

District Seven Auxiliary Aviation

Operations and Safety Newsletter



September - December 2014

Lee Bertman – Editor / ADSO-AVX / lbertyman@comcast.net
Ken Plessner – DSO-AV / kenplessner@windstream.net
Doug Armstrong – DFSO / doug@ratio.com



Introduction – DSO-AV

D7 AuxAir Team,

I hope that you will enjoy the content of this combined Sep-Oct and Nov-Dec issue of the Newsletter. Keeping the team aware of things that are going on is high on my priority list. In order to make that process more timely, some time next year we plan to transition to a web-based form of team communications. Instead of five or six newsletters, you will receive a cue from your AAC that something has been added or changed on the AuxAir web site.

Speaking of spreading the news about what's going on, I hope you noticed that the most recent edition of our District Seven newsmagazine, *The Breeze*, had a nine-page special report on AuxAir. It is included at the end of this newsletter for the benefit of those who missed it. When a friend or neighbor asks you "What do you do for the Coast Guard?" send them a copy of that article. It's approved for public release.

As you surely know by now, Bob Weskerna has been elected as District Commodore for 2015-16. The list of aviation staff officers for the next two years has been nominated to, and approved by, the DCO(elect) and it appears elsewhere in this issue. Bob is not an aviator, but is a good friend of aviation.... it will be a good two years.

The Strategic Plan for 2013-14 that I have briefed to you many times (initial plus status reports) has undergone a facelift and emerged as a Strategic Plan for 2015-16. As soon as it is staffed through the proper channels, I will make copies available. I also expect to attend each of the four Aviation Workshops, and will brief the Plan there and take questions.

Your enthusiastic, but sober, recognition of the importance of flight safety is duly recognized. Turnout for the special safety briefings this fall was most encouraging. Even though you were allowed to simply watch the video, almost everyone went to their Air Station to see the presentation first-hand. The turnout was not lost on the Air Station CO, OPS, FSO and AUXLO.

Best wishes to you and your families for this Holiday Season.

Fly well and fly safely.

Ken Plessner

DSO-AV





2014 Safety - DFSO

D7 AuxAir Team ,

It's been a busy 90 days since the last news update. As you know AuxAir nationally had several mishaps that resulted in a mandated safety training event. USCG HQ's requested the DSO-AV and DFSO visit all four AirStas and discuss the programs safety initiatives. This direction translated into a great deal of travel but a great opportunity to visit each AirSta again in 2014.

It is excited to see so many newer folks who are interested in being part of a modern, mission driven, AuxAir program. We have significant gold side representation at all four AirStas which speaks volumes about the program and its importance to the USCG. It is also a signal that the gold side leadership is keenly interested in our safety.



I want to thank my Assistant Flight Safety Officers for their support this year. Mike Klockowski in Miami has been doing an outstanding job, running monthly training sessions and working to build up AirSta MIA. Marc Miller at AirSta CLW has been forward leaning on a number of initiatives, see his contribution below regarding passenger transport. Finally, I am excited to have David Lincoln (fresh out of 777 transition school) stepping up in SVN, our program will benefit greatly from the Airline Safety perspective.

As I wrap up my first year as the DFSO for D7 I want to thank everyone for being supportive, and helping to keep D7 aviation number one in the Auxiliary.

We have some new team members starting in 2015. At the top, COMO Bob Weskerna will be our new Commodore, he is a supporter of AuxAir. Chuck Fischer one of the most accomplished (and decorated) Aircraft Commanders in the Auxiliary will be taking over the Flight Standards slot. Bob Fabich who is a distinguished and accomplished Public Affairs officer will be assisting D7 AuxAir with some exciting new external communications initiatives. We have a lot exciting things planned in 2015. The following page lists many of the new members and their positions please join me in welcoming these folks to their new jobs.

Wishing everyone a safe and fun 2015!

Fly safe.

