

Public Affairs Case Study 3

YOUR ROLE AS MISSION INFORMATION OFFICER

A mission information officer (MIO) in CAP is not always the public affairs officer. However, a PAO is often an MIO.

This situation in CAP is not as confusing as it sounds. CAP needs a local

spokesperson and media liaison when its members perform a mission, particularly a high-profile mission.

Often the PAO performs this duty, but in some cases, another CAP member is

assigned to the job. This briefing covers the basic duties of an MIO and should be reviewed and kept onhand for any member who might be called upon to deal with the media during a CAP mission.

Preparing to serve as MIO **Prepare to work with the media**

- Obtain or prepare a list of local media outlets, including radio and TV stations and newspapers, including the name of each news editor or his representative, his/her phone and fax numbers and e-mail address.
- Prepare a template for your press releases and have it ready on your computer.
- If you're unfamiliar with this kind of work, read over CAP Pamphlet 190-1, vols 1 and 2. Pay special attention to the sections on crisis communication.
- If you're not comfortable with the media, arrange to have an assistant, preferably one with some public relations experience.

 Gather preliminary information

- Date/time/location of mission
- CAP members who will participate, and those who can be interviewed
- Other agencies participating
- PA contacts at other agencies
- Purpose of mission
- How mission will proceed
- Degree of media coverage allowable
- Whether "staging" area for media will be allowed
- Contact information for any family members connected to mission (SAR, for example) and their feelings about media coverage
- Background information on CAP (Fact Sheet, copies of recent articles on CAP, brochures)

 Take these materials to the mission site

- Cell phone or other communications device
- Camera (preferably digital), extra batteries, and extra memory cards or film
- Laptop or other computer, if available
- Printer, if available
- Lists of contacts
- Maps to the site
- Press packets containing CAP background information
- Your CAP business cards
- Notebook and pens
- Media kits with background material on CAP
- Copies of your initial press release
- List of CAP members who may be interviewed with the correct spelling of their names and their correct ranks

Your first press release for the mission (example on page 4)

As soon as you find out CAP has been tasked with a mission, get the basic facts and supply them to the media in a short press release. (See example on the next page.)

Be sure to let the media know this is only the first of what will be increasingly detailed releases on the situa-

tion. Sending out this release gives the media a person to contact for additional information and to set up on-site coverage.

If possible, send this release to media outlets by fax and e-mail. Be sure to supply a contact phone number (probably your cell phone number)

where you can be reached at all times throughout the mission.

It's very important for you to stay in the information loop throughout the mission. It's a poor reflection on your unit's internal communication if media call with questions about events you don't even know about.

When the media call (or show up!)

- Be sure to get the names and titles of the media representatives who will be visiting your site.
- If time permits, prepare an identifying name badge for each media visitor.
- Set up a well-marked media staging center where media can sign in,

pick up badges, obtain background materials (including copies of your press releases on the situation, and CAP Fact Sheets), and conduct interviews if they wish.

- NEVER leave the media people to roam around as they wish. Accompany them at all times, but

assume an attitude of proactive helpfulness. Try to anticipate their questions and needs, and provide for them without compromising the security of the situation. Be professional and courteous, but always remember that everything you say is on the record, even when you're just chatting.

<p>FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE November 20, 2003</p> <p>Civil Air Patrol Sample Composite Squadron 123 Airport Way Sample City, ST 55555</p> <p>Contact: Capt. Bill Woodring, CAP, Mission Information Officer Cell: 444-987-9876; E-mail: bwoodring@cap.gov</p>	<p><i>Standard on all press releases</i></p> <p><i>Be sure to include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - date - unit address (no phone number or email; let them contact you instead) - your complete contact information - indication that updates will follow - headline for the release <p><i>Give only basic facts</i></p> <p><i>Attribute information where possible</i></p> <p><i>Mention names of CAP members and quote them when appropriate</i></p> <p><i>Include informational tagline only on first release</i></p> <p><i>Indicate end of story</i></p>
<p>FIRST RELEASE – UPDATES TO FOLLOW</p>	
<p>Civil Air Patrol searching for missing plane</p> <p>TIMBERLAKE, Tenn. – Civil Air Patrol members from the Timberlake Composite Squadron have joined the search for a single-engine aircraft missing since late last night. According to flight plans, the Cessna 182 departed the Johnson City Airport at 10:53 p.m. Thursday with plans to land at the Timberlake Airport approximately two hours later. The number of passengers onboard the missing plane is not known at this time, and the name of the pilot has not been released.</p> <p>The Timberlake Police Dept. said they were notified by the pilot's family members when the plane did not arrive as scheduled. Police then called upon local CAP members to begin an aerial search.</p> <p>According to Col. Ray Panyada, CAP mission commander, four CAP members and two airplanes were being used to search the mountainous area above Timberlake. Panyada said the search would continue throughout the day.</p> <p><i>Civil Air Patrol is a nonprofit organization with some 64,000 members nationwide. It performs 95% of continental U.S. inland search and rescue missions as tasked by the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center and was credited by the AFRCC with saving more than 140 lives during fiscal year 2003. CAP volunteers also perform homeland security, disaster relief and counterdrug missions at the request of federal, state and local agencies. The members take a leading role in aerospace education and serve as mentors to the almost 27,000 young people currently participating in CAP cadet programs. CAP has been performing missions for America for more than 60 years.</i></p> <p>On the Web: http://www.cap.gov</p> <p style="text-align: center;">-30-</p>	

The final press update text (not format) for this incident might sound something like this:

Civil Air Patrol finds missing plane, pilot alive

TIMBERLAKE, Tenn. – Civil Air Patrol members have located a Johnson City pilot whose plane crashed Thursday night in the Timberlake Mountains.

The pilot, James Wadley, was found in good condition near the crash site in a wooded valley on the northern side of Big Star Mountain. "It's a miracle he came through this so well, since the plane crashed in such a wooded area," said Col. Ray Panyada, CAP mission commander from the Timberlake Composite Squadron. Panyada and three other CAP members had been searching for the downed plane and pilot since midnight Thursday, locating the crash site at about 4 p.m. Friday.

There were no other passengers onboard. Wadley was transported to Trenton Memorial Hospital for observation.

Wadley departed the Johnson City Airport in his Cessna 182 at 10:53 p.m. Thursday with plans to land at the Timberlake Airport approximately two hours later.

The Timberlake Police Dept. said they were notified by Wadley's wife when the plane did not arrive as scheduled. Police then called upon local CAP members to begin an aerial search. CAP members Capt. Bill Duffey, 1st Lt. Jana Hanley and 2nd Lt. Jim Carrington assisted Panyada in the search. They used two CAP single-engine aircraft to fly above the Timberlake mountains.

The FAA is conducting a routine investigation into the crash.