to have completed training and certification by the U.S. Forest Service. If employed the helicopters would be OPCON to USNORTHCOM and TACON would be exercised through AFNORTH as the JFACC. Both JFCOM and PACOM were also tasked, with SecDef approval, to be prepared to provide MAFFS-qualified Combat Camera capability. Finally the Nov EXORD tasked both ARNORTH and JTF-CS to place a PAO on 24-hour PTDO, ARNORTH’s to go to the NIFC and JTF-CS’ to go to Channel Island ANGB to be release authority for all MAFFS stories, footage, and video.<sup>49</sup>

### **18 Nov 07 – Sunday**

With the NIFC’s request for a delay in-hand, NORTHCOM released MOD 1 to the EXORD. It authorized the delay in MAFFS deployment and mission ready status and delayed PACOM’s helicopters PTDO. A 21-hour delay of the DCO/DCE arrival at NIFC was also acceptable, as was a delay to the arrival of the LNO at the GACC. Both PAOs were to now assume their 24-hour PTDO window at 2000Z 20 Nov.<sup>50</sup>

### **19 Nov 07 – Monday**

The Region X DCO with a three-person DCE arrived at Boise the evening of the 19th. The DCO and DCE expected to establish operations at the NIFC on the 20th. The AEG was expected to close at Boise on the 20th and be operational by the morning of the 21st. The MAFFS were to arrive at Channel Island ANGB and be prepared to accept missions by the morning of the 21st. The NIFC DCE LNO was to arrive at the Southern California Geographic Area Coordination Center (GACC) on evening of 20 Nov.<sup>51</sup>

NORTHCOM released a RFF in the evening requesting a Combat Camera Team to “capture the visual information and narrative” of the MAFFS operations. The team would consist of one officer-in-charge, two aerial qualified videographers (at least one MAFFS qualified), two aerial qualified photographers (at least one MAFFS qualified) with rapid, independent transmission means. The recommended unit was the 4th Combat Camera Squadron of the Air Force Reserve at March ARB, CA, due to its geographic proximity to the anticipated MAFFS operations.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> Msg (U), NC, “EXORD MOD 1,” 18 Nov 07.

<sup>51</sup> Rpt (U), NIFC DCO, “Blue 6 (DCO Initial Report),” 20 0115Z Nov 07.

<sup>52</sup> Msg (U), NC, “RFF 001,” 20 0021Z Nov 07.

## **20 Nov 07 – Tuesday**

On the 20th USNORTHCOM released MOD 2 to the EXORD. This modification was to clarify the command relationship between NORTHCOM and USTRANSCOM over the MAFFS assets. TRANSCOM was to deploy four MAFFS and transfer TACON of Title 10 MAFFS assets and personnel to CDRUSNORTHCOM upon force closure into the area of operations. TRANSCOM was also to source the AEG commander and staff and transfer TACON to NORTHCOM upon arrival. In NORTHCOM the JFACC (CDRAFNORTH) would assume TACON over Title 10 MAFFS and exercise coordination authority over Title 32 forces through the AEG commander. The intent was to enhance the unity of effort of the MAFFS, while understanding the non-standard command and control construct of the mixed component commanders.<sup>53</sup>

## **21 Nov 07 – Wednesday**

The NIFC DCO reported on the 21st that the latest forecast called for Santa Ana wind conditions over Southern California Friday afternoon through Saturday afternoon. However, computer forecast models showed the intensity and duration of this event would be significantly less than the October event. All four MAFFS (1, 2, 3, and 5) were fully-mission capable and awaiting launch orders, while the Combat Camera Team had arrived and was operational at Channel Island. If fire activity remained low the Southern California GACC would implement a de-mobilization plan on Saturday afternoon for fire and support personnel.<sup>54</sup>

## **22 Nov 07 – Thursday**

The situation remained relatively unchanged on the 22d. Moderate wind levels were still forecasted for Friday and Saturday and the GACC still intended to release assets if fire activity remained low after Saturday. The NIFC DCO articulated to NIFC and the Southern California GACC two decision points for MAFFS rotation or release. The first was on Saturday at 1200MST when decision had to be made to either release the two Colorado MAFFS or rotate the crews. If the aircraft were not released, then crews would be rotated on Sunday. The second was for the two Wyoming MAFFS by 1200MST on Sunday. If the aircraft were not released, crews would be rotated on Monday. The NIFC DCO anticipated that any response by the MAFFS on Saturday or Sunday would be delayed until a forecasted marine layer and fog lifted.<sup>55</sup>

## **23 Nov 07 – Friday**

DOD assets remained poised to assist on the 23d. The situation did not drastically change and a series of expected Red Flag warnings were issued in California. Saturday was still the GACC's intended decision date and the NIFC fully understood the decision points for the MAFFS.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Msg (U), NC, "EXORD MOD 2," 20 2155Z Nov 07.

<sup>54</sup> Rpt (U), NIFC DCO, "[sitrep]," 22 0400Z Nov 07.

<sup>55</sup> Rpt (U), NIFC DCO, "[sitrep]," 23 0400Z Nov 07.

<sup>56</sup> Rpt (U), NIFC DCO, "[sitrep]," 24 0400Z Nov 07.



24 Nov 07 – Saturday



Over the night of the 23d into the 24th three fires broke out in Southern California. Two, the Lytle Creek and Ramona Fires, were 100% contained by 1730 PST on the 24th. The Malibu or Corral Fire however, was only 45% contained, having burned 4,500 acres, destroyed 49 structures, and injured 6 firefighters. The NIFC DCO reported all four MAFFS remained in a ready status from 0830 PST without any launch orders being issued, nor were any requests for DOD helicopter assets received. One Engine and four crews from Port Hueneme responded to the Malibu Fire in an Immediate Response status. No additional requests for DOD assets were anticipated and the two Colorado-based MAFFS (2 and 5) were released effective 1200 MST 25 Nov.<sup>57</sup>

25 -26 Nov 07 – Sunday-Monday

The NIFC continued to release DOD assets after the weekend. The last two MAFFS (1 and 3) redeployed from Southern California on the morning of the 26th and arrived back in Wyoming by that afternoon. Two of the four AEG staff redeployed to home station. With the MAFFS and AEG releases by the NIFC, NORTHCOM issued MOD 4 to the EXORD, redeploying all Title 10 forces and releasing PACOM helicopters from PTDO status, ending NORTHCOM's second response for the 2007 fire season.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Rpt (U), NIFC DCO, "[sitrep]," 25 0400Z Nov 07.

<sup>58</sup> Rpt (U), 153 AEG-WFF, "SITREP 007," 27 0400Z Nov 07; Msg (U), NC, "EXORD MOD 4," 26 2251Z Nov 07.

## 2007 Lessons Learned

Even before the embers died on the October fires, General Renuart held a ‘hotwash’ on 5 Nov focusing on communications strategy, changing the DSCA paradigm, integration of immediate response forces, and the use of vocal orders. Wildland fires presented strategic communications opportunities for the command and a unity of effort would best be served with a common message and having the message come from the best source. General Renuart wanted NORTHCOM to better, “smartly,” anticipate civil support requirements, communicate DOD capabilities to a wider audience, and ensure authorities and responsibilities were commensurate to “present a clear chain of command to State and Federal partners.” NORTHCOM also had to anticipate the presence of Immediate Response forces, being aware of existing MOAs and MOUs, and determine how best to transition these forces from IR to OPCON under the JFC. Finally, VOCO needed a “paper trail” to ensure follow through and VOCO had to be integrated into the Request for Forces and Mission Assignment processes.<sup>59</sup>

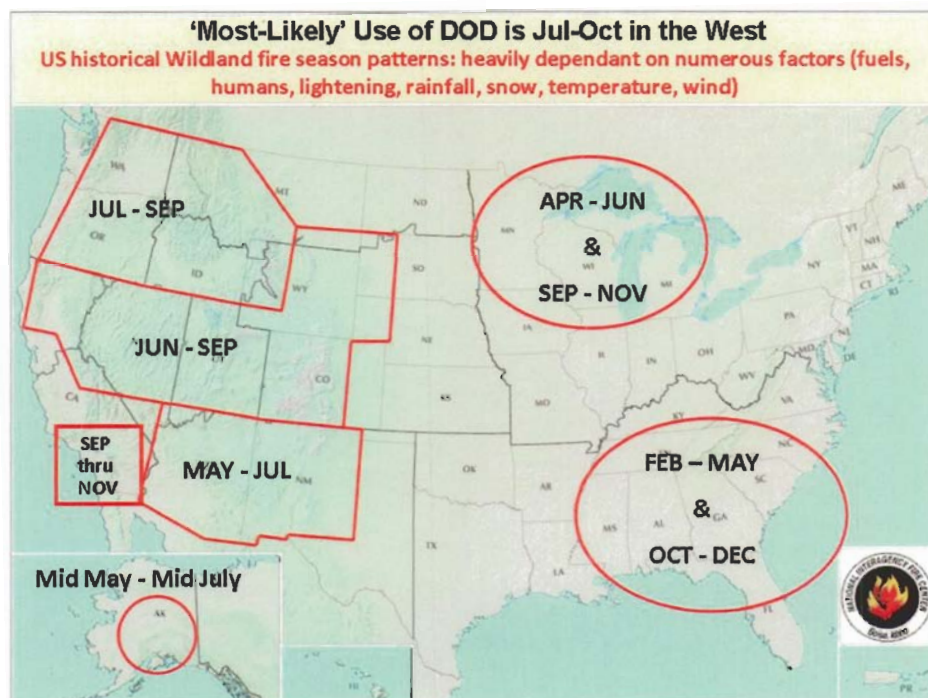
The hotwash fed into the command’s After Action Review (AAR) of the October 2007 fires. The review found that the MAFFS and IAA support were “success stories” and “a major lesson learned confirmed by California Fire Marshal Kate Dargan” was timely imagery and full-motion video were beneficial to the frontline firefighting efforts. DOD forces operating under Immediate Response Authority ultimately provided “the largest and most timely DOD effort.” While the collaboration among local, state, and federal officials had greatly improved over previous events, a number of challenges remained. Work was needed to further educate other agencies on DOD capabilities and when those capabilities were requested and needed the time for employment would be very short. DOD and USNORTHCOM would continue to be challenged by the need to anticipate requirements and provide just-in-time. Lastly, how to best to provide Title 10 support and command and control of immediate responders under mutual agreement authorities would have to be further explored and determined.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Brfg (U/FOUO), N-NC, “WILDLAND FIRES 2007Hotwash,” 5 Nov 07.

<sup>60</sup> AAR (U), NC, “Southern California Wildland Firefighting October 2007,” 27 Nov 07.

## 2008



### 2008 WFF EXORD

As winter left the Rocky Mountains USNORTHCOM began its preparations for the 2008 fire season, releasing a Wildland Fire Fighting EXORD on 1 Apr. The order noted the NIFC-defined fire season of 1 May to 31 Oct, but added the Southern California fire season extended to 31 Nov due to the Santa Ana winds. The EXORD reiterated that the most likely RFA would include a DCO and up to eight MAFFS. Further, the NIFC could request DOD ground wildland fire fighting support and DOD helicopters with Bambi bucket support. While the NIFC was unlikely to request IAA support, other agencies might.<sup>61</sup>

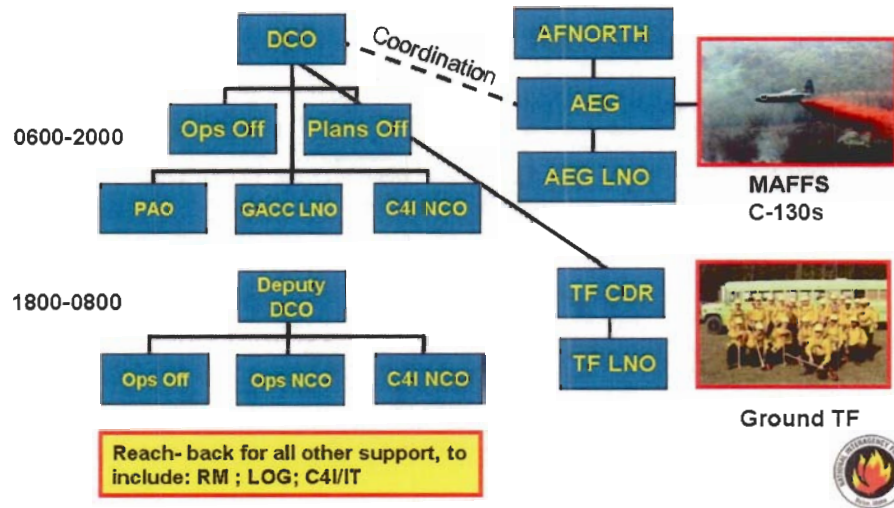
For the 2008 season the 302 AW (AFRC), Colorado Springs, CO, and the 145 AW (ANG), Charlotte, NC, would each provide two primary and two back-up aircraft, while the 153 AW (ANG), Cheyenne, WY, would have two primary and one back-up aircraft for operations. The 146 AW (ANG), Channel Islands, CA, was unavailable as it was awaiting the MAFFS II upgrade for the C-130J. However, DOD would have eight MAFFS available as two aircraft from among the three ready wings would deploy to Channel Islands. For the NIFC to request the MAFFS the 19 tankers of the commercial fleet under contract had to be committed or not readily available. Additional criteria included Preparedness Level (PL) 4 or 5 in two or more geographic areas, heavy initial attack activity anticipated over the next 14 days, or one or more states had activated their MAFFS. MAFFS air crews required annual certification in conjunction with United States Forest Service (USFS) lead plane pilots and air tanker base personnel. The 2008 certification, to include 8 actual (wet) drops and 16 simulated (dry drops), was scheduled for

<sup>61</sup> Msg (U), NC, "Wildland Fire Fighting EXORD 2008," 01 1312Z Apr 08.