Doug Armstrong DFSO – District 7 AuxAir doug@ratio.com



Auxiliary Aviation Leadership Team 2015-2016

Seventh U.S. Coast Guard District AuxAir

District Staff Officer – Aviation
Senior Member, District Aviation Board
Ken Plessner

District Flight Safety Officer
Doug Armstrong

Assistant District Staff Officer – Aviation Standards
Senior Member, Flight Examining Board
Chuck Fischer

Assistant District Staff Officer – Aviation Training
Lee Bertman

Assistant District Staff Officer – Aviation Management (Personnel)
Ben Ostrovsky

Assistant District Staff Officer – Aviation Management (Facilities)
Mike Renuart

Assistant District Staff Officer – Aviation Management (Material)
Jim Nelson

Assistant District Staff Officer – Aviation Technology
Ken Plessner (acting)

Assistant District Staff Officer – External Communications
Bob Fabich

Assistant District Staff Officer – AAC Savannah
Ed Chappell

Assistant District Staff Officer – AAC Clearwater
Jon Nicholls

Assistant District Staff Officer – AAC Miami
John Moore

Assistant District Staff Officer – AAC Borinquen
Carlos Matos



DIRAUX and D7 Commodore Tyson Visit the San Juan AOR

On November 17, 2014, CDR Seward, John Tyson, and DCAPT-E Gary Barth traveled to St. Croix for the start of their tour of Puerto Rico and the USVI. The 1000-mile trip originally planned as a non-stop ended up taking a more conservative route, a large low-pressure system over the VI and PR made a fuel stop the prudent contingency.

The group departed AirSta MIA for OPBAT facility in Great Inagua. Arrival is usually preceded with a low pass over the runway to be sure the donkeys know you are coming in and the flamingos are not going to be a factor. After landing, fuel was pumped and a short tour of the OPBAT hangar conducted. After the destruction of the facility a few years ago the USCG constructed a very nice all concrete hangar which serves as the base of operations.



The flight into St. Croix was uneventful, and everyone arrived at the Palms Hotel for the reception and dinner. The rain kept things challenging, we managed the B&S reception on the back of Chuck's porch at the Palms. Discussions centered on challenges across the district with a special focus on paperwork processing.

Early Saturday morning the team flew to San Juan to meet with the Sector and AirSta COs at the AuxAir quarterly briefing. During the briefing the USCG present members from AuxAir BQN for four medals of Operational Merit and two Aux Commandant Letters of Commendation. We conducted a detailed review of sector operations and discussed planning for future patrols and missions. Later



that evening Carlos, Charlie and Hache hosted the director, AuxAir members and representatives from SSJ at a local restaurant.



Sunday the DIRAUX and DC-E departed for AirSta BQN where later that day we flew a MOMs patrol in the MONA Pass. Mid patrol, the flight was diverted to search for a body in the water. (Which was never found.) After several hours late that afternoon we returned to base to clean up and meet the AirSta command for dinner. Dinner was hosted by OPS at his house on base.



Help Wanted: Web Development Team

For all members of AuxAir 7, spouses, flotilla-mates and friends... during 2015, we will be making a major push to update and modernize the web presence of AuxAir. We need a web design team that can help to make it happen. There is no need to write any of the content... that will be done by others. What we need is some group that can all work together to organize the content into a sequence of web pages. These pages will be accessed (among other ways) by going to the District 7 web site, then Directorates, then Aviation, then to the site that needs to be upgraded from what it is.

If you aren't interested (or can't do it)... maybe you know someone who is (or can).

Pay for the effort is the usual Auxiliary compensation: much appreciation, pride of authorship, a medal or two and (in this case) an airplane ride.

Anyone interested please contact me.

Ken Plessner
DSO-AV
kenplessner@windstream.net



Crew Requirements for Personnel aboard AuxAir Facilities on Ordered Missions

As a pilot new to AuxAir I have found myself on a steep learning curve in planning and preparing for, conducting and documenting and reporting on a wide variety of missions over the last nine months. A key element in the planning phase is the determination and assembly of the appropriate crew. Direction for required crew to conduct specific mission categories can be found in Annex 1, Section I of the Auxiliary Operations Policy Manual (COMDTINST M16793.3E).

Attached with this Newsletter is a great summary of "Requirements for Personnel" that Chuck Fischer and Doug Armstrong developed in BQN.

A few key points to remember include:

Only specific mission categories as noted in the chart can be flown at night or during IMC. Any single pilot operation under these conditions requires an Aircraft Commander current to both FAA and Coast Guard requirements. Coast Guard requirements include a minimum of 10 hrs. actual or simulated night or IMC time within the last 6 months, 5 of which must be within the last 3 months.

