



The Official Magazine of California Wing Civil Air Patrol Spring 2006

*Group 3 Crews Question
Squadron Tasking. Incident
Commanders Challenge
Mission Readiness. Both Sides
Have Their Say.*

DEBRIEFING: Turbulence in the Empire

*By Capt. James Daley, PAO,
San Bernardino Senior*

Reproduction and distribution of *Eagle Call* article reprints is authorized, and encouraged, as long as full credit is given to *Eagle Call* magazine, the Civil Air Patrol, and the individual author.

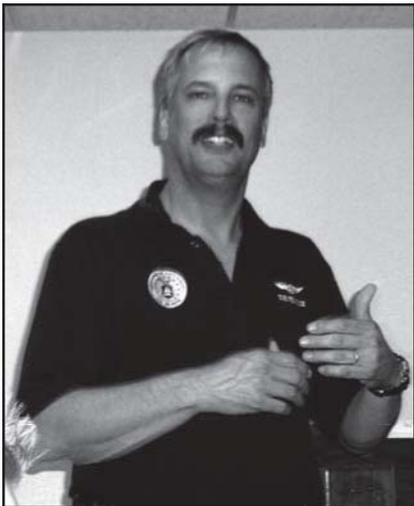
California Wing Civil Air Patrol
Eagle Call
P.O. Box 7688
Van Nuys, CA 91409
www.cawg.cap.gov
eaglecall@cawg.cap.gov

Turbulence in the Empire

*By Capt. James Daley, PAO, San Bernardino Senior Squadron 5
Group 3 Crews Question Squadron Tasking.
Incident Commanders Challenge Mission Readiness.
Both Sides Have Their Say.*

RIVERSIDE—Group 3 hosted an urgent meeting of Emergency Services personnel here in February in reaction to building frustration over search-and-rescue mission tasking and response time in the Inland Empire. Thirty-six officers— including representatives of ten Group 3 squadrons, Lt. Col. Virginia Nelson, Wing Commander, Maj. Jim Porter, Vice Commander, and Capt. Bob Keilholtz, Director of Emergency Services—engaged in a spirited roundtable discussion that aired out critical mission-readiness issues.

Referencing recent missions in the Palm Springs area, some Group 3 pilots contended that tasking by Incident Commanders had become unreasonably impatient, with crews responding quickly to missions and finding they weren't needed; or accepting



KEILHOLTZ: Defending Incident Command's call to action.



MISSION CLARITY: Vice Commander Jim Porter explained the pilot's prerogative.

missions and showing up at a staging area ready to launch, only to be told to stand down because another aircraft had been launched in the interim. Some officers claimed certain squadrons were often bypassed in favor of other units for no objective reason.

Capt. Keilholtz responded by reiterating that county sheriff's departments are typically CAP's customers, and as such demand a one-hour response time; he and other Incident Commanders were simply doing their best to keep the customer satisfied. He added with certain candor that some squadrons were in fact meeting the needs of the Wing better than others, both with respect to mission response time and capability.

He expressed his own frustration, and related an incident when crews accepted a mission and used up 45 minutes of the Wing's response time, only to report upon arrival at their airport that their CAP aircraft was gone. Capt. Keilholtz said that some crews were unacceptably unaware of the plane's scheduling or airworthiness.

Some crews argued they were being pressured to accept missions under unsafe conditions. Capt. Keilholtz objected that every pilot is always in charge of determining the safety of mission conditions, and Col. Nelson and Maj. Porter reaffirmed that as the unwavering position of California Wing. Crews responded by citing

Continued

Turbulence in the Empire

Continued

incidents in which pilots had refused missions, declaring the conditions unsafe, only to discover later that other crews were tasked on the same mission. They said the subtle pitting of squadron against squadron could lead to less experienced crews flying into dangerous conditions, or to pilots pushing against their own limits so as not to seem less competent or game than others.

Capt. Keilholtz answered that, on the contrary, in instances where one crew had demurred, more experienced and capable pilots had taken the missions, confident that they could fly in those conditions, or that the variables had changed at the point of tasking. He re-emphasized that every Mission Pilot has both the right and the duty to make that determination for himself.

During the discussion of varying crew capabilities, officers cited a mission in which pilots understood Incident Command to have established a remote base at Hemet at which they arrived to find no base staff. They wondered how they were to react in that situation. Capt. Keilholtz responded by differentiating between a mere staging area and a staffed mission base, and further emphasized the practical necessity of moving toward a virtual base model wherein the best chance of round-the-clock staffing is for missions to be run out of home offices with full communications and computer complements. Capt. Keilholtz warned that, despite the adjustment it might entail, this was almost certainly the direction of Wing mission management in the future.— *with Capt. Greg Solman*

