

Organization of CAP

CAP Officer Basic Course

Introduction

Civil Air Patrol was first established in 1941, and many of its objectives in existence then are still current today: to educate American citizens, encourage volunteer service, and provide aerospace and aviation training. In order to accomplish all this, Civil Air Patrol uses a chain of command, which, by definition, is the order of authority by which command is exercised. Every corporation has a chain of command, and CAP is no exception. A chain of command gives each individual involved a clear path by which to pass information up and down, carry out orders, and to accomplish the mission. The lack of a clear chain of command causes miscommunication, loss of information, confusion, and greatly hinders the organization as a whole. In short, the chain of command makes CAP work.

Since the passage of Public Law 557 on May 26th, 1948, Civil Air Patrol has been the auxiliary of the U.S. Air Force. It is a civilian corporation made up of volunteers, and its organizational structure and chain of command are patterned after the Air Force. Members wear an adapted version of the Air Force uniform.

CAP is organized into eight regions. The regions are subdivided into 52 wings, which are the 50 U.S. states plus the National Capital and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. Each wing is then further divided up into groups, squadrons, and flights, as necessary.

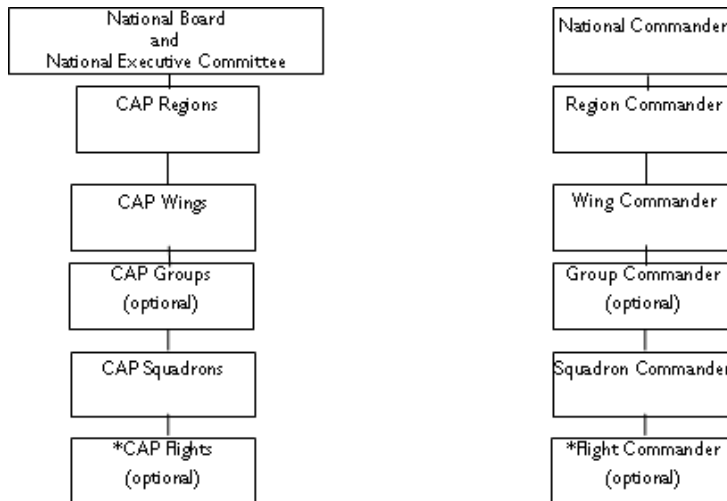
1. Summarize the roles of CAP's organizational echelons.

CAP's chain of command is organized into five basic levels of command: the Squadron level, the Wing level, the Region level, and the National level. Each work together in order for CAP to work smoothly, from the National Commander down to you. All of them are equally necessary (however the Group level is optional, as it is mainly used only to subdivide large wings). Let's start by taking a look at CAP's basic organizational structure.

Below are parallel diagrams that depict CAP's chain of command on the right, and organizational structure on the left, respectively. At the top are the National Board and National Executive Committee (NEC) and the National Commander, below, the eight CAP Regions and each corresponding Region Commander, and below the Regions the fifty-two CAP Wings and their Wing Commanders. Next are the CAP Groups and Group Commanders, the CAP Squadrons and Squadron Commanders, and lastly the CAP Flights and Flight Commanders. Each level contains command and support staff that it needs in order to function properly. That is how CAP, for the most part, is organized. Later in this lesson we will go more in depth on how they relate to one another. CAP flights are not included in the levels of command, as they may be assigned to squadrons, groups or wings. Note that both groups and flights are optional (you'll find out more about why they are later).

Organizational Structure

Chain of Command



**Flights may be assigned to squadrons, groups or wings*

If you want a more comprehensive look at CAP organization, go to Part II of CAP Regulation 20-1, *Organization of Civil Air Patrol*, to see the full organizational charts for all levels of CAP headquarters.

Now let's take a look at the different parts that make up CAP and their roles in its organizational structure. There are four distinct organizational bodies at the National level: The Board of Governors, the National Board, the National Executive Committee, and National Headquarters.

