



**146th Airlift Wing
Office of Public Affairs
California Air National Guard
Channel Islands ANG Station, California**

For Immediate Release

May 5, 2004

Local Air National Guard unit fights wildfires

CHANNEL ISLANDS AIR NATIONAL GUARD STATION, Calif. -- Men and women of the California Air National Guard's 146th Airlift Wing launched aircraft outfitted for aerial fire-fighting today to aid in the fight against Southern California wildfires that have given an early start to the 2004 fire season.

The wing's first missions of the day from this base adjacent to Naval Base Ventura County, Point Mugu, were flown against Santa Barbara County's Cachuma fire.

The Ventura County-based military unit, which flies the C-130 Hercules cargo airplane, received notification of its activation through the California National Guard's Joint Forces Headquarters yesterday afternoon and began firefighting operations less than 24 hours later.

The unit's firefighting capability, military airlifters outfitted with the Modular Airborne Fire-fighting System, or MAFFS, is an important addition to the air and ground assets the state of California has brought to bare against wildfires burning in a number of Southern California counties. Firefighting operations at this base are being conducted in partnership with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

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The 146th Airlift Wing has been conducting aerial firefighting since the 1970s when the mission was first assigned to the U.S. Air Force. Today, four Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve C-130 units use eight of the modular systems to assist federal and state forestry and fire protection agencies to battle wildland fires in times of fire emergencies, such as last falls devastating Southern California fires. Through the Homeland Security and Military Support to Civil Authorities missions of U.S. Northern Command, all four airlift units and Marine and Navy helicopter units assisted in the fight against those fires.

The long-term personnel retention offered by the reserves gives these Air Force units the ability to build and maintain the necessary skill, experience and expertise required for this hazardous and specialized mission.

For further information or to visit the base contact, public affairs officer, at (805) 986-7496.

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