



The Civil Air Patrol – A Critical Part of Aviation & Emergency Response History

The Civil Air Patrol is the official auxiliary of the United States [Air Force](#). Civil Air Patrol flies more than 95 percent of all federal inland search and rescue missions directed by the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center (AFRCC) at Langley Air Force Base, Virginia. The many disaster relief efforts, together with CAP's ongoing search and rescue counter drug missions and [homeland security](#) missions, have substantially increased the flight hours and man-hours that more than 64,000 CAP members provides to communities all across this nation and in Puerto Rico. More than 100 lives are saved every year by CAP members performing search and rescue missions.

CAP's disaster relief missions, such as those during hurricanes and floods, often don't make headlines, but CAP provides both air and ground transportation and an extensive communications network. CAP provides an aerial photo platform for many disaster relief responder agencies. Many CAP [aircraft](#) are equipped with slow scan video technology that enables them to transmit damage assessment photos, flood stage observations and traffic conditions to the agency within seconds of taking the photo.

The CAP Emergency Communications Network spans the country with a data and voice net built to survive the loss of civil communications. With one of the most sophisticated communications networks in the nation, CAP supports local, state, and [federal agencies](#) during disaster relief, search and rescue and many other emergencies. The [fleet](#) of 550 Cap-owned, single-engine aircraft, communicates on CAP's own dedicated frequencies, while new systems coordinate and track search flights via sophisticated data link.

Civil Air Patrol has an [aerospace](#) education program focused not only on members, but on the general public as well. CAP has a [congressional](#) tasking to stimulate public interest in aerospace issues. Each year, CAP supports over 100 workshops in colleges and universities across the nation which reach more than 3,000 educators. These workshops highlight basic aerospace knowledge and focus on advances in aerospace technology.

The CAP Cadet Program continues to introduce thousands of young people from 6 th Grade to age 21 to aviation, and offers them outstanding summer programs including some that offer an opportunity to solo in a light airplane at low cost. The CAP Cadet Program is designed to motivate and develop well-rounded young people, who in turn will become model citizens and the future leaders of the nation.

Civil Air Patrol is divided into eight geographic regions. Each region is divided into Wings, with one wing for each state as well as separate wings for the National Capital and Puerto Rico. Also noteworthy was a reorganization and restructuring of CAP's national headquarters at Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala., in 1995. This resulted in replacing [active-duty](#) and [civil service](#) employees with a CAP Corporate staff. A support staff of 160 persons remain in place to oversee CAP operations.

Civil Air Patrol members are easily recognized in the community since they wear a variety of distinctive uniforms. Since CAP is the official US Air Force auxiliary, members are also authorized to wear the Air Force uniform with distinguishing CAP badges and insignia.

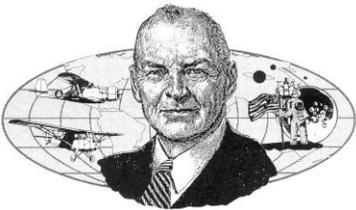
Civil Air Patrol [CAP], as the Air Force Auxiliary, provide tremendous benefit to the Air Force when performing missions in emergency services and homeland security operations, aerospace education and the cadet programs. CAP emergency services is a reflection of average Americans helping their fellow citizens in time of need. They bring aerospace and the use of airpower to the grass roots level. Aerospace education keeps the public informed and interested in aviation, the Air Force, and the need for aerospace supremacy. The cadet program exposes and motivates our nation's youth toward a career in aerospace and the armed forces, particularly the Air Force, while developing leadership and other useful skills that will help these potential Air Force NCOs and officers in their chosen careers. All these programs will have a synergistic effect on our recruiting efforts.

Legislative changes ushered in a new era of closeness between the Air Force and its auxiliary, the Civil Air Patrol. These were the first major revisions to the laws governing CAP in many years. The legislation provided the Air Force greater authority to use and support CAP as the Air Force Auxiliary. Additionally, with the secretary of the Air Force oversight, federal agencies, such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Drug Enforcement Administration, and the U. S. Customs Service, could use the Air Force Auxiliary. The law authorized the secretary of the Air Force to designate any or all of the CAP cadet and aerospace education programs as official Air Force missions or activities.

Also, for the first time, the secretary of the Air Force recognized all three of CAP's current missions, as official Air Force missions. Before this legislation, only CAP's emergency services mission was incorporated as an Air Force mission. Under the provision, the Air Force provided greater support to CAP in the areas of aircraft modernization, equipment procurement and funding. The Air Force's increased efforts in supporting CAP included training opportunities in safety, inspector general and chaplain duties.

The legislation established an 11-member board of governors. The secretary of the Air Force appoints four members, CAP selects four, and the secretary and the CAP national commander together choose three. These three will represent outside agencies or organizations that have interests and expertise in civil aviation and the CAP mission. These agencies include, but are not limited to, federal government agencies, public corporations, nonprofit associations, and universities with a heavy emphasis on aeronautical education. The board will serve as the preeminent governing body for CAP.

