



Civil Air Patrol World War II Operations

Fact Sheet



Organizational Background Information*

- In the summer of 1941, Office of Civilian Defense director Fiorello LaGuardia appointed an aviation committee composed of Gill Robb Wilson, Thomas H. Beck and Guy P. Gannett to develop a blueprint to organize civilian aviation resources nationally.
- The resulting plan, to establish the Civil Air Defense Service using civilian flyers for home defense and disaster relief in the event of a national emergency, was penned by Wilson.
- First implemented in New Jersey, this would become the model for Civil Air Patrol.
- Civil Air Patrol National Headquarters began operations as a division of the Office of Civilian Defense on Dec. 1, 1941.
- CAP was formally established by OCD Administrative Order No. 9 on Dec. 8, 1941, signed by LaGuardia.
- The first public announcement of the organization was released the evening of Dec. 8, 1941, with CAP defined to the American people as "an organization of the civilian aviation resources of the nation for national defense service."
- Maj. Gen. John F. Curry of the U.S. Army Air Corps served as the first national commander of CAP.
- Capt. (later Col.) Earle L. Johnson of the U.S. Army Air Forces replaced Curry as national commander April 1, 1942, and remained CAP's national commander for the duration of the war.
- On Oct. 1, 1942, a cadet program began under the authority of Johnson, then a major, and Capt. Kendall K. Hoyt.
- The CAP Cadet program welcomed boys and girls 15-17 in the last two years of high school to join.
- The program would expand during the war to include recruitment of aviation cadets for the armed forces.
- On April 29, 1943, Executive Order 9339 transferred CAP from the Office of Civilian Defense to the Department of War.
- Over 200,000 men and women 15 and up served in CAP -- organized into 48 wings, one per state -- during World War II.
- A total of 65 volunteers -- 62 men, two cadets, one woman -- died on active CAP service during the war, with 150 aircraft lost.

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*Data provided by Civil Air Patrol National Headquarters

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- 4,612 men and women served in one a CAP active-duty operation -- coastal patrol, tow target, courier or southern liaison patrol service.
- Overall, CAP flew about 750,000 hours during the war.
- On July 1, 1946, President Harry S. Truman signed Public Law 79-476, incorporating C.A.P. Truman signed Public Law 80-557 on May 26, 1948, establishing CAP as the civilian auxiliary of the U.S. Air Force.
- CAP from its inception was an equal-rights organization, open to citizens of all genders, races and backgrounds.
- At the start of World War II, only 3 1/2 percent of licensed pilots in the U.S. were women, many of whom joined CAP.
- By 1945 women constituted 20 percent of CAP's senior and cadet membership.
- Over half of all the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) were former CAP members, with 70 percent of the last class of WASPs having served in CAP.
- Other former CAP members joined the Women's Army Corps (WACs) or the Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES).

Coastal Patrol Operations

- Germany declared war on the U.S. on Dec. 11, 1941, and on Dec. 18 the first five German U-boats left Lorient, France, bound for the North American coast as part of *Operation Paukenschlag* (Drumbeat).
- On Jan. 12, 1942, U-123 sank the British merchant ship SS Cyclops off Nova Scotia -- the first victim of the Drumbeaters.
- By Feb. 6, when the five submarines ended operations, they had sunk 25 ships; ensuing waves of U-boats followed.
- During the first six months of 1942, U-boats sank nearly 400 merchant vessels off the Atlantic coastline, amounting to about 3 million tons of shipping.
- The U.S. Army and Navy, in agreement with the Petroleum Industry War Council, agreed March 4, 1942, to permit CAP coastal patrol anti-submarine flights to commence on an experimental basis.
- From January-March 1942, U-boats sank 52 oil tankers off the East Coast.
- Led by Sun Oil Co.'s (Sunoco) donation of \$10,000, seven additional oil companies donated \$8,000 to fund the establishment of three bases -- Coastal Patrol Base No. 1 at Atlantic City, New Jersey; No. 2 at Rehoboth, Delaware; and No. 3 at West Palm Beach (Lantana), Florida.
- The first CAP coastal patrol flight took off from Base No. 2 at Rehoboth on March 5, 1942. Base No. 1 at Atlantic City began patrol flights March 10 and Base No. 3 at Lantana on April 2.
- By the end of September 1942, 21 CAP coastal patrol bases extended from Maine to the Texas-Mexico border in 13 states -- Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts,

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Mississippi, New Jersey, New York, North and South Carolina, Texas and Virginia.

