

**Airspace Coordination: What's in Your Toolbox?**  
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**INTRODUCTION:** Airspace Coordination has been an aviation safety program within the US Forest Service since the 1980's. The program is currently in transformation into Aviation Operations as a reflection of the expanded role that airspace coordination plays in tactics and operations. Airspace Coordination has also expanded into an "All Risk" program serving the needs of aviation fire suppression, volcano eruptions and hurricane response.

**INTERAGENCY AIRSPACE COORDINATION GUIDE:** The foundation document of the DOI and USFS is the Interagency Airspace Coordination Guide. Published in 2003 as a result of a comprehensive team effort that included FAA, BLM, USFS, BIA, NPS, and DoD aviation personnel. The Airspace guide promotes safe, consistent, and standardized approaches to issues involving airspace land management responsibilities. The Guide may be found at [www.fs.fed.us/r6/fire/aviation/airspace](http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/fire/aviation/airspace).

**2005 WILDLAND FIRE SEASON SUMMARY:** The 2005 fire season arrived last across much of the West Coast. This is an extreme contrast to the current 2006 fire season! Warm rains lingered well into spring, fueling a bumper crop of grass and wildfires, that when cured, fueled fires from Southern California to NW Washington.

**2005 NATIONAL WILDFIRE TOTALS:** 66,546 fires for 8,686,716 Acres. The number and size of grassland fires last year served as an important reminder that wildfire risk is not limited to forest land and that acres alone do not tell the whole story. Huge range fires that burned in the SW where a wet winter allowed "flashy" fuels to flourish. Additionally, nearly half of the total acres burned was in Alaska.

**CURRENT AIRSPACE COORDINATION TOOLS:**

- **Interagency Airspace Coordination Guide**
- **Interagency Airspace Websites**
  - [www.fs.fed.us/r6/fire/aviation/airspace](http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/fire/aviation/airspace)
- **Automated Flight Following**
- **IAMS/CAHIS** (Initial Attack Mapping System – Computer Aided Hazard Identification System)
- **1255 National Firefighting Transponder Code**
- **Fire Traffic Areas (FTA's)**
- **Airspace Coordinators**
- **Airspace Posters**

## **2005 AIRSPACE COORDINATION**

**SENTRY EAGLE:** Sentry Eagle is a multi-unit military training exercise hosted by the 173<sup>rd</sup> Fighter Wing based in Klamath Falls. The event includes an air combat exercise that tests the flying skills of military pilots of active duty, reserve and National Guard. The exercise was August 9-14<sup>th</sup> in Special Use Airspace in Southern Oregon and included a multitude of fighter jets, including F-15's, F-16's, F-18's involved. Two airspace coordinators were assigned to the exercise to coordinate tactical fire aviation responses with the Sentry Eagle flight operations. This unique collaboration led to an extremely successful military exercise with little or no impact to fire fighting responses!

**MCCHORD RODEO:** "Rodeo 2005" is Air Mobility Expeditionary Rodeo 2005, sponsored by the Air Mobility Command, is the Mobility Air Force's (MAF) readiness competition which is an air mobility competition held at the McChord AFB that consists of military aircraft from the United States and several foreign nations competing in airdrops, refueling and other events. BLM and the US Forest Service participated in early planning meetings to assure a successful competition with little or no impact to natural resources. Early coordination was the key to providing initial input to reduce or mitigate impacts.

**NOTAM ENTRY SYSTEM:** The US NOTAM office has activated a new procedure for inputting TFRs through their NOTAM Entry System (NES). This program requires the acquisition of a "Certificate" that allows a user to enter the NES Website (password protected) to request a TFR directly through the FAA NOTAM system. The TFR is sent to the associated ARTCC and the ARTCC processes the request. The program reduced typographical errors, rectifies latitude and longitudes to match the bearing and distance from a nav aid and provides an instant graphic of the requested TFR.

- 25 site visits were made
- 26 Certificates issued by the FAA US NOTAM office
- 68 user names registered with the FAA
- 87 participants trained to use the program
- 7 Air Route Traffic Control Centers (ARTCC) on line

**INTERAGENCY AIRSPACE STEERING COMMITTEE:** The IASC is the focal point for all interagency airspace coordination operational initiatives, proposals and issues. The IASC reports to the National Interagency Aviation Council (NIAC) under National Fire and Aviation Executive Board (NFAEB). The Interagency Airspace Steering Committee provides guidance for and standardization of airspace issues in wildland fire operations. This committee is dedicated to supporting ground and aerial firefighters while maintaining safe, effective, and efficient, operations in support of fire program objectives

## **CERTIFICATE PROGRAM IN EMERGENCY RESPONSE AVIATION SAFETY MANAGEMENT – Sacramento McClellan Park**

A new certificate program to educate emergency response personnel about critical factors involved in aircraft health management as well as decision making processes and communication skills. The program combines the expertise of the US Forest Service, University of California, Davis College of Engineering, US Davis and private corporations. This unique facility including a fire and emergency response aviation simulator is an outstanding resource for airspace training!

