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DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON 20330



OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

MAR 16 1972

Dear Mr. McClure:

This is to inform you that the United States Air Force has recently completed initial testing to develop a prototype Modular Airborne Fire Fighting System (MAFFS) for fighting forest and brush fires on civilian lands as well as in remote locations on Air Force bases and ranges.

After consulting with the Forest Service, we developed, under contract with the FMC Corporation, a prototype system of portable tanks that, when operational, would quickly convert Air Force cargo aircraft into air tankers capable of dropping fire retardants. First tests of the MAFFS were conducted at Edwards AFB, California, last fall. After participating in these tests, the Forest Service requested an operational test of the system on an actual forest fire near Santa Barbara, California, in October 1971. This was carried out by the Air National Guard from Van Nuys, California, with highly satisfactory results. Although further development and testing is required to achieve an operational configuration, the system has shown considerable potential.

The Secretary of Agriculture has agreed to explore the possibility of a cooperative effort whereby the Forest Service provides the tanks and the Air Force provides the aircraft. It would appear that in view of the comparatively modest cost of the tanks this would economically achieve a back-up capability equal to the total present nationwide air tanker capability using existing Air Force transport aircraft. This back-up capability would be used in those fire disasters where all available contractor and Forest Service resources were committed. We are currently pursuing this concept.

Shortly after this letter is delivered to your office, we plan to notify the news media. If you would like additional information concerning this matter, please let us know.

For the Director of Legislative Liaison.

Sincerely,

Honorable James A. McClure
House of Representatives

JOHN J. SHAUGHNESSY, Colonel, USAF
Chief, Plans Group
Office of Legislative Liaison