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Major Brittany Byrd

AFJAGS Podcast: Episode 48

Civil Air Patrol with Major Brittany Byrd

HOST: MAJOR RICK HANRAHAN

GUEST: MAJOR BRITTANY BYRD

Maj Byrd discusses the Civil Air Patrol's unique mission set, how military legal practitioners can best work with the Civil Air Patrol.

MAJOR RICK HANRAHAN:

Today we speak with Major Brittany Byrd on the Civil Air Patrol. Major Byrd acted as the Staff Judge Advocate for the [Civil Air Patrol](#) [CAP], U.S. Air Force from 2018 to 2020. In this interview, Major Byrd discusses the Civil Air Patrol's unique mission set, how military legal practitioners can best work with the Civil Air Patrol, and some of the bigger events the Civil Air Patrol has been involved in including through the COVID-19 global pandemic. Here are a few clips from today's show.

[short intro background music]

SHOW EXCERPTS & INTRODUCTIONS

MAJOR BRITTANY BYRD:

Some days I could be you know writing an ethics legal review and the next day I'm preparing for the Board of Governors and I'm talking to our lieutenant colonel representative at the Pentagon.

That willingness and can-do attitude was something that I learned from our CAP volunteers and I will take with me throughout my Air Force career.

ANNOUNCER:

Welcome to The Air Force Judge Advocate General's Reporter Podcast, where we interview leaders, innovators, and influencers on the law, leadership, and best practices of the day. And now to your host from [The Air Force Judge Advocate General's School](#).

MAJ HANRAHAN:

Welcome to another episode from The Air Force Judge Advocate General's School at Maxwell Air Force Base. I'm your host, Major Rick Hanrahan. Remember, if you like the show, please consider subscribing on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or your favorite podcast platform and leaving a review. This helps us to grow in outreach to the JAG Corps and beyond. In today's show, we're going

to talk about the Civil Air Patrol and all the great things they do for the Air Force and our country.

We'll discuss Civil Air Patrol's unique mission set, how military legal practitioners can best utilize the Civil Air Patrol, and some of the biggest events they've been involved in. Our guest today is the former Staff Judge Advocate for Civil Air Patrol, U.S. Air Force, Major Brittney Byrd. Major Byrd, thanks for coming on to speak with us today.

MAJ BYRD:

Thanks for having me.

MAJ HANRAHAN:

Major Brittney Byrd currently serves as a Reserve instructor of law at The Air Force Judge Advocate General's School here at Maxwell Air Force Base. In her civilian capacity, she is a full time assistant U.S. attorney assigned to the northern district of Alabama. She was previously a deputy district attorney in Jefferson County, Birmingham, Alabama. And prior to entering the Reserves, she served on three active duty assignments, including at the legal office for the 20th Fighter Wing at Shaw Air Force Base, South Carolina, then as a special victim's counsel at Shaw and next as the Staff Judge Advocate for Civil Air Patrol, U.S. Air Force at Maxwell Air Force Base, which we're going to talk about today.

So, to get started, could you provide a little more background on your current position—both in the Air Force and Department of Justice and what you do?

MAJ BYRD:

Sure. So I left active duty in August of 2020 and joined the Reserves, like you said, after three active duty assignments. So I am assigned down at The JAG School to the Professional Outreach Division there with you. And this is my first almost full year in the Reserves and in my civilian capacity, I am an assistant United States attorney here at the U.S. Attorney's Office in Birmingham, Alabama. My section handles our narcotics and immigration cases, and the majority of my caseload are narcotics cases.

OVERVIEW OF CIVIL AIR PATROL

MAJ HANRAHAN:

Great. So kind of moving into today's topic on Civil Air Patrol. So I know we chatted a little bit here before recording, and you mentioned how you are the Staff Judge Advocate for Civil Air Patrol, U.S. Air Force, right? For approximately two years or so. Can you provide an overview on your involvement and an overview maybe on Civil Air Patrol?

