



NEWS

CAP National Headquarters
Public Affairs
105 S. Hansell St.
Maxwell AFB, AL 36112
Toll free: 877-227-9142, x250

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Top Air Force exec praises new Total Force partner

During tour of National Headquarters, Secretary of the Air Force Deborah Lee James says Civil Air Patrol does ‘a magnificent job’

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, Ala. – Secretary of the Air Force Deborah Lee James came to Alabama Wednesday to get a up-close look at the missions performed by the Air Force’s newest Total Force strategic partner — Civil Air Patrol.

“Civil Air Patrol has been doing a magnificent job for our country,” said James. “On average, CAP has provided 100,000 flying hours per year of very vital services, to include search and rescue and counterdrug operations.

“There are very important cadet programs involving STEM education,” she added.

James was welcomed to CAP National Headquarters by National Commander Maj. Gen. Joe Vazquez and Chief Operating Officer Don Rowland, along with Col. Michael Tyynismaa, CAP-USAF commander.

Lt. Gen. Steven L. Kwast, commander and president of Air University, was also among the VIPs touring National Headquarters with James.

As the 23rd secretary of the Air Force, James is responsible for the affairs of the Department of the Air Force, including the organizing, training, equipping and providing for the welfare of its nearly 664,000 active duty, Guard, Reserve and civilian Airmen and their families. She also oversees the Air Force’s annual budget of more than \$139 billion.

During Wednesday’s visit to Alabama, James toured National Headquarters’ cadet program and aerospace education areas and received updates from program managers as well as cadets from the Alabama Wing. She also received a briefing at the National Operations Center, where CAP routinely coordinates its Air Force-assigned missions.

“CAP’s more than 55,000 ‘Airmen’ stand ready to assist the Air Force whenever we are needed,” said Vazquez during James’ tour of the National Operations Center.

The recent recognition of CAP as an Air Force strategic partner reflects the organization’s growing role within the Air Force since 9/11, including being targets for air defense training and simulating complex unmanned aerial vehicle operations for deploying troops. These missions, along with dozens of others, highlight CAP’s important role in support of the Air Force.

CAP is valued as a force-multiplier for the Air Force and other branches of the U.S. military as well as for federal, state and local agencies. It conducts a wide range of humanitarian missions,

helps shape the nation's youth with its cadet programs and furthers STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) in U.S. classrooms through aerospace education.

Over time, being part of the Total Force will likely mean additional missions for CAP's volunteer civilian airmen. Also, Air Force leaders will now consider its assets and capabilities when planning how to most effectively and efficiently carry out noncombatant missions.

"I think the future for the Civil Air Patrol is very, very bright," said James, a former defense industry executive with 30 years of senior homeland and national security experience, who became secretary of the Air Force in 2013. Previously, James served as a congressional staff member of the House Armed Services Committee and as assistant secretary of defense for reserve affairs.

"Today's Air Force is the smallest Air Force that we have been since we became a separate service in 1947," explained James. "Yet we are globally engaged, all over the country and all over the world. Everyone wants more Air Force. For this reason, because we are so busy, I am certain that we are going to continue to value the Civil Air Patrol for the next 75 years and beyond."

Vazquez said he was grateful for James' visit to National Headquarters. "Such interest, from the very top echelon of the Air Force, is greatly appreciated," he said. "Her attention lifts our spirits and further bolsters CAP's reputation as one of the nation's premier public service organizations."

Civil Air Patrol, the longtime all-volunteer U.S. Air Force auxiliary, is the newest member of the Air Force's Total Force, which consists of regular Air Force, Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, along with Air Force retired military and civilian employees. CAP, in its Total Force role, operates a fleet of 550 aircraft and performs about 90 percent of continental U.S. inland search and rescue missions as tasked by the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center and is credited by the AFRCC with saving an average of 78 lives annually. Civil Air Patrol's 55,000 members nationwide also perform homeland security, disaster relief and drug interdiction missions at the request of federal, state and local agencies. Its members additionally play a leading role in aerospace education and serve as mentors to more than 24,000 young people currently participating in the CAP cadet program. Performing missions for America for the past 75 years, CAP received the Congressional Gold Medal in 2014 in honor of the heroic efforts of its World War II veterans. CAP also participates in Wreaths Across America, an initiative to remember, honor and teach about the sacrifices of U.S. military veterans. Visit www.capvolunteernow.com for more information.

Contact info: Julie DeBardelaben – jdebardelaben@capnhq.gov – 334-953-7748, ext. 250
Steve Cox – scox@capnhq.gov – 334-953-7748, ext. 251

