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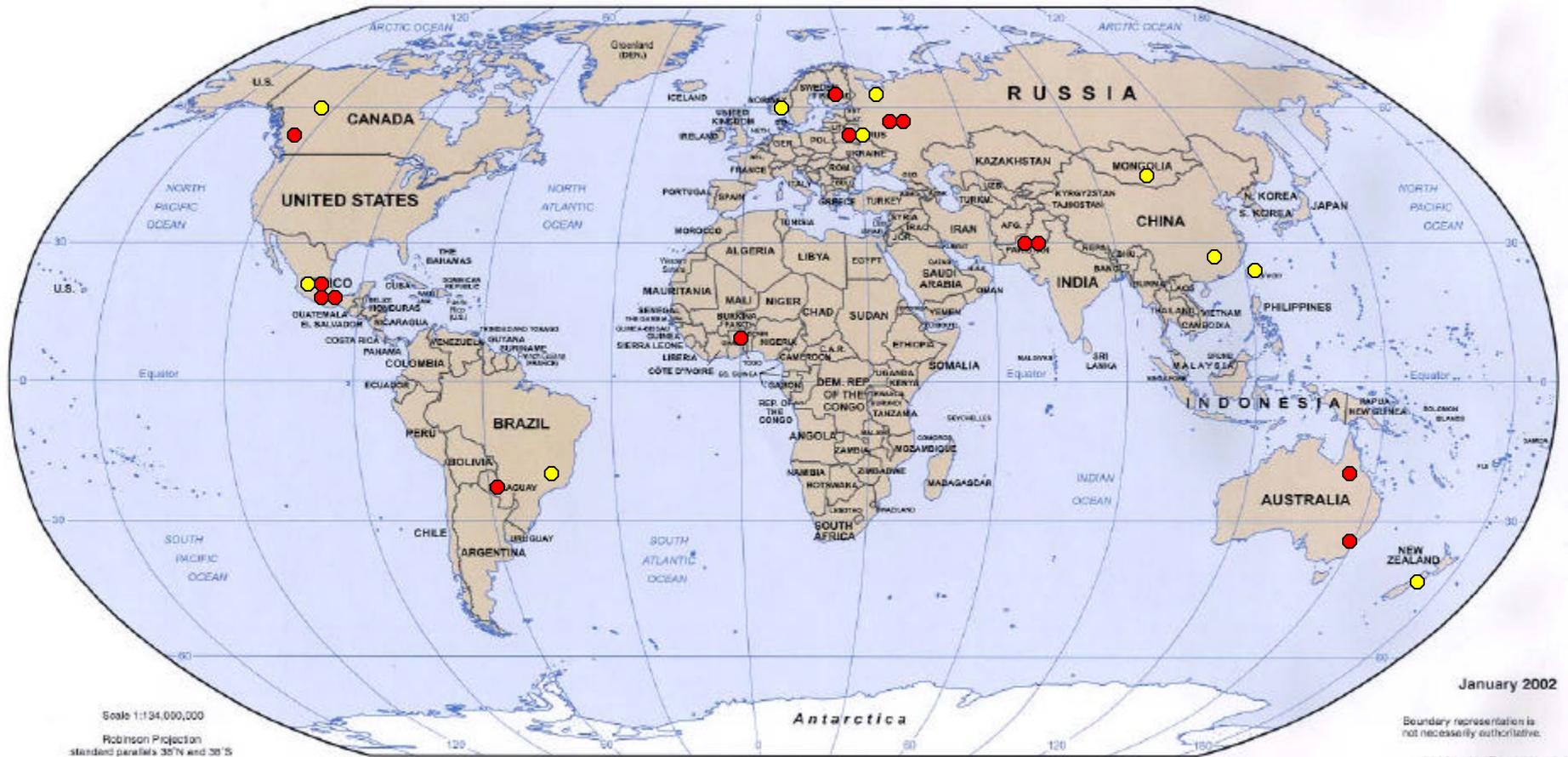
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2002
ANNUAL REPORT

Bureau of Land Management
National Office of Fire and Aviation

FY 2002 International Activities



- Countries BLM Traveled To
- Countries Where We have Hosted

FISCAL YEAR 2002 INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

This report encompasses the activities coordinated by the International Program Office of the BLM's National Office of Fire and Aviation (OF&A) during fiscal year 2002. In an effort to save trees, this report has been condensed from previous editions. If you are interested in more details including the goals and objectives of the program, and the detailed trip reports, they can be found in the following intranet site:

<http://web.blm.gov/internal/fire/intntl/index.htm>

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Technical and Scientific Exchanges: with countries faced with similar fire management issues.

