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WyANG called to fight fires in Israel

CHEYENNE – The Wyoming Air National Guard is sending approximately 50 people and two MAFFS-equipped C-130s to Israel to assist that country in fighting its worst forest fire in history.

Crews will leave the 153rd Airlift Wing's Cheyenne base early Sunday morning for a 10-day aerial fire fighting mission.

The order to deploy came Saturday afternoon from the Department of Defense.

"We are excited to join with the other nations and use our aerial firefighting skills to help Israel fight this fire," said Col. Dennie Grunstad, 153rd Airlift Wing commander. "It's not uncommon for us to provide humanitarian assistance to other countries during a crisis. I'm honored to have our Wyoming Airmen deploying to assist."

This is the second time the WyANG has deployed overseas to perform a MAFFS mission. In 1997 the wing deployed to Indonesia to fight fires in that country.

The WyANG is one of four U.S. military units equipped with the Modular Airborne Fire Fighting System, a U.S. Forest Service owned system that allows crews to drop water or fire retardant from the air.

Fire broke out in northern Israel, Dec 2.

Note: Interviews with command can be provided on Sunday, upon request.