

Birthday of CAP as USAF Auxiliary

Written by Julie DeBardelaben

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MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, Ala. – Civil Air Patrol proudly marks 60 years as the U.S. Air Force auxiliary on May 26. Public Law 557, signed on May 26, 1948, designated CAP the official auxiliary of an eight-month-old U.S. Air Force.

CAP began as an association of volunteer, defense-minded aviators just a week before the start of World War II in December 1941. CAP pilots with the Coastal Patrol distinguished themselves by flying more than 24 million miles during 86,000 over-water missions — a total of 244,600 flight hours — to help win the battle against German U-boats that were preying on coastal shipping. CAP volunteers also spotted 173 subs, attacked 57, hit 10 and sank two; called in aid for 91 ships in distress; saved 363 survivors of sub attacks; discovered 17 floating mines; and flew 5,684 special convoy missions. Fifty-nine members of these courageous aircrews died in service to their country, 26 were lost at sea and seven others were seriously injured.

“On the 60th anniversary of Civil Air Patrol’s auxiliary status, our 56,000 members continue to enthusiastically uphold their legacy of excellence, integrity and service before self,” said CAP Interim National Commander Brig. Gen. Amy S. Courter. “We are proud of our long history of volunteer service to our communities, whatever the need and whenever the call, and proud of our partnership with the U.S. Air Force.”

Today, CAP performs its Missions for America in the tradition of its wartime forefathers. Whether performing search and rescue or disaster relief missions helping communities recover from floods, wildfires, tornadoes or hurricanes; promoting aerospace education; or mentoring the leadership skills of youth, CAP members aid the nation in the air and on the ground.

Highlights of CAP’s modern-day contributions to society include:

- performing 90 percent of inland search and rescue missions as tasked by the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center, saving 103 lives in fiscal year 2007;
- assisting the Air Force in ensuring the skies above our nation are safe by flying target-intercept training missions for U.S. military pilots;
- serving as a force multiplier for the Air Force and other federal, state and local agencies, with 550 aircraft and thousands of trained aircrew members;
- supporting deployed Air Force members and their families through the Volunteer Support of the Air Force program, in which CAP members perform on-base quality-of-life tasks; and
- providing leadership opportunities to 22,000 youth in CAP’s Cadet Program.

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