MEXICO

SRV Training - Vale, Oregon

As part of the exchange program between the Government of Mexico's Secretariat of Environment and National Resources (SEMARNAT) and the BLM, Panfilo Fernandez Flores, State Coordinator for Forest Fire Protection for the State of Campeche, Oscar Rene Dominguez Moreno, State Coordinator for Durango, and Joel Zavala Gonzalez, Chief, Forest Fire Program in Federal District traveled to Vale, Oregon, on June 1 and stayed through June 8, 2002. The purpose of the exchange was for the Mexican fire officials to observe how BLM Oregon's Vale District identifies, organizes, trains, tests, and equips mainly Hispanic firefighters for the Snake River Valley (SRV) crews. They observed SRV crew training first hand and participated in the one-week field training session. Because of their background in fire suppression and fire training, all three officials were asked to assist during portions of the training. This activity was a follow-up to similar exchanges, which occurred in 1999, 2000, and 2001.



Mexican nationals assist with SRV training in Vale, Oregon

Bid Process for New Engines - Mexico City

In July 1999, under an exchange program between BLM and the Secretariat of Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT), two Mexican fire managers came to the United States to study BLM's wildland fire engine program. They spent most of their two-week stay in Shoshone, Idaho. Based on the information and knowledge obtained during that exchange, SEMARNAT was interested in purchasing heavy class wildland fire engines. They used BLM specifications for the bidding process, which closed September 9, 2002.

SEMARNAT requested the assistance of Mr. Robert Stroud, supervisor of the BLM Equipment Development Unit, located at NIFC, to provide technical guidance with the specifications and bids. S&S Fire Apparatus from Indiana, USA, was awarded the contract for the development of the 11 engines Mexico will purchase.

RUSSIA

✚ Russian Smokejumpers Travel to United States

On April 12, 2002, three Russians arrived in Boise, Idaho, to begin a five-week observation of the BLM rookie smokejumper training program. The three Russians were Andrey Eritsov, senior smokejumper and technical specialist with Avialesookhrana; Dmitry Kulakov, lead smokejumper from Avialesookhrana's Northwest Aerial Forest Fire Center in Petozavodsk; and Vadim Sereshkin, lead smokejumper and trainer at the Tyumen Aerial Forest Fire Center in Tyumen.

After observing the rookies complete classroom training, physical testing, field orientation, and training jumps, the Russian smokejumpers plan to develop a new rookie training guide and incorporate what that they learned through the exchange, including training in real conditions and using a parachute simulator.

Andrey said that the Russians have an expression about smokejumping their rookies don't appreciate: "Three minutes flying like an eagle, three days working like a horse."

The Russian smokejumpers also offered several areas they felt BLM could improve on: parachute landing techniques; use of an automatic activation device (AAD); changing the design of drogue chute; and changing the letdown rope procedure.

The Russians noted they enjoyed the feeling of a universal brotherhood among smokejumpers, something they called the "broship."

✚ U.S. Smokejumpers to Russia

BLM smokejumpers have been researching parachute equipment for some time, hoping to improve their system. Recently the BLM and the Forest Service agreed to work together to develop the next generation of parachute equipment. When the Russians invited the BLM and Forest Service to participate in a



demonstration of their newest equipment, the Missoula Technology and Development Center (MTDC) jumped at the chance.



Over the past few years the Russians have developed a new parachute system called the Lesnick 3. They scheduled a two-week

demonstration-evaluation September 7-22, 2002, and two people from MTDC attended: Mr. Jim Olson, BLM, Office of Fire and Aviation (OF&A) Equipment Specialist; and Mr. George Jackson, Forest Service Program Leader, Fire and Aviation and Residues.

The evaluation program was carried out at the regional airbase in Vladimir City, about 100 miles east of Moscow. Lead parachute instructors from regional airbases around Russia were on the evaluation team, as well as representatives from the Ministry of Emergency Management (EMERCOM). EMERCOM is similar to the United States' Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The Avialesookhrana smokejumpers were very happy with the Lenin 3, and plan to complete a final evaluation report. Mr. Olson was especially impressed with the harness/container system; size of the drogue; and the drogue release device.