MAJ BYRD:

Sure. So I was the Staff Judge Advocate for like you said, Civil Air Patrol, United States Air Force, which we referred to commonly as CAP-USAF. We were the, or CAP-USAF is the active duty Air Force unit that's responsible for overseeing the Civil Air Patrol. The Civil Air Patrol itself is a nonprofit corporation and is the Air Force auxiliary. So they're a volunteer organization as well as they have full time corporate staff who oversees the corporation. But their volunteers also fly missions, Air Force assigned missions, as the Air Force auxiliary. It's a fascinating hybrid organization.

MAJ HANRAHAN:

Yeah, it really is. I mean, I think we've all heard of the Civil Air Patrol. We kind of know generally what it does. We know there's volunteers that fly aircraft, often these Cessnas, and they do all kinds of cool and interesting missions. But I know in prep for this, we can talk a little bit to about the history and kind of that. Could you maybe talk a little bit about that to give a little more background to our listeners on where the Civil Air Patrol originated?

MAJ BYRD:

Sure. So I think I'll start with their mission. And their mission is supporting America's communities with emergency response, diverse aviation and ground services, youth development and promotion of air space and cyber power. So their roots date back to 1941 with the creation of the Civil Air Defense Service. And that was created to use civilian aviation resources to aid in war efforts.

It was created at the direction of Fiorello LaGuardia, who at that time was the mayor of New York and the director of the Federal Office of Civilian Defense and who LaGuardia Airport is also named after. And then in 1943, President Roosevelt transferred them from the Department of Civilian Defense to the Department of War. And in 1946 President Truman signed a law incorporating them as a nonprofit corporation.

And then after the creation of the Air Force, there was a law signed that actually made, designated them as the United States Air Force auxiliary. So at that time they were created to aid in the war effort. At some point they decided it's probably not the best idea, for a host of reasons, to equip civilians with bombs [laughter] and so now they aid, they're the Air Force auxiliary and they aid the Air Force in noncombat programs and missions.

ORGANIZATION

MAJ HANRAHAN:

And you mentioned this a little bit, but how is the Civil Air Patrol or CAP organized?

MAJ BYRD:

Within CAP, they're organized similar to the Air Force. They have regions, wings, and flights. They have a, their CAP CEO, who is their national commander, is a volunteer. So CAP has ranks. They are not designated specifically as military members, but they have CAP ranks. And their national commander is a CAP general officer. He is a volunteer.

They are governed by something called the [Board of Governors](#), which is an oversight group where in the Secretary of the Air Force appoints some of them, the CAP national commander appoints some of them, and then three of them are jointly appointed by the Secretary of the Air Force and the CAP Commander, and they're representatives from the civilian aviation industry. So the Board of Governors is the oversight for the Civil Air Patrol.

Like I said before, they are a nonprofit corporation, but, so they have corporate staff members there at the headquarters at Maxwell. But they also have a number of volunteers. I believe the total numbers are just shy of 55,000 volunteers, and about 30,000 of those are senior members or adult members, and about 20,000 are cadet members.

MAJ HANRAHAN:

Wow. I had no idea they were that large.

MAJ BYRD:

Right. They're everywhere [laughter]. So CAP is all, they're all over the continental United States. They also have squadrons co-located with our military bases in Germany and Japan. But the, obviously the majority of them are here within the continental United States.

MAJ HANRAHAN:

And when you talk about senior adult members, are those licensed pilots?

MAJ BYRD:

Some of them are. Actually, a lot of them are, because the pilots are the ones who actually go and fly the Air Force assigned missions. But CAP, they have inspector generals, they have public relations volunteers, they have lawyers who volunteer to be the legal counsel. So, each CAP unit kind of has each of the functions that we are used to seeing within a typical Air Force Wing as well.

MAJ HANRAHAN:

And are these typically retirees?

MAJ BYRD:

Some of them, in fact, a lot of the pilots are. One of the things I did a lot as the CAP-USAF Staff Judge Advocate was the oversight of the claims process. So when CAP members are flying on Air Force assigned missions that we provide the funding and we provide the liability coverage. So a lot of the CAP pilots are retired military

members or retired pilots who really love flying. And this is a way that they can keep up their flying hours where it's funded and they get the liability coverage.