May 5-9 at Channel Islands. The NIFC military liaison felt that changes in civilian air tanker fleet operations for 2008 might result in fewer MAFFS requests.<sup>62</sup>

## DCO/E Task Org (MAFFS + Ground TF)



Ground support requirements had traditionally been for one or more battalion-sized units consisting of 25 crews of 20 persons each (500 personnel) and a 60 person headquarters and support element. The 2008 NORTHCOM EXORD allowed for the requirement to be tailored to 10 crews of 20 persons each (200 personnel) and a 50 person headquarters and support element. Eight battalions had been deployed to the 1998 Yellowstone National Park fires and the last use had been on the Tripod Fire in Washington State in 2006. Requests for ground support came about every three years and so the lack of a request in 2007 was not an anomaly. To request ground support the NIFC had to be at a national PL 5, 356 or more of the 375 civilian Type II crews had to be committed, and at least 30 days were remaining until the season's end in most involved geographic areas. DOD units had to receive 40 hours of training to reach Firefighter II qualification consisting of two days at home station conducted by NIFC cadre and three days of at the fire location. NIFC had to provide the necessary personal protective equipment (PPE)—NOMEX pants and shirts, hard hat, leather gloves, approved boots, and emergency fire shelters—to DOD deploying units. All this meant that at least six days, at best, would pass from the NIFC request to a DOD unit working on the fire line.<sup>63</sup>

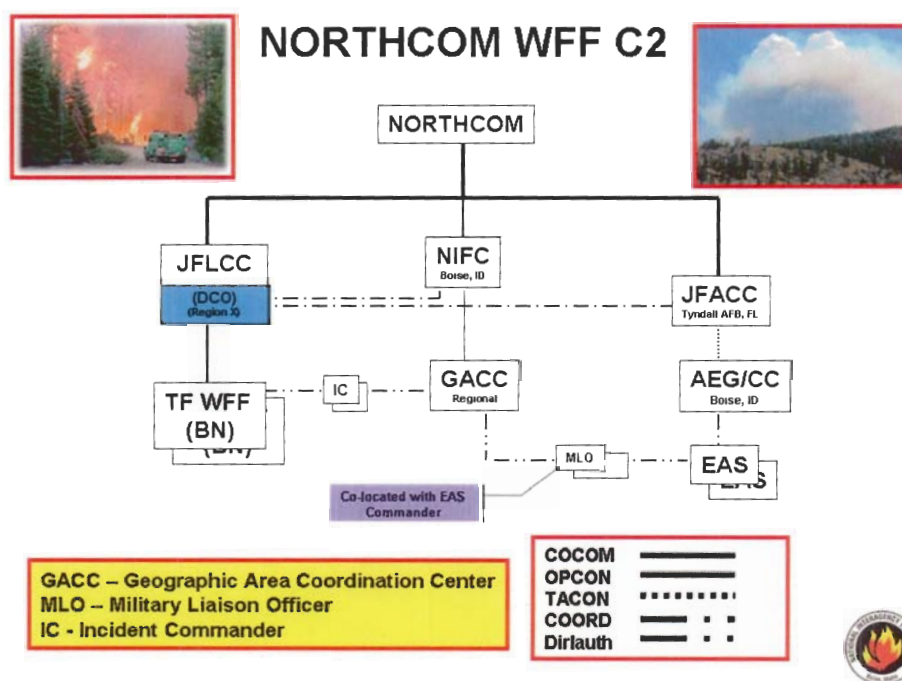
As NIFC had not requested DOD helicopters with Bambi Bucket for at least the past four seasons the status of USFS required aviation certification and training for the crews was in question. (This did not include state National Guard helicopters which were under the control of the governor and were not considered a DOD resource.) Would the DOD crews receive

<sup>62</sup> Brfg (U), NC/J35, "NIFC WFF Conference," 8-9 Apr 08; Brfg (U), NIFC Military Liaison, "DOD Support to NIFC," Apr 08.

<sup>63</sup> Brfg (U), NC/J35, "NIFC WFF Conference," 8-9 Apr 08; Brfg (U), NIFC Military Liaison, "DOD Support to NIFC," Apr 08.

certification during just in time training or pre-season training of anticipated requirements? During the 2007 fires USMC and Navy Reserve helicopters performed water bucket operations under immediate response and indentified the need for better MOAs, planning, and communications between local, state, and DOD officials. All these areas were to be worked on in preparation of the 2008 Southern California season during a Cal Fire/USMC/USN exercise on 14-16 May.<sup>64</sup>

NORTHCOM also, upon request, could provide Incident Assessment and Awareness (IAA) capabilities via various aerial platforms such as U-2, Global Hawk, P-3 with full motion video, and the Civil Air Patrol. IAA would typically be provided to Geographic Area Coordination Centers (GACC), Incident Management Teams (MT), and city or county Emergency Operation Centers (EOC). Federal wildland fire fighting capabilities had organic and contract IAA resources, so the main value of DOD IAA would be at the IMT and EOC levels.<sup>65</sup>



To exercise command and control of DOD assets committed to wildland fire fighting operations during 2008 USNORTHCOM turned to its component headquarters. The Commander, AFNORTH (1st AF), as the Joint Force Air Component Commander (JFACC), would be the supported commander for air domain operations within the Joint Operations Area (JOA). The JFACC would provide command and control and exercise coordinating authority with C-130 MAFFS, Title 10 helicopters conducting Bambi Bucket operations, and IAA resources. CDRARNORTH (5th Army), as the Joint Force Land Component Commander (JFLCC), was the supported commander for land domain operations within the JOA. The JFLCC would provide command and control and responsibility for DOD Title 10 ground fire

<sup>64</sup> Brfg (U), NC/J35, "NIFC WFF Conference," 8-9 Apr 08; Brfg (U), NIFC Military Liaison, "DOD Support to NIFC," Apr 08.

<sup>65</sup> Brfg (U), NIFC Military Liaison, "DOD Support to NIFC," Apr 08.

fighting assets, be prepared to deploy the Region X DCO and staff element to the NFIC, and relinquish OPCON of the NIFC DCO to CDRUSNORTHCOM while activated for wildland fire fighting operations. Finally, the EXORD also tasked supporting commands and components to be prepared to deploy Public Affairs (PA) officers and detachments to “interface with fire information officers and provide timely, accurate information” on the role of DOD in firefighting efforts.<sup>66</sup>

NORTHCOM’s “way ahead” for the 2008 WFF season included predictions for a warmer and drier summer. Expectations were for a capability of 8 original MAFFS systems as MAFFS II fielding was delayed and not expected until the fall. A ground troop request would likely be for less than a battalion-sized force. An expanded use of DOD helicopter and IAA assets in Southern California was possible, applying USFS qualification standards, balancing IR with processes for requesting DOD support, and integrating DOD IAA into WFF operations at the appropriate level. Finally, MAFFS crews might be alerted for potential Southern California wildfires, as the traditional definition of a ‘season’ may no longer apply and all had to be prepared for year-round operations.<sup>67</sup>

### **CJCS DSCA EXORD 2008**

As USNORTHCOM completed its conferences and plans for the 2008 WFF season the CJCS was revising its standing Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA) EXORD. The proposed framework changed the previous DSCA tiers: Tier 1 Assigned Forces, Tier 2 Pre-Approved Forces and Assets, and Tier 3 Large Scale Response Forces Capabilities. Now the EXORD had four categories. Category 1 was assigned forces, Category 2 pre-identified resources, Category 3 DOD resources for internal use, and Category 4 Large Scale Response Resources. Category 1 forces were those assigned to the supported Combatant Commander (CCDR) who could place them on PTDO status, deploy within the AOR, and employ upon receipt of an RFA for up to 60 days, only requiring CJCS and SecDef notification. Category 2 pre-identified resources included military installations for base support, up to 8 MAFFS, DOD civilian firefighters, up to 12 utility helicopters (8 light/medium, 4 medium/heavy) for search and rescue, reconnaissance, command and control, Bambi Bucket operations, or other coordinated use and patient movement capability within the first 24 hours after achieving PTDO status. Other resources included National Defense Medical System (NDMS) coordinating centers, deployable medical platforms, communication packages, one P-3 search aircraft with tactical common data link, and a Joint Deployable Distribution Operations Center. Under Category 2 the CCDR could coordinate directly with force providers to source pre-identified resources and place on a 24-hour PTDO status for up to seven days, deploy sourced forces in the AOR, employ sourced forces upon receipt of an RFA for up to 60 days, again requiring CJCS and SecDef notification.<sup>68</sup>

Category 3 resources for internal use included NDMS bed reporting, three Combat camera teams, a Public Affairs media team, one Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, Civil Authority Information Support Element Liaison Officers, and Directors of Mobility Forces, Air

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<sup>66</sup> Msg (U), NC, “Wildland Fire Fighting EXORD 2008,” 01 1312Z Apr 08.

<sup>67</sup> Brfg (U), NIFC Military Liaison, “DOD Support to NIFC,” Apr 08.

<sup>68</sup> Brfg (U), CJCS, “Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA) Standing Execute Order (EXORD) 2008 Proposed Revisions,” 4 Apr 08.



and Surface. The supported CCDR could coordinate directly with force providers of Category 3 resources to source pre-identified resources and place on a 24-hour PTDO status for up to seven days, deploy and employ forces in the AOR for up to 60 days, requiring notification to CJCS and SecDef. Category 4 resources could involve up to a full Army Brigade Combat Team, Marine Regimental Combat Team, or Navy Amphibious Ready Group with aviation, communication, medical, personnel, logistic, IAA, and engineer supporting units. Only SecDef approval could put Category 4 forces on a PTDO status and deploy or employ them. The CJCS published its revised EXORD, incorporating the new categories, on 28 May. USNORTHCOM followed suit in early June, releasing a 2008 DSCA EXORD, superseding the 2006 order.<sup>69</sup>

## **California Lightning**

### **22 Jun 08 – Sunday**

On 21 Jun lightning storms swept across Northern California, which was experiencing dry fuel conditions, high fuel temperatures, and low relative humidity, igniting over 700 fires. The Cal Fire Chief contacted General Swan, NC/J3, on 21 Jun about requesting two MAFFS. General Swan called the NORAD and USNORTHCOM Command Center (N2C2) at 2026 MDT on 21 Jun concerning the request. N2C2 contacted the NIFC Military LNO, who was unaware of any request, as was the NIFC, which was standing down for the evening, but agreed to provide an update at 0600 MDT 22 Jun. Events quickly sped up, however. At 0245 MDT 22 Jun the N2C2 received a NIFC RFA for the DCO/E at the NIFC and two MAFFS to deploy to the Chico, CA air tanker base and be operational NLT 1700Z 24 Jun. The command center provided a heads-up TRANSCOM and the 302 AW vice commander. The NORTHCOM J35 sent in the Crisis Action Team (CAT) to submit the modification to the EXORD in the morning.<sup>70</sup>

NORTHCOM released MOD 3 to the 2008 WFF EXORD at mid-day on 22 Jun. (MODs 1 and 2 were administrative in nature and submitted back in April.) TRANSCOM was to deploy and relinquish OPCON to NORTHCOM up to eight MAFFS and the 302d Air Expeditionary Group (302 AEG). AFNORTH was tasked to accept OPCON of the 302 AEG at Boise, ID, to provide command and control of Title 10 forces and coordinating authority for Title 32 for operations from on or about 23 Jun to 24 Jul. ARNORTH was to deploy the DCO and DCE to the NIFC in support of WFF operations and relinquish OPCON once they arrived. ARNORTH's OPOD deployed the Region I DCO, COL Stanley, and the Region X DCE to the NIFC.<sup>71</sup>

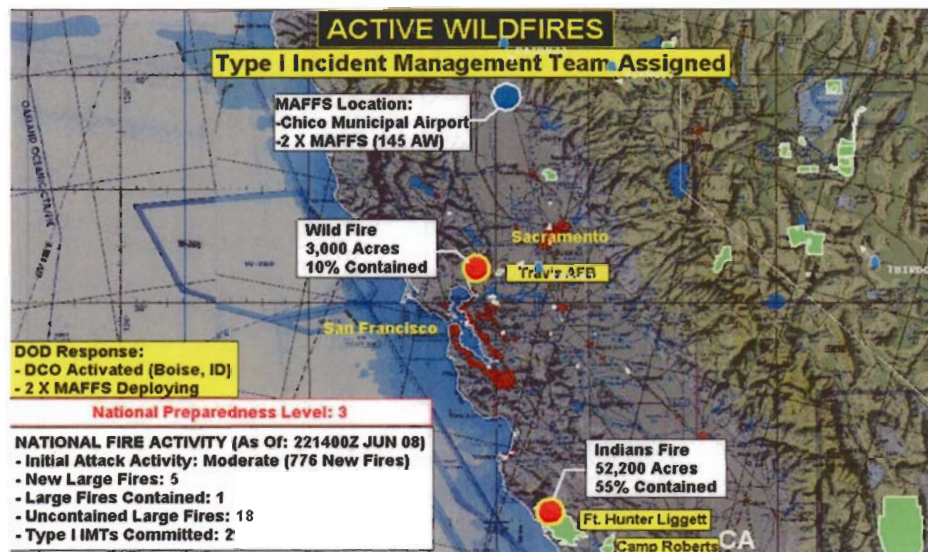
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<sup>69</sup> Brfg (U), CJCS, "Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA) Standing Execute Order (EXORD) 2008 Proposed Revisions," 4 Apr 08; Msg (U), CJCS, "DOD Support of Civil Authorities," 28 2000Z May; Msg (U), NC, "Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA) Operations," Jun 08.