International Program Staff Visit Russia

Connie Lewis, International Program (IP) Specialist for OF&A, traveled to Russia in July 2002. The objective of the trip was to learn about Avialesookhrana's fire operations and facilities, and share information about the BLM and its programs.

The trip included an overview of the Avialesookhrana's headquarters in Pushkino, approximately 50 miles outside of Moscow. Ms. Lewis met with Mr. Nicolay Kovalev, the national chief of Avialesookhrana, as well as his deputies. Mr. Kovalev and many of his deputies have made trips to the United States under BLM's exchange program.

The trip included a tour and presentation of the regional airbase in Vladimir City, about 100 miles east of Moscow. The Vladimir City airport, including the terminal, was turned over to Avialesookhrana after the fall of the Soviet Union. Many of the smaller airports in Russia had the same fate because of the high cost of flying. The regional base is close to Moscow, so it has many uses including the Avialesookhrana 50th Anniversary celebration the year before, and the evaluation of the Lesnick 3 parachute (see above).

Ms. Lewis also had a chance to visit the regional air base, dispatch center, smokejumper base, and a museum in Petrozavodsk. Petrozavodsk is a city northwest of Moscow in the Karelia Region near the Finnish border. The dispatch centers in Russia are very small, usually with one person taking all calls. The smokejumpers performed a practice jump on the day Ms. Lewis arrived.

Ms. Lewis was impressed with the comradeship and professionalism of the Avialesookhrana organization. She was also impressed with the ability of the Russians to forge and carry on such an organization with the limited resources available to them.

NORWAY



Study of United States' Interagency Incident Command System



Torgeir Anderson in U.S.

The IP hosted a Norwegian fire official, Torgeir Anderson, from Drammen, Norway, August 19 to September 6, 2002.

Torgeir's main interest was learning more about the Incident Command System (ICS). At an initial orientation to U.S. fire fighting methods and systems, he received briefings on the U.S. interagency wildland fire management and coordination system and a tour of the National

Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) facilities. He then visited areas that had recently burned around Idaho City, Idaho, and some previous burns from several years ago including the 8th Street Fire just north of Boise and the Point Fire southwest of Boise.

As part of a longer field trip, Torgeir visited the Burns, Oregon, interagency dispatch office and then spent three days in southwest Oregon observing area command team and incident management team operations on the Biscuit Fire, which was the largest fire in the United States in 2002. Mr. John Shive, the Fuels, Prescribed Fire and Rehabilitation Program manager at the Utah State Office accompanied Torgeir and gave him an excellent perspective of U.S. fire and aviation programs, as well as ICS.



Torgeir & John Shive (Utah State Office)

At the closeout of the exchange, Torgeir said that his trip had been a success and he had been able to observe and learn a great deal about the incident command system and about the entire United States system. He felt that the exchanges continue to be useful on both sides and hoped that they would carry on.

Technical Support: Assistance for countries in need of fire management training and disaster relief through reimbursable agreements or hosting of employees.

Mexico, Helicopter Training

Rocky Bernal, single engine air tanker and helicopter manager for the BLM Arizona Safford Field Office, was one of two United States instructors on a training assignment to Cuernavaca, Morelos, Mexico, December 2-12, 2002. Isidoro Solis from the Forest Service was the other instructor. A total of 17 firefighters from the Government of Mexico’s Secretariat of Environment and Natural Resources and the National Forestry Commission (CONAFOR) attended the training which included the presentation of S-217 *Interagency Helicopter Training Guide* and S-371 *Helibase Manager*. Mr. Bernal has been involved in this program since 1998. All travel and per-diem was paid for by the Forest Service.

Bulgaria: Assistance with Telecommunication System

Following the destructive Bulgarian fire season of 2000, a Forest Service Assessment Team funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) traveled to Bulgaria to look at ways to build and improve Bulgaria’s fire response capability. (Bulgaria spent more than \$35 million (U.S. dollars) to suppress the fires in 2000.) One of the team’s recommendations was to provide basic equipment for 300 initial attack firefighters. This included firefighting clothing, radios, repeater stations, and Bambi water buckets.



