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MASSIVE SEARCH BY CALIFORNIA CAP LOCATES DOWNED PLANE – EXCEPTIONAL MULTI-AGENCY COORDINATION SITED

59 members of the California Wing of the Civil Air Patrol (CAP) helped search for a missing Beechcraft Baron 58 twin-engine aircraft that disappeared after departing Bishop Airport July 17, 2004, eventually crashing and leaving no survivors. The mission opened after the family reported the aircraft overdue early Saturday evening on a flight from Bishop to one of several airports: Sacramento, San Luis Obispo, Santa Maria, and Paso Robles.

Beginning July 18, a massive search ensued that included 8 aircraft, 2 ground teams, and 39 base personnel. CAP flew 16 sorties and a total of 47.2 hours. Additional support was provided by California Highway Patrol, California Department of Forestry, California's Office of Emergency Services, Inyo County Sheriff, as well as many other counties doing ramp checks. There were a few family friends who brought in their own aircraft to help search at the discretion of the incident commander, LtCol Steve Ashe.

Due to the enormous search area, separate incident commanders had to be assigned to each geographic area under the leadership of Capt Bob Keilholtz. Assigned as the regional incident commanders were Maj David Boehm, LtCol Steve Ashe, and LtCol Beth Ries-Wordworth.

Locating the Emergency Locator Transmitter (ELT) to this aircraft was difficult at first because there were three other ELTs were going off at the same time. These ELTs had to be contained before the search could be narrowed down.

The ELT that led to the location of the missing aircraft was located by Lt Timothy Hicks and Capt John Craig of the Palm Springs Squadron. Due to the difficult terrain and altitude, Hicks and Craig had to guide a King Air to the area in order to identify the airplane. Hicks stated, "The communication was excellent throughout the mission." Craig stated, "It was difficult to fly in an area with sharp, jagged peaks."

The pilot had over two thousand hours of experience flying but did not file a flight plan, which could have helped expedite the search process.

The crash site was discovered Sunday through the combined efforts of the Civil Air Patrol, Fresno County Sheriff's Aero Squadron, Inyo County Sheriff's department, and friends and family of the victims. The wreckage was found intact at 12,500 feet.

"Coordination between the various agencies and the numerous aircraft and ground teams was exceptional," said Hicks. Despite the fact that the search was conducted

primarily in the difficult mountainous terrain and at high altitude with gusty winds, no accidents, incidents, or safety problems of any kind surfaced during the mission.

Capt. Kielholtz, the Lead Incident Commander noted, "Special thanks to the crews that were available, but not utilized." "The efforts of the Civil Air Patrol volunteers on this mission represent a savings to state and local taxpayers of over \$25,000 dollars on this mission. Missions such as this demonstrate the importance of Civil Air Patrol's missions to the nation and the value received by our fellow citizens.