Board of Governors (BOG)

The Board of Governors is the chief governing body of CAP. Its primary role is to set the direction of CAP by approving regulations and directives, along with reviewing policies and procedures and keeping them consistent with CAP's intended direction. It does this through the NHQ staff and CAP regulations and manuals. It consists of the following 11 members appointed by the USAF Secretary and Civil Air Patrol:

- National Commander
- National Vice Commander
- Two Members-at-Large elected for three-year terms by CAP
- Four members appointed by the Secretary of the Air Force who may be active or retired Air Force officers, employees of the U.S., or private citizens
- Three members selected jointly by the Secretary of the Air Force and the National Commander, these members may be representatives of any government agency, public corporation, non-profit organization, or other organization relating to civil aviation and CAP's missions.

National Board (NB)

The National Board is in charge of CAP volunteers. It meets twice a year in order to deal with internal CAP issues. It has exclusive authority over certain matters such as electing the National Commander and Vice Commander. The 68 members are as follows:

- National Commander (elected by the National Board)
- Senior Air Force Advisor
- National Vice Commander (elected by the National Board)
- Chief of Staff
- National Legal Officer
- National Finance Officer
- National Controller
- Chief of the Chaplain Corps (a nonvoting member)
- CAP Inspector General (a nonvoting member)
- Region Commanders
- Wing Commanders

National Executive Committee (NEC)

The NEC is the subordinate governing body to the National Board. It is in charge while the National Board is not in session. The NEC convenes at least twice. The NEC is composed of the following members:

- National Commander (elected by the National Board)
- Senior Air Force Advisor
- National Vice Commander (elected by the National Board)
- Chief of Staff
- National Legal Officer
- National Finance Officer
- National Controller
- Chief of the Chaplain Corps (a nonvoting member)
- CAP Inspector General (a nonvoting member)
- Region Commanders

National Headquarters (NHQ)

National Headquarters is based in Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. It consists of the Executive Director, his or her staff, and the CAP-USAF Commander and his or her staff. The Executive Director's role is to issue rules, regulations and directives in accordance with those set by the National Board and the NEC and sanctioned by the BOG. He or she is also responsible for handling employment and managerial decisions associated with his or her paid professional staff. The CAP-USAF Commander's role is to command all USAF members assigned to CAP-USAF in order to provide oversight and to be an effective liaison between the USAF and CAP.

Below the National level are the Region, Wing, Group, Squadron and Flight levels.

Regions

The Region Commander, holding the grade of Colonel, is appointed by the National Commander. He or she has authority over all CAP units and members within his/her region.

His or her job is to represent the National Commander, promote CAP objectives and purposes throughout the region, and ensure the region fulfills the goals that are set. The eight CAP regions are as follows:

- Northeast
- Middle East
- Great Lakes
- Southeast
- North Central
- Southwest
- Rocky Mountain
- Pacific

Wings

It is the job of the Wing Commander to command all units in its wing, promote CAP objectives and purposes throughout the wing, and ensure the wing fulfills the goals that are passed down by the region, and to set goals of its own and fulfill those as well. Wing Commanders are appointed by the region commander and hold the grade of Colonel. The Wing Commander forms groups if necessary, and appoints group, squadron and flight commanders as necessary.

Groups

When the geographic area of a wing is too large or if there are too many units for the wing commander to directly supervise, he or she is permitted to form groups, which take on the responsibility of supervising the squadrons that are assigned. There must be a minimum of five squadrons within each group formed.

Squadrons

The squadron is the basic unit by which CAP achieves its goals. They consist of a minimum of fifteen members, three of whom must be senior members. If a squadron falls below these numbers, it is re-designated as a flight (see below). There are three types of squadrons, **senior**, **cadet** and **composite** .

- **Senior squadrons** are solely made up of senior members.
- **Cadet squadrons** are primarily composed of cadets, with at least three senior members who oversee the training and administration.
- **Composite squadrons** consist of both cadets and senior members, and they have two separate programs, one for senior members, one for cadets.