Bulgarian, Katia Alexieva (USAID), Stephanie Fritz Savolaine (USFS), Royce Shearing (BLM). & Bob Becker (USFS)

The USAID, through the Forest Service, provided the equipment and supplies. The BLM was asked to: consolidate the fire equipment order from various sources and then send it on to Bulgaria as one “package;” and build repeater stations for the 300 radios being purchased.



Rila Monasterv. Bulgaria

In order to best understand and respond to the telecommunication needs of their counterparts in the Bulgarian Civil Defense, the Forest Service requested Mr. Royce Shearing, Chief, Branch of Communications Maintenance, NIFC, to travel to Bulgaria. Mr. Shearing went to Sofia, Bulgaria, April 28 to May 4, 2002. The trip was funded by USAID.

Ghana: Fire Management Planning Project

Over the past three years, the Forest Reserve Institute of Ghana (FORIG) and the U.S. Forest Service/International Forestry has participated in a multi-year project funded by the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO). The project's goal was to develop a fire management program for suppressing wildfires and reducing the current rates of human-caused wildfires, which are destroying the natural tropical forests.



The specific fire prevention and education objectives developed were to:

- ❖ meet key personnel in Ghana involved with the ITTO project, particularly key fire prevention/education contacts in Ghana, to provide advice and recommendations for the development of a forest fire prevention program;
- ❖ assist in the development of a Forest Fire Prevention Communication Plan to provide the basis for ongoing fire prevention and education planning.

Disaster Assistance Support Program (DASP)

IP works closely and supports the Forest Service's Disaster Assistance Support Program (DASP), which supports U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA).

This support includes:

- assisting and facilitating the attendance of BLM employees in Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) training;
- facilitating BLM employees in being assigned 4-6 weeks details in the OFDA's Logistics office in Washington D.C;
- facilitating the delivery of equipment and supplies for International disaster relief efforts;
- facilitating BLM employees to travel internationally for disaster assistance assignments.

🌐 DART Training

The IP worked with DASP to train Forest Service and BLM employees for potential international assignments dealing with disaster relief. IP assisted in the preparation and presentation of a DART training/orientation session April 8-12, 2002, in Seattle. Eight BLM employees attended the DART training.

DARTs are ICS-based, multi-disciplined teams that are sent out by OFDA to international disaster sites to coordinate the U.S. government's relief efforts. The DART training helps prepare individuals to work in support of OFDA in Washington, D.C. and on international assignments. The training covered the purpose and structure of organizations and offices that the participants may encounter on these assignments: personal preparation, health, and safety issues; cultural awareness and sensitivity in the foreign environment; OFDA's mission, roles and responsibilities; and the structure and organization of a DART. Although the training is geared for assignments with OFDA, much of the material served as an excellent base for anyone traveling on an international assignment.

The BLM employees who attended the Seattle DART training included:

Brad Blomquist	Kingman, AZ Field Office
Todd Jinkins	Boise Smokejumpers
Becky McMahan	Central Oregon Interagency Dispatch
Charles Newlin	Wyoming State Office
Andrew Parker	Colorado State Office
Kurtis Schmidt	Needles, California Field Office
Pete Stephenson	Alaska Smokejumpers
Douglas Swantner	Carson City, Nevada Field Office

🌐 Details in OFDA Logistics - Washington, D.C.

The following is a list of individuals who attended the DART training over the past several years and served on details of several weeks with OFDA, providing support to OFDA's international disaster relief efforts:

Bob Means	Wyoming State Office
Bill Laspina	Office of Fire & Aviation, ID
Lindsey Lien	Alaska Fire Service,
David Rosenkrance	Idaho State Office
Earle Smith	Roswell Field Office, NM
Marc Pointel	Nevada State Office

🌐 Support from the Great Basin Cache:

The Great Basin Fire Cache continues to assist OFDA, under a reimbursable agreement through DASP, with the procurement, assembly, refurbishment, storing, and shipping of Remote Location Packs. These packs are used by OFDA employees and OFDA detailers throughout the



