

# Wing Banker Program Pays Dividends

## CAP Receives First-Ever Unqualified Audit

By Lenore Vickery

Civil Air Patrol is now the proud recipient of an “unqualified audit” by independent auditors — the first in its history. This achievement was the result of CAP revolutionizing its accounting procedures nationwide, thanks to processes first begun in 2006 through the Wing Banker Program introduced by Col. Warren Vest of the Middle East Region, the Virginia Wing’s former director of finance.

“If I have played some role in achieving that unqualified opinion, then I am happy for CAP,” said Vest. “A not-for-profit organization cannot practice transparent governance and demonstrate full accountability for public funds with qualifications on their audited financial statements. The entire financial team, both volunteer and corporate, deserves the credit for this step forward.”

Before Vest conceived the Wing Bankers Program, managing the financial activity of CAP’s 52 wings — which represent all 50 states plus Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico — was a monumental challenge. Units were required to submit annual reports, and their timeliness and accuracy were not always consistent. Directors of finance had to consolidate the information to be submitted to National Headquarters without having confidence in the results.

Vest’s innovative solution — to bring the “cash”



Photo by Lt. Col. Maurice Thomas, Middle East Region

CAP’s unqualified audit was made possible thanks to implementation of the Wing Banker Program conceived by then Lt. Col. Warren Vest, the Virginia Wing’s former director of finance. Vest, now a colonel, recently earned CAP’s Distinguished Service Award for his introduction of the finance program.

through the wing level — helped solve this problem. The wing, in essence, became the banker for every squadron in its state.

“We hold the funds, pay out money for expenditures and bills and do the accounting and reporting,” Vest told the *Civil Air Patrol Volunteer* in a January-February 2007 interview introducing the wing-based program. “We do all this following some very specific rules.”

Leaders in CAP’s nearly 1,600 units soon realized how easy the transition was and got on board with the process. CAP gave Vest permission to introduce

the program nationwide and phase it in over three years. Every level of CAP responded to the challenge.

“A dedicated corporate staff responded with the training and resources to succeed,” said Billy Daniels, a certified public accountant and certified government financial manager with Wilson, Price, Barranco, Blankenship and Billingsley, P.C., the Montgomery, Ala., accounting firm that issued the unqualified audit. “A command staff responded with the leadership and, ultimately, a diligent army of volunteers responded and made it work. The commitment of these team players has ensured success and illustrated financial accountability to the stakeholders.

“Witnessing an organization such as CAP emerge over the last few years with an unqualified audit has been one of the highlights of my career,” he said. ▲