<sup>70</sup> Brfg (S/Rel to CAN/Decl on MR), N-NC, "Commander's Situation Awareness Meeting," 22 Jun 08, info used is Unclassified; Memo (U), NIFC to DOD, "Request for Military Support, Amendment 1," 21 Jun 08.

<sup>71</sup> Msg (U), NC, "MOD 3 to WFF EXORD 2008," 22 1821Z Jun 08; Msg (U/FOUO), ARNORTH, "OPOD for DSCA iso WFF in CA," 22 0200Z Jun 08, info used is Unclassified.

## 23 Jun 08 – Monday



By the evening of 23 Jun the 302 AEG (Provisional)-Wildland Fire Fighting was established at Boise, Col Burton Chapman commanding on Title 10 orders. The 156th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron (156 EAS) commanded by Lt Col Roger Wilson on Title 10 orders, was established at Chico Airport with two MAFFS-equipped C-130 aircraft and their associated personnel and equipment from the 145 AW (ANG), Charlotte, NC. The air crews would report at 0900 PDT 24 Jun for initial briefing and then assume alert. Some concern arose over length of the runway at Chico which would limit retardant loads if the temperature increased beyond the current forecast. The USFS accepted a reduced retardant load, but the EAS preferred to operate out of a location with a longer runway and so a team would travel to McClellan Air Park in Sacramento to survey the field for possible future re-deployment. The AEG reported an RFA for two additional MAFFS aircraft was expected within the next 24 hours, sourced from the 302 AW (AFRC), Colorado Springs, CO. Another RFA for two more aircraft (6 MAFFS total) was a strong possibility, per discussions with Cal Fire, sourced from the 153 AW (ANG), Cheyenne, WY.<sup>72</sup>

## 24 Jun 08 – Tuesday

The NIFC did request two addition MAFFS on 24 Jun, to be operational NLT 1900Z 25 Jun at Chico, CA. NORTHCOM released MOD 4 directing the deployment of two aircraft from the 302 AW, per prior coordination, and AFNORTH released MOD 1 to its EXORD directing the same soon after. The AEG reported two MAFFS aircraft and crew assumed alert at the Chico Air Attack Base on 24 Jun, but due to very poor visibility and extensive smoke did not fly. The two Colorado MAFFS were expected by mid-day on 25 Jun and Cal Fire was considering moving the MAFFS to McClellan Air Park near Sacramento.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Msg (U), 302 AEG, "SITREP 02," 24 0100Z Jun 08.

<sup>73</sup> Memo (U), NIFC to DOD, "Request for Military Support," 24 Jun 08; Msg (U), NC, "MOD 4," 24 1501Z 08; Msg (U), AFNORTH, "MOD 1 to AFNORTH WFF EXORD," 24 Jun 08; Msg (U), 302 AEG, "SITREP 03," 25 0100Z Jun 08.

## **25 Jun 08 – Wednesday**

On 25 Jun FEMA issued a Mission Assignment activating DOD support for FEMA as directed. This included DCO, DCE, state EPLOs, and other DOD units requested to the FEMA Region IX Regional Response Coordination Center (RRCC) in Oakland, CA in support of disaster operations. As the fires continued, now over 800, and hot and dry weather remained in the forecast, the NIFC requested four helicopters with external buckets be deployed to Naval Air Station (NAS) Lemoore, CA and be operational NLT 1900Z 26 Jun.<sup>74</sup>

USNORTHCOM combined these requests into MOD 5, released on 25 Jun. PACOM was tasked to deploy and relinquish OPLAN four medium or heavy helicopters capable of carrying 700 gallons of water in bucket operations and deploy liaison officers to the 302 AEG. Department of the Navy was tasked to provide NAS Lemoore as a BSI. The mod also directed the service commanders to deploy their EPLOs for Region IX to the RRCC.<sup>75</sup>

Two MAFFS arrived at Chico on the morning of the 25th and joined the other two on alert. Again, none of the four flew due to very poor visibility. The 156 EAS commander learned that Cal Fire intended to request two more MAFFS, for six total, on 26 Jun. With the increase in numbers the USFS accepted McClellan Air Park as an appropriate tanker base and a plan was being developed to move all operations to McClellan.<sup>76</sup>

## **26 Jun 08 – Thursday**

At the morning teleconference on 26 Jun COL Stanley, the NIFC DCO, reported the MAFFS at Chico were on track to move to McClellan Air Park as Chico was crowded and smoke from nearby fires was prohibiting flights. Once staged at McClellan the MAFFS would likely start flying immediately. There was some discussion that the four NAS Lemoore helicopters might go to Fresno, which was problematic as tankers were already operating out of Fresno and there would be no room if the need arose to surge to 12 DOD helicopters. For IAA a NASA asset would fly on Friday afternoon, while Global Hawk remained a second choice. Finally, the NIFC reported no need for DOD ground forces at the time. Also, COL Howell, Region IX DCO was on-site at the FEMA RRCC ECO in Oakland.<sup>77</sup>

The NIFC did request two more MAFFS on the 26th, to arrive at McClellan Airpark no earlier than 1300 PDT on the 27th, but become operational as soon as possible after arrival. NORTHCOM captured this RFA in MOD 6 to the EXORD. The mod noted the four MAFFS at Chico were relocating to McClellan where they would be joined by two more, for a total of six. DCO/DCE and EPLOS were deploying to the FEMA Region IX RRCC, where the Army EPLOS were OPLAN to the DCO and the other service EPLOS TACON. Four helicopters were heading for NAS Lemoore. The NIFC DCO/DCE, EPLO, AEG, and LNO for helicopter

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<sup>74</sup> MA (U), FEMA, 7220SU-CA-DOD-07, 25 Jun 08; Memo (U), NIFC to DOD, "Request for Military Support," 25 Jun 08.

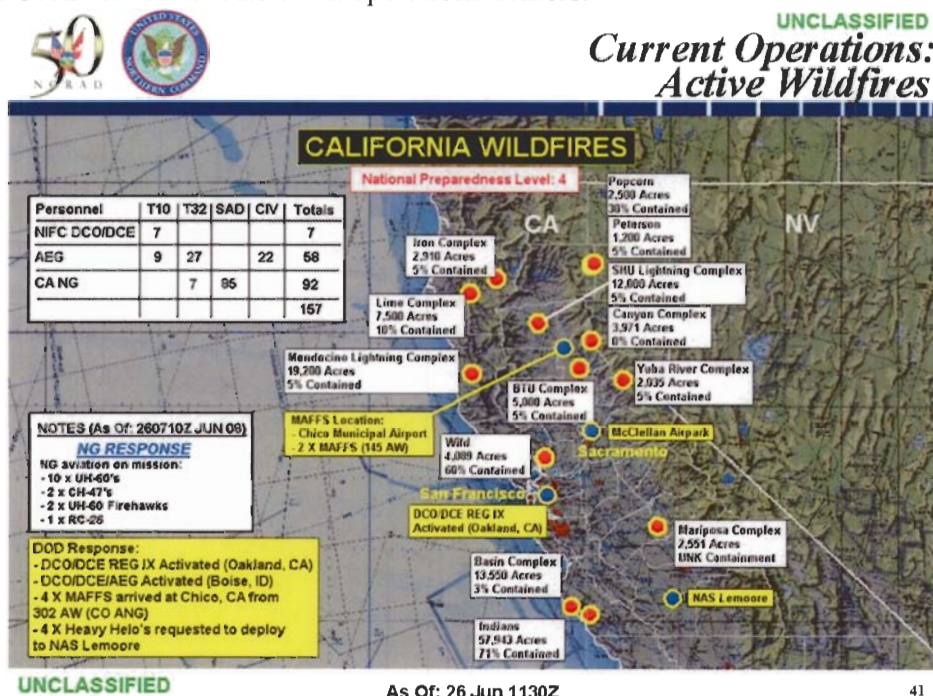
<sup>75</sup> Msg (U), NC, "MOD 5," 25 2302Z Jun 08.

<sup>76</sup> Msg (U), 302 AEG, "SITREP 04," 26 0100Z Jun 08.

<sup>77</sup> Notes (U), NC, "[am telecom]," 26 Jun 08.



operations were in-place at Boise, ID. The Florida ANG had an Air Mobility Division LNO at the California JFHQ, a LNO at the Northern California GACC, and two Combat Camera LNOs at McClellan Airpark. NORTHCOM was deploying a PAO to the NIFC/Cal Fire Joint Information Center at Redding, CA. Finally, the mod placed a MAFFS-qualified Combat Camera Team of 5 personnel from the 4 CTCS on 24-hour PTDO. At the evening teleconference the NIFC DCO reporting “no new RFAs in the hopper,” and that he was moving an LNO to Northern California GACC. Cal Fire had made queries regarding the process for requesting ground forces, but it was only a query and there was no request or anticipated request for ground forces at the time. Helicopters were looked at again but the NIFC and Cal Fire determined there was no need at the time for more helicopters. The Region IX DCO reported that his staff was working out of the RRCC but not on 24 hour operations and two Air Force EPLOs have been moved to California operations centers.<sup>78</sup>



The AEG reported that the MAFFS finally received a launch order on the 26th to fight the Whiskey Fire. Four aircraft launched throughout the day, flying 10 sorties, making 10 air drops, and releasing 30,000 gallons of retardant. The move to McClellan continued with support from the 146 AW (CA ANG). LTG Blum (Chief, National Guard Bureau), MG Wade (CA TAG) and Maj Gen Lucas (CA DAG AIR) visited the operation in Chico. At the end of the flying day, two MAFFS from the 302 AW (Colorado AFRC) recovered to the new tanker base at McClellan.<sup>79</sup>

## 27 Jun 08 – Friday

Across seven days Northern California wildfires burned over 230,000 acres, destroyed 21 residences and 1,052 structures, and injured 31, mainly firefighters. Fortunately, no one had yet

<sup>78</sup> Memo (U), NIFC to DOD, “Request for Military Support,” 26 Jun 08; Msg (U), NC, “MOD 06,” 26 2301Z Jun 08; Notes (U), NC, “[pm telecom],” 26 Jun 08.

<sup>79</sup> Msg (U), 302 AEG, “SITREP 05,” 27 0330Z Jun 08.

been killed. With the California lightning fires still burning the NIFC requested two more MAFFS, for a total of eight, to deploy to McClellan Airpark and be operational at 1300PDT on the 29th. USNORTHCOM added the RFA to MOD 07, along with tasking AFNORTH, ARNORTH, and JFCOM to each deploy a PAO and TRANSCOM to deploy the Combat Camera Team to McClellan to support MAFFS operations. PACOM was tasked to place eight additional medium lift helicopters capable of Bambi Bucket operations on 24-hour PTDO. Further, the mod noted that a USAF Global Hawk and U-2 from Beale AFB and a Navy Global Hawk from NAS Pt Mugu on training missions provided imagery for USNORTHCOM and the NIFC on the 27th.<sup>80</sup>

NORTHCOM also released an RFF on 27 Jun in anticipation of an RFA from NIFC. CDRUSNORTHCOM requested an infantry battalion consisting of up to 500 Title 10 personnel and up to 60 Title 10 personnel command and control element be placed on a 24-hour PTDO. The recommended source was a Marine battalion from I MEF at Camp Pendleton, CA. The potential use of a Title 10 ground battalion caused much discussion at the NIFC and during the evening teleconference. The NIFC DCO thought, if weather conditions deteriorated as expected, the request could come as early as the evening of 28 Jun and it would be a request for a full 500, not 200. During the NORTHCOM discussions the California National Guard's (CANG) ability to provide ground fire fighters arose. The DCO Region IX in Oakland noted that the CANG was concerned with "putting the right mission with the right unit" and that taking the fire fighting mission could degrade a unit's ability to conduct any potential law enforcement mission. NORTHCOM was concerned about deploying a Title 10 unit before CANG forces "were in the fight." One argument for using Title 10 forces was the ability to cross state lines, allowing it to fight several fires during its 30-day deployment.<sup>81</sup>



MAFFS on the McClellan Airpark Ramp, Jun 08

<sup>80</sup> Brfg (U/FOUO), CANG, "California Wildfire Support," 27 Jun 08; Memo (U), NIFC to DOD, "Request for Military Support," 26 Jun 08; Msg (U), NC, "MOD 07," 27 2310Z Jun 08.