**INTERAGENCY AIRSPACE AGREEMENTS:** Letters of agreement were updated during 2005 with NAS Fallon, Nellis AFB and UTTR. 2006 will see additional agreements with Mountain Home AFB and NAS Whidbey.

**UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS:** The US Forest Service is in a partnership with NASA AMES to develop unmanned aircraft systems to support wildfire suppression. The goal is to be at the forefront of the application of small UA's for fire imaging. Three UA's were flown during a demonstration at Moffett Field in July, 2005. (MLB Bat, APV-3 and RMAX Rotorcraft. Another demo is planned for Spring, 2006. Overall goals of the Western States Fire Mission is to fly a 24 hour flight using an AltAir UA imaging fires with infra-red while handling on-board processing and delivering data in near real time. Delays for the 2005 test were due to telemetry problems.

### **What's New with the Military?**

#### **129<sup>th</sup> Rescue Wing, Moffett Field, CA**

The 129<sup>th</sup> is located in the heart of Silicon Valley. The 129th Rescue Wing's mission is to provide trained, well-equipped men and women who can augment the active force during national emergencies or war, and provide assistance during natural disasters and civil disturbances. The motto of the 129th Rescue Wing, "That Others May Live," refers to the primary mission of the Wing - to save lives. The members of the 129th have performed rescues under a variety of conditions - from rough Pacific seas to the rugged Sierra Nevada. They use a combination of HC-130 tankers and HH-60 helicopters. Many high-risk lifesaving missions involved long-range, over-water flights, air refueling of helicopters by the HC-130 aircraft, and skilled maneuvering by ships and helicopters to recover patients from the decks of these vessels. Since its designation as a rescue unit in 1975, the 129th has directly saved the lives of 300 people.

- **Airspace and Range** – The unit's primary training airspace is a Low Altitude Tactical Navigation (LATN) area located south of the bay area. They utilize the Fort Hunter Leggett air to ground gunnery range 40 miles north of San Luis Obispo for their small weapons only.
- **Airspace Issues** – The unit has lost the use of 2 of their 5 helicopter landing zones due to encroachment and they need a larger gunnery range to train with their 50 caliber weapons. The C-130 needs another Landing Zone and Drop Zone. The C-130 had planned on using the Crows Landing LZ but that development is being reconsidered. Another problem has been the temporary loss of the use of the Fort Hunter Leggett dirt landing strip due to improvements required
- **144<sup>th</sup> FW, Fresno, CA** – The 144<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing's primary mission is Homeland Defense. As one of the first units assigned to this role, the Wing has been providing security for California's skies for almost 50 years. With the Unit's central location, it provides excellent coverage and protection for the entire state's major population centers and critical infrastructures to include Los Angeles and the Bay area. In light of this, the 144<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing and its 18 F-16s and aircrew have had the highest Noble Eagle tasking in the Air National Guard and the Air Force. Unit training consists of 12 to 18 sorties per day/night.
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- **Airspace and Range** – The units two primary training areas are the Edwards Complex - R2508 -and the over water Warning Areas.
- **Airspace Issues** – There are very few issues concerning airspace. The Edwards Complex is shared with Naval Air Station (NAS) Lemoore and test missions from China Lake and some large scale exercises that included deployed aircraft. The unit would use the proposed Lemoore MOA if time were available once it is approved and charted.

**Travis AFB, Vacaville, CA - Captain Hietpas** (60 OSS/OSO). The 60th Air Mobility Wing is the largest air mobility organization in the Air Force with two squadrons of C-5 Galaxy cargo aircraft and two squadrons of KC-10 Extender cargo/refueling aircraft. The wing handles more cargo and passengers than any other military air terminal in the United States. The 60th Air Mobility Wing is responsible for strategic airlift and air refueling missions circling the globe. The unit will begin replacing the C-5 aircraft with C-17s this year. The new aircraft will provide strategic airlift but will have need capabilities with tactical low level navigation and off-load capability.

- **Airspace Issues** – With the arrival of the C-17, the wing will have new training requirements for low level navigation and tactical delivery as well as tactical landing training. Air Mobility Command is assisting Travis in developing IR military training routes and also trying to develop a tactical landing zone. The previously designated site at Crows Landing is being reconsidered.
- **Airspace and Ranges** – The wing uses Air Refueling Tracks to on-load and off-load fuel for training and strategic airlift

**HURRICANE RELIEF:** The entire nation responded during the 2005 hurricane season. Airspace coordination was critical as first responders utilized aviation resources to provide relief and rescue. Approximately 13,000 Interagency employees have served more than 250,000 person days. At the peak of hurricane relief efforts, approximately 5,500 personnel were assigned to more than 30 different locations in seven states.

Airspace Coordination was provided through the National Response Coordination Center at FEMA Headquarters in Washington DC. ESF-1 (Emergency Support Function) is the name for the unit responsible for “transportation” of both evacuee’s and commodities. ESF-1 is led by the Department of Transportation and consisted of DOT, FAA, DOD and USFS personnel.

**LOOKING AHEAD:** The early fire season of Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas is extreme and the National Weather Service has already issued warnings of Explosive Wildfire Behavior.