



Civil Air Patrol
East Iowa Cadet Squadron
United States Air Force Auxiliary
P.O. BOX 10481
Cedar Rapids, IA 52410-0481



Mission Information Officer Program
Review: November 2009

1. Objective

The objective of this document is to define the Mission Information Officer program for the 78th East Iowa Cadet Squadron in compliance with CAPP 190-1 (E).

2. The Information Officer in a Mission Context

MIOs are the .salespersons for the missions of Civil Air Patrol. Trained, mission-qualified MIOs ensure Civil Air Patrol's efforts will be recognized. There is more to being a mission information officer than getting the phone call, grabbing your gear and running to the mission base to meet and greet the press. Just like every member of the mission base team goes through specialized training, so does the MIO.

3. Mission Information Officer

In conjunction with the mission coordinator, the MIO prepares and disseminates information about a mission to the media, and coordinates media access to base activities.

The MIO coordinates release of all information through the mission coordinator. The MIO will handle questions and requests with a courteous and professional attitude in order to maintain a positive impression of the Civil Air Patrol's activities. (See Chapter 3 for information regarding release of sensitive information.)

An important responsibility of the MIO is to arrive at mission base in time for the first briefing by the mission coordinator. From that briefing, the MIO will prepare the first press release. When the search is under way, the MIO may communicate directly with the wing public affairs officer. If the mission has more than a local interest, the headquarters information officer will appreciate detailed briefings.

It is important to communicate with the media. They will need accurate information by specific deadline times. The MIO should give them as many facts and as much assistance as possible, and should give the reporters a sterling impression of Civil Air Patrol and the job it does for the local community.

Accurate news coverage of mission activity is critical for telling the public about Civil Air Patrol. The experienced MIO will chronicle details of the mission and include the names and grades of the individuals involved (double checking and spelling names correctly), and use these details when talking to the media.

Printed handouts are an excellent way to ensure reporters receive consistent information, especially in regards to local squadron facts and statistics and the names of squadron members who are serving on the search-and-rescue mission.

The television medium brings Civil Air Patrol into the homes of thousands of people in your community. Therefore, the MIO must provide the most up-to-the-minute visual information on a search-and-rescue mission by deadline. It is the MIO.s job to ensure that the CAP image and message is positive.

4. Duties and Responsibilities of the Mission Information Officer

- 1. Check in at the mission base** wearing the appropriate uniform and presenting current documents as required on the Reporting-In Procedures list.
- 2. Report to the MC** for a briefing on mission details that may be released to the media.
- 3. Set up a desk** with a telephone, typewriter or computer, and unpack the mission kit. (See .The Mission Kit. list)
- 4. Prepare an initial news release** that contains information provided by the MC at the start of the mission. These stories should not contain opinions about anything or anyone associated with the mission.
- 5. Prepare midday, interim, and end-of-day** press releases for the media and obtain the MC.s approval. Copies of all press releases, interviews, etc., and the agencies they were given to, will be mailed, faxed or e-mailed to the wing director of public affairs. The news releases should also be posted to your unit/wing website.
- 6. Wrap-up day's activities** with leads, notes, interviews, statistics and details. It will be given out at the end of the day or the next morning, and can serve as an aid to the next MIO who may be serving on the same mission.
- 7. Answer media questions** as fully and accurately as possible under the mission security conditions.
- 8. Verify credentials** and completed CAPF 9 releases for media representatives that may want to accompany flight crews or ground teams on sorties. They must be approved by the MC.
- 9. Cooperate with media personnel**, but ensure they do not impede or interfere with the conduct of the mission.
- 10. Complete required forms** and paperwork for the MC prior to leaving the mission base.
- 11. Monitor newscasts** and contact the media to correct any reporting errors.
- 12. Direct and monitor** the release of information and photographs to newspapers, wire services, radio, and television media representatives.
- 13. Assist family members** of those who are the subject of the search-and-rescue mission. In these situations, the MIO will keep the visitors from impeding with the operations of the mission.

5. MIO knowledge needs

5.1 Reporting-In Procedures

1. All personnel must be in appropriate uniform. Refer to CAPM 39-1
2. All Civil Air Patrol personnel must present their current membership and emergency-services cards upon signing in at mission base.
3. Pilots must present their current pilot's license and flight physical. A radio operator authorization card is optional.
4. Ground team members must present first-aid and ROA cards. A cardiopulmonary resuscitation card is desirable, but not necessary.

