

Statement on the Crash of a North Carolina Air National Guard C-130 in South Dakota

July 2, 2012

Yesterday a military C-130 from the North Carolina Air National Guard crashed while supporting firefighting efforts in South Dakota. The full details are still under investigation, but the crew of this flight, along with their families and loved ones, are in our thoughts and prayers. The men and women battling these terrible fires across the West put their lives on the line every day for their fellow Americans. The airmen who attack these fires from above repeatedly confront dangerous conditions in an effort to give firefighters on the ground a chance to contain these wildfires:

to save homes, businesses, schools, and entire communities. They are heroes who deserve the appreciation of a grateful nation. I know Americans across the country share my concern for the well-being of the surviving members of the crew and my deep condolences to the families of those who lost their lives. And I know that Americans join me in expressing my deepest gratitude for the selfless determination they and thousands of men and women involved in this fight in States across the country demonstrate every day.

Statement on the Death of Andy S. Griffith

July 3, 2012

Michelle and I were saddened to hear about the passing of Andy Griffith this morning. A performer of extraordinary talent, Andy was beloved by generations of fans and revered by entertainers who followed in his footsteps. He

brought us characters from Sheriff Andy Taylor to Ben Matlock and, in the process, warmed the hearts of Americans everywhere. Our thoughts and prayers are with Andy's family.

Remarks at a Naturalization Ceremony for Active Duty Servicemembers

July 4, 2012

The President. Thank you. Good morning, everybody.

Audience members. Good morning, Mr. President.

The President. Secretary Napolitano, Director Mayorkas, distinguished guests, family and friends, welcome to the White House. Happy Fourth of July. What a perfect way to celebrate America's birthday: the world's oldest democracy, with some of our newest citizens.

I have to tell you, just personally, this is one of my favorite things to do. It brings me great joy and inspiration because it reminds us that we are a country that is bound together not simply by ethnicity or bloodlines, but by fidelity to a set of ideas. And as members of our mil-

itary, you raised your hand and took an oath of service. It is an honor for me to serve as your Commander in Chief. Today you raised your hand and have taken an oath of citizenship. And I could not be prouder to be among the first to greet you as "my fellow Americans."

Now, looking back, it was an act of extraordinary audacity: a few dozen delegates in that hall in Philadelphia, daring to defy the mightiest empire in the world, declaring "that these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States."

Two hundred and thirty-six years later, we marvel at America's story: from a string of 13 Colonies to 50 States from sea to shining sea; from a fragile experiment in democracy to a