NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
June 8, 2004, 6:15 pm

Contact: Emily Garber (602) 525-1042

Military Air Tankers Dispatched to Three Forks Fire

MESA (June 8, 2004) – Two U.S. Air Force C-130 airplanes equipped with Modular Airborne Fire Fighting Systems (MAFFS) were dispatched in support of firefighters responding to the Three Forks Fire on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest. The MAFFS units each dropped a load of approximately 2,700 gallons of retardant before returning to Williams Gateway Airport in Mesa to reload. They each completed one more drop before nightfall curtailed further operations.

The MAFFS units became available in Arizona on May 24, 2004. The Three Forks Fire, 4 ½ miles east of Big Lake and 18 miles south of Springerville-Eager and approximately 200 acres in size, is the fourth wildland fire assignment for MAFFS since their arrival.

MAFFS are self-contained aerial fire retardant dispersal systems that can hold up to 3000 gallons of retardant. They are designed to slow the rate of spread of a wildland fire to allow ground crews time to establish containment lines around the fire perimeter. More than 30 reserve airmen of the 302nd Airlift Wing, 731st Airlift Squadron, from Peterson Air Force Base in Colorado Springs, Colorado, will be stationed at Williams Gateway Airport for the duration of the fire season in the southwest.

– 30 –

MEDIA ADVISORY: Due to operational and security concerns, on-site interviews and filming MUST be coordinated in advance with Emily Garber, Information Officer at 602-525-1042.

Directions: From US 60 take Power Rd. south to Ray Road. Turn left at Ray Rd. which after a quarter mile turns and becomes Sossaman Rd. Follow Sossaman through the airport and turn left on Velocity Drive. Follow the "MAFFS" signs to the tanker base.