ASSETS

MAJ HANRAHAN:

So great stuff here. So there's about 55,000 total volunteer members, including around 30,000 senior adult members and 20,000 cadets. How many assets or airplanes does CAP have?

MAJ BYRD:

So CAP has total about 570 aircraft, which are small Cessna planes, but they also have 47 gliders and two hot air balloons for their, for their aircraft. The majority of their missions are flown with their 570 Cessna planes. But in addition to that, they've got about a thousand vehicles and over 2000 small unmanned aircraft systems. And then they have a couple of thousand high frequency radios as well, which they use a lot for their humanitarian and search and rescue missions.

MISSIONS

MAJ HANRAHAN:

That's amazing, hot air balloons and gliders in addition to the aircraft. Are they doing mostly search and rescue or are they doing other types of activities?

MAJ BYRD:

So they do lots of different types of missions. When we're talking about the missions, one thing that is, I would want folks in the field to understand is that any time CAP is doing a mission for a federal agency, any federal agency, they have to do it as an Air Force assigned mission, which means they get the funding from that federal agency and the federal government provides them with that liability coverage.

So they do a host of different types of missions as Air Force assigned missions. For the Air Force, for our local bases, they do an annual—it's called a low-level route survey. So the common routes that are aircraft, whether it be at Shaw or Andrews or any, you know, any of our

Air Force bases the routes that our planes typically fly, there's an annual requirement to have a low-level route survey to make sure that no one has, you know, built a skyscraper in the middle of the normal route. And CAP can do that. And I mean, we could use our F-16s or our C-130s to do those missions, but the cost savings is astronomical. So it costs about \$165 an hour on average to fly a CAP Cessna compared to upwards of \$10,000 an hour for an F-16 and \$15,000 an hour for a C-130. So the cost savings for the Air Force for these types of missions is huge. But that's just one small example of what they do for us in the Air Force.

They also do counterdrug missions at the border. So they will go up with a law enforcement officer and the CAP member is flying, and the law enforcement officer is doing the law enforcement mission, because when CAP is an Air Force assigned mission status, they're still also bound by the Posse Comitatus Act. They cannot act in a law enforcement capacity. They do the surrogate RPA planes, they have to have an escort. So the CAP planes will escort them in CONUS air space. And then they do a lot of search and rescue and disaster relief and humanitarian assistance following hurricanes.

I talked about CAP-USAF previously, which was my unit. So we fall under First Air Force and ACC. Previously, CAP-USAF fell under the Holm Center and AETC, Air Education Training Command, but it was reorganized a couple of years ago—actually before I got there. And it makes sense that we're now under 1st Air Force because CAP missions, if I remember correctly, are usually about 40% of the 1st Air Force daily air tasking order. So they're doing a lot with respect to domestic operational missions.

And then CAP also does non-flying missions. For example, they provide chaplains to local Air Force bases when they don't have enough, a CAP chaplain can backfill them. So they really do a lot for our Air Force as well as other federal agencies. One of my favorite examples is, you know, the Army Corps of Engineers is doing research on bird preservation in Oregon and they need some

imagery, so they can provide the funding and the CAP plane goes up in AFAM status and flies over the bird preservation to provide the corps of engineers with the imagery they need. So it's really a variety of missions that CAP does for the Air Force and for our country.

FUNDING

MAJ HANRAHAN:

Well, that's really an incredible collaboration right there. And interesting mission sets, right, that the CAP gets to do that's very unique probably to anybody else. You mentioned that the assets, airplanes and all those types of things—who primarily funds the assets and also funds the maintenance of the assets?

MAJ BYRD:

So the Air Force does. So we do that through something called a cooperative agreement. And this was a learning curve for me when I started in the CAP-USAF SJA job and my predecessor, Mike Crenshaw, did a great job teaching me about it. And I always use his kind of line to tell you, to explain what a cooperative agreement is. So we all know there's three general ways the federal government can give money to a nonfederal entity: contracts, grants and cooperative agreements. Most JAGs in the Air Force are familiar with contracting, right? We have a base contracting squadron—the federal government provides money in exchange for a good or service. And then a cooperative agreement is a type of grant. And the difference in a contract and grants and cooperative agreements is whether they have a public purpose.

