

Civil Air Patrol Congressional Gold Medal Fact Sheet

Organizational Background Information

- In the summer of 1941, Office of Civilian Defense (OCD) 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 the Civil Air Patrol
- Civil Air Patrol (CAP) national headquarters began operations as a division of the Office of Civilian Defense on December 1, 1941
- CAP formally established by OCD Administrative Order No. 9 on December 8, 1941, signed by LaGuardia
 - First public announcement of organization released evening of December 8, 1941, with the CAP defined to the American people as “an organization of the civilian aviation resources of the nation for national defense service”
- Major General John F. Curry, U.S. Army Air Corps, served as the first national commander of the CAP
 - Captain (later colonel) Earle L. Johnson, U.S. Army Air Forces, replaced Curry as national commander on April 1, 1942, and remained CAP’s national commander for the duration of the war
- On October 1, 1942, a cadet program began under the authority of Major Earle L. Johnson and Captain Kendall K. Hoyt
 - The CAP Cadet program welcomed boys and girls, ages 15 to 17 in the last two years of high school to join
 - The program would expand during the war to include the recruiting of aviation cadets for the armed forces
- On April 29, 1943, Executive Order 9339 transferred the CAP from the Office of Civilian Defense to the Department of War
- Over 200,000 men and women, ages 15 and up served in the CAP during World War II organized into 48 wings, one per state
- 4,612 men and women served in one of the CAP active duty operations, either coastal patrol, tow target, courier, or southern liaison patrol service
- A total of 65 volunteers (62 men, two cadets, one woman) died on active CAP service during the war with a loss of 150 aircraft
- The 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 three and a half 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)

- Overall, CAP flew approximately 750,000 hours during the war
- On July 1, 1946, President Harry S. Truman signed Public Law 79-476, incorporating the Civil Air Patrol
 - Truman later signed Public Law 80-557 on May 26, 1948, establishing the Civil Air Patrol as the civilian auxiliary of the United States Air Force

Coastal Patrol Operations

- Nazi Germany declared war on the United States on December 11, 1941, and on December 18 the first five German U-boats left Lorient, France bound for the North American coast as part of Operation *Paukensschlag* (Drumbeat)
 - On January 12, 1942, *U-123* sank the British merchant ship *SS Cyclops* off Nova Scotia, the first victim of the Drumbeaters
 - By February 6 when the boats ended operations, the five submarines collectively had sunk 25 ships and ensuing waves of U-boats followed
 - Within the first six month of 1942, U-boats sank nearly 400 merchant vessels off the U.S. Atlantic coastline totaling approximately three million tons of shipping
- U.S. Army and Navy in agreement with the Petroleum Industry War Council agreed on March 4, 1942 to permit CAP coastal patrol antisubmarine flights to commence on an experimental basis
 - From January to March 1942, U-boats sank 52 oil tankers off the Eastern United States
 - Led by the Sun Oil Company's (Sunoco) donation of \$10,000, a seven additional oil companies donated \$8,000 to fund the establishment of three bases, Coastal Patrol Base No. 1 at Atlantic City, NJ; No. 2 at Rehoboth, DE; and No. 3 at West Palm Beach (Lantana), FL
- The first CAP coastal patrol flight took off from Rehoboth, DE (Base No. 2) on March 5, 1942
 - Base 1, Atlantic City, NJ began patrol flights on March 10, and Base 3 on April 2
 - By the end of September 1942, 21 CAP coastal patrol bases extended from Maine to the Texas – Mexico border
 - Coastal patrol bases were established in thirteen states (Delaware, New Jersey, Florida, Virginia, Georgia, Texas, North Carolina, South Carolina, New York, Massachusetts, Maine, Mississippi, and Louisiana)
 - The bases were initially organized under the Eastern Defense Command's I Bomber Command, but on October 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 aircraft used on coastal patrol service were privately-owned, including models built by Cessna, Fairchild, Stinson, Grumman, and Waco
 - Coastal patrol aircraft were required to have at least 90 horsepower engines
 - Operating in pairs, aircraft 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 aircraft 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 aircraft sported one 325-pound Mk 17 depth bomb
- On July 19, 1942, German Admiral 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
 - German U-boats operated in the Gulf of Mexico from May to September 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 on August 31, 1942 in accordance with an Army agreement to transfer all antisubmarine operations to the Navy

