



U.S. SENATOR MARK UDALL

Armed Services, Energy and Natural Resources, and Intelligence Committees

March 13, 2014

Udall Presses Air Force, Forest Service to Ensure Excess Military Aircraft Are Quickly Refitted, Added to Fire-Fighting Fleet

Excess C-130Hs Will Strengthen Air Tanker Fleet, Help Protect Colorado Communities

Mark Udall, who has fought to strengthen Colorado's ability to combat wildfires, urged the U.S. Air Force and U.S. Forest Service in letters today to swiftly repurpose military aircraft to help fight future wildfires in Colorado and across the West. Udall, who serves on both the U.S. Armed Services Committee and the U.S. Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, said these aircraft will help protect Colorado's communities, water supplies and special way of life.

The excess military aircraft — seven U.S. Coast Guard-operated C-130Hs — were transferred to the Forest Service through provisions in the 2014 National Defense Authorization Act.

"We are in an era of modern mega-fires and my state has repeatedly broken records in recent years for the largest and most devastating fires in Colorado's history. Projections for future fire seasons and the volume of hazardous fuels on the landscape make me extremely concerned," **Udall wrote in his letter to the Forest Service.** "Air tankers cannot fight fire alone, but they are critical firefighting resources that can give firefighters time and prevent small blazes from becoming catastrophic wildfires. ... I am requesting a report that describes the expected timeline for the completion of those transfers and an estimated date on which each C-130H will be employable as a firefighting asset, as well as their expected lifecycle and an analysis of what could possibly delay this timeline."

To read Udall's letter to the U.S. Air Force, click [HERE](#).

To read Udall's letter to the U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Department of Agriculture, click [HERE](#).

Udall has been [the leading voice in Congress to update and strengthen the federal air tanker fleet](#), including [through the transfer of excess military aircraft](#). He recently [pressed the U.S. Forest Service to quickly adopt the Government Accountability Office's recommendations on how to upgrade its air tanker fleet](#).

Udall has [championed common-sense programs and strategies to prevent western wildfires](#). He recently [introduced bipartisan legislation to allow the Federal Emergency Management Agency to proactively work with states and localities on wildfire mitigation projects](#).

Please contact Mike Saccone at 202-224-4334.