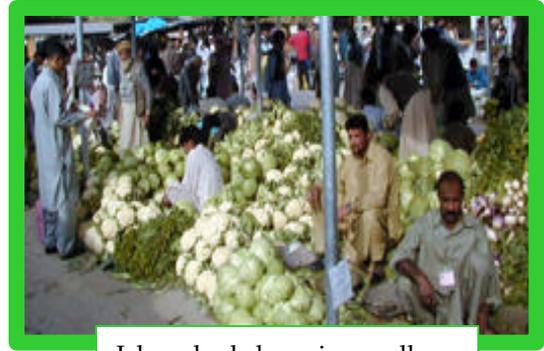
USAID Logistics Center
Washington D.C.

world for disaster responses. The packs consist of 44 different items including sleeping bags, tents, water purification tablets, rain gear, mosquito nets, masks, candles, first aid kit, etc.

Another important service that the cache provides OFDA is storage for approximately 3,000 copies of the *Field Operations Guide for Disaster Assessment and Response* used by OFDA and numerous international disaster responders on field assignments.

© **Pakistan DART**

Tom Frey was a member of the OFDA's Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) in Islamabad, Pakistan, from October 21 through November 15, 2001. Tom worked as a liaison between the DART and coalition military officers (U.S. and British) to help in the exchange of information to ensure that military plans and operations did not conflict with relief plans and operations for humanitarian efforts in Afghanistan.



Islamabad shopping mall



Bill Laspina escorted **into** the building.....or out??

Bill Laspina served as the Logistics Office/ Administrative Officer on the Pakistan DART from November 13, 2001 to January 15, 2002. The team was responsible for assisting the refugees and displaced persons made homeless by the Afghanistan military situation.

© **Contingency Planning - Tampa, Florida**

OFDA requested Tom Frey to be prepared to deploy to Germany to work with the U.S. military European Command on humanitarian support issues. Instead, Tom went to Washington D.C.,

and then on to Tampa, Florida, where he worked with planners from the U.S. military's Central Command (CENTCOM). CENTCOM is responsible for U.S. military activities in the Middle East. Tom was able to assist CENTCOM planners in the development of contingency plans that would help coordinate civilian relief operations with military operations in Afghanistan.

© **Facilitation of International Search and Rescue Advisory Group Meeting**

Tom Frey assisted with the facilitation of the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) meeting for countries of the Americas, May 3-5, in Fairfax County, Virginia. The meeting was sponsored by the United Nations office for the Coordination

of Humanitarian Affairs and hosted by Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department. Tom has been involved with the INSARAG process since 1989 and was asked to assist with facilitation because of his knowledge and background on INSARAG issues. Agenda items for this year included reports and presentations on the Fairfax County Search and Rescue Team's response to the Pentagon on September 11, and the Miami-Dade County Search and Rescue Team's assignment to the World Trade Center following September 11. These teams were mobilized as part of the FEMA's Federal Response Plan. Both of these teams worked with wildland fire community incident management teams (IMTs). Tom learned that the coordination between the search and rescue teams was excellent.

International representatives for the meeting came from several Central and South American countries, the Caribbean, as well as the United Nations.

International Meetings and Conferences

Australia - Pre-Planning Meetings for Sydney Conference - 2003

In October 2003, several Australian organizations will host the 3rd International Wildland Fire Conference in Sydney, Australia. One of the three international hosts is the Fire Management Working Group (FMWG) of the North American Forestry Commission. BLM's Office of Fire and Aviation is a member of the FMWG and played an active role in the 2nd International Wildland Fire Conference held in Vancouver, B.C. in 1997. It was an immensely successful experience for BLM. These conferences are one place where BLM



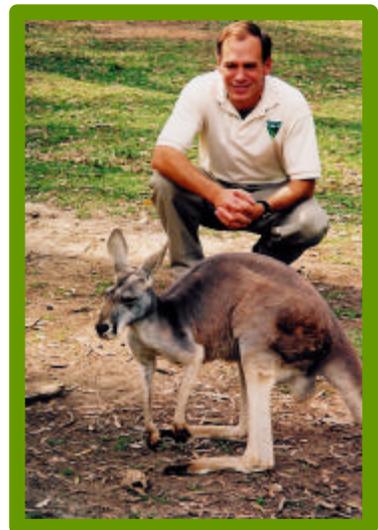
Planning Meeting
Sydney, Australia

can speak about and display its goals and accomplishments to an international audience. It is also a place where staff at all levels can discuss universal fire management issues and problems with an international audience. Tim Murphy, Deputy Director, OF&A, and Connie Lewis, IP Specialist, OF&A, are members of this committee.

