



## Executive Briefing Paper

**Background.** This briefing paper is designed to illuminate the concerns and potential of the proposed legislation to create an interdependent firefighting air fleet for the State of Colorado.

**Key Points.** There are three primary drivers to support this legislation which go beyond the near term wildfire threat to Colorado, evolving to make Colorado the global center for advanced technology aerial firefighting.

1. *Public safety.* There is little doubt that wildfire poses a clear and present danger to the state and its citizens. Beyond the deteriorating condition of the forests and expanding wildland-urban interface (WUI) concerns, there is an active terrorist threat that exists. The May 2012 issue of *Inspire*, a magazine published by al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, actively advocates Jihadist arson in the American west. In the wake of the Boston Marathon bombings, the public and political implications of ignoring this threat cannot be overstated.
2. *Job creation.* Colorado's air fleet should be required to be modified, maintained, and operated in Colorado, bringing aircraft modification, maintenance, and operations jobs back to our state, as well as sustaining good paying full time positions for scores of Coloradans. Additionally, in Phase 2 of this effort, the creation of a *Center of Excellence for Advanced Technology Aerial Firefighting* will create, in Colorado, a much needed global driver for innovation in this industry.
3. *Colorado reputation and legacy.* The second phase of this effort, the creation of the *Center of Excellence for Advanced Technology Aerial Firefighting* would unite a wide variety of public and private sector constituents (Universities, USAF Academy, military, test and evaluation, entrepreneurs, etc.) on an international scale to lead the firefighting industry in an area that is currently much needed but untouched, making Colorado the globally recognized hub of this emerging science.

## Counterpoints.

1. *Costs.* While initial startup costs are not insignificant, the long term benefits and economic potential to Colorado will prove to be a value added, positive cash flow endeavor through new models of contracting, technology development, loss control, and the tax revenue from jobs for Coloradans.
2. *Private sector concerns.* Near term, this will be seen as competition with the existing traditional contracting model, and therefore should be approached as a private-public partnership. For example, government owned but privately modified, maintained and operated.
3. *Federal role and responsibility.* The US Forest Service is currently unable to break from the contracting and technology developmental model that is required to meet the current and future threat levels.

**Summary.** Change is difficult, but the potential exists to make this a true "feather in the cap" of a state with great challenges and great potential to lead against an evolving threat to the citizens of the western United States and around the globe.