Flights

If a unit is too small to be classified as a squadron, then it is designated a flight. It must consist of a minimum of eight members, three of whom must be senior members. If enough members join to reach the minimum requirements, it can be reclassified as a squadron.

2. Discuss appropriate interaction for the member with each of the higher headquarters.

The chain of command exists in order for CAP to function. That is why it is vital that it is used properly. As a member of a squadron, you should know whom you have to report to. You, for the most part, will be interacting with the closest person on your chain of command: Your squadron commander. If you are a squadron commander, the next person in line would be your group or wing commander. If you are directly in the chain of command, which is a "line" position, this is the path you should strictly follow. If, however, you have a "staff" position, such as logistics officer and public affairs officer, you can and should communicate with the person who holds the same position as you at the next level. More on that topic is covered in the *Chain of Command* lesson. Civil Air Patrol's organizational structure is similar on all levels from the region down, and so are the position descriptions for all "staff" positions. They are similar enough to use the same description for all levels of that position. You can find them in Part III of CAP Regulation 20-1, *Organization of Civil Air Patrol*.

Here are some examples of improper interaction: a squadron logistics officer going straight to the wing commander in order to discuss planning for an activity unless he or she was directed to do so. Another would be a squadron commander who decides to skip the wing commander/group commander and contact Region Headquarters directly in order to request supplies for his or her squadron. Both of these actions violate the chain of command, and they break down the clear path of communication between levels of command. These actions could be detrimental to the squadron's success in their missions. However, it is totally acceptable for a squadron public affairs officer to communicate with the wing public affairs officer.

Although the proper chain of command should be followed nearly all of the time, there are a few very important exceptions to the rule: In the case of a safety hazard, anyone may approach the Safety Officer. If there is a moral issue, the Chaplain can be approached. Lastly, if there is any issue of fraud, waste or abuse, the Inspector General should be informed. These three positions are covered more thoroughly in the Legal Basis for CAP chapter.

Special Readings : The USAF-CAP Relationship

Below is a passage from CAP Pamphlet 50-5, *Introduction to Civil Air Patrol*, pages 19-20.

The Civil Air Patrol and the United States Air Force maintain a civilian-military relationship which is based upon the Civil Air Patrol's status as the USAF Auxiliary. As such, CAP's services to the nation and the USAF are: (1) voluntary, (2) benevolent, and (3) noncombatant. Finally, these services are to be employed both in times of peace and war.

It is the responsibility of the US Air Force to provide technical information and advice to those CAP members who organize, train and direct CAP members and who develop CAP resources. In CAP-USAF lingo, this is called advice, liaison, and oversight. We'll discuss these terms later. In addition to these functions, the Air Force also makes available certain services and facilities required by CAP to carry out its mission. Such assistance, however, is restricted to specific areas by act of Congress, and cannot interfere or conflict with the performance of the Air Force mission. Finally, in part because of its relationship to the Air Force, the government provides some level of protection to CAP members and their families in the event a member is killed or injured while participating in a qualifying Air Force sponsored mission.

In return, Civil Air Patrol assists the Air Force through the performance of its three faceted mission: Emergency Services, Aerospace Education, and the Cadet Program. While we will discuss each of these missions in Chapter three, we'll briefly introduce them here as a means to show CAP's contributions to the USAF.

Emergency Services (ES) may be CAP's best known of the three-faceted mission; itself having several components. Since 1948, the Air Force controls the inland search and rescue (SAR) activities within the United States. CAP's role in this mission provides the bulk of the operational SAR services, primarily through flying and ground team activities. CAP's

personnel and aircraft fly thousands of hours each year flying SAR missions, as well as mercy flights and disaster relief assistance.

In addition, CAP's ES activities also include performing civil defense activities and other missions, such as: crashed aircraft spotting and marking, route surveys, counterdrug reconnaissance, courier services, light transport duty, post-attack recovery duty, and similar activities within the capabilities of CAP light aircraft and other equipment.

Civil Air Patrol also maintains a nation-wide radio network. It is used for domestic or military emergencies, CAP activities of all types, search and rescue support, and training communications personnel.