So people are generally familiar with federal grants for example, the Department of Housing and Urban Development would provide funding to subsidize low income housing, and they do that via a federal grant. A cooperative agreement is a federal grant, but it requires substantial involvement on the part of the awarding agency. And so in our cooperative agreement between the Civil Air Patrol and the Air Force, the Air Force is the awarding agency.

So we have substantial involvement in the performance of the mission with CAP, and that's how we provide them funding. So they have an annual O&M, operations and maintenance budget. They get a specific budget for aircraft and for vehicles as well. And then they get funding, either from the Air Force or from other federal agencies, when they're going to go out and specifically do a mission.

MAJ HANRAHAN:

And who would be working on the aircraft, would these be civilians that are contracted out?

MAJ BYRD:

Right. So CAP has a LG section who's responsible for logistics and maintenance and they contract with private maintenance shops for the maintenance of the airplanes. Because the CAP airplanes are at the CAP units, they're actually owned by CAP. The Air Force gives them the money to go out and procure them, but the airplanes themselves are owned by CAP as a nonprofit corporation.

So our CAP-USAF detachment commanders are out in the field. They're co-located with the CAP region. So we inspect them. We watch where the aircraft are. We make sure that they are safe to fly. But as far as ownership and maintenance, the CAP corporation actually owns them and contracts to maintain them.

CIVILIAN VOLUNTEERS

MAJ HANRAHAN:

And I know we talked about this a little bit. You already mentioned this how CAP is the only auxiliary of the Air Force and so in that sense, it's very unique. And it's a nonprofit, right? A nonprofit corporation, which interesting how that all kind of came about, which sounded like it started back in the post-World War Two era. Do you happen to know the impetus behind that, why they did it that way?

MAJ BYRD:

My understanding is that it was because civilians wanted to volunteer to help with the World War Two war effort. And so it was, okay, how are we going to let civilians volunteer, and so it was just I think it was an organic grassroots effort at that time. And then it was actually federally chartered when they passed the statute that incorporated it as a nonprofit corporation.

HIGH VISIBILITY

MAJ HANRAHAN:

And I'm assuming too that CAP because of their, I guess, high image, right, a lot of people know who they are. Does that help in the advancement of aviation for the Air Force?

MAJ BYRD:

Right. So, yes. So when they were incorporated Congress also passed the statute, that gate that laid out the purposes of Civil Air Patrol. It's at 36 United States Code 40302. If anyone wants to go look it up. There are five purposes, but one of them is actually two parts. And their purposes are exactly that, to encourage the voluntary contributions of private citizens to the public welfare, to provide aviation education and training, to encourage and aid United States citizens in contributing their efforts, services and resources in developing aviation and in maintaining air supremacy. And then to provide an organization of private citizens with facilities to assist in meeting local and national emergencies. And then the last one is, of course, to assist the Department of the Air Force in fulfilling its non-combat programs and missions.

But as you can see, of the six, flying Air Force missions is really only one of them. CAP has a much broader statutory purpose, and they do an outstanding job because they're out in the local communities. Many CAP units meet at a school after hours or many are on military bases, many meet in a church or a community center. And these are people who live in their local communities, they have connections in their local communities, and they're really fostering interest and development in aviation in those communities.

FLYING HOURS

MAJ HANRAHAN:

Any idea, just kind of generally speaking, how many flight hours, maybe per year these volunteer pilots might log?

MAJ BYRD:

I do not have that off the top of my head.

MAJ HANRAHAN:

Okay, just curious. No, it's all good. It's all just curious there, because you said there was like 40, they were doing 40% of the mission, right? Earlier.

MAJ BYRD:

Right. Right. But right. I don't I could get it for you, but I don't have it off the top of my head, their flight hours.

MAJ HANRAHAN:

Like, yeah. And I'm not going, we're not going to keep this; we'll edit this out. But okay. Is this, I mean, is this something where they're kind of just getting a call or they volunteer for things or they're like, "Hey, I'm available on this and this date?" I'm just kind of curious.

