

STATEMENT BY SENATOR JOHN McCAIN ON THE WILDFIRE SUPPRESSION AIRCRAFT TRANSFER ACT OF 2012

July 25, 2012

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Senators John McCain (R-AZ), Senator Bill Nelson (D-FL), and Senator Diane Feinstein (D-CA) introduced bipartisan legislation known as the *Wildfire Suppression Aircraft Transfer Act of 2012* that would transfer 14 excess C-27J Spartan aircraft from the Department of Defense to the Forest Service to help replenish the agency's aging airtanker fleet. The United States Air Force plans to scrap the aircraft under its Fiscal Year 2013 Force Reduction Plan, but the Forest Service says the C-27J Spartan would become a vital component of its overall airtanker modernization strategy. These aircraft would provide a modern, flexible, and extremely efficient Type 2 platform specifically designed to operate in challenging conditions.

"The Forest Service needs to modernize its entire airtanker fleet," said Senator John McCain. "We have an opportunity to take the C-27J, an aircraft the Pentagon no longer wants, and give it to the Forest Service to enhance aircraft safety and lower existing maintenance costs. The C-27J should be kept in the service of the American people to help our brave fire crews, rather than sit in an airplane boneyard."

Unlike past proposals that directed the transfer of excess military aircraft to private firefighting contractors, the legislation introduced by Senator McCain keeps the aircraft under Forest Service ownership and dedicates them solely to fighting wildfires. The bill would also reauthorize a law that expired in 2005 that lets the Department of Defense sell surplus aircraft parts to private companies that perform maintenance on Forest Service aircraft.

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