

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 9, 2014

The Honorable Chuck Hagel
Secretary
Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Hagel:

We write today to express our opposition to a Department of Defense proposal that would require the Modular Airborne Fire Fighting System (MAFFS) mission to be executed in Title 10 status. We believe the current MAFFS mission flown by the Air National Guard in Title 32 status is an essential option in the suppression of wildfires that threaten our citizens, their property, and public infrastructure alike.

For more than 40 years, performing this mission under Title 32 has provided flexibility for the use of traditional, military technician or Active, Guard, or Reserve personnel, with Wing commanders having the authority to order military members to MAFFS duty. As you know, governors and National Guard adjutants general do not have the authority to order airmen into an active duty status. As a result, we are concerned that asking MAFFS crews to conduct this mission in a Title 10 status may jeopardize the National Guard's ability to man crews for an entire fire season—particularly as a number of pay and benefits issues associated with this proposal have yet to be resolved.

The adjutants general in California, Wyoming and North Carolina—the three states where Air National Guard units fly this critical mission—oppose this proposal in its current form. Despite the non-concurrence of the Chief of the National Guard Bureau and the real possibility MAFFS crews could be unnecessarily delayed or have insufficient volunteers to conduct the mission, Acting Assistant Secretary Rosenblum has directed Defense Department components to be prepared to conduct MAFFS support in Title 10 status by May 1, 2015. Rather than focusing on unity of command, we believe the Defense Department should be ensuring Defense Support for Civil Authorities (DSCA) unity of effort in the accomplishment of the overall fire suppression objective.

Our respective National Guard adjutant generals want to be part of the solution, and we firmly believe input from the professionals who execute this mission should inform any future changes to the MAFFS mission. As such, we request that Acting Assistant Secretary Rosenblum's memo be withdrawn and the Department work with the three states and the National Guard Bureau to resolve the objections the Department may have to performing the mission in Title 32 status.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



SCOTT PETERS
Member of Congress



JULIA BROWNLEY
Member of Congress



MARK MEADOWS
Member of Congress



MIKE HONDA
Member of Congress



LOIS CAPPS
Member of Congress



DOUG LAMALFA
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VIRGINIA FOXX
Member of Congress



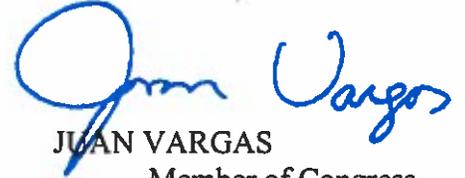
GEORGE HOLDING
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JOHN GARAMENDI
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GLORIA NEGRETE MCLEOD
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