

Bill doubles USFS air tanker fleet

By Curtis Tate, Sacramento Bee

After a lengthy and destructive wildfire season in California, Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., inserted language into a defense bill that will double the size of the U.S. Forest Service fleet of large air tankers.

Feinstein said that the amendment, which she cosponsored with Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., would transfer seven surplus HC-130H Hercules aircraft from the Coast Guard to the Forest Service. The planes can carry a combined 21,000 gallons of water or fire retardant, she said.

Feinstein and McCain included the language into the National Defense Authorization Act. The Senate approved the bill late Thursday on a vote of 84-15.

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