All "Passenger Transport" missions require an Aircraft Commander and a second safety pilot who is current in both category and class of the aircraft to be used. Additionally, if the flight is to be conducted in forecasted IMC conditions, both pilots must be instrument current per FAR 61.57.

Flight under actual IMC with any crew on board requires two pilots, both of which must be IFR current per FAR 61.57.

Only First Pilots and Aircraft Commanders may act as PIC for "Search and Rescue" and these missions must include at least one certified observer.

I trust you will find the attached chart helpful in your pre mission planning efforts.

Marc Miller is the Assistant District Flight Safety Officer (ADFSO) Clearwater and an Aircraft Commander US Coast Guard Auxiliary District Seven





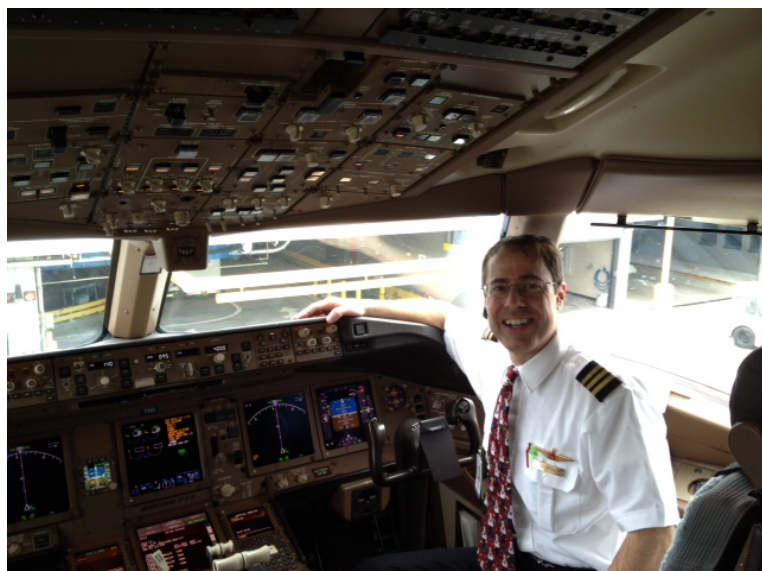
Requirements for Personnel aboard AuxAir Facilities on Ordered Missions

Requirements for Personnel aboard AuxAir Facilities on Ordered Missions		
MISSION	PILOT(S)	MEP / PAX
Night or IMC		
- Pilot is sole Person on Board	AC (with addtl rqmts below)	No MEP or PAX allowed
- Multiple Persons on Board	AC + IFR 2nd Pilot (AC,FP,CP)	MEP & PAX allowed but none reqd
Daylight VMC		
Passenger Transport	AC + 2nd Pilot (AC,FP,CP)	MEP & PAX allowed but none reqd
Search & Rescue		
- Beyond sight of land	AC or IFR FP	MEP with minimum 1 CertObs
- Within sight of land	AC or FP	MEP with minimum 1 CertObs
Logistics (not incl PAX Transport)		
- Beyond sight of land	AC or IFR FP	MEP allowed but none reqd
- Sight or Gliding distance of land	AC or FP	MEP allowed but none reqd
- Gliding distance of land	CP	No MEP or PAX allowed
All Other Missions		
- Beyond sight of land	AC or IFR FP	MEP with min 1 other crew member
- Sight or Gliding distance of land	AC or FP	MEP with min 1 other crew member
IMC = Instrument Meteorological Conditions VMC = Visual Meteorological Conditions IFR = Instrument Flight Rules AC = Aircraft Commander FP = First Pilot CP = Copilot		
Night or IMC missions with the AC as the sole person on board must be Logistical with an IFR flight plan filed and flown, and the AC must have 10 hrs night or IMC flight time in the last 6 mos and 5 hrs in the last 3 mos.		
Logistics can include Aircraft Repositioning, Cargo and/or MEP Transport, and Passenger Transport.		
Flight Crew includes aviators or aviation-rated persons, designated or in training, assigned to operate or assist in operating an aircraft who are performing in-flight duties relating to the operation of the aircraft. The PIC must be an AuxAir Pilot, but safety pilot may be a rated Coast Guard pilot. Pilots must be current in aircraft category and class, and with license ratings, as is required for the mission being flown.		
MEP is Mission Essential Personnel whose skills or expertise are required to carry out an authorized DHS or Coast Guard responsibility, mission, or function for which the aircraft is being operated. This includes AuxAir Trainees, Observers, Air Crew, Pilots, and members of the Coast Guard. It also includes personnel from other government agencies including law enforcement, marine inspectors, ATON personnel, rescue or disaster victims, MEDEVAC patients, search teams, etc.		
PAX is Passenger who is any person transported on an aircraft other than Flight Crew Members and Mission Essential Personnel. Operators may not allow non-Auxiliary guests or passengers (including family members) onboard any facility under orders unless the OIA specifically authorizes their presence in writing. Guests and passengers may be authorized only for limited purposes (e.g., training, indoctrination, public affairs, and other circumstances reasonably linked to the Auxiliary's purpose and mission). Auxiliaries who are not assigned to duty as crewmembers may be taken onboard passenger flights at the discretion of the facility operator.		
CertObs is a Certified Observer who can be an AuxAir Observer, Air Crew, Pilot, or a member of the Coast Guard. An AuxAir Trainee is not a Certified Observer.		



