



# NEWS

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## **Civil Air Patrol's 76-year history steeped in 'vigilant service to country and community'**

**MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, Ala.** – Civil Air Patrol's rich heritage of volunteer service is front and center today as the U.S. Air Force Auxiliary celebrates its 76th anniversary.

"What a legacy we have!" exclaimed Maj. Gen. Mark Smith, CAP's national commander and chief executive officer. "Each year, on this special day, we are reminded of the sacrifices of CAP's earliest members, whose extraordinary contributions to America represent our proud history of vigilant service to country and community."

CAP was founded on Dec. 1, 1941, less than a week before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor led to America's involvement in World War II. Its members soon proved their worth by conducting aerial patrols on their own, displaying heroism that discouraged and eventually stopped deadly German U-boat attacks along U.S. coastlines and waterways.

The wartime service of CAP's "subchasers" helped stop the loss of American and Allied merchant vessels, saving the lives of untold thousands of sailors and countless millions of dollars of war materiel destined for the battlefields in Europe and the Pacific. In addition to coastal patrols, CAP aircrews assisted with other essential wartime missions on the home front, such as search and rescue, disaster relief, border patrol, forest fire patrol, target towing for military practice and transporting critical supplies. Members also managed hundreds of airports and trained aviators — many of them cadets — for future service in CAP and the military.

Those services provided by Civil Air Patrol's World War II-era veterans earned CAP a Congressional Gold Medal on Dec. 10, 2014. The medal — the highest civilian honor bestowed by Congress — was presented to CAP on behalf of those founding members.

Their legacy lives on in today's all-volunteer force, which continues to contribute greatly to America's defense by providing aerial reconnaissance for homeland security, giving Air Force fighter pilots practice in protecting America's airspace and helping train U.S. military troops for service overseas. CAP members also make a profound difference in more than 1,400 communities across the nation, saving lives through search and rescue and other emergency services and conducting aerospace education and youth programs that help develop the nation's next generation of leaders.

In the past fiscal year, CAP was involved in 1,127 search and rescue missions and credited by the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center with saving 110 lives. One hundred and five of those people saved were found with the help of CAP's national cell phone forensics and radar analysis teams. In addition, CAP members helped emergency personnel determine critical infrastructure needs following Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria by providing nearly 500,000 aerial damage assessment photos.

“Every day, our citizen Airmen continue to build on the terrific foundation forged by our forefathers,” said Smith. “Their contributions have helped Civil Air Patrol evolve into the premier public service organization that it is today.”

CAP's 76th anniversary observance includes an annual “CAP Sabbath/Sunday” activity in which chaplains, character development instructors and other members are encouraged to wear their uniforms to their place of worship. The activity is scheduled for this weekend, Dec. 1-3.

*Civil Air Patrol, the longtime all-volunteer U.S. Air Force auxiliary, is the newest member of the Air Force's Total Force. In this role, CAP operates a fleet of 560 aircraft, performs about 90 percent of continental U.S. inland search and rescue missions as tasked by the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center and is credited by the AFRCC with saving an average of 80 lives annually. CAP's 59,000 members also perform homeland security, disaster relief and drug interdiction missions at the request of federal, state and local agencies. CAP also plays a leading role in aerospace/STEM education, and its members serve as mentors to 25,000 young people participating in CAP's Cadet Programs. Visit [www.GoCivilAirPatrol.com](http://www.GoCivilAirPatrol.com) for more information.*

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