<sup>81</sup> Msg (U), NC, "RFF 001 for WFF in CA," 27 2327Z 08; Notes (U), NC, "[pm telecom]," 27 Jun 08.



MAFFS Ops, McClellan Airpark, Jun 08

On the 27th two MAFFS assumed alert at McClellan Air Park as two more re-positioned from Chico to McClellan and assumed alert. The four MAFFS received a launch order from Cal Fire and conducted fire operations, flying 9 sorties, with 8 air drops of 24,000 gallons on the Corral and Motion Fires. Two MAFFS from the 153 AW (Wyoming ANG) deployed to McClellan and assumed alert. Four CH-46E helicopters from the 3D MAW deployed to NAS Lemoore and would be prepared to conduct operations from the 28th.<sup>82</sup>

### **28 Jun 08 – Saturday**

By 28 Jun over 1,000 fires were burning in Northern California, 32 of which were considered major fires, the majority caused by lightning. These fires had burned 322,006 acres, 26 residences, caused 85 injuries, no fatalities, and were only 26.35% contained. A Presidential Emergency Declaration was signed on the 28th and with the declaration FEMA began providing Stafford Act funding in support of the wildfires. The weather outlook was not initially good with an increased threat of dry lightning during the day. To deal with the increased chance of fires in inaccessible areas the State of California, via the NIFC, requested four heavy lift and two medium lift helicopters with buckets to deploy to the King City Airport to be operational on 30 Jun. The NIFC later reduced the request to only four heavy lift helicopters and changed the location to NAS Lemoore.<sup>83</sup>

USNORTHCOM issued its eighth modification in seven days, instructing PACOM to deploy four helicopters, of the eight previously placed on 24-hour PTDO, and MARFORNORTH to provide a rotary wing LNO to AFNORTH to support the JFACC. The NIFC DCO reported that the plan was for the helicopters to base out of NAS Lemoore and move to King City daily for operations. The DCO also noted that they had received positive feedback on the imagery products, but were running into bandwidth problems trying to get the information down to the lowest level. The plan was to break the imagery into smaller packets each focused on one fire and the Air Force representatives were working to make it happen. The GACC LNO notified the DCO at 2130L that the Northern California GACC intended to submit a resource request for a DOD ground battalion on 29 Jun, to employ it on the Lime-Iron Complex in the

<sup>82</sup> Msg (U), 302 AEG, "SITREP 06," 28 0430Z Jun 08.

<sup>83</sup> Rpt (U), DCE IX, "Blue 4 (Daily Status)," 28 Jun 08; Memo (U), NIFC to DOD, "Request for Military Support," 28 Jun 08 1400 MDT; Memo (U), NIFC to DOD, "Request for Military Support," 28 Jun 08 1900 MDT.



Shasta-Trinity National Forest. The situation, the DCO reported, “remains fluid.” While overnight weather conditions were better than expected resource requirements continued to rise. Indeed, the size and nature of the fires in Northern California suggested there would be resource requirements for “weeks if not months.”<sup>84</sup>

The six MAFFS at McClellan flew 15 sorties and made 15 drops of 45,000 gallons on the Corral Fire. They were joined by two more MAFFS. The Marine 3D MAW CH-46E helicopters at NAS Lemoore conducted fire operations, flying 12 sorties with 35 drops of 8,204 gallons on the Oliver Fire. MAFFS operations needed personnel and logistic support since only three wings were tasked to support eight aircraft in 2008, vice the dedicated organic support normally available from the four airlift wings regularly tasked.<sup>85</sup>

### **29 Jun 08 – Sunday**

The MAFFS’ logistic concerns caused USNORTHCOM issued MOD 09 to the EXORD on the 29th. The modification authorized the JFACC to conduct direct liaison with the 146 AW (CAANG) to source MAFFS-specific personnel, support equipment, and command and control. If the MAFFS wings were unable to source the requirements, an RFF was to be submitted to NORTHCOM. The command also tasked the NORTHCOM J4 directorate to deploy a logistics planner to the AEG in Boise.<sup>86</sup>

The NIFC DCO reported that the California fires had 330 unfilled crew requests as other geographic areas (Northwest, Great Basin, **Rocky Mountain**) had increasing fire potentials and thus were maintaining a higher level of crew **capability**. The Northern California GACC had thus been approved to include DOD ground forces in its resource request. An RFA for a ground battalion was thus expected on the 30th. Employment would be on a Federal fire in the Shasta-Trinity National Forest, based out of the Lime Complex near Hayfork, CA, but the battalion could be expected to fight fires in any of three complexes (Iron, Lime, or Alps) consisting of 83 individual fires. For planning purposes the DCO suggested it would take nine days of coordination, training, and travel before the DOD forces would take up positions on the line. Ultimately, he concluded, “overwhelming justification” existed for requesting DOD ground forces and the fact that it was early in the season suggested the RFA would extend for the full 30 days.<sup>87</sup>

Air operations continued on the 29th. The eight MAFFS at McClellan flew 28 sorties, dropping 84,000 gallons during 28 drops on the Corral and Piute Fires. At the end of the flying day one MAFFS needed a prop change and became Non-Mission Capable (NMC). The four Marine CH-46Es conducted 11 sorties from NAS Lemoore dropping 43 times for a total of 10,925 gallons on the Corral Fire. The AEG commander felt the integration of rotary wing assets was “progressing very well with improved knowledge and communication.” But logistic

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<sup>84</sup> Msg (U), NC, “MOD 08,” 28 2301Z Jun 08; Rpt (U), NIFC DCO, “Blue 4 (DCO Daily Status),” 28 2300Z Jun 08.

<sup>85</sup> Msg (U), 302 AEG, “SITREP 07,” 29 0630Z Jun 08.

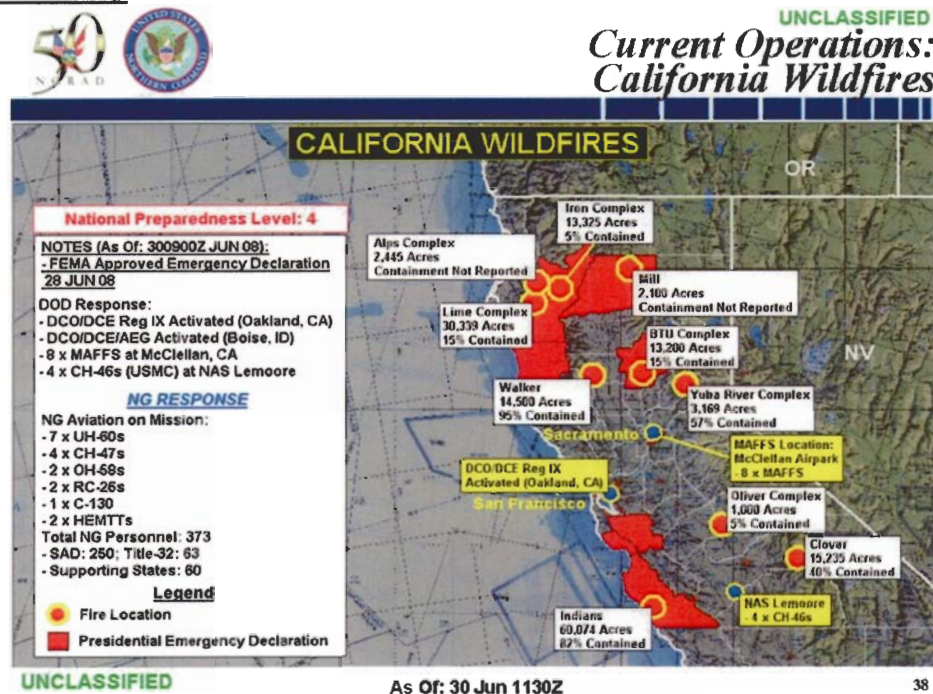
<sup>86</sup> Msg (U), NC, “MOD 09,” 29 1454Z Jun 08.

<sup>87</sup> Rpt (U), NIFC DCO, “Blue 4 (DCO Daily Status),” 29 2300Z Jun 08.



support sourcing continued to be a concern due lack of organic capability and the MAFFS operation was now operating at 75% due to these needs.<sup>88</sup>

### 30 Jun 08 – Monday



The pending NIFC RFA for a full ground battalion (25 x 20-man teams) dominated the 0900 MDT teleconference at NORTHCOM. The tasking would likely fall to the 1-12 IN and 2-12 IN at Fort Carson. Training could begin on 5 Jul, the battalion would deploy on 6 Jul, training would continue on the fire line 7-8 Jul, and on 9 Jul the battalion would be operational. The battalion would have a requirement for either a medical evacuation (MEDEVAC) or casualty evacuation (CASEVAC) capability, the NIFC DCO was getting clarification, which would be tasked to PACOM. PACOM was currently deploying four more helicopters, expecting two Navy SH-60s and 2 Marine CH-46Es, to NAS Lemoore, with four more medium helicopters on PTDO.<sup>89</sup>

The long-awaited NIFC RFA came on the afternoon of the 30th. The NIFC asked for 500 personnel plus no more than 50 command and support personnel to assist in fire fighting. Further, NIFC asked for DOD transport of the personnel and approximately 34 NIFC advisors from the DOD installation to an undetermined Aerial Port of Debarkation (APOD) on 6 Jul, from where NIFC would transport them to the Lime base camp. A Public Affairs Detachment of no more than five personnel was also authorized, but the PA personnel had to attend fire line training.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>88</sup> Msg (U), 302 AEG, "SITREP 08," 30 0500Z Jun 08.

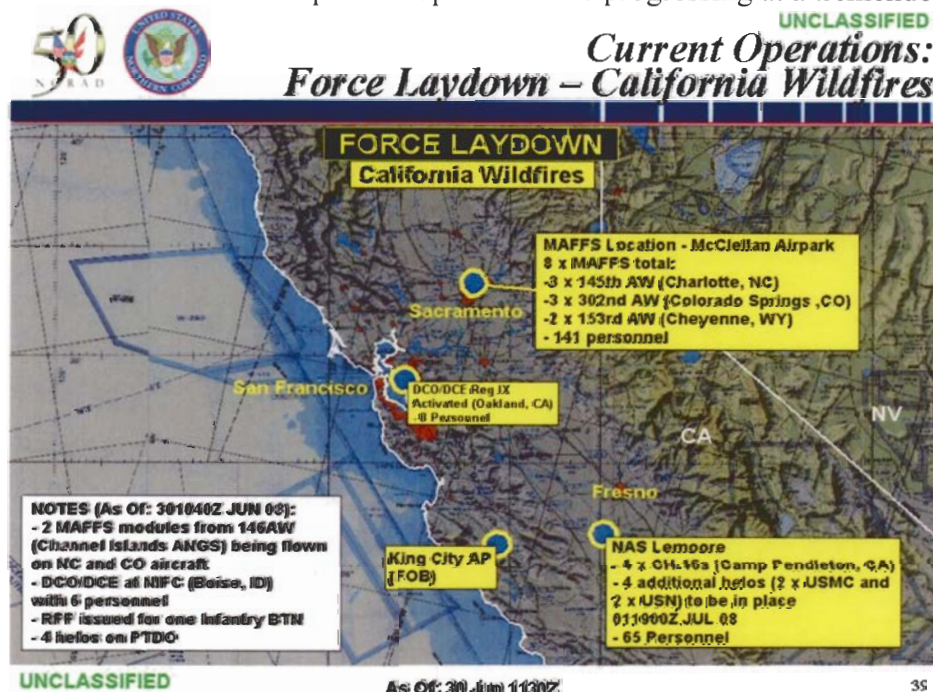
<sup>89</sup> Notes (U), N-NC, "0900 N-NC WFF TELECON," 30 Jun 08.

<sup>90</sup> Memo (U), NIFC to DOD, "Request for Department of Defense Support," 30 Jun 08.

