

# PRESENTENSE

the newsletter for public affairs officers

FEBRUARY 2004



**CIVIL AIR PATROL**  
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

## INSIDE

### NEW PRODUCTS FOR PAOS FROM HQ STRATCOM

Headquarters Strategic communications has added some new videos that you can view and download. Included are a teacher's perspective on CAP's aerospace education program and two new PSA-type commercials! Find out how to access them and when you'll be able to order Beta copies for your local television stations to broadcast. **Page 2**

### CAP IN THE NEWS

Find out where articles and broadcasts on CAP have appeared recently in the national media. **Page 2**

### THIS MONTH'S CASE STUDY

It's *Cliffs Notes* for CAP PAOs! See "The Least You Need to Know as a PAO," a great tutorial for the new PAO, PAOs who want to be sure they're on track, and CAP members who want to understand better what a PAO is supposed to do. **Page 3**

### CHECK OUT ONLINE NEWS!

The headquarters online news service is now up and running. Access it from the front page of [www.cap.gov](http://www.cap.gov). In fact, you can put a link to it on your own unit Web site.

## PLUS

- Cool Web sites for PAOs
- Latest CAP stats

*Presentense* is the official monthly publication for public affairs officers of the Civil Air Patrol, and is produced by Melanie LeMay in the Strategic Communications and Planning Directorate, CAP National Headquarters, Maxwell AFB, Ala. All copy is written by Melanie LeMay unless otherwise noted.

Is there something you'd like us to cover in *Presentense*? Contact Melanie LeMay at [mlemay@cap.gov](mailto:mlemay@cap.gov) or call her at (334) 953-5320.



Photo courtesy of John Barainca

Cadets Adam McGee, left, and R. Adam Kelley of the Utah Wing explore "Martian" terrain during a Mars Society/CAP cadet encampment in the desert northwest of Hanksville, Utah, during the summer of 2002. During the encampment, the cadets were able to work full-time at a Mars research habitat sponsored by the Mars Society. Their environment simulated life on Mars, including requisite spacesuits each time they ventured outside the habitat module to perform experiments and collect rock samples.

## Jump on the aerospace bandwagon

A recent announcement by President George W. Bush opens the door for PAOs to promote local aerospace education programs.

Bush's announcement that he would seek additional NASA funding for both lunar landings and future Mars landings has moved space travel back into the national consciousness. Your local media will be particularly receptive to space-related stories right now, especially those which involve people in your community.

Take advantage of this interest by promoting both your unit's aerospace education programs for both senior and cadet members, as well as your local aerospace education programs for classroom teachers.

Start by meeting with your unit's aerospace education or cadet pro-



White House photo

President George Bush announced on Jan. 15, 2004 that he would seek \$1 billion in NASA funding to return Americans to the moon and pave the way for future manned trips to Mars.

grams officer. Find out what aerospace-related activities are currently going on or are planned for coming weeks.

See Aerospace, p. 2

## New products for PAOs from Strategic Communications

Headquarters Strategic Communications has some new products on the headquarters Web site that can make your PAO life easier.

**Headquarters has produced two new commercials and a great new video presentation on CAP's aerospace education program.**

To see these, go to [www.cap.gov](http://www.cap.gov). Click on MEDIA INFO, then MEDIA CENTER, then MULTIMEDIA, and then select CAP VIDEOS from the drop-down box. On the audio and video page, you can view and download any or all of the following:

- ◆ CAPabilities video
- ◆ Homeland Security video
- ◆ CAP commercials (NEW!)
- ◆ CAP aerospace ed video (NEW!)
- ◆ 2003 National Cadet Competition video
- ◆ "We're There" radio commercial

To download one of the selections:

1. Choose the format you want from the drop-down box below each choice. If your computer capacity is limited, choose "low



streaming."

2. Click on the link connected to your choice. Your media player will open.
3. Let the clip completely load and play to the end.
4. When the clip has ended, choose FILE and then SAVE AS. Save the clip to any destination you choose.

Copies of the new videos will be available in Beta format (the format most frequently used by television stations) for distribution to CAP PAOs within the next six weeks. Watch the March edition of *Presentense* for instructions on obtaining these videos for your local media.

## CAP in the News

Articles about CAP appeared recently in the following national publications:

*Aviation Week & Space Technology* – Jan. 5, 2004 "Civil Air Patrol expands mission"

This story, written by editor Dave North, describes CAP's new Gippisland GA-8 Airvan and the factors which led to its purchase. North had the opportunity to fly the new Airvan in October at a CAP technologies demo at Andrews AFB, Md., and details his personal experience.

*American Profile* magazine – Jan. 4, 2004 "Patrolling our borders by land, sea and air" (See it at [www.americanprofile.com](http://www.americanprofile.com).)