- Statistically, the 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 reported
- 36 dead bodies reported
- 91 vessels in distress reported
- 363 survivors in distress reported
- 836 irregularities noted
- 1,036 special investigations at sea or along the coast
- 5,684 convoy missions as aerial escorts for Navy ships
- 86,685 total missions flown
- 244,600 total flight hours logged
- Over 24,000,000 total miles flown
- Flew over 500,000 hours on other missions:
- 26 fatalities, 7 serious injuries, and 90 aircraft lost

- In 1948, Air Medals were awarded to 824 former coastal patrol pilots and observers who flew at least 200 hours of overwater patrol time

- Previously on February 17, 1943, Edmond I. Edwards and Hugh R. Sharp, Jr. received Air Medals for valorous service in the rescue of 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

Courier Service

- Beginning on August 27, 1942, a CAP Courier Service began operations under the Second Air Force over routes extending into 16 states transporting Army mail, aircraft parts, war materials, supplies, and personnel

- Daily route mileage covered 16,382 miles and 54 scheduled flights
- Additional services provided to First and Fourth Air Forces

- Commencing on December 1, 1942, a sub-depot courier service under Headquarters, First Area Service Command handled non-scheduled missions between sub-depots under that command

- The service discontinued by August 1944

- Statistically, the Courier Service

- Transported 3,451,851 pounds of cargo for the Second Air Force
- Transported 12,139 pounds of cargo for the Fourth Air Force
- Transported 73,921 pounds of cargo and 543 passengers for the First Air Force
- Seven courier aircrew died with a loss of seven aircraft

Southern Liaison Patrol

- Involved the patrolling along the Rio Grande River from Brownsville, TX to Douglas, AZ (over 1,000 miles) to prevent illegal border crossings in either direction and to report irregularities to the Army's Southern Land Frontier, Headquarters, Fort Bliss, TX
- Inaugurated on October 3, 1942, the operations were conducted from two main bases located at Laredo (Southern Liaison Patrol No. 1) and El Paso, TX (Southern Liaison Patrol No. 2) with sub-bases at Del Rio and Marfa, TX
- The daily patrols afforded one to four observations of every foot of the border on a daily basis, flying from 50 to 450 feet above ground, depending on terrain, able to make immediate radio reports of any incident or unusual sighting
 - Without the 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
- Statistically, CAP Southern Liaison Patrol aircrews:
 - Flew 4,720 patrol missions and 1,397 special missions
 - A total 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

- Inaugurated on December 1, 1942 as a tracking service for the First Air Force, the mission expanded to supporting antiaircraft training in both the First and Fourth Air Forces within the Eastern and Western Defense Commands in late 1943
- Eight Tow Target Units in six states (New Jersey, Massachusetts, California, Maryland, Washington, and Virginia) initiated operations in December 1943 through February 1944
- Aircraft principally flew either tracking missions, to allow searchlights to acquire and track a moving target, or tow target missions, wherein a canvas target sleeve was towed behind a CAP aircraft to allow antiaircraft gunners to practice and perfect their gunnery skills
 - Antiaircraft training involved weapons ranging from .50 caliber machine guns to 40mm, 90mm, and 120 mm cannons
- Personnel originated primarily from the Coastal and Liaison Patrols following the discontinuance of each operation
- CAP aircraft proved more economical than the use of Army aircraft in the performance of the same missions
- Statistically-speaking, tow target aircrews:
 - Flew 20,500 tow target missions
 - Suffered 7 deaths and 5 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 prior growing out of control
- Typically numbering less than a handful of aircraft, the forest patrols saved valuable timber resources
 - In Ohio in 1943, the state patrol flew 402 missions totaling 790 hours of flight time, while reporting 587 fires
- Missing aircraft search missions commenced 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 Force search missions during World War II
 - CAP personnel often provided emergency medical aid to injured aircrew and guarded crash sites until military or law enforcement personnel could arrive

Additional Missions

- CAP performed a variety of additional missions for state and federal civilian defense and military organizations, including
 - 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 medicines, 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
 - Recruiting drives for the Women's Army Corps and armed forces overall
 - Guarding and maintaining civil airports
 - Patrolled lakes and rivers in the Great Lakes areas to report on ice conditions
 - Assisted with the training of State Guards units
 - Conducted aerial hunts of wolves and coyotes destroying livestock
 - Tracked fugitives from justice for state and federal law enforcement agencies
 - Herded wildfowl by air to prevent crop destruction