Discussions around the ground force RFA continued into the evening NORTHCOM teleconference. The NIFC DCO reiterated the training timeline and noted that getting correct numbers and boot sizes for the PPE was crucial, something the NC/J35 and J4 representatives both understood and were ready to assist. The Joint Director of Military Support (JDOMS) confirmed that DOD had the RFF in progress, but expressed Mr. McHale's, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense (ASD/HD), concern that the National Guard Bureau was not providing enough CANG assets to the firefighting effort. A decision on Title 10 forces would be made by noon EDT on 1 Jul. NORTHCOM understood and appreciated the ASD's concerns and would continue to focus support to the NIFC.<sup>91</sup>

The NIFC DCO continued coordination with NIFC and the Northern California GACC for logistical support of the ground battalion, focusing on issues which could be worked prior to a sourcing solution. The priority issues included CASEVAC, the delivery of boots, and transportation from the installation and from the base camp to the fire site. But the most critical requirements could not be resolved until approval and a unit sourced. Given the number of agencies involved the DCO did not believe the timeline could be compressed as it had been validated during many previous deployments.<sup>92</sup>

On 30 Jun, their fifth day of operations, six MAFFS made 30 sorties, dropping 29 times, for a total of 87,000 gallons of retardant for the day on the American River, Basin, and Piute Fires. The AEG expected a prop to arrive from Colorado on 1 Jul and the aircraft to be available later in the day. The four helicopters flew eight sorties, releasing 34 bucket loads of 8,397 gallons. As the AEG commander reported "operations are progressing at a tremendous pace."<sup>93</sup>



<sup>91</sup> Notes (U), NC, "WFF TELECON NOTES PM," 30 Jun 08.

<sup>92</sup> Rpt (U), NIFC DCO, "Blue 4 (DCO Daily Status)," 30 2300Z Jun 08.

<sup>93</sup> Msg (U), 302 AEG, "SITREP 9," [1 0400Z Jul 08].

## **01 Jul 08 – Tuesday**

After a week of operations, NORTHCOM's support to the California wildfires began to reach a steady-state. The MAFFS released another 42,000 gallons of retardant during 15 drops in 15 sorties on the Piute, Basin, and Gap Fires. The CH-46Es were quiet, awaiting a shift in mission, but not location, from supporting Cal Fire to the USFS and were joined by two Marine CH-53s and two Navy SH-60s with Bambi Buckets. There were no RFAs from DOD in FEMA Region IX and the NIFC requested the CH-46s be reassigned, but left at NAS Lemoore. No requests for DOD IAA currently existed. The NIFC agreed to pay for **the lease** of commercial MEDEVAC for the ground battalion and it was determined that the battalion commander could authorize exchange sales to non-DOD personnel at the fire camp. Mr. McHale continued to support the use of National Guard troops with Title 32 funds to supply the WFF battalion, with NGB and ASD working on a plan, and preliminary analysis ongoing with the NIFC, DCO, and CANG.<sup>94</sup>

## **02 Jul 08 – Wednesday**

With no RFAs on the 2d, NORTHCOM released MOD 11 approving the shift of the Marine CH-46s to supporting the USFS. However, when they flew in support of one fire, the forest manager turned them back, fearing they were too expensive. The other helicopters performed no drops on the 2d due to the presence of contract air. The NIFC worked to correct these issues. The MAFFs continued to fly on the Piute and Gap Fires, releasing 61,600 gallons of retardant in 22 drops during 22 sorties.<sup>95</sup>

By the morning of 2 Jul the RFA for a ground battalion was at a standstill. JDOMS reported that CJCS and OSD were coordinating with the NGB for a potential National Guard sourcing solution, as Secretary McHale approved use of Title 32 funding. During the day General Blum called the Adjutant General (TAG) of California and said the funding and sourcing solution for the NIFC RFA would be Title 32 forces and 200 CANG troops were reported to be moving to the fire line. The NIFC DCO expressed concern that the entire RFA process was being circumvented because the agreement between NIFC and DOD was that ground forces would be Title 10. Further, forces on Title 32 or State Active Duty (SAD) could be considerably more expensive and less flexible, as they might not be able to cross state lines to fight other fires. The NIFC DCO was also concerned that the NIFC would get the perception that DOD was unresponsive and unsupportive. Senior leadership, the DCO believed, had to get involved to ensure the reason that DOD forces were declined was relayed to NIFC officials and that they understand the RFA was not rejected, but would be answered with National Guard forces.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Msg (U), 302 AEG, "SITREP 11," 02 0545Z Jul 08; Notes (U), NC, "WFF TELECON PM," 1 Jul 08; Memo (U), NIFC to DOD, "Request for Military Assistance," 1 Jul 08.

<sup>95</sup> Msg (U), NC, "MOD 11," 02 2330Z Jul 08; Msg (U), 302 AEG, "SITREP 10," 03 0440Z Jul 08.

<sup>96</sup> Notes (U), NC, "WFF Telecon [am]," 2 Jul 08; Notes (U), NC, "WFF Telecon [pm]," 2 Jul 08.



### **03 Jul 08 – Thursday**

Heavy fire activity continued in Northern California, with fires expected to increase in severity over the weekend as a fire at Camp Pendleton was taking some resources away from current firefighting effort. The RFA for a ground battalion was being worked out with California NG, but Cal Fire would request the support through the USFS. However, the California National Guard should not be used outside of the state. Whatever ground forces were committed the NIFC DCO expected “a significant commitment of Federal resources in California for at least the next several weeks” with “some level of MAFFS and / or helo support for much of the remainder of this WFF season.”<sup>97</sup>

Air operations continued on the 3d, with the MAFFS dropping 42,000 gallons in 15 sorties over the Gap and Piute Fires. Helicopters flew 26 sorties with 116 drops releasing 47,743 gallons on the Gap Fire and Basin Complex. While the AEG had worked out its logistical issues, AFNORTH/A4 was working sustainment issues. The EAS commander was concerned about the assignment of the MAFFS aircraft since the Northern and Southern California operations centers were assigning specific aircraft to specific fires, rather than requesting support, causing “inefficiencies in aircraft usage.” The AEG elevated the issue to NIFC and they, in turn, elevated to the USFS Aviation Officer in California.<sup>98</sup>

### **04 Jul 08 – Friday**

On the morning of 4 Jul Cal Fire requested Channel Islands Air National Guard Base (CIANGB) be operational by the next day to function as a reload base for the MAFFS operating in Southern California. The California Air National Guard’s 146 AW was able to support the short notice request to lift a compressor from McCellan to Channel Islands and by the evening the base was well on its way to being operational. The MAFFS continued to fight the Gap, Piute and Motion Fires with 25 sorties dropping 70,000 gallons during the day. The Navy and Marine Corps helicopters conducted 172 drops during 30 sorties for the day, releasing 64,260 gallons during the day on the Gap Fire and Basin Complex.<sup>99</sup>

The NIFC DCO and DCE continued to support the CANG in their mobilization and deployment to the Lime Complex, to include facilitating boot issue. It appeared the California Guard would deploy 10 crews (200 personnel) and a 68 person staff in SAD status. While progress had been made in containing large fires, California continued to consume Federal resources “at unprecedented levels for this time of year.” MAFFS and helicopter support would remain critical to WFF efforts in California for the foreseeable future. Since the only Title 10 helicopter crews qualified and certified by Cal Fire and the USFS came from units already committed, how long NORTHCOM could continue to support the current levels needed to be established. Further helicopter RFAs may well be coming from the NIFC.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Notes (U), NC, “WFF Telecon,” 3 Jul 08; Rpt (U), NIFC DCO, “Blue 4 (DCO Daily Status),” 3 Jul 08.

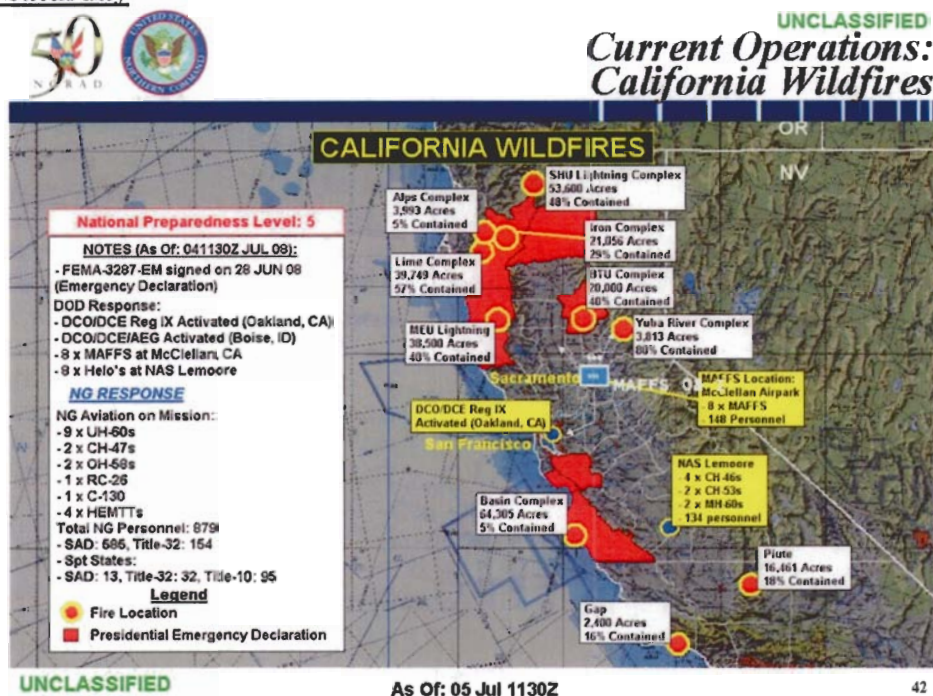
<sup>98</sup> Msg (U), 302 AEG, “SITREP 11,” 04 0510Z Jul 08.

<sup>99</sup> Msg (U), 302 AEG, “SITREP 12,” 05 0545Z Jul 08.

<sup>100</sup> Rpt (U), NIFC DCO, “Blue 4 (DCO Daily Status),” 4 Jul 08.



**05 Jul 08 – Saturday**



On the 5th heavy fire activity continued in Northern California and fires were expected to increase in severity over the weekend as weather and wind worsened. However, progress had been made over the last two days. Most of the NIFC's resources were committed to the Big Sur Fire in the Southern California GACC, but 200 CANG forces were expected on the line by 15 Jul, freeing up more ground crews. NORTHCOM and PACOM were working on extending the PTDO status of four PACOM helicopters, which would expire on 6 Jul. PACOM expected helicopter assets to be tight due to real world support missions.<sup>101</sup>

On the ground the NIFC DCE completed a battle handover to the CANG of all the logistic preparations and base camp coordination it had conducted. In the air six MAFFS aircraft operated from McClellan Airport against the Motion Fire, with two working out of CIANGB, significantly increasing MAFFS productivity on the Gap and Piute Fires. In all the MAFFS flew 240 sorties dropping 103,600 gallons. The SH-60s and CH-53s briefed, but stayed on standby at NAS Lemoore as the Forest Service was unable to provide a helicopter manager for the day. The AEG commander and the DCO were working this issue with the USFS that night. The CH-46s forward deployed to the Santa Ynez Airport to work the Gap Fire, yet poor visibility and airspace congestion limited their sorties to just 23, with 71 drops of 22,032 gallons.<sup>102</sup>

**06 Jul 08 – Sunday**

After two weeks 331 fires still burned across California, grouped into 27 fire complexes: 21 in Northern California and 6 in Southern California. In total some 558,738 acres had burned,

<sup>101</sup> Notes (U), NC, "WFF Telecon," 5 Jul 08.

<sup>102</sup> Rpt (U), NIFC DCO, "Blue 4 (DCO Daily Status)," 5 Jul 08; Msg (U), 302 AEG, "SITREP 13," 06 0500Z Jul 08.

with poor air quality and low visibility hindering the operations of more than 20,300 fire fighting personnel currently working. The NIFC was at National Preparedness Level (PL) 5, the second earliest PL 5 since 1990.<sup>103</sup>

The NIFC DCO reported that the last few days had seen considerable progress in containing large fires and protecting of threatened infrastructure. While high temperatures and winds were forecasted for the next two to three days, if their effects could be minimized significant resources would be freed up between now and 15 Jul. Projected large fire containment in the next four days included five in Northern California and one in Southern California which would free up over 2,000 personnel. However, MAFFS and DOD helicopters remained critical to the overall effort in California and the DCO fully anticipated they resources will be employed for the length of their existing RFAs. The NIFC DCO also requested NORTHCOM command guidance on MAFFS and helicopter request issues.<sup>104</sup>

As Federal requirements for MAFFS reduced, the State of California may request dedicated MAFFS support. The NIFC no longer wanted to use the Federal Charter to meet State requirements and so NORTHCOM would need a mechanism to allow ~~either~~ the Wyoming or North Carolina NG to provide MAFFS to another State when no Federal requirement or existed. As for helicopters, the NIFC DCO wondered if, based on the recent decisions with respect to ground battalion sourcing, NG resources had to be exhausted prior to validation of an RFA for Title 10 helicopters in support of a state. The NIFC DCE previously had not considered availability of NG resources in validating WFF RFAs received from NIFC.<sup>105</sup>

Four MAFFS conducted fire operations out of McClellan Airport on the West Basin Fire, while three worked out of CIANGB on the Piute Fire. Cal Fire South released the MAFFS from the Piute fire, but Cal Fire North would not use them on the West Basin Fire, causing those aircraft to sit on the ground for two hours. Despite this the MAFFS flew 29 sorties with 27 air drops of 75,600 gallons. Two SH-60s and two CH-53s flew 24 sorties out of King City, dropping 24,744 gallons in 42 drops against the Basin Fire. Low visibility and air traffic saturation kept the four CH-46s forward deployed to Santa Ynez Airport to work the Gap Fire on the ground.<sup>106</sup>

### **07 Jul 08 – Monday**

At the 0900 MDT teleconference, the N2C2 remarked that the operations tempo was beginning to transition to a steady state. California was now down to 223 fires with 70 uncontained large fires. The priority remained fighting the Basin, Gap, and Big Sur Fires. FEMA decided to shut down their Region IX RRCC in Oakland at close of business on Tuesday, 8 Jul. The DCO expected FEAM would ‘deactivate DOD’ at the same time, ~~meaning~~ deactivate the Region IX DCO/E from an active incident status.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Slide (U/FOUO), NGB, “California Wildfire Support National Guard Situation Report #14,” 6 Jul 08;

<sup>104</sup> Rpt (U), NIFC DCO, “Blue 4 (DCO Daily Status),” 6 Jul 08.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> Msg (U), 302 AEG, “SITREP 15,” 07 0445Z Jul 08.

