

Your Role in Missions

Lesson Objective:

Lesson Objective: Comprehend the role of commanders in accomplishing the CAP mission.

Desired Learning Outcomes:

1. Describe how your unit impacts CAP on a large scale.
2. Discuss how a unit's unique talents & qualities make the unit special to the larger effort.
3. Determine your unit's specialties.
4. Discuss how to blend a unit's efforts into the Wing effort.

Lesson:

Overview:

In this segment you will learn how your unit fits into "the big picture", focusing on the individual work of units into the overall effort, especially at the wing level. Your unit has a special part of the effort and it is important to understand why the unit should work to ensure the mission the unit performs is complementary to the overall program, the Wing's in particular.

As you know CAP has three missions chartered by Congress, and it fulfills these missions by working through with its **echelons**: national, region, wing, group, and squadron (flights are sponsored by a squadron and do not have independent authority.)

List CAP's echelons of command in order:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Your Squadron's Impact:

National Headquarters cannot shut down an emergency locator transmitter at your municipal airport; however, the squadron can. In doing that, you support and accomplish CAP's national missions. The squadron then is where the rubber meets the road.

CAP Missions and the Squadron

What do CAP's three primary missions mean to the unit commander? They are your fixed stars - your keys to success as a commander. By accomplishing these missions at the unit level, you can contribute to the success of CAP's three missions *nationally*. Let's take a few minutes to discuss how each of these missions is accomplished at the squadron.

A. AEROSPACE EDUCATION:

The aerospace education mission (AE) is accomplished at the squadron level through its internal and external programs. Taken together they provide a comprehensive foundation for appreciating the importance of the aerospace community in America.

1. Internal AE Programs

The internal program encompasses both senior and cadet education programs, though the cadet AE program is perhaps more well known. The cadet internal program can be broken into two components - the academic component and the practical component. The *academic component* revolves around a self-study text and a weekly current events discussion during meetings. Cadets use the self-study text as part of their achievement program, and current events are used during meetings to help cadets see how the aerospace world affects them on a daily basis.

The *practical component* of cadet aerospace education involves its application. Practical application consists of three optional but integral programs: model rocketry/aircraft building, orientation flights, and the Aerospace Excellence Program.

- a. Model rocketry/aircraft building is a fun and challenging way to show cadets the mechanics of what they read about in their books. What better way to learn about the aerodynamics of flight than to build a rocket or plane and see how it flies?
- b. Orientation flights take cadet understanding one step further by letting them use all their senses in understanding the forces of flight. And, despite the proliferation of commercial airline travel these days, many cadets receiving orientation flights will be taking to the air for the first time!

- c. The Aerospace Excellence Program is a collection of fun and inexpensive activities that squadron members do together to make what they read come alive.

For seniors, aerospace education also encompasses academic and practical applications. Academically, senior members can enter an optional program similar to the cadets' program using a slightly more challenging self-study text - followed by an end of course exam. Seniors passing the exam receive the *Brigadier General Charles E. "Chuck" Yeager Aerospace Education Achievement Award* and can wear the accompanying ribbon on their uniform.

Practical application for senior members includes training for pilots, observers, and scanners. Though traditionally thought of as activities solely supporting the ES mission, this training in fact exposes many seniors to the aerospace environment in a most practical way, especially for non-pilots. Observers and scanners can get up close to the dynamics of flight - gathering an appreciation they would not otherwise have received.

2. External AE Programs

- a. External aerospace education at the squadron level also has two components: public relations opportunities and school education programs. CAP can further the aerospace education mission through its participation in local aerospace activities. At the squadron level, it can mean participation in support of air shows by providing recruiting and AE displays, concessions and other duties both highlighting CAP's participation in the aerospace event and contribute to the event's success.
- b. CAP is also very involved in school education programs. Units may sponsor local school systems - recruiting teachers as aerospace education members, assisting schools in obtaining free materials and lesson plans, and providing guest speakers to classrooms. In this way, school students of all ages can be introduced to the aerospace community and teachers can expand their library of resources.

B. CADET PROGRAMS:

Squadrons accomplish the Cadet Program at their level by providing strong local programs that fully utilize all available options for their cadets, and helping cadets to avail themselves of opportunities at wing, region, and national levels. What does this mean?

It means that cadets in your unit should be able to fully benefit from Cadet Program options. There should be a strong classroom program to augment self-study materials. (Incidentally, self-study *does not* mean no classroom time. CAP lesson plans are available to support the AE texts). Tutors and counselors should be available to help cadets complete the achievements.

In addition, programs like model rocketry and cadet orientation flights should be offered to allow cadets to experience what they read. Cadets who may not be able to fully understand a concept by reading about it may learn from the experience itself. Besides, it's fun and will keep the cadets' attention.

Other activities, such as encampments and emergency services training and qualification provide even more variety to the program - honing leadership skills and providing a public service.

The cadet program takes some work to implement, but the longer you work on it, the easier it becomes to maintain. As cadets mature, they can assist you in administering the cadet program. You will then see how it benefits all involved.

By the way, senior squadrons can also benefit the cadet program. Most senior squadrons are aviation and ES oriented - so they can contribute these services to cadet and composite units. Senior squadrons can sponsor cadet orientation flights and ES training or may also teach aerospace education classes which relate to their specialties. If you are a commander of a senior squadron, the possibilities for contributions to the Cadet Program are only limited by your desire and imagination.

C. EMERGENCY SERVICES:

Emergency Services (ES) at the squadron is the most important link in the emergency services chain. It is basically at the squadron level where individuals decide to begin and receive initial ES training, such as radio communication training, initial Form 5 qualification; and in larger squadrons, where initial mission specialty training takes place. It is also the basic unit in which the training is applied.