Representatives from Australia and New Zealand were present, at the two planning meeting, as well as approximately 15 members from Europe, Africa, South America, Central America, North America, and Asia. The first planning meeting was held January 23-25, 2002, and the second planning meeting was held July 31 to August 3, 2002. Both meetings were held in Sydney, Australia.

Australia: Speaker at Australasian Fire Authorities Conference

Mr. Steve Ellis, the BLM's Lakeview, Oregon, District Manager, was invited to speak at the 2002 Australasian Fire Authorities Council (AFAC) Firefighters Conference. The conference was held September 27 through 29, 2002, in Conrad Jupiters, Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia. The theme for the conference was "Innovation and Best Practice for Emergency Services. Mr. Ellis made a presentation on "Fuel Management in the Urban Interface." He was selected to make this presentation because of his extensive fire background, and the fact that the Lakeview District has the largest hazardous fuels program in the BLM. Mr. Ellis also accompanied Mr. Paul de Mar, Fire Management Officer for the State Forests of New South Wales, on a tour of fire stations to observe how Australians manage their fire program. He gave his



Steve Ellishard at work,
somewhere in Australia.....

presentation on “Fuel Management in the Urban Interface” to groups along the way who were unable to attend the conference in Queensland. He returned to Lakeview on October 9, 2001.

Finland: RAWS Technology Study

The National Office of Fire and Aviation’s Remote Sensing/Fire Weather Support Unit (RSFWSU) is viewed within the wildland fire community and by many federal agencies as a leader in defining and providing remote weather and resource management technology.



Australian Fire Station

This unit provides calibration and maintenance for remote automatic weather stations (RAWS) and instrumentation for all federal wildland fire agencies and several other agencies. The unit’s equipment was used at “Ground Zero” in New York City providing the Environmental Protection Agency with vital current weather information and particulate sampling to provide safety-related information for workers at Ground Zero and residents around the site.

In order to keep their knowledge and skills at the cutting edge of this technology, Mr. Phil Sielaff, Unit leader, Remote Sensing/fire Weather Support, and Mr. Robert McCormick, Field Section Supervisor, Field Section, were invited to travel to Helsinki, Finland, to meet with personnel from the Vaisala Corporation. The purpose of the trip was to discuss future development activities and needs. Vaisala bought the U.S.-based Handar Corporation which provided RAWs units to BLM in the past. Vaisala continues to be the prime provider of the RAWs unit. Vaisala was very interested in receiving input on their prototype next generation fire RAWs in order to make final modifications and/or fine tune the equipment prior to these systems being shipped to NIFC later in 2001. Mr. Sielaff’s and Mr. McCormick’s participation with Vaisala at this point in the equipment development process provided for a better product for the ever increasing needs of this technology by resource managers and other agencies dealing with all risk requirements. Their travel dates were February 22 through March 1, 2002.

Canada - CIFCC Board of Directors Meeting

Tom Frey attended the annual meeting of the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Center (CIFCC) Board of Directors meeting in Banff, Alberta, November 29-31, 2001. The meeting was also attended by Dennis Pendleton, the Forest Service Fire Director at NIFC. Dennis presented an overview of the 2001 fire season. Tom presented information on how U.S. wildland fire agencies supported all risk efforts following the terrorist attacks on September 11.

Russia Coordination Meeting - Portland, Oregon

Tom Frey and Connie Lewis attended a meeting with the Forest Service in Portland, Oregon, December 13, 2001, to discuss activities conducted with Russia's forestry and wildland firefighting organizations. Mr. Frey and Ms. Lewis presented a brief history of past BLM activities with Russia and a list of proposed activities. The discussions focused on ensuring that both agencies' efforts were coordinated, consistent and not duplicative. Everyone agreed to continue ongoing communications as the planning and implementation of activities occurred and to follow up by sharing the outcomes and conclusions of the activities. The Forest Service had representatives from the Alaska and Intermountain Regions, the Office of Fire and Aviation Management, and International Forestry.