5. ROA cards are required for radio operators, observers/scanners, and ground-team leaders and members. The cards are optional for pilots, public affairs officers and flight line officers.
6. A CAPF 101 is required for all mission personnel.
7. All visitors and non-CAP members are required to sign in at the reception desk.

5.2 Media Contacts

A successful mission information officer must know each of the local media contacts that may cover the CAP search-and-rescue mission. Set up a file of their names and phone numbers. This will be the most important item in your mission kit.

5.3 Be Honest With the Media

Be honest with the media at all times. Tell them about Civil Air Patrol (not just .CAP.) and that you want to work closely with them in order to provide the story as quickly and accurately as possible.

5.4 Keep Updated Bios on Mission Members

In your mission kit, keep a complete file of forms and information required for the mission base. Your kit should include biographical information on mission team members who regularly work search-and-rescue missions.

5.6 Train for Mission Base Activities

The ideal learning environment is on the job training. Apprentice yourself to the best mission information officer you can find and work with him or her during missions or training exercises.

5.7 Provide your contact information

The local mission control officer and mission coordinator will call you as soon as an alert has been issued. Your squadron commander should also have your contact information.

5.8 Mission Base Uniform

MIOs **wear the same uniform as the rest of the mission base team: the Air Force blue uniform.** If the weather is warm, you may open the top shirt button and remove the tie. If it is cold, you can wear the Air Force blue pullover sweater over the shirt. You may also wear the CAP corporate uniform.

5.9 Prepare Your Mission Kit

The MIO must bring everything normally required to do a PAO.s job. See the section titled The Mission Kit for requirements and suggestions.

Check In Upon arriving at mission base, check in with the administrative officer and produce the required credentials (see section titled .Reporting-In Procedures. later in this chapter). Set up your workspace and attend the mission coordinator's briefing. Obtain all data currently available regarding the mission, most important, the names of the pilot and passengers that may have been on board. Document the names of all Civil Air Patrol members who are participating in the mission. As soon as possible, type up your first release with the basic data and have it approved by the mission coordinator and release it. Continue to update your notes so you are able to release information to the press as the day goes on. You may be asked to answer

the phone for the mission base. Although you are not obligated to do so as an MIO, you can help out as time permits. If you do take phone calls be careful what information you give over the phone and be sure of your accuracy. A casual comment by the MIO can suddenly become a part of the big news story quoting the opinion of the MIO as an expert on the subject. And remember, when referring to the organization, always say Civil Air Patrol instead of just CAP. Always remember the media's job is to get as many details as possible out of you any way they can. Your job is to give them all the details you are authorized to give them and nothing more. When phoning or faxing the story, do not deviate from the approved copy. Make notes of when you sent releases and to whom they are given. This will also be required in the mission base report, so accurate records are imperative. In follow-up stories, give full credit to all agencies and key personnel participating in the search-and-rescue mission. Your tactful attitude and cooperation will help other organizations .return the favor and credit the activities of Civil Air Patrol in their releases.

Inform the mission coordinator that the pilots should not talk to any media representatives when they return from a sortie. All questions should be directed to the MIO. However, emphasize that the phrase "no comment" should not be used when talking to the media. This often raises suspicions and challenges reporters to probe into .what you are trying to hide.

5.10 The Professional Approach

The difference between a professional and an amateur mission information officer is dependent on the approach to the job. To be professional does not require a college degree, but does demand organizational skills. A professional is expected to know what is going on, who is doing what, and when and where things are happening.

5.11 Track Critical Information

To write a story about a unit event or activity, the MIO will require background material about squadron members, who they are, and what they did during the Civil Air Patrol activity. An effective method for keeping track of activities, people and information in Civil Air Patrol is to keep a data file. Necessities include forms, reports, biographies, news clippings, squadron newsletters, and press releases.

The mission information officer checklist, daily mission information sheet, daily media release log, list of local radio stations, mission staff list, MIO phone list, media and TV stations, and biographical data forms should be accessible to the MIO at all times.