- The bases were initially organized under the Eastern Defense Command's I Bomber Command, but on Oct. 15, 1942, were placed under the operational control of the Army Air Forces Antisubmarine Command, with the bases divided between the 25th and 26th wings, Antisubmarine Command.
- All planes used in coastal patrol service were privately owned, including models built by Cessna, Fairchild, Grumman, Stinson and Waco.
- Coastal patrol planes were required to have at least 90-horsepower engines.
- Operating in pairs, planes maintained patrols from dawn to dusk, flying up to 60 miles offshore.
- Aircraft sported a roundel consisting of a white triangle atop a blue circle, minus the red propeller of the CAP logo, to distinguish coastal patrol planes from those of other CAP units.
- In May 1942, senior Army and Navy leaders authorized the arming of CAP coastal patrol aircraft.
- Depending on capacity, aircraft typically carried one to two 100-pound AN-M30 general purpose demolition bombs; larger planes sported one 325-pound Mk 17 depth bomb.
- On July 19, 1942, German Adm. Karl Doenitz, commander of all German U-boats, withdrew his last submarines operating off the East Coast after increasing losses and reduced success against merchant traffic.
- U-boats operated in the Gulf of Mexico from May-Sept. 4, 1942, when Doenitz again withdrew his boats after the introduction of convoys and air patrols made U-boat operations prohibitively ineffective.
- The CAP coastal patrol operation ceased Aug. 31, 1942, in accordance with an Army agreement to transfer all antisubmarine operations to the Navy.

Statistics

CAP reported the following to the U.S. military regarding the 18 months of coastal patrol operations:

- 57 attacks on enemy submarines.
- 82 bombs dropped against submarines.
- 173 radio reports of submarine positions.
- 17 floating mines spotted.
- 36 dead bodies spotted.
- 91 vessels in distress spotted.
- 363 survivors in distress spotted.
- 836 irregularities noted.
- 1,036 special investigations at sea or along the coast.
- 5,684 convoy missions as aerial escorts for Navy ships.

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- 86,685 missions flown.
- 244,600 flight hours logged.
- Over 24 million miles flown.
- Over 500,000 hours flown on other missions.
- 26 fatalities, seven serious injuries and 90 aircraft lost.

Courier Service

- Beginning Aug. 27, 1942, a CAP courier service began operations under the 2nd Air Force over routes extending into 16 states transporting Army mail, aircraft parts, war materials, supplies and personnel.
- Daily routes covered 16,382 miles and 54 scheduled flights.
- Additional services were provided to the 1st and 4th Air Forces.
- Beginning Dec. 1, 1942, a sub-depot courier service under Headquarters, 1st Area Service Command, handled nonscheduled missions between sub-depots under that command.
- The service was discontinued by August 1944.

Statistics

The Courier Service transported:

- 3,451,851 pounds of cargo for the 2nd Air Force.
- 12,139 pounds of cargo for the 4th Air Force.
- 73,921 pounds of cargo and 543 passengers for the 1st Air Force.
- Seven courier aircrew died with a loss of seven aircraft.

Southern Liaison Patrol

- Involved patrolling more than 1,000 miles along the Rio Grande from Brownsville, Texas, to Douglas, Arizona, to prevent illegal border crossings in either direction and to report irregularities to the Army's Southern Land Frontier, Headquarters, Fort Bliss, Texas.
- The operations were inaugurated Oct. 3, 1942, and conducted from two main bases at Laredo (Southern Liaison Patrol No. 1) and El Paso (Southern Liaison Patrol No. 2), Texas, with sub-bases at Del Rio and Marfa, Texas.
- The daily patrols afforded one to four daily observations of every foot of the border from 50 to 450 feet up, depending on terrain; aircrews were able to make immediate radio reports of any incident or unusual sighting
- Without CAP, the Southern Land Frontier would have required the use of thousands of troops to patrol the border.
- The patrol ceased operations in April 1944.

