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While aircraft relocate, MAFFS maintain firefighting capabilities

By Tom Saunders, AFNORTH Public Affairs

TYNDALL AIR FORCE BASE, Fla. – Two Modular Airborne Firefighting System C-130 Hercules aircraft from Air Force Reserve Command's 302nd Airlift Wing at Peterson Air Force Base, Colo., deployed to Texas Tuesday to provide additional aerial support to contain wildland fires that have plagued Texas for several weeks.

The C-130s flew their first aerial retardant drop sorties shortly after arriving to join the 302nd Air Expeditionary Group, which is deployed to Dyess AFB in Abilene, Texas, to support the National Interagency Fire Center.



The arrival of the 302nd AW MAFFS aircraft also marks the re-deployment of the 145th Airlift Wing from North Carolina and the 153rd Airlift Wing from Wyoming to their respective home stations.

"The 145th and 153rd have provided critical and timely support to the region and to the MAFFS operation as a whole," said Col. Jay Pittman, 302nd AEG commander. "The arrival of the aircraft from Peterson allows for a seamless transition for us to continue providing valuable firefighting capabilities to the citizens of Texas as long as our support is needed."

Aircraft assigned to the 302nd AEG have flown 44 missions dropping 132,000 gallons of fire retardant in an attempt to contain wildfires since April 17.

The MAFFS is a self-contained aerial firefighting system, which can discharge 3,000 gallons of water or fire retardant in less than five seconds, covering an area one-quarter of a mile long by 60 feet wide. Once the load is discharged, it can be refilled in less than 12 minutes.

The MAFFS is owned by the U.S. Forest Service, a cooperative partner with the National Interagency Fire Center based in Boise, Idaho. NIFC is the lead federal agency for these firefighting efforts, and the Department of Defense is flying in support of the NIFC mission.

AFNORTH is the air component for U.S. Northern Command and when tasked, provides support to local, state, tribal, regional and federal emergency service agencies.

Additional imagery pertaining to the firefighting efforts can be viewed at www.facebook.com/AmericasAOC or via the Defense Video & Imagery Distribution System web site at www.dvidshub.net.