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U.S. Supports Training for Over 5,000 Volunteers to Combat Forest Fires

U.S. Embassy Charge d'Affaires Larry Memmott today delivered a donation of nearly \$30,000 to support environmental stewardship initiatives in Bolivia. The grant is part of the U.S. Government cooperation program to Bolivia, provided through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), to support Bolivian development policies.

With this donation, the United States contributed to the Fourth International Forest Firefighter Brigade Mobilization Exercise organized by the Autonomous Government of Santa Cruz Department, through its Secretariat of Environment and Sustainable Development in coordination with the Secretariat of Public Safety and the Municipal Government.

The objective of this exercise is to bring together technical experts and specialists in fighting forest fires so that they can exchange experiences, knowledge, skills and successful fire prevention and control programs. At the same time, the participants are trained to develop teamwork skills to coordinate the work of the brigades and participate in physical performance tests. Another training area involves the use of specialized equipment for forestry and forest fire control. The U.S. donation consisted of 900 pairs of fire retardant pants, valued at \$30,000, which will protect volunteers and specialists in the case of a forest fire.

One of the main causes of environmental degradation in Bolivia is forest fires. The Departmental Government of Santa Cruz, with support from the U.S. Embassy, is organizing a series of training opportunities for firefighters, volunteers, military units, civil defense institutions, rescue teams, firefighters specialized in combating forest fires, public and private universities, as well as other institutions. The objective of these events is to develop skills to fight forest fires and protect the natural resources of Bolivia.