<sup>107</sup> Notes (U), NC, “WFF Telecon,” 7 Jul 08; Rpt (U), DCE# IX, “BLUE 4 (DCO Daily Status),” 7 Jul 08.



Imagery showing smoke from the Northern California Fires, 7 Jul 08

Despite FEMA's optimism, the NIFC DCO remained concerned as the progress of the last few days had slowed as conditions deteriorated. Reports of crew fatigue caused by temperatures well over 100 degrees, combined with the terrain, and the fact many had been on the fire line for over two weeks, meant progress would be slow. The next four days would likely see containment on only 6 of 59 large fires in California, but the containment projection improved after this with all but 7 of 23 complexes forecasted to be contained by 31 Jul. Based on this the DCO expected DOD involvement beyond 31 Jul would be limited to MAFFS operations. Yet all this was dependent upon the week's weather events.<sup>108</sup>

All eight MAFFS aircraft conducted fire operations out of McClellan Airport initially on the West Basin and American River Fires. Four were then sent from the American River Fire to work out of CIANGB on the Piute Fire. Sorties for the day totaled 36, with 37 drops of 100,800 gallons of retardant. The SH-60s and CH-53s flew 14 sorties with 37 drops of 22,404 gallons against the Basin Fire. The CH-46's forward deployed to Santa Ynez Airport to work the Gap Fire, but a diminishing need for air assets kept them on the ground.<sup>109</sup>

<sup>108</sup> Rpt (U), NIFC DCO, "Blue 4 (DCO Daily Status)," 7 Jul 08.

<sup>109</sup> Msg (U), 302 AEG, "SITREP 16," 08 0550Z Jul 08.

## Steady State

### 08 Jul 08 – Tuesday

USNORTHCOM released MOD 12 to the WFF EXORD on the 8th, redeploying the Combat Camera Team, four PA personnel, the Region IX DCO, and transferring TACON of the remaining service EPLOs to the NIFC DCO. The NIFC DCO reported the MAFFS and helicopters currently engaged would continue to be required for at least the next several days. It had been determined that the current eight helicopters should be sufficient and the remaining four on PTDO could be released. Air operations continued with the MAFFS flying out of McClellan against the Canyon Complex, Moon, Piute, Lightning Butte, and West Basin Fires. The aircraft completed 31 sorties, 29 drops, and releasing 81,200 gallons. Two CH-53s and two SH-60s flew 11 sorties on the Basin Fire, dropping 5,256 gallons in 9 drops. Two CH-46s forward deployed to Columbia Airport for alert in support of the North Mountain Fire, while the other two remained at NAS Lemoore on alert for the Gap Fire, but none conducted any drops. The AEG commander noted that “efficient use of the helos is still in question,” while the NIFC DCO reported that “helicopter usage is expected to remain unchanged as they are held in reserve for structure protection usage in anticipation of possible fire spreads or new starts in wildland – urban interface areas.”<sup>110</sup>

### 09 Jul 08 – Wednesday

The command released a General Administrative (GENADMIN) message releasing the PACOM helicopters from PTDO and MOD 13 which authorized the **NIFC DCO to release** and redeploy personnel to home station as the situation required. The NIFC DCO continued to anticipate that all currently committed resources would be retained at least for the length of the current RFA and was working with the NIFC to submit requests for extension NLT five days prior to the current end date. NIFC did not anticipate any additional requests for DOD support at the time. The MAFFS flew (23 sorties, 23 drops, 64,400 gallons) against the Piute and Basin West Fires. MAFFS 8 had to shut down an engine over the Piute Fire and jettison its retardant load. It now needed an engine change and would be operational four hours after the arrival of the engine. The CH-53s and SH-60s sat alert with no tasking, as two CH-46s forward deployed to Columbia Airport and flew fire missions (6 sorties, 15 drops, 3,402 gallons) on the North Mountain Fire as the other two remained at NAS Lemoore on alert with no tasking.<sup>111</sup>

### 10 Jul 08 – Thursday

MOD 14 on 10 Jul released the four PACOM helicopters from the PTDO. It also clarified the process by which MAFFS aircraft would get support from outside their respective wings. As in the case of the needed engine, the AEG would notify AFNORTH who would then notify USNORTHCOM who would then request the support from USTRANSCOM and TRANSCOM would task a unit to provide the support. As the NIFC DCO noted the MAFFS

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<sup>110</sup> Msg (U), NC, “MOD 12,” 08 2233Z Jul 08; Rpt (U), NIFC DCO, “Blue 4 (DCO Daily Status),” 8 Jul 08; Msg (U), 302 AEG, “SITREP 17,” 09 0610Z Jul 08.

<sup>111</sup> Notes (U), NC, “WFF Telecon,” 9 Jul 08; Msg (U), NC, “MOD 13,” 09 2315Z Jul 08; Rpt (U), NIFC DCO, “Blue 4 (DCO Daily Status),” 9 Jul 08; Msg (U), 302 AEG, “SITREP 18,” 10 0555Z Jul 08.



“have proven themselves as one of the workhorses of the heavy tanker fleet currently operating in California” with five aircraft flying 29 sorties, 30 air drops, 81,200 gallons against the Motion and East Basin Fires. Projected containment dates suggested the MAFFS would be needed past their initial 30 day period. Helicopters continued to be under-utilized, with no taskings on the 10th. Since 4 Jul only four of the eight received daily taskings. The AEG and DCO were working with the USFS to identify ways to better utilize the helicopters.<sup>112</sup>

### **11 Jul 08 – Friday**

NORTHCOM released MOD 15 on 11 Jul removing the PACOM helicopters from PTDO and requesting Beale AFB be utilized as a limited operational staging base for pre-approved federal commodities in anticipation of a potential mass evacuation and shelter up to 300 civilians, per a FEMA MA. The NIFC also provided two RFAs. The first requested one of the MAFFS aircraft be released to participate in MAFFS II flight testing and operational validation, reporting to Chico Airport, CA on 15 Jul. The second requested NORTHCOM to reposition six USMC helicopters with buckets from NAS Lemoore to McClellan Airpark on 12 Jul.<sup>113</sup>

The NIFC DCO reported that Cal Fire had coordinated for helicopter managers and lodging for the four CH-46s, two CH-53s, crews, and maintenance personnel. In light of this request the 3D MAW was conducting planning and coordination to facilitate the movement. As they received no taskings on the 11th, the AEG commander reported that “Marine aircrews are very excited to get back into the fight.” The six available MAFFS flew 28 sorties, 34 air drops, releasing 78,400 gallons of retardant (for a cumulative total of over one million gallons since 26 Jun) on the Motion Fire.<sup>114</sup>

### **12 Jul 08 – Saturday**

After three weeks the California fires had burned more than 800,000 acres and speculation was that this number could reach more than 1,000,000 acres as 22 active fire complexes remained. But some relief was on the way. Onshore flows were expected to develop on the 12th along the California coast, accompanied by cooler temperatures and higher relative humidity. As the outlook for California improved it was expected that all large fires in California would be contained by the beginning of Aug, pending any unexpected worsening in weather patterns.<sup>115</sup>

NORTHCOM released MOD 16 approving the release of one C-130H to support MAFFS II testing and validation and repositioning the Marine helicopters from NAS Lemoore to

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<sup>112</sup> Msg (U), NC, “MOD 14,” 10 2150Z Jul 08; Rpt (U), NIFC DCO, “Blue 4 (DCO Daily Status),” 10 Jul 08; Msg (U), 302 AEG, “SITREP 19,” 11 0440Z Jul 08.

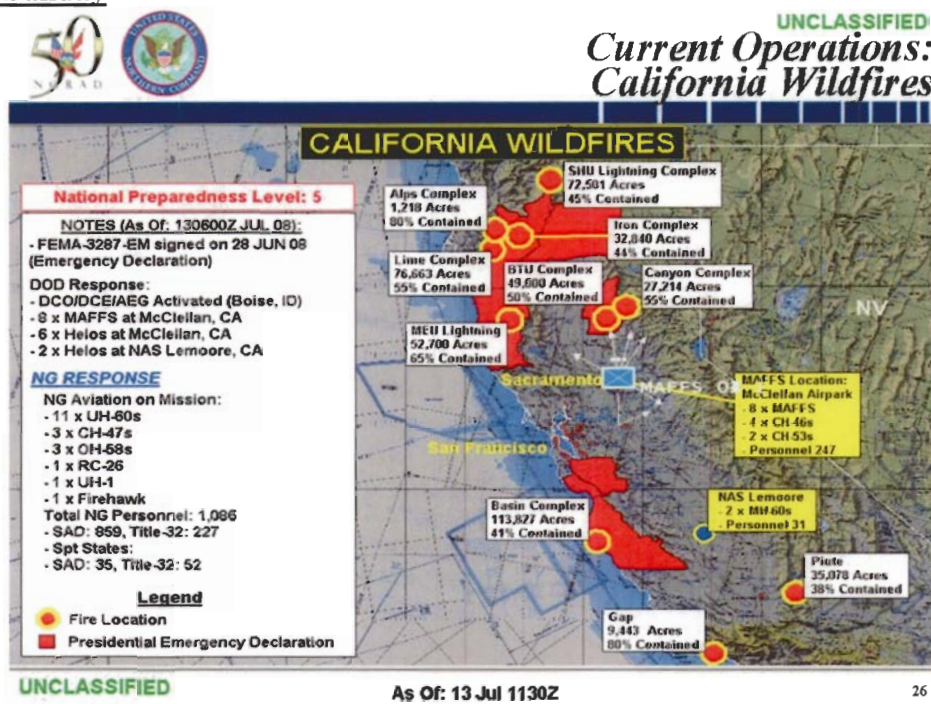
<sup>113</sup> Msg (U), NC, “MOD 15,” 11 1945Z Jul 08; Memo (U), NIFC to DOD, “Modification NIFC RFA 4, dated June 27, 2008,” 11 Jul 08; Memo (U), NIFC to DOD, “Modifications to NIFC RFA 1 and NIFC RFA 2, dated 25 June & 28 JUN 08,” 11 Jul 08.

<sup>114</sup> Rpt (U), NIFC DCO, “Blue 4 (DCO Daily Status),” 11 Jul 08; Msg (U), 302 AEG, “SITREP 20,” 12 0445Z Jul 08.

<sup>115</sup> Notes, NC, “California Wildfires Severe Weather Senior Leadership VTC,” 12 Jul 08; Notes (U), NC, “WFF Telecon,” 12 Jul 08.

McClellan Airpark. MOD 17 transferred the two Navy helicopters to McClellan and once again tasked PACOM with deploying four additional Title 10 medium lift helicopters to McClellan on 15 Jul. The NIFC DCO reported that the USMC helicopters (2 CH-53, 4 CH-46) relocated to McClellan Airpark on the morning of the 12th. Initial observations were that Cal Fire and the USFS were not prepared to receive the influx of helicopters and other assets. Cal Fire, in concert with the USFS were working logistic support requirements and the Marines were prepared to conduct operations beginning on the 13th if the requirements were met. Six MAFFS conducted operations (24 sorties, 26 drops, 67,000 gallons) against the Motion, West Basin, and East Basin Fires. However, the support difficulties for helicopters at McClellan were a significant area of concern as the number of DOD helicopters at McClellan was expected to double in two days.<sup>116</sup>

### 13 Jul 08 – Sunday



For the first time in many days the MAFFS flew no sorties due to smoke dispersal conditions that made it too hazardous to drop retardant. Upon recommendation of the DCO and in coordination with AFNORTH, NORTHCOM, NIFC, 3D MAW and HSC-85 the AEG placed a 24-hour hold on the movement and deployment directed in MOD 17. The influx of resources in the past 24 hours, the operating limitations of DOD helicopters at high altitudes, and the significant progress in Southern California resulted in a complete review of resources. Based on that review and in consultation with the NICC and USFS the DCO recommended that all DOD helicopter resources be released.<sup>117</sup>

<sup>116</sup> Msg (U), NC, "MOD 16," 12 1903Z Jul 08; Msg (U), NC, "MOD 17," 12 2010Z Jul 08; Rpt (U), NIFC DCO, "Blue 4 (DCO Daily Status)," 12 Jul 08; Msg (U), 302 AEG, "SITREP 21," 13 0450Z Jul 08.