American Profile is a tabloid-size publication that appears in newspapers nationwide. It focuses on people in small communities. This story featured CAP National Legal Officer Rock Palermo of the Louisiana Wing and included an intro from Tom Ridge

### Aerospace, from page 1

Then prepare a press release that mentions the Bush announcement in the lead paragraph and ties it to your local CAP aerospace activities. If you need more information on the Bush announcement, you can do an Internet search (try "Bush NASA funding" in Google), and you'll uncover a number of press releases that will give you the basic details.

Remember that aerospace activities lend themselves well

to photography, so be sure your press release includes a list of possible interviews and photos. As the PAO, you should coordinate any press coverage and accompany the media to the interviews and photo sessions with your local CAP seniors and cadets.

Here are some ideas for stories and photo ops:

- ◆ A local classroom where a teacher is using CAP aerospace education materials to lead a hands-on activity, like

building a model rocket or making a 3-D solar system.

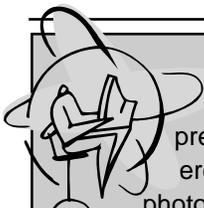
- ◆ CAP cadets learning the principles of aviation, using charts and diagrams in CAP-produced materials.

- ◆ CAP members visiting a planetarium or space museum.

- ◆ CAP members learning about advanced technologies such as the Satellite Tool Kit.

The current interest in Mars, thanks to the Mars Rover, coupled with the Bush announcement, is likely to per-

sist for some time to come. Be sure to stay in the loop with your aerospace education and cadet programs officers so you'll know when new aerospace activities are scheduled, and contact the media well in advance. You'll win friends with your local media when you help them localize one of the current hot news topics, and you'll tap into a whole new area of publicity for your unit as well.



### Cool Web sites for PAOs

**Get prepped on aerospace** – If you're writing a press release or article on aerospace and need reference material, or some good downloadable photos, go to NASA's Web site at [www.nasa.gov](http://www.nasa.gov). Take a look at their site for kids, too, at <http://kids.msfc.nasa.gov/>.

**Forge for tips on media relations** – This Internet site includes links for all kinds of media relations subjects and is geared to non-profits. Included is a good list of PR links. Go to [http://www.mapnp.org/library/pblc\\_rel/pblc\\_rel.htm](http://www.mapnp.org/library/pblc_rel/pblc_rel.htm).

## LATEST CAP STATS

### CAP Membership as of Dec. 31, 2003

Senior members 35,209  
Cadet members 26,652

**TOTAL members 61,861**

## Public Affairs Case Study 5

## THE LEAST YOU SHOULD KNOW AS A PAO

One of the best features of those “for dummies”-type books is the little “the least you need to know” summary at the end of each chapter. PA Case Study 5 is such a summary, sort of a *Cliffs Notes* for PAOs. This includes those things you absolutely, positively must know (and do) if you’re going to be effective as a PAO.

Unless you’ve got these items under your belt, you’re not giving the position your best shot.

◆ **Read and soak up CAP pamphlet 190-1, volumes 1 and 2.** This excellent reference for CAP PAOs will give you a good overview of the elements of public affairs work, from writing press releases, handling media during a crisis, taking photos, managing special events, and getting your unit covered in *CAP News*.

You can’t get a better primer on public affairs that is specifically geared to CAP. If you don’t have a copy on hand, you can print one out from the headquarters Web site. Just to the PUBLICATIONS selection and scroll down until you find CAPP 190-1, volumes 1 and 2. Be sure to get both volumes!

◆ **Make a list of local media contacts.** The couple of hours it takes to set up this list will be well worth it in the long run. If you’re starting from scratch, look in your yellow pages under newspapers, radio stations, and television stations. Select the ones you’ve actually heard of, and write down their names, addresses, phone numbers, fax numbers (if listed), Web addresses and e-mail addresses for submissions.

Next, call each one and ask the name of the appropriate person to whom you should send press releases about a local volunteer organization. Depending on the size of the newspaper, this may be a managing editor, features editor, metro editor, community editor, or possibly even a military editor. At a television or radio station, ask for the name of the assignments editor. Again, for a large

station, you may have to specify that your news will relate to local volunteer efforts.

Get not only the name of your contact, but also his or her direct phone number and direct e-mail address. Add these to your list.

◆ **Build a list of the go-to people in your unit.** These are the people who are always in the know. Be sure you have every conceivable method of contacting them on your list, including cell numbers and e-mail addresses. Clear with your commander in advance the procedure you should follow if you cannot reach him or her in an emergency.

◆ **Be sure everyone in your unit knows how to contact you.** By its very nature, being a public affairs officer means that you may be contacted anytime, night or day. The go-to people in your unit and your media contacts should all be able to reach you if a crisis occurs. This is the only way you’ll be able to control information about the situation.

If your unit has a Web site, be sure you’re listed as the unit’s public affairs officer and that your contact information there is correct.

*Tip:* If a member of the media calls and catches you off-guard, tell him or her that you can’t talk right then. Don’t let an aggressive reporter force you to comment off the cuff. Get the reporter to tell you why he’s calling, find out when he needs the information he’s seeking, get his phone number and e-mail address, and then promise to call back as soon as possible.