MAJ BYRD:

Yeah. So a lot of them are available, a lot of a lot of the time because they're retired. So but they'll plan these missions. So if they're going to go, you know, to the CAP unit down at Eglin, it's the retired CAP pilot who's been there for years and knows the commanders at Eglin. And so if they know a low level route survey is coming up or if they know, for example, CAP, when CAP responded to I believe it was Hurricane Michael at Tyndal, they will move and pre-position their aircraft in anticipation of a hurricane or whatever.

1ST AIR FORCE

MAJ HANRAHAN:

You mentioned earlier about your involvement with 1st Air Force, and we've actually had retired Lieutenant Colonel "Crash" McNeil on the show, a number of episodes ago to talk about stuff they do there with DSCA. What has

been your involvement with 1st Air Force, any interesting events that you've had to work through?

MAJ BYRD:

So like I said, my unit fell underneath them. I certainly called Crash often, but the, I guess the division of responsibilities was that I as the CAP-USAF SJA the money would be moved to do the, to do these CAP missions. That's what I was reviewing and I was reviewing their operational plans. But then it was actually 1st Air Force, and I believe it's the 609th Air Operations Center, their Chief of Combat Operations is the one who approves it. So they're doing the operational legal review. But I certainly called Crash many times.

One of the interesting experiences with this job is that it is a solo SJA job. I did not have a colleague, and I did not have a paralegal. So, I was kind of on my own and really relied on the 1st Air Force SJA and Crash when I had questions, particularly relating to domestic operations.

MAJ HANRAHAN:

Well, I know that Crash is an incredible resource, an expert for sure. So I'm sure that was very helpful to have him there on speed dial when needed.

MAJ BYRD:

Yes.

LOCAL COMMUNITY

MAJ HANRAHAN:

And how did how do folks within the Air Force local community and base legal offices, how do you work with those folks from the CAP perspective?

MAJ BYRD:

So what I did when I was the CAP-USAF SJA I talked with legal offices all over the world. A lot of times it was primarily an educational piece. They had a question about letting their CAP unit use a building or use their runway, and they weren't quite sure what CAP was or how they fit into the Total Force. And so they would call me and just ask for resources and I would oftentimes

send them the federal statutes that allow the Air Force to provide resources to CAP. That was the main way that I worked with base legal offices within the Air Force community. Like I said, I would liaise from our unit. We have a liaison officer up at 1st Air Force, and then work, working with AETC. And then we actually have two Air Force officers who fall under SAF/MR, Manpower and I'm sorry, Reserve—Manpower and Reserve. And they are up there at the Pentagon, and they're the ones who fight for the CAP budget every year.

So one of the interesting things about my job is some days I could be writing an ethics legal review and the next day I'm preparing for the Board of Governors and I'm talking to our lieutenant colonel representative up at the Pentagon. You kind of went from the bottom all the way to the top very quickly.

MAJ HANRAHAN:

That's incredible. So that you'd be working at the local level and then you might have to take a call from headquarters potentially on something because you were kind of the POC for CAP.

MAJ BYRD:

Correct.

BEST PRACTICES

MAJ HANRAHAN:

Could you offer maybe any best practices for how a base legal practitioners could work with or become better acquainted with CAP?

MAJ BYRD:

Yeah, I would just say if you have a CAP unit at your base or in your local community building partnerships with them, they offer a lot to the Air Force. One of the things that the CAP-USAF SJA job taught me was to do the research and find out what's going on before giving an answer. A lot of times I think folks would hear about CAP and see the cadets and think they were just like the Boy Scouts or just like some other private organization that was not affiliated with the Air Force.

And I would really want to kind of get the word out that CAP is different because they are actually the auxiliary of the Air Force, and they do a lot to contribute to our mission, and they are recognized by Air Force Doctrine as members of the Total Force. So that's what I would say to our colleagues out in base legal offices and to our base SJAs is if you have a CAP unit at your base to just be willing to provide them the support that they need and working with your local commanders to do that.

MEMORABLE EVENTS

MAJ HANRAHAN:

Great stuff there. And you kind of talked about this a little bit, but maybe could you offer any events that you found memorable when working with CAP?

