

Featured news about CAP volunteers & events

CAPSHOTS

CNN airs prime-time CAP feature on 'Defending America'

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NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS — in a first for Civil Air Patrol, CNN was allowed to accompany and film a CAP crew performing a homeland security training mission for the Air Force.

The segment aired on Jan. 19 as part of CNN's "Defending America" series, and it featured Col. Rock Palermo, an attorney from Lake Charles, La., as he and a CAP aircrew flew a target-intercept exercise assigned under the auspices of the North American Air Defense Command (NORAD).

During the exercise, Colonel Palermo piloted the CAP plane, posing as a suspicious aircraft flying over restricted air space. The Air Force dispatched two F-15 Eagle fighter jets to intercept the plane, allowing the Air Force to test the speed and efficiency of its response, as well as the effectiveness and quality of its air-defense radar, weapon systems and operating procedures.

CAP members like Colonel Palermo frequently fly such exercises. Because CAP is the volunteer civilian auxiliary of the Air Force, the cost of using CAP's single-engine aircraft with volunteer pilots is far less than the cost of using military aircraft for the same purpose.

"The cost of operating a CAP plane for this kind of exercise is only about \$100 per hour," said CAP National Commander Maj. Gen. Dwight H. Wheless. "That makes CAP one of today's best values in homeland security, and a force-multiplier for our military."

The CNN crew, headed by national correspondent Jonathan Freed from the Chicago Bureau, agreed to strict security guidelines in order to film the exercise. Public affairs specialists collaborated on the necessary approvals across chains of command from CAP National Headquarters and 1st Air Force Headquarters to NORAD and U.S. Northern Command. CNN also filmed Colonel Palermo at work in his Lake Charles law office, where he handles personal-injury cases and mediation.

The finished segment addressed the colonel's ongoing challenges in juggling his professional and volunteer responsibilities.

"We in CAP value our country's security and we value human life," Colonel Palermo said. "Our volunteer members are honored to use our skills to protect both."

"We're grateful for the commitment of CAP members like Rock Palermo," said CAP National Vice Commander Brig. Gen. Antonio Pineda. "This is a

man with a family and busy professional career. He doesn't have to spend his free time doing this work. Nobody pays him to do it."

"CNN did a good job of capturing the spirit of service that undergirds this organization," said Louisiana Wing Commander Col. Rod Ammons. "You see it in Rock and in thousands of other CAP volunteers across the nation. These are the 'can-do' people who get out there and do something positive to make a difference. We wanted the American people to know that, and we also wanted to reassure them that many different kinds of security plans are at work in their communities. I'd venture to say most people have no idea that CAP members in their own communities are performing missions like the one shown in this CNN segment."

Colonel Palermo's copilot for the exercise was Col. Glen Atwell of the Alabama Wing. The two performed the mission in a Gippsland GA8 Airvan, with the CNN film crew and a public affairs officer from 1st Air Force, 1st Lt. Lisa Citino, onboard. To assist with radio communications, CAP put a Cessna C-182 in the air along with the Gippsland.

Kentucky Wing Director of Communications 1st Lt. Russ Hensley served as the Cessna



Photo by Melanie LeMay

Louisiana Wing's Col. Rock Palermo is interviewed by CNN national correspondent Jonathan Freed Jan. 11 at a New Orleans airport. CNN followed Colonel Palermo and other CAP members as they flew a homeland security target-intercept mission assigned by the Air Force. The story, which focused on CAP volunteerism, also showed the colonel at work in his private law practice in Lake Charles, La. The program aired on CNN's "Defending America" series Jan. 19.

mission pilot, accompanied by mission observer Capt. Kevin Fosberg, Kentucky Wing vice commander and director of Operations. CAP's Southeast Region counterdrug director of Operations, Lt. Col. Ernie Bilotto, served as the communications specialist onboard the Cessna. Maj. Arnold Glauser of the Florida Wing also assisted throughout the preparation, planning and implementation of the exercise.

CNN's "Defending America" series covered a variety of stories related to homeland security and national defense.

The series aired throughout the presidential inauguration week, spanned by the media's coverage of unprecedented security measures put into place for the Jan. 20 inaugural events. The "Defending America" series included stories originating from throughout the nation, giving the public a glimpse of how the United States maintains its air supremacy and how everyday Americans contribute to homeland security.

The CNN segment on CAP is available on the CAP national Web site at www.cap.gov/mediacenter/video.html.



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Civil Air Patrol News (USPS 114-780) is published bimonthly by the Civil Air Patrol, 105 South Hansell St., Bldg. 714, Maxwell AFB, AL 36112-6332. Periodicals postage paid at Montgomery, Ala. Postmaster: Send address changes to Civil Air Patrol — Membership Services, 105 South Hansell St., Bldg. 714, Maxwell AFB, AL 36112-6332. This newspaper is the official publication of the Civil Air Patrol, a private, benevolent corporation and auxiliary to the U.S. Air Force. Opinions expressed herein do not necessarily represent those of CAP or the U.S. Air Force.

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