Mexico - North American Forestry Commission - Fire Management Working Group Annual Meeting

Larry Hamilton, Director of Fire and Aviation Management, and Tom Frey attended the North American Forestry Commission - Fire Management Working Group (FMWG) Annual meeting in Cancun, Mexico on February 11-15, 2002. This was the 35th annual meeting of this group. The meeting was hosted by the Government of Mexico's Secretariat for Natural Resources and the Environment. Also attending the meeting were FMWG members from the U.S. Forest Service; Jim Hull, State Forester from Texas, representing the National Association of State Foresters; and FMWG members from Canada. Guests from Australia and Spain also attended.

Mr. Hamilton made a presentation on the BLM's 2001 fire season. Mr. Frey took the opportunity to discuss with his counterparts from Mexico, Canada, and Australia, potential future exchange activities. Discussions about ongoing cooperative activities between members were conducted. There were also discussions on the status of planning and coordination for the 3rd International Wildland Fire Conference scheduled for Sydney, Australia in 2003.

A one day field trip to several old fire sites in the State of Quintanoo Roo clearly showed the difficult fire suppression issues faced by Mexican fire fighters. A major fire problem was the dried windfall that accumulates after a hurricane. The fires that follow are human caused. The terrain, although mostly flat, is underlain by rough limestone covered over by dense jungle re-growth. The footing was slippery, rocky, and filled with varying sizes of holes and cervices. Under the shallow-rooted trees was a very thin duff layer with little to no top soil which makes mopping up very difficult. Mr. Hamilton and Mr. Frey came away with a new appreciation for challenges faced by Mexican fire fighters in Quintanoo Roo.

Paraguay Military Conference

The Office of Fire and Aviation was approached by the Department of Defense about making a presentation at a conference titled, “Strengthening the Bonds of Environmental Cooperation Between Security Forces in the southern Zone of the Americas” in Asuncion, Paraguay. Tom Frey traveled to Paraguay May 28-31, 2002, to attend the conference. His presentation covered how U.S. interagency wildland fire agencies use U.S. military forces to augment firefighting needs during heavy fire seasons, stressing that civilians lead these efforts. Another issue he addressed was the cooperative fire fighting efforts that exist between the U.S. and other nations. The conference was co-sponsored by the U.S. military’s Southern Command, the U.S. Army War College’s Center for Strategic Leadership, the U.S. Embassy in Paraguay, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Geological Survey, the State Department, the Corps of Engineers, the Environmental Protection, and the Office of the Secretary of Defense. Attendees were from military and environmental agencies in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Bolivia, Uruguay, and Paraguay.

Other Activities:

Hosting International Guests

Brazilian Visitors

The Forest Service hosted two groups of Brazilians in the summer and fall of 2001. The IP hosted the two groups in Boise prior to their return to Brazil.

The Moyer Rappel Crew, of the Salmon/Challis National Forest, hosted the first group of three Brazilians. They were here in the United States from June 9, through October 25, 2001, and performed as fully functional fire fighting type 2 crewmembers. While in Boise, they toured NIFC. Following the tour, Mr. Paul Hefner of the Forest Service in McCall gave an excellent ICS presentation and Larry Sutton, BLM-NIFC Training, gave an in-depth presentation on the training program, as well as the red-card system.

The second group consisted of Rubens Filho, Director PROARCO Program and Joao Periera. Mr. Filho works with the Fire Science program in Brazil and also visited the Forest Service Riverside Fire Lab in California. They came to Boise, November 1, 2001, to get a national perspective of the U.S. fire program. Michelle Zweebe, from the Forest Service, International Forestry, Latin American Program in Washington D.C., met the group in Boise.

Australian and New Zealand Visitors

The IP helped the Forest Service host four Australian and two New Zealand fire managers May 15-17, 2002 on their visit to NIFC as part of a month-long fire management study tour, which included several stops in Canada and the U.S. Two of the Australians were in the U.S. in 2000 as a part of the Australian fire fighters group that came to assist U.S. fire fighting efforts.

Chinese Foresters and Scientists

The IP hosted six Chinese foresters and scientists from Yunnan Province on June 25, 2002. The group was in the U.S. to study forestry and fire management issues. They wanted to come to NIFC to obtain a national perspective on some of the other issues they were studying.

Taiwan Fire Manager

At the request of the Idaho Department of Commerce's Division of International Business, the IP hosted an official from Taiwan's National Fire Administration on July 9, 2002. The fire official was interested in issues related to emergency management, training opportunities, logistics and coordination systems. Two employees of the Department of Commerce accompanied the Taiwanese official to NIFC.

