



U.S. Army North (Fifth Army)

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Press Release

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ARNORTH to oversee second military wildland fire ground response operation in California

SAN ANTONIO, Texas – At the request of the National Interagency Fire Center and in support of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service, approximately 250 Marines and Sailors will assist wildland fire fighting response efforts in Central California. U.S. Army North (Fifth Army), U.S. Northern Command's Joint Force Land Component Command, will oversee the military support effort, the second undertaken in the state this month.

"Given the unprecedented fire season and the magnitude of the loss the people of California are experiencing, we stand ready to support the National Interagency Fire Center in their effort to help protect people, property and land in California," said Lt. Gen. Laura J. Richardson, ARNORTH and JFLCC commander. "Just like the Soldiers supporting fire suppression efforts in Northern California, the Marines and Sailors who will assist in this mission in Central California are trained and equipped with all of the necessary gear to keep them safe, to include in a COVID-19 environment."

The Marine unit, the 7th Engineer Support Battalion, 1st Marine Logistics Group, I Marine Expeditionary Force, from Camp Pendleton, California, will assist with wildland fire response efforts on the Creek Fire in the Sierra National Forest.

Marines and Sailors from the unit will be fitted for personal protective equipment, including fire retardant clothing, boots, gloves and hard hats, and begin training on fire behavior and fireline safety at Camp Pendleton as early as Sept. 17. They are scheduled to deploy to Central California, Sept. 19, to receive hands-on training in fire suppression methods and procedures, including Watch-Out Situations and Standard Firefighting Orders, prior to employment in the national forest.

"The 1st Marine Logistics Group is ready to assist our community during the California wildfire crisis," said Brig. Gen. Bobbi Shea, 1st MLG commanding general. "Alongside federal agencies, and state and local partners, 1st MLG will provide highly capable Marines and Sailors to assist in wildland fire suppression efforts."

In Northern California, the 14th Brigade Engineer Battalion from Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington, has assisted with wildland fire response efforts at the August Complex in the Mendocino National Forest since Sept. 3.

Lt. Gen. Richardson and Command Sgt. Maj. Phil K. Barretto, ARNORTH and JFLCC senior enlisted leader, visited Northern California, Sept. 14-16, to meet with Soldiers from the battalion, and with state and federal partners.

"Fire activity at the August Complex remains high, but our Soldiers continue support activities as firefighting crews work to suppress what has become the largest complex fire in California history," said Lt. Gen Richardson about her visit. "Our thoughts remain with communities affected here and elsewhere by the fires, while our actions, part of a joint effort, provide much needed relief."

USNORTHCOM is the primary Department of Defense organization for coordinating defense support of civil authorities to help federal partners, like NIFC, respond to natural disasters. ARNORTH serves as USNORTHCOM's operational lead for this DSCA ground support effort.

For additional information, contact ARNORTH Public Affairs office at usarmy.jbsa.arnorth.mbx.pao-media-operations@mail.mil or 210-428-9835.