

**STATEMENT BY
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CIVIL AIR PATROL**

Before the

**Homeland Security Subcommittee on
Emergency Communications, Preparedness, and Response**

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Good afternoon Chairman and Members of the Committee. I am pleased to have this opportunity to testify on behalf of the Civil Air Patrol (CAP) on the use of CAP assets for humanitarian assistance, aerial reconnaissance, search and rescue, and emergency services. I would like to assure you CAP is the perfect fit to support this effort because of the skill, expertise, and experience this organization brings to the table.

History

First, allow me to enlighten the rest of the members on who we are and what we do. Civil Air Patrol was founded in December 1941, during a time of uncertainty and danger one week before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor that hurled America into global conflict. In America's time of wartime need, CAP's fledgling organization of 150,000 volunteer citizen aviators halted the deadly, destructive designs of Germany's Nazi U-boats in America's coastal waters. Under the jurisdiction of the Army Air Forces, CAP pilots flew more than one-half million hours, were credited with sinking two enemy submarines and rescued hundreds of crash survivors during World War II. On July 1, 1946, President Harry Truman established CAP as a federally chartered benevolent civilian corporation, and Congress passed Public Law 557 on May 26, 1948, making CAP the auxiliary of the new U.S. Air Force. CAP was and is still today charged with three primary missions—aerospace education, cadet programs and emergency services. I will focus my comments today on the emergency services mission.

It is important for you to understand why CAP is a different from other volunteer public service organizations. We started in World War II flying antisubmarine missions with light aircraft off the Atlantic coast when the military was unable to do that mission. It was a dangerous and essential national mission that we did well. We continue that tradition of service to this very day. We have over 500 light aircraft and professional, trained aircrews, on alert and ready to respond. That capability is supported by a vast communications and command network, ground teams capable of conducting emergency missions and thousands of trained volunteers. These assets are located in hundreds of communities, towns and cities in every state. We utilize modern technologies including satellite transmitted aerial photos and hyper-spectral imaging and can quickly take on new technologies. No other volunteer organization in the United States can provide that kind of capability. Mr. Chairman, we are ready to help now.

CAP operates as an all-volunteer civilian community asset and the auxiliary of the U.S. Air Force with over 55,000 members. It includes eight geographic regions consisting of 52 wings, one in each of the 50 states, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia for a total number of units that exceeds 1,500. CAP operates one of the largest fleets of single-engine piston aircraft in the world with 530 aircraft and our volunteer members fly nearly 110,000 hours each year. Additionally, CAP maintains a fleet of nearly 1,000 emergency services vehicles for training and mission support.

Emergency Services is our niche. CAP conducts 95 percent of all inland search and rescue in the United States, as tasked by the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center at Langley Air Force Base, Virginia, and other agencies. All Air Force-assigned missions are coordinated through the CAP National Operations Center at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. We are called upon to perform aerial reconnaissance for homeland security. CAP also provides disaster-relief support to local, state, and national disaster relief organizations which may include transporting time-sensitive medical materials, blood products, and body tissues. CAP is also equipped to provide near real time damage assessment, light transport, communications support, and low-altitude route surveys for the U.S. Air Force. We also assist federal agencies in the war on drugs. Finally, we maintain the most extensive emergency communications network in the nation with over 16,000 radios.

As has been a tradition for over 65 years, CAP pilots and aircraft are highly valued for their ability to fly low and slow making them the ideal observation platform. Federal and state agencies have regularly called on CAP pilots and observers to take vital damage assessment photos or search for crash victims. CAP aircrews are an ideal resource throughout the country because of their experience in search and rescue and their ability to provide aerial imagery in a cost-effective manner. Its customers, especially the U.S. military, pay a very small fee for the outstanding service CAP provides. When the U.S. Air Force assigns a mission to CAP, it generally costs less than \$120 per flying hour.

The past few years have highlighted the phenomenal bravery, sacrifice and patriotism of CAP's Everyday Heroes. Our rapid response to Hurricanes Katrina, Ophelia, Rita and Wilma was the organization's most extensive ever. During the relief efforts CAP deployed 1,800 members from 17 states who served over 50,000 volunteer hours; flew over 1,000 air missions and logged over 2,000 flight hours; provided more than 2,000 time-critical aerial images of the affected areas; distributed 30,000 pounds of relief supplies; ground teams visited over 4,000 homes, contacting over 8,500 residents. CAP's great work didn't stop with hurricane relief efforts. Additionally, members carried out over 2,500 search and rescue missions and saved 73 lives. In conjunction with many other organizations, CAP helped reduce illegal drug activity by more than \$637 million. Whether searching for a missing hunter in Oregon, seeking missing or overdue helicopters in Louisiana and Arkansas, providing flood relief in Pennsylvania or assessing tornado damage in Kentucky, CAP members were there performing missions for America.

CAP aviators and other members continue to support U.S. homeland security taking part in several vital exercises at the request of the U.S. Air Force. As a result, Maj. Gen. M. Scott Mayes, former 1st Air Force Commander, stated, "CAP has become an important partner in our homeland defense mission. Because of the cooperation between CAP and NORAD, we're better able to meet our nation's requirements for rapid response to any threat to our air sovereignty.

This kind of teamwork is vital to our rapid-response capability. Together, when we're called upon, we'll be ready to act, and act fast."

The Arizona Border Mission

That same level of CAP commitment and cooperation continued last summer. At the request of the CSAF, CAP commenced increased training in Arizona in the anticipation of follow-on taskings. These mission rehearsals began on 17 July of 2006. CAP is training in Search and Rescue, Aerial Reconnaissance and Radio Relay. In the course of these training missions, if CAP aircrew members observed individuals in distress, appropriate authorities were notified. Concurrently, USAF staff members are actively developing a Concept of Operations so that we can smoothly transition to support of the Border Patrol, should the Department of Defense receive a request for assistance. The bottom line need was to protect lives along the border.

Conclusion

As CAP celebrates 65 years of service, it prepares for challenges yet to come in an increasingly complicated world. Whatever dangers or opportunities lay ahead, CAP's volunteers are poised to heed the call with the same patriotic spirit that has always distinguished CAP's missions for America. In that light, CAP is the right fit for this mission and remains committed to assisting border security operations if called upon to continue or expand its role. However, several issues that may limit our effectiveness must be addressed. First, as various federal, state, or local agencies come together to work on a mission such as this one the overall effectiveness and results of the total effort may be enhanced by placing one agency in a position of overarching authority. This lead agency could then most efficiently and effectively orchestrate and direct all operational and support activity to accomplish the mission. Secondly, since CAP is a private non-profit corporation and the Air Force Auxiliary, should "Posse Comitatus" apply to operations such as this one? CAP stands ready to address and assist in resolving these and any other issues if you wish to continue utilizing us in this role.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the members of this committee for your strong and devoted support of Civil Air Patrol. As National Commander of this outstanding group of citizen volunteers, I encourage you to recognize the fact that CAP continues to provide an irreplaceable, professional and highly cost-effective force multiplier to America. Through the voluntary public service of more than 55,000 members, CAP makes a priceless and positive impact in communities by performing disaster relief and search & rescue missions, and also by providing aerospace education and cadet programs. CAP serves as a guardian of the skies and a skilled resource on the ground, wherever the call and whatever the mission.