With the attacks of September 11, 2001 and the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, the decision was made in 2002 for the Air Force to move CAP from its operations directorate to the homeland security directorate under Brig. Gen. David E. Clary, to give the patrol additional duties in homeland security operations and exercises. CAP now also performs counterdrug reconnaissance missions at the request of law enforcement agencies and can do radiological monitoring and damage assessment. CAP recently purchased a GA8 Airvan, from Gippsland Aeronautics in Australia and plans to purchase five more Airvans specifically to support its homeland security missions.



Civil Air Patrol was conceived in the late 1930s by legendary New Jersey aviation advocate Gill Robb Wilson, who foresaw aviation's role in war and general aviation's potential to supplement America's unprepared military. Wilson, then aviation editor of The New York Herald Tribune and later NJ Aeronautics Commissioner, first sold the idea to New Jersey's governor, who created a statewide organization. Wilson then convinced New York mayor (and National Civil Defense Chief) Fiorello La Guardia of the need for a civilian air defense

organization. The new Civil Air Patrol was born on December 1, 1941, just days before the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. CAP initially planned only on liaison flying and interdiction of infiltrators on the East Coast and the southern border, but CAP's mission grew when German submarines began to prey on American ships. CAP pilots provided their own airplanes and equipment, and often could not cover expenses on their \$8 per flying-day [government](#) pay, which often arrived two months late. Civic organizations across the nation chipped in with "Sink-a-Sub Clubs," staging fundraisers for Coastal Patrol.

Because of its effectiveness, the CAP Coastal Patrol passed its experimental or trial period with "flying" colors. The coastal patrol went on to serve its country for nearly 18 months (5 March 1942 – 31 August 1943), flying in good weather and bad, from dawn to dusk. The 18-month record of the Coastal Patrol – all volunteer civilians, with little or no formal combat training – is most impressive: it began with three bases and at its conclusion of the program, was operating from 21 bases. It had reported 173 U-boats sighted, sunk two, and had dropped a total of 83 bombs and depth charges upon 57 of these – with several other "probables." Its aircrews flew 86,865 missions over coastal waters for a total of 244,600 hours – which approximates to 24 million miles. The patrols summoned help for 91 ships in distress and for 363 survivors of submarine attacks. It sighted and reported 17 floating mines, and, at the request of the US Navy, flew 5,684 special convoy missions. Although the victory against the submarine was a joint operation of the Army, Navy, Coast Guard, and the CAP, it is a fact that the U-boats disappeared in direct proportion to the spread of CAP operations.



In April 1943, CAP was reassigned from the Office of Civilian Defense to the War Department and placed under the jurisdiction of the Army Air Forces. These Flying Minutemen, all volunteers, performed valiantly during the war. They performed many missions including coastal patrol to search for enemy submarines, search and rescue missions throughout the United States, cargo and courier flights to transfer critical materials and personnel, and even towing targets so Army Air Corps personnel could practice air-to-air gunnery techniques - a very risky mission with new gunners. In all, these volunteers amassed a stunning record - flying more than half-a-million hours, sinking two enemy submarines, and saving hundreds of crash victims.

On July 1, 1946, President Truman established CAP as a federally chartered benevolent civilian corporation, and Congress passed Public Law 557 on May 26, 1948, which made CAP the auxiliary of the new US Air

Force. CAP was charged with three primary missions: Aerospace Education, Cadet Programs and Emergency Services.

Since air search and rescue had been one of CAP's primary missions during the war, it was obvious there was no other organization with the equipment and training to continue this vital job in the post-war years. Even though there were plenty of military aircraft available, they cost far too much to operate and flew too fast for accurate spotting of downed planes and personnel. Military pilots were expensive to train as well, and mission requirements limited their availability for search and rescue work. Civil Air Patrol, with its proven record of volunteer service using light aircraft, was put to work.

During the 1990's Civil Air Patrol experienced an ever-increasing number of missions. Some of the notable natural disasters, which CAP responded to include the San Francisco earthquake of 1991 and the Midwest floods and major hurricanes in the southeast during the mid-nineties.

Due to CAP's expanding role in the 21st century to include increased homeland security work, Congress in February 2003 amended the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 to make members of the Civil Air Patrol eligible for Public Safety Officer death benefits.

Under this bill, Civil Air Patrol members who lose their lives in the line of duty will become eligible for the same federal death benefit provided to other public safety personnel. The bill, entitled the Civil Air Patrol Homeland Security Benefits Act (H.R. 3681) applies to the members of CAP who lose their lives or become permanently disabled while engaged in active service in support of operational missions of the U.S. Air Force.