David Lincoln – New Assistant District Flight Safety Officer for AirSta SVN

Beginning in December, David Lincoln joined the district flight safety team representing air station SVN. David's full time job is flying big iron for a large Atlanta based air carrier and he flies a Mooney for AuxAir.



Ever since I was 10, I wanted to become a pilot. I was lucky enough to have some great mentors over the years to make a dream become reality.

"David is highly qualified and will make an outstanding addition to the District Seven flight safety team." Doug Armstrong – D7 DFSO

My parents were instrumental in supporting me in becoming a pilot, and actually introduced me to Coast Guard Auxiliary flying back in Pennsylvania in the early 2000's supporting Coast Guard Air Station Atlantic City. Shortly after my Observer training, I remember flying a mission with my stepfather, who was the Aircraft Commander, and we were called out on a search & rescue mission for a sailboat SOS call. The call took us right out over the Potomac River, a short time after 9/11. I remember all the clearances I had to get as Observer to access the restricted & prohibited areas, including the ADIZ at that time (now SFRA).

It was very challenging to speak to so many controlling agencies and on top of it all, missile launches were being conducted out of Naval Air Station Patuxent, near our search area!

It's a great honor & surprise to be asked to serve Savannah as the Assistant District Flight Safety Officer. I come from a very structured & safety based background, so I'll look forward to working with our group to help in any way I can to further flight safety.



On a more relaxed note, in my free time I enjoy downhill skiing, scuba-diving, traveling, flying Angel Flight missions, keeping poison dart frogs, and of course flying USCG Auxiliary missions.

David Lincoln is the Assistant Flight Safety Officer for Air Station Savannah, District 7 Aircraft Commander and first officer on a the Boeing 777.



U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Aviation Program Provides Direct Support to Air Station Missions

Uniqueness of Operation Bypasses Division and Flotilla Structure

A powerboat that had made a distress call to the Coast Guard, followed by its radio silence, is met by a Coast Guard vessel from Sector Jacksonville. The powerboat was located by an AUXAIR facility piloted by David Cristol, Flotilla 14-4, Jacksonville Beach, Fla., upon receiving coordinates from a Coast Guard dispatcher. The boat was found to be under power, and all passengers were wearing life jackets. Coast Guard Auxiliary photograph.

DISTRICT 7 IN ACTION

By Dick Risk, Senior Editor, *Breeze*

The U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Aviation Program (AUXAIR) has its own structure, separate from surface operations or communications, and is distinctive in that it is organized on a district basis without a parallel structure at the division and flotilla level. This is partly due to the unique nature of aviation, in that an aircraft facility is able to bypass flotilla and division geographic boundaries and, in many cases, an entire district's area in one flight. Aviation orders and direction flow directly between the air station and the district aviation staff.

The mission of Auxiliary operations is to provide operational, logistical, and training support for appropriate Coast Guard programs. Auxiliary aircraft are most often used as observation, communications and logistics platforms.

