

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 29, 2023

The Honorable Frank Kendall
Secretary of the Air Force
1670 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330-1670

Lieutenant General Michael A. Loh
Director of the Air National Guard
1000 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330-1000

Dear Secretary Kendall and Lieutenant General Loh:

We write to request your selection of the 152nd Airlift Wing (AW) at the Reno-Tahoe International Airport, Nevada, as you evaluate base candidates for the Air National Guard C-130H recapitalization (MOB 7-10). We are aware that eight Air National Guard locations are currently being considered for the C-130Js, and we appreciate that Air Force leaders followed through on their commitments before the Senate Armed Services Committee to make the Modular Airborne Fire Fighting System (MAFFS) mission part of its basing criteria.


The decision to upgrade the Nevada Air National Guard's C-130H fleet with C-130Js would have a substantial impact on their readiness and firefighting capabilities in Nevada, California, and throughout the western United States, a vast region plagued by devastating wildland fires. The 152nd AW flies its legacy C-130s in some of the hottest temperatures, highest elevations, and in the most challenging mountainous environments of any C-130 unit. Integral to their mission is flying MAFFS – the most dangerous C-130 mission – in support of the U.S. Forest Service (USFS).

Transitioning to C-130J aircraft will improve interoperability between the 152nd AW's support for USFS, the Bureau of Land Management, and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, and will also improve interoperability with the 146th AW in Channel Islands, California, which is currently the only MAFFS unit flying the C-130J. In 2020, the 152nd AW flew 113 MAFFS sorties, dropping 314,955 gallons of fire retardant, and in 2021, during their 89-day activation, the AW flew 330 sorties and dropped 912,042 gallons of fire retardant – making 2021 the second busiest MAFFS activation in fifty years of C-130 support to USFS. These efforts are thanks to the tremendous work and skill of the 152nd AW, but they also place significant strains on aircraft and personnel.

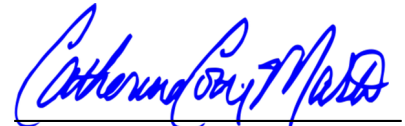
As devastating wildland fires become more common occurrences in Nevada, California, and the western United States, it is critical to have increased capabilities for these firefighting missions. In light of this, we believe basing determinations should be made based on location and the missions served in particular regions of the country. Ensuring that the Air National Guard is ready to assist and respond to these emergencies should be a priority as you consider where to base more capable aircraft.

We appreciate your attention to this important matter and respectfully request that you strongly consider the Reno-Tahoe International Airport in Nevada when making your basing decisions.


Sincerely,




Jacky Rosen
United States Senator



Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Alex Padilla
United States Senator