Immediately contact the people on your go-to list, starting with the person most likely to be able to give you the facts. Once you have a good understanding of the situation, either call the reporter back or e-mail him with your answers. The moral to this story? Never respond to a reporter when you’re unprepared!

◆ **Learn how to write a press release.** While you may have the luxury of laboring over a press release

about an awards ceremony or a cadet activity, you may be called on to produce one very quickly in a crisis situation. When you’re in a crunch, you’ll be glad you took the time to learn.

Set up a press release template in advance and keep it close at hand, preferably on both your home and office computers and/or laptop. A copy of the template we use in headquarters public affairs is reproduced on the next page. You can use it as a guide, substituting the appropriate information for your unit and adding local information to the closing paragraph, or tagline.

To bone up on press release writing, consult the 190-1, vol. 2, page 10-1. You can also find tips in past issues of *Presentense*. Your local public library will have books on news writing, and you can also find good short courses on press release writing on the Web (try [www.newstips.org](http://www.newstips.org)). For examples of nationally distributed press releases about CAP, go to the headquarters Web site at [www.cap.gov](http://www.cap.gov). Click on MEDIA INFO, MEDIA CENTER, then PRESS RELEASES.

◆ **Stay in the information loop.** Ideally, you should keep abreast of all the major happenings and issues throughout CAP. You can stay informed by regularly visiting the headquarters Web site ([www.cap.gov](http://www.cap.gov)) and reading new additions to the online news service and the national media releases. *CAP News* is another good source of information.

At the very least, however, be sure you know what’s happening in your own unit. Nothing is worse than answering a call from a reporter who wants information about an incident you haven’t heard about.

If reporters come to know you as the CAP person who’s never on top of the situation, they’ll stop calling you and you’ll lose your ability to control the dissemination of information. Keep in touch with the go-to people and be sure they keep you in the loop. *Continued on next page.*

Public Affairs Case Study 5

# THE LEAST YOU SHOULD KNOW AS A PAO (CONTINUED)

**UNITED STATES AIR FORCE AUXILIARY**  
**CIVIL AIR PATROL**

**NEWS**  
**CIVIL AIR PATROL**  
 NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

Want to know more?  
 Contact: Melanie LeMay, Public Relations Specialist  
 334 953 5320, mlemay@cap.gov

For immediate release  
 MONTH xx, 2004

**HEADLINE HERE**

MAXWELL AFB, Ala. —

Civil Air Patrol, the official Air Force auxiliary, is a nonprofit organization with almost 62,000 members nationwide. It performs 95% of continental U.S. inland search and rescue missions as tasked by the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center. 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. On the Web: <http://www.cap.gov>

Get text of this release online at [www.cap.gov](http://www.cap.gov) under Media Info

105 South Hansell St. ♦ Bldg. #714 ♦ Maxwell AFB, Ala. 36112-6332 ♦ 334 953 5463 ♦ Fax 334 953 4245

Put your squadron or wing name here.

Put your contact information here;

Put the date here. Be sure to abbreviate the month according to AP Style.

Type in your headline here. Your headline should give the reader a good idea of what your press release will contain.

Put your own dateline here, in all capital letters. The dateline is the place where the press release is originating. For example, a press release from Fayetteville, Ark. would read:  
 FAYETTEVILLE, ARK. —

At the end of your press release text, insert a standard "tagline" about CAP. You can add local information to this general one used on national releases sent out by headquarters StratCom.

Give your own unit's Web address, and put your release on the Web as well as sending it out.

Be sure to include your unit's address, phone, and fax numbers somewhere on your release.

**This is the template currently used by headquarters public relations for all national press releases. You can use this template as a guide for your own press release format. Of course, you'll want to substitute your own local and contact information. You may also want to add local information to the final paragraph, or tagline. You might include the number of units in your general area, the number of members locally, the day and time of your regular meetings, and/or your unit Web address. Tip: Keep an eye on the headquarters Web site at [www.cap.gov](http://www.cap.gov). Within the next few weeks, StratCom will post a press release template which you can download and customize.**

◆ **Stock up on general CAP information, especially the CAP Fact Sheet.** Keep handy a supply of general information about CAP, both for your own reference and for any media calls. The CAP Fact Sheet is probably the best quick reference. It's a Word document that's kept updated by StratCom. You can find it at <http://www.cap.gov/data/FactSheet.pdf>.

Print it out and keep copies at hand. You can also use the headquarters-produced Fact Sheet as a guide for creating a local version, and then you can distribute both.

Reporters like fact sheets because they give them a fast snapshot of the subject and supply the stats they need to flesh out their stories.

You can also supply copies of

head-quarters produced brochures and other promotional material. Contact Melanie LeMay at [mlemay@cap.gov](mailto:mlemay@cap.gov) for more information on obtaining these.

These are the basics for a PAO, but they're just a start. See previous and future editions of Presentense for tips on the finer points of effective public affairs.