6. How to set up MIO Files

Keep up-to-date media information in a card file or a notebook as part of the mission kit. Be mindful to keep a duplicate of this information at squadron headquarters for commander's and staff officers' use. The file should contain the name and address of the media outlet, newspaper, radio, television, magazine, etc. contact name, telephone and fax numbers, e-mail addresses and deadlines. Ideally, the file will include comments about publishing style and editorial policy to be mindful of when preparing submissions.

When targeting the television medium, confirm with the local station whether it accepts videotapes. If so, document for the files the type, size and format. If still photographs are acceptable, what size and style is best? Will the station use cassette recordings of a news story? Ask if faxed or e-mail news releases are accepted.

6.1 Biographical Files on Members

Starting with the unit commander, keep at least a one-page biography on each squadron member. It should include his or her full name and current rank, address, phone number, business or work affiliations, family status, number of years in Civil Air Patrol and highlights of that career. Additional information should include where the member went to school, military service record (if applicable), membership in other organizations, if the member is a pilot (if so, what kind of plane does he or she fly), and details of CAP missions or activities the member has participated in. Include a head and shoulders picture of the member, preferably in uniform. If possible, keep additional photographs of members in the biography file. A few photos of each member in action during a CAP activity (with captions to identify the participants, events, and dates) can double as the unit scrapbook. File the negatives in a safe place. When a member leaves the unit, do not throw the personnel file away. Keep it in an inactive file. These files may prove helpful for the squadron's historical records or even an obituary.

6.2 News Release File

Retain copies of every press release sent to the media and file them by date, activity or media contacts. Clip and save the stories that resulted from the press releases. This file will serve as a style guide for future articles and is required for the quarterly reports public affairs officers must submit to National Headquarters.

6.3 Mission Personnel File

The mission personnel file lists the names and addresses of all mission-qualified members an MIO may work with on a regular basis, including other information officers.

6.4 Mission Information Officer File

Any forms required by wing headquarters that must be sent in with the mission reports should be kept in an organized notebook or file. A file containing directives and information from the wing public affairs office must also be kept current.

6.5 Public Relations Materials

Regulations, manuals, booklets and other materials received from National Headquarters should be stored together for easy accessibility. Fliers, pamphlets, cards and posters used for recruiting purposes should be displayed or stored appropriately. Keep a re-order form on hand at all times and allow plenty of time to place and receive the order for your recruiting event. Refer to other publications, such as the *Annual Report to Congress*, for information and statistics about

6.6 Unit Directory

The unit directory contains the names, addresses, and contact information of other squadrons and groups in your wing. Each squadron should expend the energy to maintain a current roster of its members.

6.7 General Emergency Services Specialty Ratings

A general Emergency Services rating is issued to individuals authorized to perform general operational support functions under the direction of qualified personnel.

This rating may also be issued to highly qualified members in special fields such as chaplain, administrative officer, cadet supervisor, medical officer/technician, legal officer and data-collecting

team members. Recipients of a CAPF 101 for the general Emergency Services rating must meet the following minimum requirements:

1. Be a Civil Air Patrol member with a current membership card.
2. Have satisfactorily completed classroom instruction covering CAP emergency-services operations, state/local laws, and regulations regarding Emergency Services.
3. Have an understanding of CAP regulations, procedures and associated forms (CAPR 50-15, 2-4).

General emergency services personnel provide support as administration and flight line helpers, runners, drivers, recorders, sandbag fillers, traffic directors, and many other duties. Each function falls under the supervision of qualified personnel. This designation replaces the trainee status (CAPF 101T) for a GES specialty rating prior to issuance of an advanced specialty rating. Review CAPR 50-15, CAPR 55-1 and applicable supplements for a complete description of training areas and methods required to achieve higher mission and Emergency Services specialty ratings.

6.8 Family Liaison

In all missing aircraft missions, CAP mission control duty officers assign a family liaison to interact with the missing persons relatives. The family liaison is usually a chaplain, mission coordinator, someone on the intelligence group in the planning section for the mission, or a CAP member with the proper experience, attitude and demeanor to deal with a family. The family liaison usually does not change during the mission. On missions where all families are not present at the search base, the family liaison may be the sole point of contact between CAP and the families.