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Statistics

CAP aircrews:

- Flew 4,720 patrol missions and 1,397 special missions.
- Amassed 30,033 hours of flight time.
- Suffered two fatalities.
- Lost over 13 aircraft.
- Reported 176 suspicious aircraft and 6,874 unusual or out-of-the-ordinary activities.

Tow Target Service

- The mission was inaugurated Dec. 1, 1942, as a tracking service for the 1st Air Force and expanded to support antiaircraft training in both the first and 4th Air Forces within the Eastern and Western Defense Commands in late 1943.
- Eight Tow Target Units in six states -- California, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Virginia and Washington -- initiated operations from December 1943-February 1944.
- Planes principally flew either tracking missions, to allow searchlights to acquire and track a moving target, or tow target missions, with a canvas target sleeve towed behind a CAP aircraft to allow anti-aircraft gunners to practice and perfect their gunnery skills.
- Anti-aircraft training involved weapons ranging from .50-caliber machine guns to 40 mm, 90 mm and 120 mm cannons.
- Participants originated primarily from the coastal and liaison patrols after their discontinuation.
- CAP planes proved more economical than the use of Army aircraft in the performance of the same missions.

Statistics

CAP aircrews:

- Flew 20,500 tow target missions.
- Suffered seven deaths and five serious injuries.
- Lost 25 aircraft.

Forest Patrol and Missing Aircraft Search

- In early 1942 forest patrols commenced in numerous states, working in cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service and state departments of conservation to observe the extent of forest fires, direct firefighting efforts and spot fires before they could grow out of control.
- Typically numbering very few planes, the forest patrols saved valuable timber resources.
- In Ohio in 1943, the state patrol flew 402 missions totaling 790 hours in the hour while reporting 587 fires.

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- Missing aircraft search missions started practically from the creation of the CAP, encompassing the search for missing civilian, Army, Navy and Canadian aircraft.
- When unable to research crash sites by air, CAP units resorted to vehicular, foot and mounted patrols.
- CAP aircrews flew over 25,000 hours on official Army Air Forces search missions during the war.
- CAP members often provided emergency medical aid to injured aircrews and guarded crash sites until military or law enforcement personnel could arrive.

Additional Missions

CAP also provided assistance to state and federal civilian defense and military organizations through:

- Aircraft radio calibration flights.
- Radar calibration and training missions.
- Emergency relief missions in response to natural disasters, including floods, blizzards, hurricanes, tornadoes, railway wrecks, fires and explosions.
- Emergency medical flights, transporting medicine, blood plasma and Red Cross supplies.
- Transporting civilian defense and military officials for inspection of camouflage, blackouts and other defense work.
- Promotional flights for War Bond drives.
- Special flights for state and municipal agencies.
- Guarding and maintaining civil airports.
- Patrolling lakes and rivers in the Great Lakes areas to report on ice conditions.
- Assisting with the training of state guard units.
- Conducting aerial hunts of wolves and coyotes killing livestock.
- Tracking fugitives from justice for state and federal law enforcement agencies,
- Herding wildfowl by air to prevent crop destruction.

Recognition

- In 1948, Air Medals were awarded to 824 former coastal patrol pilots and observers who flew at least 200 hours of over-water patrol time.
- On Feb. 17, 1943, Edmond I. Edwards and Hugh R. Sharp Jr. received Air Medals for valorous service in the rescue of fellow CAP member Henry T. Cross after his aircraft crashed at sea; each received an oak leaf cluster in lieu of a second Air Medal in 1948.
- In 1947 the War Department awarded 25 Exceptional Civilian Service Medals to former coastal patrol, tow target unit and southern liaison patrol base commanders