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Air Forces Northern to support oil containment efforts

TYNDALL AIR FORCE BASE, Fla. – At the request of U.S. Northern Command, and to assist the U.S. Coast Guard's efforts to contain the oil spill in the western Gulf of Mexico, Air Forces Northern is providing units to help disperse the spill and mitigate its impacts when it makes its way toward the shoreline.

Under the command of the Joint Forces Air Component Commander here, the 910th Airlift Wing, a U.S. Air Force Reserve unit based in Youngstown, Ohio, has deployed two C-130 Hercules transport aircraft and aircrew to Stennis International Airport, Miss., equipped with the Modular Aerial Spray System, to assist with containment efforts in the Gulf of Mexico.



The C-130's unique aerial capabilities allow the aircrew to fly at an air speed of 200 knots (230 mph) about 100 feet about the water, while dispersing a detergent-like agent to help break down the petroleum-based slick. The crew is able to cover an area between 225 and 250 acres per flight.

In addition to the MASS flights, the Civil Air Patrol, flying as the Air Force Auxiliary, is supporting the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources. Operating Cessna C-182s, AFAUX is providing digital images of the affected Gulf of Mexico coastline and waterways.

An Air Component Coordination Element has been deployed to Houma, La., to serve as the Air Force's subject matter expert to help coordinates the movement of Air Force assets into the region and to reach back to the 601st Air & Space Operations Center here to if additional Air Force support is necessary.

Air Forces Northern is also providing Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers to support the federal on-scene coordinator to assist civil authorities with available military assets, including logistics, medical, security forces and public affairs.

AFNORTH's Defense Support of Civil Authorities mission is to provide support to local, state, regional and federal emergency services agencies. The organization is capable of providing a variety of logistical, medical, aerial and search and rescue assets if the need arises.