AUXAIR is organized at the district level in the Response Directorate under a district staff officer for Aviation (DSO-AV). Within District 7, the Response Directorate is headed by Craig Elliot, district director for response (DDC-R), Flotilla 15-8, Hernando Beach, Fla. Ken Plesser, Flotilla 12-3, Lake Murray, S.C., manages AUXAIR for the district's far-reaching area of responsibility (AOR) from South Carolina, Georgia and Florida to Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands (V.I.). Plesser supervises the assistant district staff officers, also known as Auxiliary air coordinators, assigned to Coast Guard Air Stations Savannah (Ga.), Clearwater (Fla.), Mi-

Auxiliary Aviation (AUXAIR) Missions Varied and Complex



A Division 7 AUXAIR team is leveraging the Coast Guard's interagency partnerships, flying a mission with a U.S. Customs and Border Protection agent evaluating the use of an imaging infrared sensor for detection of very small surface targets at long ranges. These systems are used to help locate vessels at sea and ultimately save lives. Both agencies are under the Department of Homeland Security. Coast Guard Auxiliary photo.

ami, and Borinquen (Puerto Rico), as well as assistant district staff officers for training, standards, technology, personal protective equipment and management.

The district flight safety officer (DFSFO) is an advisor to the aviation staff and to the district commodore for flight safety issues. Doug Armstrong, Flotilla 16-1, Christiansted, V.I., serves that role in District 7. The DFSFO's

responsibilities include working with the DSO-AV in evaluating the safety of district aviation programs and procedures, developing and implementing an aviation incident plan and being a member of the District Aviation Board. The DFSFO reports directly to the district commodore on these matters and on overall safety of Auxiliary flight issues.



Above: Coast Guard Rear Adm. John H. “Jake” Korn (left) commands the Seventh District, which encompasses an area of 1.8 million square miles and shares operational borders with 34 foreign nations and territories. Doug Armstrong, Flotilla 16-1, Christiansted, U.S. Virgin Islands, AUXAIR District 7 flight safety officer and owner of a Citation Mustang twin jet facility, is called on to fly the admiral around his area of operations. Coast Guard Auxiliary photo.



This 18-foot yola (Puerto Rican fishing boat) with seven illegal immigrants on board was spotted by an Auxiliary crew in the Mona Passage, the strait that separates the islands of Hispaniola and Puerto Rico and connects the Atlantic Ocean to the Caribbean Sea. Immediately after being spotted, the passengers spread out blue tarps over themselves to become less conspicuous to aerial surveillance.

The Auxiliary aircraft remained on scene for an hour and a half before it had to return to base on account of darkness. A short time later, a Caribbean Air and Marine Dash 8 aircraft reacquired the target of interest based on the position provided by the AUXAIR crew. The Dash 8 was soon joined by a Coast Guard cutter and helicopter plus a U.S. Customs and Border Protection fast boat. When the yola resumed its high-speed journey to make landfall on the north shore of Puerto Rico, the fast boat crew shot out the yola’s engines and the illegal immigrants were detained. Coast Guard Auxiliary photo.

Plesser notes, “One of the hallmarks of the last couple of years has been a broadening of the AUXAIR mission set for each of the air stations, with expanded response to the needs of the sectors. This is both a challenge and an opportunity—a challenge to broaden and refine our own skills and an opportunity to provide even better service to our parent air station commands. It is clear that we are responding effectively to this ‘raising of the bar.’”

AUXAIR offers several very worthwhile ways to be part of a valuable team. One can serve as observer, air crew, copilot, first pilot or aircraft commander and participate in a number of mission areas. AUXAIR aviators have varied aviation backgrounds and many have prior military experience. Persons who hold FAA Pilot Certificates may participate in AUXAIR either as Auxiliary pilots, depending on their certificates and experience, or in non-pilot positions as observers and air crew members. Currently, 154 Auxiliarists in District 7 participate in AUXAIR, including 35 aircraft commanders, 9 first pilots, 9 co-pilots, 57 air crew and 44 observers. Among the pilots, 12 are additionally certified as instructor pilots and flight examiners. “Auxiliary pilots are more than ‘pilots’ flying for AUXAIR,” says Armstrong. “We must always see ourselves as professionals who are held to the Coast Guard standard..

Just as surface operators volunteer their boats, pilots volunteer their aircraft for use as facilities. All aircraft used in AUXAIR operations must be U.S. Coast Guard approved facilities. Planes are inspected annually to verify that they meet requirements and that all paperwork is in order. Multi-band encrypted radios are provided by the Coast Guard to ensure operational security. Auxiliarists using their own aircraft on ordered missions are eligible for reimbursement for fuel and maintenance expenses. They are also covered by federal insurance and liability protection in the performance of their official Auxiliary duties. Plesser reports there are about 45 aircraft facilities in the district.