MAJ BYRD:

Sure. So when I would I was there from, like you said, from 2018 until when I left active duty in 2020, and they were really they had a lot of emerging mission sets at that time. We, the Air Force was experiencing the pilot shortage and then there was also a big push from headquarters level to increase diversity among our pilots. And so one of the ways that CAP contributed to that was there was something called the rated diversity initiative. So they wanted to increase diversity among our pilots and studies show that if people who were trying to pass that next exam or the next test, if they got a couple of extra orientation flights that could really get them over the line.

So the Air Force asked Civil Air Patrol to help in providing those orientation flights to these lieutenants who really just needed a little bit of extra training. And we got that approved as an Air Force assigned mission. And then we also got something approved. It was teacher orientation flights. So any CAP member who, CAP volunteer who was also a teacher, there were often times STEM teachers, they could go up and get a CAP orientation flight and then kind of take that experience back to the classroom and incorporate it into their STEM curriculum and get their students excited about aviation.

So those were kind of some emerging missions when I was there that we worked the operations plans for and the funding and got them approved as Air Force assigned missions. And then I got to go, I got to travel a lot in this job, which was fun. I every time the Board of Governors met, I got to go because my commander the CAP-USAF commander was an advisor to the Board of Governors. And then we got to go also to the CAP National Conferences, which were in some pretty cool locations. So those memories I'll definitely take with me.

MAJ HANRAHAN:

What were some of the main topics of discussion in the conferences?

MAJ BYRD:

So the CAP National Conference is a, is giant. The one that I remember was in Anaheim, California, and they have the CAP Command Council. So all of the region and wing commanders, they vote on, and they talk about upcoming policy changes, because CAP has they have CAP regulations. And then they have breakout groups. So they have people who are experts in search and rescue or they have the operations group, they have cadets talk about the projects that they are doing. It's a great opportunity to see what's going on in Civil Air Patrol and for the members, senior members and adult members, sorry, senior members and cadet members to see what other regions and wings are doing.

LESSONS LEARNED

MAJ HANRAHAN:

And I know you had mentioned some of the things you learned as an SJA for CAP-U.S. Air Force, and any kind of big takeaways you could offer for our listeners in the job if any folks have an interest in it?

MAJ BYRD:

Sure. So I touched on this a little bit before, but I would just say, you know, don't be afraid to learn and get out of your comfort zone. My first two active duty assignments, I would say were pretty traditional. I was in a base legal

office, and then I was a special victim's counsel, to be quite frank, I was trying to get back to Alabama because I got married and wanted to be where my husband was. And so when JAX offered me this job, I said sure. And then I promptly hung up and Googled, "What is the Civil Air Patrol", which I don't know is that uncommon for your typical Air Force JAG?

And so when I got here, I was I was excited to be here, but I really was quite ignorant to what CAP was, how they functioned and I was also the only, I was the only female in my, the only female officer in my unit, the only CGO and the only JAG. So I felt like I was a little bit on an island to myself. I was working with primarily lieutenant colonels and colonels who were all men and were all pilots. And I really felt like I needed to push myself to get out of my comfort zone and learn quite a bit about our Air Force. And I think that's the takeaway that I learned in this job is that it's very rewarding when you do that.

LEADERSHIP

MAJ HANRAHAN:

And as you know, one of the themes of this show is leadership and innovation. And you've talked about this a little bit, I think, already, but anything you could offer listeners in how your leadership abilities kind of grew through your role here as SJA for CAP-U.S. Air Force?

MAJ BYRD:

Sure. So this is similar to my previous answer, but not to get too pigeonholed. I think a lot of times in the JAG Corps, particularly in more of our litigation jobs, we're used to working and functioning within the JAG Corps and working with other JAGs. And I learned the value, the value for me, just from a personal growth and officer ship perspective, and the value that I could bring to my client, to the Air Force, and really understanding the bigger picture of what our Air Force does.