<sup>117</sup> Rpt (U), NIFC DCO, "Blue 4 (DCO Daily Status)," 13 Jul 08; Msg (U), 302 AEG, "SITREP 22," 14 0250Z Jul 08.

### **14 Jul 08 – Monday**

Smoke conditions prevented all air tanker, MAFFS and civilian, from operating on the 14th. The NIFC was beginning to receive reports that the civilian air tanker fleet availability was declining due to increased usage and subsequent maintenance requirements. This indicated and increased reliance on MAFFS as civilian air tankers were taken out of service for required maintenance and crew rest. All Title 10 helicopters resourced in support of fire fighting efforts in California had been released from RFAs by California, in coordination with the NIFC, that planned to issue the RFA for release that evening. All Title 10 forward deployed helicopters would remain in place pending CDRUSNORTHCOM's decision on release of assets back to the force provider.<sup>118</sup>

### **15 Jul 08 – Tuesday**

California's decision to release all DOD helicopters had not been received by NIFC by the morning of the 15th. CDRUSNORTHCOM's guidance was to maintain the status of the helicopter assets until he met with the Governor of California. For a third day all air tankers remained untasked due to smoke conditions and the MAFFS used the time to get all eight FMC. MAFFS 2 was supporting the MAFFS II field evaluation and was scheduled for priority use on the 16th. By that evening the NIFC DCO received the NIFC release for all Title 10 helicopters in California, but they would remain in place pending CDRNORTHCOM's decision. NORTHCOM released MOD 18 late in the day, placing a hold on all twelve Title 10 helicopters until the commander's assessment in California on the 16th.<sup>119</sup>

### **16 Jul 08 – Wednesday**

By the 16th Predictive Services was tracking a weather system approaching the west coast that could trigger a significant lightning event this weekend or early next week. This event could lead to changes in national resource allocation and was being monitored closely at the NIFC. The MAFFS only flew two sorties (4 drops, 5,600 gallons) on the Mill Fire. The helicopters had been released back to NORTHCOM and were standing by.<sup>120</sup>

### **17 Jul 08 – Thursday**

The commander's visit to McClellan Airpark and meeting with the Governor of California "went well" and MOD 19 releasing all Title 10 helicopters, crews, and LNOs from deployed or PTDO status was issued late in the evening of the 16th. With the potential for further fire weather the NIFC requested that two MAFFS aircraft, the AEG, and the DCO/E be extended for 30 more days. The MAFFS flew no sorties on the 17th and the six Marine and two

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<sup>118</sup> Rpt (U), NIFC DCO, "Blue 4 (DCO Daily Status)," 14 Jul 08.

<sup>119</sup> Notes (U), NC, "WFF Telecon," 15 Jul 08; Rpt (U), NIFC DCO, "Blue 4 (DCO Daily Status)," 15 Jul 08; Msg (U), NC, "MOD 18," 16 0251Z Jul 08.

<sup>120</sup> Rpt (U), NIFC DCO, "Blue 4 (DCO Daily Status)," 16 Jul 08; Msg (U), 302 AEG, "SITREP 25," 17 0225Z Jul 08.

Navy helicopters departed for home station, having flown 181 sorties, 574 drops, and releasing 217,327 gallons in 17 days of WFF operations.<sup>121</sup>

## **Release**

### **18 Jul 08 – Friday**

USNORTHCOM issued MOD 20 to the EXORD on 18 Jul. The modification covered the 30 day extension of four MAFFS, the AEG, and the DCO/DCE to on or about 24 Aug. It also released NAS Lemoore and Beale AFB from BSI and NSLA requirements. The NIFC released two MAFFS effective 2300Z and the AEG commander authorized MAFFS 4 and 6 to return to base. MAFFS 2, as the MAFFS II test aircraft, flew two sorties on the Soda Complex, with four airdrops and releasing 5,600 gallons. Without a weather event triggering significant fire activity, the NIFC DCO anticipated more releases soon.<sup>122</sup>

### **19 Jul 08 – Saturday**

MOD 21 tasked AFNORTH in coordination with the AEG to redeploy two MAFFS. The AEG briefed the teleconference that MAFFS 4 (302 AW, Colorado Springs, CO) and 6 (145 AW, Charlotte, NC) were returning their MAFFS units to Channel Islands, then returning to McClellan to pick up the rest of their personnel before heading to home station. The AEG had expected to release two more aircraft pending notification from NIFC, as Cal Fire's initial plan was to do so, but due to increase fire activity Cal Fire put a 24-hour hold on any more MAFFS releases. The MAFFS available at McClellan Airpark flew another 19 sorties, with 17 drops, of 47,600 gallons against the Soda, Lime, and East Basin complexes.<sup>123</sup>

### **20 Jul 08 – Sunday**

NORTHCOM entered its fifth week of support to the California fires on the 20th. MOD 22 directed redeployment of two more MAFFS, making a total of four MAFFS released, four still at McClellan Airpark. The AEG's plan was to release MAFFS 1 and 3, as the MAFFS II unit executed two sorties on the Soda Complex, with four airdrops and releasing 5,600 gallons. An increased fire potential over the next few days and increased fire activity caused a reevaluation of MAFFS release plans. As a result no more MAFFS were released and a 21 Jul meeting would reassess the plan.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Notes (U), NC, "WFF Telecon," 17 Jul 08; Msg (U), NC, "MOD 19," 17 0023Z Jul 08; Memo (U), NIFC to DOD, "Extension Request of DoD Support," 17 Jul 08; Msg (U), 302 AEG, "SITREP 26," 18 0300Z Jul 08.

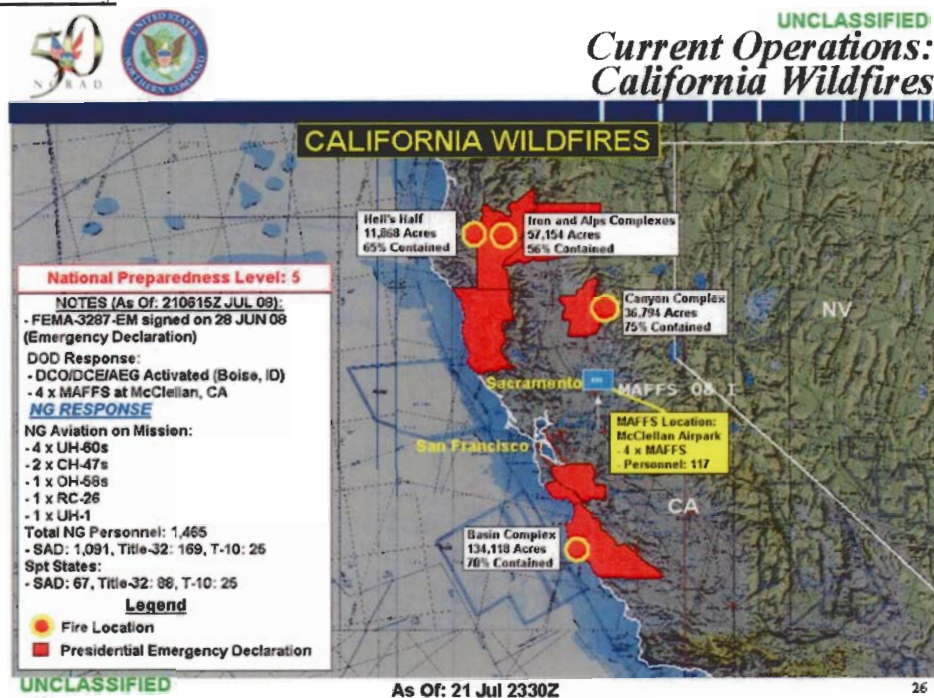
<sup>122</sup> Msg (U), NC, "MOD 20," 18 1710Z Jul 08; Memo (U), NIFC to DOD, "MAFFS Release," 18 Jul 08; Msg (U), 302 AEG, "SITREP 27," 19 0445Z Jul 08; Rpt (U), NIFC DCO, "Blue 4 (DCO Daily Status)," 18 Jul 08.

<sup>123</sup> Msg (U), NC, "MOD 21," 19 0050Z Jul 08; Notes (U), NC, "WFF Telecon," 19 Jul 08; Msg (U), 302 AEG, "SITREP 28," 20 0455Z Jul 08.

<sup>124</sup> Msg (U), NC, "MOD 22," 19 0050Z Jul 08; Msg (U), 302 AEG, "SITREP 28," 20 0249Z Jul 08; Rpt (U), NIFC DCO, "Blue 4 (DCO Daily Status)," 20 Jul 08.



21 Jul 08 – Monday



An active weather system was moving inland on the 21st, increasing the potential for large fires. The forecast for initial attack activities in was considered high thru 23 Jul. As a result, California decided to hold all MAFFS and would re-evaluate on 22 Jul. Of the four MAFFS available, on the MAFFS II aircraft flew (2 sorties, 2 drops, 5,600 gallons) against the Lime Complex.<sup>125</sup>

22-25 Jul 08 – Tuesday-Friday

On the 22d two MAFFS flew two sorties, with two drops, releasing 5,600 gallons of retardant on the French Fire. The MAFFS II unit was returned to Chico and swapped-out with a MAFFS I. No releases were expected until 24 Jul.<sup>126</sup>

Improving resource availability and moderating weather conditions for the next three to five days resulted in the national Preparedness Level being lowered from 5 to 4 on 23 Jul, indicating a low probability for additional requests for DOD assistance in the near term. The MAFFS received no launch orders on the 23d.<sup>127</sup>

<sup>125</sup> Msg (U), 302 AEG, "SITREP 30," 22 0410Z Jul 08; Rpt (U), NIFC DCO, "Blue 4 (DCO Daily Status)," 21 Jul 08.

<sup>126</sup> Msg (U), 302 AEG, "SITREP 31," 23 0410Z Jul 08

<sup>127</sup> Rpt (U), NIFC DCO, "Blue 4 (DCO Daily Status)," 23 Jul 08; Msg (U), 302 AEG, "SITREP 32," 24 0255Z Jul 08.

Four MAFFS were operational at McClellan Air Park, but flew no sorties on the 24th. NIFC released two MAFFS effective 0100Z on 25 Jul. Planning for redeployment operations was underway at the AEG.<sup>128</sup>

MOD 23 released redeployed the two MAFFS per the NIFC RFA and the CDRUSNORTHCOM's VOCO on 25 Jul. The two MAFFS and associated command and support personnel departed for home station (Colorado Springs), closing at 25 2004Z Jul 08 (MAFFS 2) and 25 2040Z Jul 08 (MAFFS 5). The remaining two MAFFS from the 145 AW (NC ANG) again flew no missions on the 25th, but were retained due to an emerging fire in Southern California.<sup>129</sup>

### **26-31 Jul 08 – Saturday-Thursday**

The MAFFS flew against the Telegraph Fire in Southern California on the 26th, flying 12 sorties, 14 drops, releasing 39,300 gallons of retardant. They continued their air attacks on the 27th, with another 7 sorties and drops and 19,600 gallons released. Given their importance to fighting the Telegraph Fire California notified the NIFC that the two MAFFS would be retained for operations for another 72 hours. The NIFC DCO expected they would be employed until at least the 30th.<sup>130</sup>

On 28 Jul the MAFFS flew again against the Telegraph Fire (4 sorties, 4 drops, 11,200 gallons) and the AEG reported they would be held for at least the next 48 hours. On the 29th USNORTHCOM released MOD 24 authorizing redeployment of the DCE (-) from the NIFC. Three personnel returned to home station from the DCE after 38 days at the NIFC. The MAFFS continued to attack the Telegraph Fire on 29 Jul with 11 sorties, 11 drops, and 30,800 gallons.<sup>131</sup>

On the 30th the MAFFS flew (2 sorties, 2 drops, 5,600 gallons) again against the Telegraph Fire. The AEG commander noted that the USFS planned to hold two MAFFS for the next 24 to 48 hours, which fell during the lead wing swap out. He warned this meant the 302 AW could deploy on 31 Jul and redeploy on 1 Aug. NORTHCOM issued MOD 25 on 31 Jul to support the hand off of the MAFFS mission between the 302 AW and 145 AW.<sup>132</sup>

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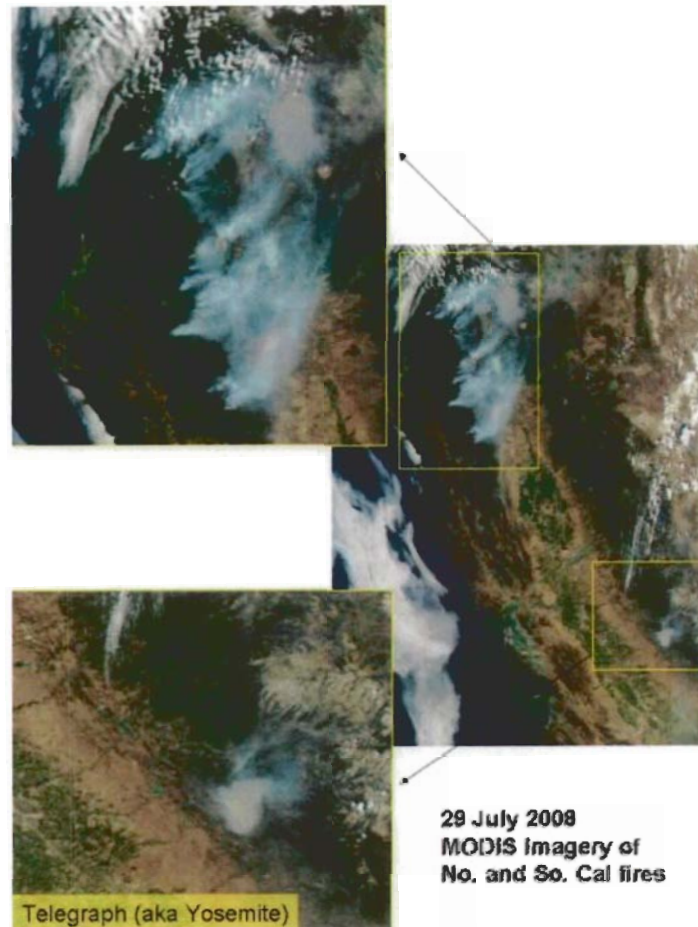
<sup>128</sup> Rpt (U), NIFC DCO, "Blue 4 (DCO Daily Status)," 24 Jul 08; Memo (U), NIFC to DOD, "MAFFS Release," 24 Jul 08.