Annually, AUXAIR logs about 12,000 flight hours — 1,000 hours per month. Crew hours would be triple that amount, according to Plesser. District 7 accounts for about a quarter of the Auxiliary’s flight hours, and the percentage is growing: 20 percent in calendar year 2011; 21 percent in 2012; 23 percent in 2013; and 26 percent in 2014 to date.

By federal law, qualified Auxiliary pilots while assigned to duty are considered to be Coast Guard pilots, as are Auxiliary aircraft deemed to be Coast Guard aircraft when on assigned duty.

The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter *Farallon* maneuvers to pick bales of cocaine from the water (circled in red) in 3-5 foot swells following the apprehension south of Puerto Rico on April 30, 2014, of a 35-foot go-fast vessel with two outboard engines traveling northbound without any navigation lights. It had been pursued by Coast Guard Cutters *Farallon* and *Drummond* out of Sector San Juan, an HC-144 maritime patrol aircraft from Air Station Miami and an armed MH-65 intercept helicopter from Air Station Borinquen that shot out one of the outboard engines.

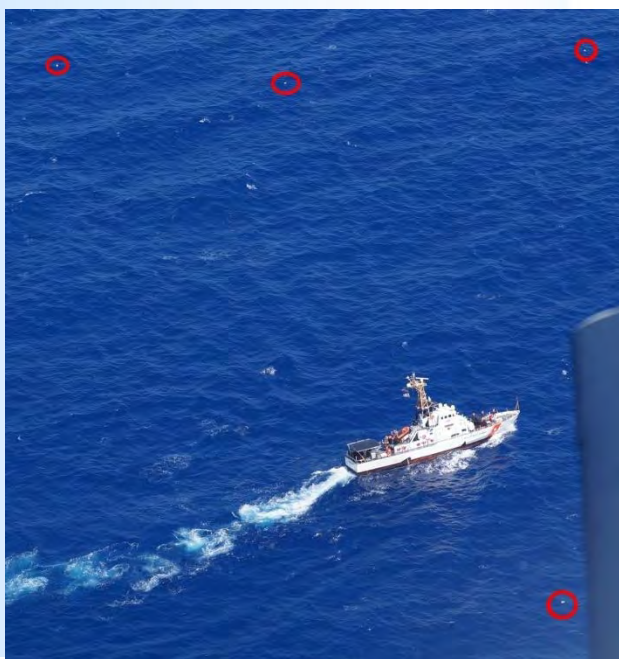
Other law enforcement agencies were notified and joined the interdiction effort. Authorities interviewing two captured suspects learned that a third person had jumped overboard to avoid apprehension as law enforcement units approached the disabled vessel. The Coast Guard conducted a large-scale search lasting 34 hours and covering 546 square miles, but the third person was never found.

While searching for the missing person, Coast Guard active duty and Auxiliary crews located and subsequently recovered 45 bales of contraband from the water, which later tested positive for cocaine — some 1,280 kilograms worth about \$37 million on the street. Coast Guard Auxiliary photo.

Missions are Varied and Often Complex

Virtually every patrol undertaken by AUXAIR occurs in a multi-mission environment. Aircraft may be tasked with several simultaneous or sequential missions to be carried out on the same patrol. For example, while doing a maritime safety patrol:

- Coast Guard personnel can be taken onboard as part of an area familiarization mission.
- Training can be conducted with Auxiliary or Coast Guard vessels or radio stations.



- Observer or pilot trainees may be aboard as part of their training.

As with surface operators, air facility operators are issued patrol orders based on the needs of the Coast Guard and the availability of crews and facilities. The decision to employ Auxiliary resources rests with the Coast Guard operational commanders. As the Auxiliary continues to be a “force multiplier,” the Coast Guard encourages operational commanders to use Auxiliary assets and personnel to fulfill non-law enforcement duties. Coast Guard air stations are the order issuing authority (OIA) for AUXAIR.

By law, the Coast Guard has 11 missions and AUXAIR personnel participate all of them, in various ways, while avoiding legally prohibited direct military or law enforcement actions that would endanger Auxiliary personnel. The risk of an Auxiliarist encountering a maritime threat while performing missions may not be greater than that to the boating public.