7. MIO Coordination with Family Liaison

MIOs working a mission must ensure all information given to the media has been approved in advance by the mission coordinator and also has been briefed to the mission-qualified chaplain with enough time for the chaplain to brief the family of any new information before it is released to the media. Normally the mission coordinator keeps the chaplain fully briefed, but MIOs may take the initiative to verify proper coordination before releasing new information because MCs can sometimes be overworked and preoccupied during missions and unable to concentrate on public affairs or family relations.

Families must have consistent information about a mission. If they receive different information from the media or others than what they hear from CAP, complications can result. Even the most innocuous inconsistencies can cause problems, thus MIOs should monitor the media, verifying facts with the family and checking for inaccurate reporting. Information officers from other agencies may be able to provide assistance in monitoring the media. For example, suppose a family hears from CAP that the Federal Aviation Administration air traffic recordings say the missing pilot last said, „I have XYZ Airport in sight.. Then the family reads in their local paper that the pilot intended to land at ABC Airport. Such an inconsistency has caused families to send lawyers to search bases to investigate for inadequate searching and caused Congressional inquiries to extend a search beyond what is prudent.

7.1 Congressional Inquiries

When a family, an interested politician or friends of the search objective sense a search is not perfectly professional and adequate usually from inaccurate media reports or less than ideal relations between CAP and families, a Congressional inquiry to the Air Force Rescue Coordinator may result. Usually the inquiries come from Congress, but similar inquiries can come from governors and other elected officials. An inquiry is usually an official demand to the Department of Defense to take specific action such as to extend a search or replace search

management. Some inquiries are unavoidable, but others may be avoided by consistent media stories and solid family liaison.

7.2 Family Briefings

CAP regulations discourage family members of search objectives from visiting a search base. Nevertheless family members sometimes will be present at the search base. If families come to a search base, they must have proper family briefings. Family briefings must be scheduled, professional, positive, instill confidence, informative and without any guessing or conjecture. The point is to be a reliable source of consistent information to the families.

7.3 Preparing for Finds

MCs, MIOs and chaplains are aware that the media monitors CAP radio communications and often follows ground teams. To control what information the media receives can be impossible, but MIOs should try to help control sensitive information such as a probable find until the chaplain has briefed the families. Families should be briefed privately, away from the media.

7.4 Preparing for Suspension

Families, interested politicians, friends of the search objective and the media should be prepared for a mission suspension or a find with no survivors from the beginning of the search. They should not be given false hopes. Information should be balanced between optimism and reality.

AFRCC statistics show only 35 percent of crash victims survive crashes, 21 percent are injured and of those, only 4 percent survive 24 hours, 14 percent are uninjured but of these only 7 percent survive after 3 days. Thus, after 3 days of searching, all must be prepared for bad news. The families and others should be educated to the purpose of search and rescue, which is to find survivors. The AFRCC and CAP will not continue a search when there is no reasonable probability of survival of the search objectives. Survival expectation is a combination of the probability of survival within the search area (freezing temperatures become important factors), the quality of the search effort, and the consensus of the search planners at the AFRCC, CAP and any involved local law enforcement.

The families and others should also be aware that searching is always inherently dangerous. Air grid searching is very dangerous, especially in the mountains. At least 50 CAP aircrew have been killed on mountain grid searches. Thus, search planners must weigh the risk of searching versus the potential for saving lives. Also the use of search assets on one search may preclude their availability on other searches or for other missions. Due to all these considerations, the AFRCC and CAP will never conduct search operations only for the likelihood of finding bodies. County sheriffs, or private searchers such as the state's Rescue Dog Association, which has dogs capable of finding bodies and survivors may conduct searches for bodies.

7.5 Family Psychology

The psychology of a family is similar to the media and others. As a mission progresses, their hope for survivors will diminish in fits and spurts while their acceptance of the loss of their relative becomes greater. If a search is suspended before their level of hope meets their level of acceptance, the family is likely to react in a negative way such as by starting a Congressional inquiry or slandering CAP in the media. A MIO can help the family greatly by ensuring accurate information, including basic statistics on searching, is released to the media.

The family, media, and others should be notified of a decision to suspend at least 1 day prior to suspension. This gives them at least 1 more day of hope. It gives them time to accept the

search cannot continue indefinitely. It is critical that suspension information be absolutely consistent between the AFRCC, the MC, the chaplain and the MIO at all times.