The second thing that I would say that I was so grateful for in this job because we were a small unit CAP-USAF had about 25 active duty members and they were spread out across the country. So we had a much

smaller contingent who was actually in my office at Maxwell, was the importance of family atmosphere and supporting your Airmen. And so when I was in this job, I was pregnant and then I had a baby and felt absolutely supported by both of my commanders and that was just a big takeaway for me of how important that is in a leader.

MAJ HANRAHAN:

Great stuff there. That's good to hear. And hopefully folks that have any interest in it maybe they'll consider.

MAJ BYRD:

Absolutely.

INNOVATION

MAJ HANRAHAN:

And the other thing we like to talk about is innovation. We bring it up in most episodes, most discussions. Was there anything you noticed from a CAP standpoint that they were doing that look to be innovative or maybe things you learned that you could apply to your Air Force career and/or mission?

MAJ BYRD:

So CAP is full of outside the box thinkers. I'm not sure if it's because they, as a nonprofit corporation, are not hindered by the bureaucracy and red tape that we often encounter from inside the federal government, but they, they're volunteers. Their cadet members are great outside the box thinkers. And when they were presented with a problem, if they could help, they always would. And so that willingness and can-do attitude was something that I learned from our CAP volunteers and I will take with me throughout my Air Force career.

COVID

MAJ HANRAHAN:

Great to hear that. And my last substantive question before we get to kind of our last two summary questions that we ask all guests, is I know that you were at CAP at the tail end of when COVID started. Are you aware of how CAP responded through the COVID pandemic?

MAJ BYRD:

Yes. So like you said, it was towards the end of my time there, but at the beginning of COVID, so March to May of 2020, CAP really sprung into action because they were out in the local communities and their COVID related missions, including delivering test kits and personal protective equipment. And then, of course, when schools shut down and free and reduced lunches went away, CAP would distribute food and critical supplies. They also had blood drives and transported blood and augmented state emergency operations centers. And then later, this was after I left, I understand that they were also involved in transporting vaccines. So they really, when COVID hit CAP rose to the occasion.

RESOURCES

MAJ HANRAHAN:

So, Major Byrd, this has been a great talk. Kind of moving on to our last two questions. Are there any additional resources where listeners could learn more about today's topic?

MAJ BYRD:

Sure. If anyone is just interested in the Civil Air Patrol, generally, all of their information is on go civil air patrol dot com [gocivilairpatrol.com]. They have the Air Force cooperative agreement is on there, all of their regulations. And then you can also find, if you're interested in joining as a volunteer, your local squadron.

And then if any of our JAG colleagues are interested for work, there is an AFI, it's Air Force Instruction [10-2701](#) [*Board of Governors of the Civil Air Patrol*], which is the Air Force Instruction that governs the Civil Air Patrol.

FINAL THOUGHTS

MAJ HANRAHAN:

Well, thank you for that. We will get that up on our website, as we're updating the website. And last question, any final thoughts on today's topic for our listeners?

MAJ BYRD:

Sure. So my takeaway for JAG colleagues who are out there in, or might be interested in working with the Civil Air Patrol or have a work related question with them, is just to get out there and to get involved. Often times, like I said, I think we're stuck in our office, but there are there's lots to learn about these different areas of our Air Force that help us be better JAGs, and they help us get to know our client, and help us contribute to the mission in a much more significant way. And this job that I had with the Civil Air Patrol, like I said, was something I had never heard of and pushed me to grow personally and professionally. And I encourage folks to find these corners of the Air Force because they're very rewarding.

MAJ HANRAHAN:

Well, Major Byrd, thank you again for coming on. I know it's been very illuminating to me to learn more about CAP and what they do and all the great things they're doing for both the Air Force and our country. So thank you again for coming on the show today.

MAJ BYRD:

Absolutely. Thanks for having me.

TAKEAWAYS

MAJ HANRAHAN:

That concludes our interview with Major Byrd. Here are my three top takeaways from the interview.