The CAP Chaplain Corps provides over 700 chaplains and (character development) officers. Serving in squadrons, they teach the character development curriculum while providing spiritual assistance to all unit personnel. Many chaplains are also pilots, while others are involved in search and rescue teams and emergency services. Under Title 10, CAP Chaplain Corps personnel can be called upon by the Air Force to perform certain USAF chaplain functions.

One other area of valuable assistance given to the Air Force and other Federal agencies is the CAP Aerospace Education Program. Through its "internal" program of aerospace education given to both cadet and senior members, and the "external" aerospace education services to schools, colleges and the general public (through workshops, conferences and a variety of free materials), the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for living successfully in the aerospace age are imparted, not only to CAP members, but to educators, students and, most importantly, to the general public.

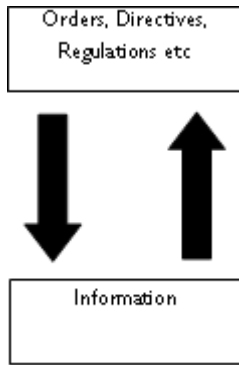
To help present and carry out the aerospace education program, CAP develops lesson plans, videos, and other educational materials. CAP also encourages and helps to plan guided tours of aerospace-related facilities such as airports, Air Force bases and aerospace manufacturing facilities. All these things help to instill in the American people an appreciation of the importance of what the Air Force does, how the aerospace industry contributes to American society on a daily basis, and how everyday people can get more involved.

Finally, a most important example of CAP's reciprocal service to the Air Force is found in the number of CAP cadets and senior members who have become officers and airmen in the United States Air Force. Every year, thousands of CAP cadets and former cadets enter the Air Force Academy, other service academies, Reserve Officer Training Corps programs at colleges and universities across the country, and basic training programs of all services.

For more information on CAP's relationship to the Air Force, read Air Force Instruction 10-2701, *Organization and Function of the Civil Air Patrol*.

3. Describe the relationship between a headquarters and the HQs above and below it in the chain of command.

Let's get a clearer picture of how the chain of command works. It is similar to a call-down list: Instead of one person having to call everyone, each person along the list is assigned people to call in order to distribute the workload and establish clear communication down the line. The chain of command works in a similar fashion.



The chain of command is a two-way street, and as such, there are two directions to it: Up and down. The orders, directives, regulations and so forth come from the top and flow down, and information moves up, as the diagram above illustrates. The reason that the chain of command functions in this manner is because the higher levels on the chain need information in order to plan out the organization's goals, and the lower levels need directives in order to be able to achieve those goals given from above in the most effective way possible. If there is a break in the chain of command, the higher levels cannot issue orders, directives and the like because there is no information coming up from the lower levels on which to base decisions. As a result the lower levels do not have the necessary instruction and resources in order to accomplish their missions which means that CAP, as an organization, fails.

Let's take a closer look at the chain of command relationship.

Higher Headquarters: Passes down orders, directives and sets goals for headquarters of interest, receives information about results.

Headquarters of Interest: Carries out orders and directives and achieves goals set by higher headquarters, creates its own orders, directives and goals to pass down, receives information about results from lower headquarters.

Lower Headquarters: Carries out orders and directives, achieves goals, sends up information and results.

As you can see, although each headquarters has its own unique role to play, the pattern is similar throughout the chain of command: information goes up, and orders, directives, regulations and the like go down, as we have determined earlier in this section. Each headquarters is responsible for the lower one and accountable to the higher one.

While using the chain of command, there are a few important things to keep in mind: No matter how high a person is in the chain of command, no one has authority to disregard or ignore CAP regulations, policies or procedures. Everyone is subject to the same rules, regardless of position, and no one is above the chain of command.

Lesson Summary and Closure

Through this lesson you have learned how Civil Air Patrol is organized, how it uses organization in order accomplish its missions in the most effective manner, and its relationship with the U.S. Air Force. You have also learned the necessity of following the proper chain of command and why it is a very important factor in this organization, and how it makes CAP work.

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