Since all elements of the wing ES resource can't train together all the time, much of the training falls on the squadrons' shoulders. Orienteering, map gridding, radio procedures, ES questionnaire administration and scoring, General ES qualification and a wide variety of other tasks are administered at the squadron level.

Many squadrons form their own ground teams and mini-mission bases to respond to smaller - one could say "routine" missions, like the basic ramp search. Squadrons also work together at the wing level to support larger training and actual response efforts.

One by-product of this is the cohesion of unit teams and the units' specializing in a specific job or jobs. For instance, one squadron may have several members who are flight-line qualified; another squadron may concentrate on mission communications. Still others may have a broad base of skills. They are not only recognized as a special resource, but because of that they become a proud team. Remember what we said in the beginning? CAP as a national entity can't fill sandbags, rescue survivors or take disaster assessment photos, but your members can!

Unique Talents & Qualities Make the Unit Special to a Larger Effort:

When "CAP" is activated to put on a SAR effort or to hold an encampment, it looks to the units which can best accomplish the job, in the minimum amount of time, the most economically, and with the least risk. Usually this is determined by the geographic location, the size of the activity to be supported, resources available and the unit's particular area of expertise.

CAP looks to units:

- That can best _____ the job
- In the least amount of _____
- The most _____
- With the least _____

We cannot emphasize enough that your squadron is part of a larger effort. Your squadron contributes to the effectiveness of every other unit in your wing, and they do the same for you. Everything your unit does - right, wrong, or indifferent, has an influence on the wing. It cannot be separated.

By that same token however, your unit is unique. There are things you do exceptionally well to support the missions of CAP that your fellow units may lack or don't focus on. You may have an exceptional model rocketry program. Your cadets may all be ground team qualified. Your pilots may all be IFR qualified.

Whatever the case, your unit's unique capabilities and talents add dimension to the total effort, enhancing the wing's total capability.

Determine the Unit's Specialties:

How can you best contribute to that effort? How do you tailor the unit efforts to more successfully accomplish the overall mission? There are several ways, just a few of them are:

- Concentrate on your strong points.** Celebrate what the unit does well! Make those specialties or qualities the hallmark of your unit. It not only gives the unit something to be proud of, but it provides the wing with a dedicated place to tap a needed skill.
- Lessen the impact of your weaknesses.** Just as a unit can do things exceptionally well, there are places that likely need a lot of work. Squadrons cannot be everything to everybody, and no one expects that. But, deficiencies related to critical areas mustn't be ignored. Though your unit may not always attain it, strive for excellence in all areas. When you do, you will improve in all areas, and in the end make your strong points even stronger.

Blend the Unit's Efforts into the Wing Effort:

- A. **Look outside the unit (Look at the big picture).** The best way to have your members feel successful is to have them know the importance of their contributions. It is so easy to get stuck "inside the box". However, when you do that you lose perspective. When you look at the big picture, you'll gain a better understanding of what you're doing right and wrong. It will help to give your unit a path to follow.
- B. **Talk to other units.** This is the corollary to looking outside the unit. You must have robust interaction with your companion units around the wing. This way, you understand each others' capabilities and weaknesses, can help each other achieve individual unit and wing goals, and gain different perspectives as to how best to handle your unit and situations.

Do not underestimate the value of the experiences of other squadron commanders. They see things you don't and may have different solutions and are a valuable sounding board for you. In addition to ensuring that you're all "on the same page" you will have built a strong support network for yourself and the staff of your unit.

- C. **Make your priorities compatible with accomplishing the total mission.** The unit may have the best cadet orientation pilots in the wing, but if there's a shortage of SAR or counterdrug pilots, those valuable resources may be wasted. In cases like this the unit doesn't have to abandon what it does well, but it may have to adapt its individual mission and capabilities to make up for the shortfall.

You can best contribute to the effort by:

- Concentrating on your _____ points.
- Lessening the impact of your _____.
- Looking _____ the unit (looking at the big picture).
- _____ to other units.
- Making your priorities _____ with accomplishing the total mission.

Another example: your unit may have had a 15 passenger van for years. But, with more of your members preferring to carpool and a decrease in the level of outside activities, you may only need something smaller. Ask your wing if you can trade it for a smaller vehicle, so that resource isn't wasted.

So, the next question should be: What does your unit do well? Other questions: What does it specialize in? Do you know? Does your unit try to do everything? If you don't know, your first step is to find out. Ask yourself, "What does the unit focus on? The Cadet Program? Counterdrug and ES? Aerospace education in the schools?"

- D. **Talk to your people.** Find out what *they* think the squadron's specialty is. Ask why. Look at the squadron's records. What stories do the records tell?

Now that you know what your squadron specializes in, you need to find out how it fits into your wing's plans and priorities. If it doesn't, then your unit may have to adapt to be more compatible.

- E. **Talk to your wing commander and wing staff officers.** Your wing commander should have an established set of goals. Tell your wing commander where you think your unit is and what you feel the unit's good at. The wing commander can then tell you his/her observations about the unit's fitness, what is expected, what approaches are recommended, and how to make the relationship better.

Talk to the wing staff to see how they can help you and how you can help them accomplish these goals. This *is* a two-way street. The staff can tell you what you must do and more importantly, why. Establishing this dialogue is a crucial part of knowing your squadron's place in the big picture.

As stated, this is a dialogue, it isn't a one way conversation, nor is it a one-time conversation. You must continue to give and receive feedback from your fellow squadrons, groups (if applicable), and wing level to ensure that your unit's particular mission fits in with the larger group effort. It's a continuous effort which will become easier and indispensable to you later on.

What is the best way to find out if your unit's missions (priorities) fit in with those of your wing?

The wing staff can help by not only telling what you can do, but more importantly how you should do it.