Mr. Chairman, it is fortuitous now that I rise for

the purpose of entering into a colloquy with the gentleman from Florida

on an issue that deals directly with the C-17, I might add.

I rise today to voice my concern over recent and devastating

wildfires that have enveloped massive amounts of land throughout our

country. The ruin caused by these wildfires has consumed 2.1 million

acres, destroyed over 1,600 homes, killed 7 people, and threatened many

more. This recurring problem, caused by dry conditions, hot weather,

and ample fuel, tests the limits of our current Federal, State, and

local firefighting resources.

When homes and lives are on the line, I believe we should take all

possible action to protect lives and property, including the deployment

of Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve resources when appropriate.

We oftentimes think of the Department of Defense as an entity that

should be aimed at defending our Nation from foes abroad, but the fact

is that there are enormous resources held by the Department of Defense,

such as cargo planes that are capable of assisting in many other

efforts, including firefighting efforts, which threaten the lives and

property of our people.

For example, one specific concept, named the Precision Container

Aerial Delivery System, or PCADS, needs only an additional $2.6 million

in funding to complete its already years-long evaluation of this

technology. Unfortunately, however, DOD has not committed this meager

sum to finish evaluating PCADS, despite the authority to do so.

What are PCADS? They essentially allow any military cargo plane that

has a ramp in the back--mainly, our C-17s and our C-130s--to assist in

wildfire efforts without having to modify the airplane at all. This

means the C-17s and the C-130s, of which we have right now many

stationed all over the country, could be deployed to help extinguish

wildfires at a relatively low cost, creating a new and enormous

firefighting capability. As I say, it's at a minimal cost.

Basically what we're talking about is a huge container system in the

back that is made out of cardboard and a water balloon, which will

permit putting them onto the C-17s and the C-130s to rolling right on

1,000 pounds of water per container. These C-130 pilots and C-17 pilots

are already trained to drop these things, and without modifying the

airplane, they could become an enormous resource to fighting fires

throughout our country without adding any extra cost after this $2.6

million for the final test.

I, therefore, have one simple request: to the extent that the

Department of Defense is capable of exploring new, innovative, cost-

effective, and promising firefighting technologies that can be used for

our civilian population, but especially for the firefighting

capabilities that can aid in support, as I say, firemen's requests

throughout our country and from the State and Federal level, I urge the

Department of Defense to do so to the degree that it can.

I now yield to the distinguished chairman, the gentleman from

Florida.

In the past, in order to achieve the goal that you

have outlined, we needed to reconfigure the inside of these C-130s and

have special C-130s deployed.

This new PCAD system, which we can roll on enormous amounts of water

in these little container systems, which is 1,000 pounds of water per

container, can be dropped without reconfiguring the C-130s or the C-

17s.

There's been a series of tests to show this is very

effective. One more series of tests will cost $2.6 million and can

deploy these. I believe it will increase the value of our C-130s and C-

17s to the point that we can actually maybe charge a little bit more

money when we sell the C-17s, which will be far more than the $2.6

million for this final test. It will pay for itself, not to mention the

property damage that we can protect against.