7.6 Emergency Management Agencies, Sheriffs and Lead Reports

In most areas, search and rescue activities fall under the control of county sheriffs who are aided by a mutual aid system coordinated by the state emergency management agency.

Through agreements with the state and local officials and AFRCC, CAP is authorized to assist with missing aircraft searches. MCs and MCOs work closely with the agency headquarters and sheriffs of counties where CAP is conducting search and rescue operations. When a search objective becomes definitively located inside a single county, normally the county sheriff takes over the duties of the CAP mission coordinator to complete the rescue or recovery operations. CAP MIOs are encouraged to work closely with information officers at emergency management agencies and affected sheriff's offices. These information officers have media and government contacts CAP may not have. They can assist greatly in spreading the word about a search objective to encourage the reporting of sighting leads. For example, state emergency management agency information officers can ensure all forest rangers, many located in very remote and mountainous locations, receive updates on a search through their daily morning radio briefing.

Many searches are ultimately solved by a lead triggered through a media report. Lead reports will be most useful if the news releases to generate them have been carefully screened by the planning section. The news releases must strike a balance between enough information to prevent some improbable sighting reports, but not have enough information to create false leads. A good news release to generate leads will usually leave out at least one highly significant fact about the missing aircraft that can be used to verify a lead. For example, the time of day the aircraft went missing or a visual detail such as a plane with floats may not be released. The intelligence group in the planning section or a ground interrogation team may use that information to verify a lead during an interview with a witness.

8. Conclusion

CAP MIOs assisting with a mission are a vital part of the large team working to find the search objective. Some searches are very fast and may be the only work for a MIO is to issue a press release to ensure all who helped in the search receive the credit and recognition due. In longer searches that drag on for days, a MIO may become the only means to generate new leads from the public to continue an effective search. In those long searches, MIOs are encouraged to keep the media interested in the search by educating the public about ELTs, the CAP program, the U.S. Air Force, other search and rescue units, and matters involved in the search. Just as aircrews and ground teams debrief after sorties to discover lessons learned, after a mission, MIOs are encouraged to debrief with the MC or MO on duty to see what went well in public affairs and what could have been improved.

Elaborated by:

Francisco Molina, 1st Lt

Reviewed by:

Brian Mishmash, 1st Lt

Addendum I

VFR, IFR, ELTs

The media should also be educated on the consequences of whether a missing pilot was flying visual-flight rules or instrument-flight rules, and what type of emergency locator transmitter the plane had. A plane flying VFR can fly with or without a flight plan. Failure to file a flight plan does not cause a plane to crash. Instead, it causes a longer search or a larger initial search area. AFRCC statistics show a no-flight-plan search usually takes 15.55 hours between the time the plane went missing to when a search is opened, compared to 3.86 hours for a search for a plane on a VFR flight plan, and 1.07 hours for an IFR flight plan flight. The time to locate a missing plane from the time it went missing to actual location for planes found during missions is 62.57 hours for no flight plan, 18.13 hours for VFR flight plan, and 11.54 hours for flights under an IFR flight plan. ELTs were mandated by Congress to be installed in most aircraft by 1974. The overwhelming majority installed in general aviation aircraft are the original models which have abysmal activation rates and batteries that do not work in very cold weather. There are no current efforts by the U.S. Government to mandate more advanced and reliable ELTs.

By a factor of more than 4:1, missing aircraft do not have an activated ELT to assist in the search. For the majority of installed ELTs, the old T.S.O. 91 models, AFRCC records indicate an ELT aided in the SAR effort only 3.5 percent of the time in 1995, 5 percent in 1994 and 7.4 percent in 1993. AFRCC statistics for searches between 1983 and 1988 show the time between when a plane goes missing to the time a mission starts for a search with an ELT working is 3.3 hours, and 11.8 hours if the ELT is not working. The average time to locate the aircraft is 14.17 hours if the ELT works and 65.88 hours if it does not. An MIO should become informed on whether or not an ELT has worked on the search to educate the media on why an objective may not yet have been found aged to keep the media interested in the search by educating the public about ELTs, the CAP program, the U.S. Air Force, other search and rescue units, and matters involved in the search. Just as aircrews and ground teams debrief after sorties to discover lessons learned, after a mission, MIOs are encouraged to debrief with the MC or MO on duty to see what went well in public affairs and what could have been improved.