NUMBER ONE, the Civil Air Patrol, or CAP is the Air Force auxiliary and a nonprofit corporation. CAP is quite unique. It is the Air Force's auxiliary composed of civilian volunteers and a federally supported, congressionally chartered nonprofit corporation. As a recap to this interview, what does that mean? In short, CAP is deemed to be an instrumentality of the United States with respect to any act or omission in carrying out a mission assigned by the Secretary of the Air Force. CAP members are actually referred to as Airmen when performing missions or programs as the Air Force

auxiliary as part of the Total Force. Right alongside active duty Air Force, Air National Guard and the Air Force Reserves. Further, Department of Air Force leaders are asked to consider ways to fully utilize CAP to fulfill the non-combat programs and missions of the Department of Air Force. How Department of Air Force leaders do this is through the mission of CAP.

Which leads me to point **NUMBERTWO**. CAP has a **unique mission set**. Congress sets out five purposes of CAP under 36 U.S.C. Section 40302, which include one, to provide an organization to encourage and aid citizens of the U.S. in contributing their efforts, services and resources in developing aviation and in maintaining air supremacy, and encourage and develop by example the voluntary contribution of private citizens to the public welfare. Two, to provide aviation education and training, especially to its senior and cadet members. Three, to encourage and foster civil aviation and local communities. Four, to provide an organization of private citizens with adequate facilities to assist in meeting local and national emergencies. And number five, to assist the Department of Air Force in fulfilling its non-combat programs and missions. This fifth purpose is the one we tend to focus on the most and talk about, which I'll discuss a bit more in my final point.

In my **THIRD AND FINAL TAKEAWAY** is **learn to understand and work with your local CAP**. Building partnerships with your local CAP units and learning about where they fit in and what they do for the Air Force mission is a crucial force enabler to mission accomplishment. The better you understand CAP and your Air Force client, the better you can utilize all that CAP has to offer.

As discussed in point number two, one of CAP's main purposes is to assist the Department of Air Force in non-combat programs and missions. And as discussed by Major Byrd, because of the types of aircraft and equipment CAP employs and the voluntary nature of its members, CAP performs missions at a much lower cost than comparable Department of Air Force units

or commercial contractors. Major Byrd estimated it costs a few hundred dollars an hour to fly a CAP Cessna versus upwards of \$10,000 or more per hour to fly Air Force assets.

And these CAP missions are very versatile indeed. Including such things as low-level route surveys, counterdrug missions at the border, search and rescue, disaster relief and humanitarian assistance, to flying over bird preservations to take imagery for the Army Corps of Engineers, and many other missions, including more recently with COVID-19 assistance. So the bottom line is to get out there and to learn about this unique force of approximately 60,000 CAP volunteers, which work every day to enhance Air Force mission success.

You can also learn more about CAP through reading its statutes which are found at 36 U.S.C. 40301 to 40307 and 10 U.S.C. 9491 through 9498, along with Department of Air Force Instruction 10-2701 which discusses the organization and function of the Civil Air Patrol, which was recently rewritten in June of 2021, and Air Force Instruction 10-2702 which deals with the Board of Governors of the Civil Air Patrol. You can also go to Go Civil Air Patrol dot com [gocivilairpatrol.com] to learn more about CAP. And there you can also find its constitution and bylaws.

Thank you for listening to another episode. If you like this episode, please let us know by leaving a review on Apple Podcasts, Spotify or your favorite podcast platform and consider subscribing to the show. We'll see you on the next episode.

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GLOSSARY

- **ACC:** Air Combat Command
- **AETC:** Air Education and Training Command
- **AFAM:** Air Force Assigned Mission
- **AFJAGS:** Air Force Judge Advocate General's School
- **CAP:** Civil Air Patrol
- **CAP-USAF:** Civil Air Patrol, United States Air Force
- **CGO:** company grade officer
- **CONUS:** continental United States
- **DSCA:** Defense Support of Civil Authorities
- **JAG:** judge advocate general
- **JAX:** Professional Development Division for The Judge Advocate General's Corps
- **LG:** logistics
- **O&M:** operations and maintenance
- **POC:** point of contact
- **RPA:** remotely piloted aircraft
- **SAF/MR:** Secretary of the Air Force, Manpower and Reserve Affairs
- **SJA:** Staff Judge Advocate
- **STEM:** science, technology, engineering and mathematics