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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Civil Air Patrol Northeast Region Completes Joint Search and Rescue Exercise
With New Jersey SAR Organization

BRANCHVILLE, NJ – After two years in the making and three months of planning, nine members of the Northeast Region (NER) of the Civil Air Patrol (CAP), many from the New Jersey Wing, worked alongside their counterparts of an organization known as the New Jersey Search and Rescue (NJSAR) on a joint Search and Rescue Exercise (SAREX). The event was the direct result of a search for a downed aircraft in NJ in which CAP participated in 2006. During that mission two of the NJSAR who were also CAP members, felt that it was in the best interests of both organizations to conduct joint training exercises in order to work out any communication “glitches” and set up a Unified Command drill under the Incident Command system (ICS).

Under the direction of the NJSAR training section, two of their members, one of whom is CAP’s NER Training Officer, Lt Col Mike Sternick who is also a member & trustee and part of the medical team of NJSAR and fellow NJSAR member Bob Shaw developed and presented this SAREX proposal which was quickly adopted and implemented by both organizations. Shaw and Sternick wrote up the SAREX scenario at the request of NJSAR and contacted the NJWg for permission to execute the plan, which was quickly authorized and opened up to other members of CAP for staffing purposes.

All together 25 NJSAR and 9 CAP officers including one aircraft and 3 crewman took part in this joint exercise whose scenario involved a missing plane. The planning team which got together the night before and bivouacked in a Pennsylvania campground consisted of several NJSAR team members and staffers from the NER such as Major Robert Taylor the region’s Director of Homeland Security and 1st Lt Jack Arena the region’s Director of CISM. Taylor and Arena worked alongside Lt Col Kevin Webster and 1st Lt Robert Lippman of the NJWg, the team worked most of the night to pre-plan for the one day mission which began early Sunday morning.

The air crew and ground teams had 14 specific tasks to be conducted, the NJ SAR personnel focused on the ground search while the CAP personnel handled the communications duties and the air search, Captain Peter Mitchell, NJWg stepped up and took care of the ground DF tasks together with Taylor and Arena. The mission ended around 3PM after lightening storms in the area made further operations un-safe, by then all 14 of the pre-plan search tasks were successfully accomplished by the teams. Lt Col Sternick commented that the operations “went off better than my greatest expectations, especially considering we were working in 95 degree heat.” The SAREX organizers were in agreement that this exercise will lead to even more joint SAREX training weekends at much larger scales in the future.

Success is measured in many different ways, the success of this event was established a week later when park rangers at the Stokes State Forest alerted the NJSAR of a missing person in the area of the Kittney Ridge in the area where the search teams practiced a week prior. NJSAR contacted CAP who received a mission number and put together an aircrew for the search, this was the first time in many years CAP had ever been contacted for assistance in searching for a missing person in New Jersey and even though the individual was eventually found before the aircraft arrived, based upon CAPs responsiveness it won't be the last. "CAP's presence at the joint SAREX" commented Sternick, "made NJSAR and the NJ Park Service aware of their capabilities and will certainly lead to more contact in the future when the emergency need arises."

NJSAR, The NJSAR is an all volunteer organization which is officially recognized by the state of New Jersey as a state and county Emergency Services Management Resource which does not charge for their services. Approximately 55 professionals who train all year-round for both day and night operations in all weather conditions are on call 24 hours a day via pagers. Members provide their own equipment and respond in their own vehicles. NJSAR has responded to searches in northern New Jersey, southern New York, and eastern Pennsylvania and provides mutual-aid to other SAR teams on prolonged or extensive searches.

On the Web: www.njsar.org

Civil Air Patrol, the official auxiliary of the U.S. Air Force, is a nonprofit organization with almost 60,000 members nationwide. CAP performs 95 percent of continental U.S. inland search and rescue missions as tasked by the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center. Its volunteers also perform homeland security, disaster relief, and counter-drug 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 25,000 young people currently participating in CAP cadet programs. CAP has been performing missions for America for more than 60 years.

On the Web: www.ner.cap.gov

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Picture: Members of the NJ Search and Rescue along with senior members of the Civil Air Patrol's North East Region are briefed prior to executing their first ever joint Search and Rescue Exercise at Stokes State Forest in NJ.