



CAP and the Total Force

On August 28, 2015 Civil Air Patrol became a part of the U.S. Air Force's Total Force. This important change in Air Force doctrine has generated many questions from CAP members across the nation. A synopsis of the most commonly asked questions and a response to those questions are provided below:

Q: Is joining the Total Force a good thing?

A: Yes, mostly from a credibility and "part of the team" perspective. And, most agree it's long overdue. The greater awareness of CAP with our Total Force partners ushers in a new era of understanding and presents potential mission opportunities never before envisioned.

Q: Why was the change needed?

A: Previous versions of Air Force Doctrine defined the Total Force as "the US Air Force organizations, units, and individuals that provide the capabilities to support the Department of Defense in implementing the national security strategy. Total force includes Regular Air Force, Air National Guard of the United States, Air Force Reserve military personnel, U.S. Air Force military retired members, U.S. Air Force civilian personnel (including foreign national direct and indirect-hires, as well as non-appropriated fund employees), contractor staff, and host-nation support personnel."

Missing from this definition was an acknowledgement of CAP's contributions as the Air Force Auxiliary. Most members are aware of the distinction between CAP as a corporation and CAP as the Air Force Auxiliary when performing Air Force assigned missions (AFAMs). The doctrinal change reinforces this distinction.

Q: How will CAP as an organization be affected?

A: In short, CAP as a corporation will retain its corporate identity. However, CAP, when serving in its role as the Air Force Auxiliary, is now recognized as a crucial element of the Total Force. This recognition promotes Air Force-wide awareness of CAP's existence, value and contribution as a credible force multiplier and a welcomed partner in accomplishing the Air Force's missions and programs.

Q: What is the impact on individual members?

A: Members will see little change in the longstanding relationship CAP has enjoyed with the Air Force. The conduct of CAP's three primary missions – Emergency Services, Aerospace Education and Cadet Programs – will be largely unaffected. However, Air Force wide awareness holds tremendous promise for new missions and other non-combat related initiatives where CAP's cost effective capabilities can be applied. CAP is known for delivering incredible skills and resources at a very low cost; something that's very much needed in these fiscally constrained times.

Q: What about the term "Airmen?" Does that mean members performing AFAMs are now in the Air Force?

A: No. Airmen, as it pertains to the Total Force, is an inclusive term of honor and prestige that simply means being a part of the Air Force team. Considering all Airmen in the Total Force simplifies the Air Force planning process by helping highlight the contributions of each component when developing all-encompassing plans.

Q: When is it appropriate to use the term “Airmen?”

A: The term “Airmen” is an inclusive term reflecting the Total Force. Air Force doctrine Volume 2 emphasizes that Department of the Air Force (DAF) civilians are members of the Total Force, but are not members of the uniform-wearing military element of the Total Force. Volume 2 further states “Civil Air Patrol members, when executing Air Force-assigned missions, are civilian volunteers (with a small paid staff) of the official Air Force Auxiliary. Air Force Auxiliary members fall under the use of the term Airman in the same manner as DAF civilians, when general inclusiveness by senior leaders is required for clarity in communication.”

In short, CAP’s use of the term “Airmen” is appropriate ONLY when referring to members performing AFAMs as the Air Force Auxiliary.

Q: Is it appropriate for CAP members to further distinguish themselves by another term, such as “Auxiliary Airmen” or “Volunteer Airmen?”

A: No, it is not appropriate to use any term other than “Airmen.” CAP’s status as a volunteer organization and official Air Force Auxiliary when performing AFAMs is recognized in the Air Force Doctrine Volume 2 definitions for Total Force and Airmen.

Q: Will CAP’s emblems and uniforms change?

A: As the volunteer arm of the Total Force, CAP will not have to change patches, logos or other historically significant emblems. Additionally, since CAP’s uniforms are not changing, members will not have to bear the cost of obtaining any new uniforms.

Q: What about access to base exchanges and commissaries?

A: Federal statutes limit patronage of base exchanges, commissaries and similar benefits to currently serving or retired military members; however, the increased awareness of CAP’s inclusion in the Total Force might make it easier for CAP members to get installation access when it is needed for authorized CAP activities.

Q: Will my squadron have easier access to the Air Force base where we meet?

A: Every installation commander, to include Guard, Reserve, and other services, is responsible for determining the appropriate level of security needed for their respective installation. Each installation’s security posture and access procedures are based on the installation’s missions and assets. Therefore, the access procedures members experience are unlikely to change with CAP joining the Total Force. Despite the unlikelihood of easier access, now is a great time for unit commanders to schedule a visit with the installation commander to discuss how your CAP unit can help meet their mission requirements. Base access could be made easier as a result of that discussion.

Q: What if I have more questions not answered here?

A: New questions will be added to the knowledgebase and can be viewed by going to the knowledgebase at: [Total Force FAQs](#). If you can’t find an answer to your question, please submit your question through the Knowledgebase.

Thank you for your support of CAP and the rest of our Total Force partners.