Bulgarian Emergency Managers

The IP assisted the Forest Service in hosting three Bulgarian emergency management officials on August 14, 2002. These officials also have responsibilities for forest fire suppression in Bulgaria. Their trip to the United States was hosted by the Forest Service and sponsored by USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA). The U.S. tour was part of an OFDA support program to try to improve Bulgaria's ability to respond to natural disasters, especially forest fires. Bulgaria had gone through a severe fire season in 2000. The managers were interested in learning about the U.S. interagency wildland fire management and coordination system and in touring the NIFC facilities.

Canadian Emergency Planners

The IP assisted External Affairs in hosting three Canadian emergency planners from the city of Richmond, British Columbia, on August 13, 2002. Richmond is a suburb of Vancouver, B.C. with a population of 165,000. The city is trying to develop a better emergency coordination system and operations center. The three emergency planners from Richmond were interested in how NIFC's interagency wildland fire coordination system works with a special emphasis on communications.

Mongolian Environmental Managers

The IP assisted the Forest Service in hosting three environmental managers from Mongolia, September 26, 2002. They were interested in receiving technical information about NIFC's interagency wildland fire management and coordination system, the incident command system, aviation operations and fire education and prevention.

Assistance to Governor of Idaho

IP helped the Governor of Idaho in reviewing a "Cross-Border Coordination to Fight Forest Fires" proposal that the Governor's Office received from the Premier of Manitoba. The IP helped clarify issues presented in the proposal, pointed out objectives that were already being dealt with and identified recommendations that were made using incomplete information.

International Assistance to U.S.

The United States now has international arrangements with Canada, Australia and New Zealand, and an international agreement with Mexico. Operating plans have been approved for Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Several operating plans at the local (zone) level are in place with Mexico, but national operating plan guidelines are still being developed for Mexico.

The United States needed international assistance early in the 2002 fire season when the national preparedness level went to 5, its highest level, at its earliest point ever in late June, and stayed at that level until late August. Canada's severe fire season did not allow Canadian firefighters to assist the U.S. until early August. And final issues were not cleared away for arrangements to be signed with Australia and New Zealand until August 5.



Some down under folks ...up on top

In early August, NIFC requested international assistance from Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Although there was no formal request for assistance from Mexico, U.S. and Mexican firefighters worked together on several fires along the border and numerous Mexican nationals who are resident aliens in the U.S. supported fire suppression efforts as members of regular type 2 crews, or as members of contract crews.

During the 2002 fire season, the IP played a key role in completing legal arrangements with five states in Australia and the Government of New Zealand. The IP then worked with the National Interagency Coordination Center in the ordering and deployment of 40 Australian and 10 New Zealand firefighters to fires in Oregon.

Years Agreements or Arrangements Signed

Canada - 1982

Mexico - 1999

Australia - 2000, 2002

New Zealand - 2000, 2002

Types of International Assistance Received by U.S.

Canada during the 2002 fire season

40 type 1 (20 person) Crews (800 people)

117 Miscellaneous Overhead (middle managers)

Australia

40 Miscellaneous Overhead (ground and aviation middle managers)

New Zealand

10 Miscellaneous Overhead (ground and aviation middle managers)

Mexican Nationals

Members of BLM's Snake River Valley Type 2 Crews out of Vale, Oregon

Members of Type 2 Crews including Contract Crews

Members of Diablo Type 2 Crew out of Big Bend National Park

Military Support

The IP also coordinated the activation and deployment of a battalion of Army troops to fires in Oregon.

Mexico/U.S. Cross Border Arrangement

In mid-May, 2002, the U.S. assisted Mexican fire fighters with a 10,000-acre (4,047 hectares) fire just across the U.S./Mexican border in Agua Prieta in the State of Sonora. In

mid-June, a 1,300-acre (526 hectares) fire that threatened numerous residences near the border towns of Nogales, Arizona, and Nogales, Sonora, was suppressed under a unified command between U.S. and Mexican firefighters. During the suppression efforts, firefighters from Mexico worked closely with U.S. firefighters especially in constructing fire lines on the western flanks of the fire. Aerial suppression resources were also used.