<sup>129</sup> Msg (U), NC, "MOD 23," 25 1458Z Jul 08; Rpt (U), NIFC DCO, "Blue 4 (DCO Daily Status)," 25 Jul 08.

<sup>130</sup> Msg (U), 302 AEG, "SITREP 35," 27 0420Z Jul 08; Msg (U), 302 AEG, "SITREP 36," 28 0420Z Jul 08; Rpt (U), NIFC DCO, "Blue 4 (DCO Daily Status)," 27 Jul 08.

<sup>131</sup> Msg (U), 302 AEG, "SITREP 37," 29 0400Z Jul 08; Msg (U), NC, "MOD 24," 29 2044Z Jul 08; Rpt (U), NIFC DCO, "Blue 4 (DCO Daily Status)," 29 Jul 08; Msg (U), 302 AEG, "SITREP 38," 30 0400Z Jul 08.

<sup>132</sup> Msg (U), 302 AEG, "SITREP 39," 31 0305Z Jul 08; Msg (U), NC, "MOD 25," 31 2351Z Jul 08.



### 01-13 Aug 08 – Friday-Wednesday

The 145 AW and 302 AW completed their swap-out on the 1 Aug. The NIFC then decided to release the final two MAFFS and the DCO effective that evening. NORTHCOM released MOD 26 late on the 1st to redeploy the two MAFFS, but left the DCO and the AEG deployed to continue to support NIFC and the redeployment. The two 302 AW MAFFS departed from McClellan Airpark on 2 Aug and the AEG and EAS commander were determining a redeployment plan to for the remaining support equipment. The MAFFS were deployed for 42 days to the 2008 California wildfires, flew 480 sorties, for 679.5 hours, with 488 air drops, and releasing 1,325,000 gallons of retardant.<sup>133</sup>

The final two support aircraft departed McClellan Airfield on 3 Aug, one to Colorado Springs and one to Channel Islands, with MAFFS support equipment and the EAS commander. Also on the 3d the NIFC DCO performed his duties from a remote location, with the NIFC Military Liaison extended until 30 Sep and the AEG remaining to support the retrograde of equipment. The AEG submitted its final situation report on 4 Aug and departed Boise on 6 Aug. USNORTHCOM released MOD 27 redeploying the DCO and the AEG, but tasking them to

<sup>133</sup> Msg (U), 302 AEG, "SITREP 41," 02 0330Z Aug 08; Memo (U), NIFC to DOD, "MAFFS / DCO Release, California 2008 Fire Siege," 1 Aug 08; Msg (U), NC, "MOD 26," 02 0435Z Aug 08; Msg (U), 302 AEG, "SITREP 42," 02 2300Z Aug 08

support MAFFS II operational testing from home station. However, the USFS decided to delay MAFFS II testing and so on 13 Aug NORTHCOM issued MOD 28 which released the NIFC DCO and the 302 AEG from supporting NIFC, effectively ending the 2008 fire season for NORTHCOM.<sup>134</sup>

## After Action Review

The USNORTHCOM After Action Review (AAR) focused on four areas: OPCON of forces, helicopter operations, DOD/NG ground forces, and DOD IAA. For the first time, USNORTHCOM delegated OPCON of forces to the JFACC. There were some growing pains as shown by problems with spare parts for the MAFFS aircraft. The AEG AAR noted that standard logistical practices were not always responsive enough for emergency and disaster operations. The current process did not account sufficiently for cost mitigation options and key logistics components were unfamiliar with current operations. The associate program hindered or even prevented organic support and the MAFFS wings were not always capable of organic support. There were also insufficient methods to task willing ANG assets. However, the AEG found that higher headquarters logistics experts helped both the AEG and the EAS and should be retained as a “best practice.”<sup>135</sup>

The NIFC requested DOD helicopter support which fell under the AEG at Boise, ID. But with the AEG primarily focused on MAFFS operations, it required helicopter LNOs to assist in command and control. Marine Forces North reported that the daily usage rate for the Marine helicopters deployed to the fires was only 23 percent. A number of factors contributed to this low number. While USMC helicopter crews were authorized to fly a 12 hour crew day and were generally prepared to begin flight operations NLT 0800 each day, the NIFC daily operational schedule typically precluded flight operations before 0930 and often ended before the 12 hour crew day was exhausted. Further, once an asset was assigned to a particular fire for that day, it was unlikely it would be reassigned to another fire regardless of need. Also, there were reports that firefighting officials and Incident Commanders were reluctant to employ DOD helicopter assets because of their perceived expense.<sup>136</sup>

The State of California requested DOD ground personnel support, but had not tapped into its National Guard. Shortly after requesting DOD ground forces, California began training a pool of firefighters with support from the NIFC. General Renuart discussed the need for a trained pool of National Guard members for firefighting missions during his visit with Governor Schwarzenegger. The Joint Director of Military Support (JDOMS) AAR noted that the Joint Staff (JS) prepared an EXORD on 29 Jun placing a Title 10 battalion on PTDO. On 30 June the Deputy Chairman signed the order, but the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense asked why Title 10 was being considered when the California NG only reported 313 personnel committed to the fire, yet signed the order anyway. The EXORD went to the SECDEF on 1 Jul,

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<sup>134</sup> Msg (U), 302 AEG, “SITREP 43,” 04 0140Z Aug 08; Msg (U), 302 AEG, “SITREP 44,” 05 0140Z Aug 08; Msg (U), NC, “MOD 27,” 05 0100Z Aug 08; Msg (U), NC, “MOD 28,” 13 2200Z Aug 08.

<sup>135</sup> Brfg (U), NC, “US Northern Command 2008 WFF AAR/Issues,” 9-11 Dec 08; Brfg (U), 302 AEG, “After Action,” Dec 08.

<sup>136</sup> Brfg (U), NC, “US Northern Command 2008 WFF AAR/Issues,” 9-11 Dec 08; Brfg (U), MFN, “DoD Helo Operations ISO NIFC 2008,” Dec 08.



but was placed on hold due to discussions between the SecDef and POTUS over minimizing stress on Title 10 forces. The CJCS directed NORTHCOM to coordinate with the NGB to develop a National Guard solution and on 2 Jul the CA NG accepted the mission.<sup>137</sup>

Finally, DOD IAA was provided to incident commanders but was not requested by federal agency. Navy and Air Force Global Hawks each flew one mission, using training missions. Three planned U-2 training missions were ultimately canceled. The NASA Ikhana UAV, Eagle Vision, National Guard RC-26s and OH-58s, and USFS aircraft flew 345 IAA sorties. The challenges for DOD IAA were no common operating portal, intelligence oversight, Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) restrictions on UAVs, and dissemination.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Brfg (U), NC, "US Northern Command 2008 WFF AAR/Issues," 9-11 Dec 08; Brfg (U), JDOMS, "2008 Wildland Fire Fighting Post Season Conference," Dec 08.

<sup>138</sup> Brfg (U), NC, "US Northern Command 2008 WFF AAR/Issues," 9-11 Dec 08; Brfg (U), AFNORTH, "NIFC Post-Season Conference," Dec 08.

## Note on Sources

All the documents cited in this study may be found on the following NIPR Operations Portal sites:

<https://operations.noradnorthcom.mil/sites/BattleStaff/DSCA/wff/CA07/default.aspx>

<https://operations.noradnorthcom.mil/sites/BattleStaff/DSCA/wff/SOCALNOV07/default.aspx>

<https://operations.noradnorthcom.mil/sites/nncj7/NNCJ75/Master%20Doc%20Library/SoCalFire07.aspx?PageView=Shared>

<https://operations.noradnorthcom.mil/sites/BattleStaff/DSCA/wff/2008/Jun08CAWFF/default.aspx>

## Glossary

AAR	After Action Review
ACCE	Air Component Coordination Element
AELT	Aeromedical Evacuation Liaison Team
AEG	Air Expeditionary Group
AFB	Air Force Base
AFNORTH	Air Force North
AFRC	Air Force Reserve Command
ANG	Air National Guard
ANGB	Air National Guard Base
APOD	Aerial Port of Debarkation
ARB	Air Reserve Base
ARNORTH	Army North
ASD/HD	Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense
BSI	Base Support Installation
CAE	Commander's Assessment Element
CAISE	Civil Authority Information Support Element
CASEVAC	Casualty Evacuation
CAT	Crisis Action Team
CCATT	Critical Care Air Transport Team
CCB	Command Coordination Board
CCDR	Combatant Commander
CDF	California Department of Forestry
CDR	Commander
CJCS	Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff
CTCS	Combat Camera Squadron
DCE	Defense Coordinating Element
DCO	Defense Coordinating Officer
DEPORD	Deployment Order
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DOD	Department of Defense
DSCA	Defense Support to Civil Authorities
EAS	Expeditionary Airlift Squadron
EOC	Emergency Operations Center
EPLO	Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officer
EXORD	Execution Order
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
FCO	Federal Coordinating Officer
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FFC	Fleet Forces Command
FLIR	Forward Looking Infrared Radar
FMV	Full Motion Video
FOSA	FEMA Operational Staging Areas
FRAGO	Fragmentary Order
FWD	Forward

GACC	Geographical Area Coordination Center
GENADMIN	General Administrative
HHS	Health and Human Services
HSC	Helicopter Combat Support Squadron
IA	Individual Augment
IAA	Incident Assessment and Awareness
IR	Immediate Response
JDOMS	Joint Director of Military Support
JFACC	Joint Forces Air Component Commander
JFC	Joint Force Commander
JFCOM	Joint Forces Command
JFHQ	Joint Force Headquarters
JFLCC	Joint Forces Land Component Commander
JFMCC	Joint Forces Maritime Component Commander
JFO	Joint Field Office
JOA	Joint Area of Operations
JPAC	Joint Planning and Augmentation Cell
JRSOI	Joint Reception, Staging, Onward movement, and Integration
JS	Joint Staff
JTAC	Joint Terminal Attack Controller
JTF	Joint Task Force
LNO	Liaison Officer
MA	Mission Assignment
MAFFS	Modular Airborne Fire Fighting Systems
MARFORNORTH	Marine Forces North
MASF	Mobile Aeromedical Staging Facility
MAW	Marine Air Wing
MEDEVAC	Medical Evacuation
MEF	Marine Expeditionary Force
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
MOC	Medical Operations Cell
MOD	Modification
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAS	Naval Air Station
NAWS	Naval Air Weapons Station
NDMS	National Disaster Medical System
NEPLO	Navy Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officer
NGB	National Guard Bureau
NIFC	National Interagency Fire Center
OCP	Operation Command Post
OES	Office of Emergency Services
OPCON	Operational Control
PA	Public Affairs
PACOM	Pacific Command
PAD	Public Affairs Detachment
PAO	Public Affairs Officer



POTUS	President of the United States
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
PTDO	Prepare-to-Deploy-Order
RFA	Request for Assistance
RFF	Request for Forces
RRCC	Regional Response Coordination Center
SecDef	Secretary of Defense
SOCOM	Special Operations Command
TACON	Tactical Control
TCDL	Tactical Communications Data Link
TF	Task Force
TRANSCOM	Transportation Command
UAS	Unmanned Aerial System
USFS	United States Forest Service
VOCO	Vocal Order
WARNORD	Warning Order
WFF	Wildland Fire Fighting