

"CIVIL AIR PATROL Continues Fire Missions Across three California Counties. Two Squadron 40 Members Involved"

Gillespie Field, San Diego.-27.

The California wing of the Civil Air Patrol was activated by the Air Force on Friday, 26 th October, in support of operations relating to the fires in California. CAP is flying reconnaissance flights in support of various Federal, Sate and local agencies. Flight and support crews have responded from as far north as Fresno.

Two of the primary tasks assigned are searching for possible victims in areas not easily accessible by ground crews, and airborne fire damage assessment of various buildings, facilities and towers used by both the US military and numerous civilian agencies.

The initial request for CAP assistance was received from the National Operations Center at 10 AM. The first of several CAP aircraft were in the air by 11: 30. Flight operations continued until about 8 PM.

According to Incident Commander Major Robert Keilholtz, "The feedback we've received so far from the government has been outstanding. This mission continues the long-standing tradition of Disaster Relief activity by the members of the California wing". Major Keilholtz is himself a fire evacuee.

Major Joseph Di Mento, a Fallbrook evacuee himself, said "This mission gives me an opportunity to help further the mission. My family was fortunate to have escaped the conflagration in and around Fallbrook, while others lost everything they had in the fires. I'm just happy to have had people there to help us."

Squadron 40 members 2LT. Rene Caldera was assigned as the photographer on a flight whose targets included the Palomar Observatory. 1LT Matthew Scherzi worked Air Operations.

The Mission Base opened at 7 AM on Saturday morning at Gillespie Field, with 7 CAP aircraft and 30 members assigned. Aircraft used are six Cessna C-182's and one Gipsland G-8 Airvan.

Flights operations are throughout San Diego, San Bernardino and Orange Counties.

The U.S. Civil Air Patrol, the official auxiliary of the U.S. Air Force, was founded on Dec. 1, 1941, less than a week before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor brought the U.S. into World War II. CAP is a nonprofit volunteer organization with more than 55,000 members nationwide. The organization's members perform 90 percent of continental U.S. inland search and rescue missions, as tasked by the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center, and was credited by the AFRCC with saving 58 lives in 2006. Its volunteers also perform homeland security, disaster relief and counter-drug missions at the request of federal, state and local agencies. Members play a leading role in aerospace education and serve as mentors to the more than 22,000 young people currently participating in the CAP cadet program.