Maritime Observation Missions (MOMs) have the objective to search for and report obstructions to navigation, fires or other disasters, and boaters in distress. MOMs may also include specific tasking to search for or identify vessels near bridges, in shipping lanes, in the approaches to harbors or sensitive locations, and/or to photograph such events and vessels. Some MOMs may be described as homeland security patrols or harbor patrols. The AUXAIR mission may include flights close to sensitive locations such as power plants, bridges, liquefied natural gas terminals, inner harbors, and cruise ships. MOMs are in direct support of — but separate from — the Coast Guard’s Ports,



Using a pollution boom, salvage workers attempt to contain a petroleum sheen from a vessel that had run aground near Amelia Island, along Florida's northeast coast, 30 miles from Jacksonville. Monitoring such operations is part of the Coast Guard's Marine Environmental Protection (MEP) mission. This patrol was conducted by an AUXAIR facility. Coast Guard Auxiliary photo by David Cristol, Flotilla 14-4, Jacksonville Beach, Fla.

Waterways and Coastal Security (PWCS) mission. They were created as a distinct mission category for the Auxiliary to avoid confusion because of the inherent danger associated with PWCS patrols and the lack of authority for the Auxiliary to engage in direct law enforcement and military activities.

An evolving concept called Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) has emerged with a high priority assigned to it in the wake of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, as the United States improves the safety and security of its citizens. MDA is not a mission of its own, but is an inherent part of virtually every operation activity. MOMs are non-law enforcement missions with the primary purpose to provide increased MDA by observing areas of interest and reporting findings to the Coast Guard operational commander while maintaining the safety of Auxiliary personnel. Should Auxiliarists observe anything suspicious during the course of normal multi-mission patrols, the Coast Guard instructs that they should record and report the same immediately via means other than marine band radio, if feasible, but take no additional action.

Search and Rescue (SAR) is a critical mission for the Coast Guard and for the Auxiliary. The SAR mission may arise from a call-out, from a planned event as part of a multi-day or multi-mission search,

or from the diversion of an aircraft from another mission already in progress. Since a SAR case may arise out of a completely different mission, it is especially important that the pilot and crew fully understand the requirements and procedures for SAR and be proficient and current on all related flight procedures.

For the Auxiliary aircraft, SAR response often takes the form of searching for a person or vessel on the waterways. The Auxiliary aircraft in this scenario functions as an observation and communications platform, following certain criteria in the search for the target. SAR generally takes priority over other missions, but it must be coordinated with the Coast Guard unit controlling the mission, and the pilot and crew must ensure that they have the skills and resources to complete a SAR before accepting the mission.

For the SAR mission, the combined surface/air team provides the Coast Guard with a greatly increased capability. The use of aircraft can extend the search area by up to 20 times that covered by surface vessels alone. With proper planning, surface vessels can be in an optimum position to reach the vessel or person in distress when the aircraft locates it. As time is often a critical factor in the successful performance of a SAR mission, the time saved through such coordinated operations will often have a major impact on the outcome of the mission.

Marine Safety is a generic term for a class of missions flown with a focus on keeping the boating public safe. This mission usually involves one or more generalized sweeps of the sector while keeping a lookout for vessels in distress or unusual activity on the waterways. These missions consist of promoting safe boating, providing SAR response when needed, and rendering assistance to distressed persons in the marine environment. In many cases, the area covered is also being patrolled by Auxiliary or active duty surface vessels. Using aircraft in combination with surface craft is an effective way to increase the efficiency of the coverage since Auxiliary aircraft can cover a large area in a shorter time than a surface vessel. The aircraft and surface units act as parts of a team in which the aircraft detects incidents and targets, and may guide surface craft or helicopters to the scene.

Auxiliary aircraft may be tasked with overflights of critical infrastructure areas to record and report information. The objective of these missions is to search for and report boaters in distress, obstructions to navigation, fires, or other disasters; and may include

specific tasking to search for or identify vessels near bridges, in shipping lanes, in the approaches to harbors, or sensitive locations and/or to photograph such events and vessels. Regatta support/safety zone support missions are conducted by AUXAIR to provide an overview of marine events and check for the presence of hazards or of vessels entering into “safety zones.”

Marine Environmental Protection (MEP). Auxiliary aircraft may be assigned missions to fly over channels or harbors to report pollution or oil or fuel spills. Auxiliary aircraft can assist sectors in this mission by patrolling and observing harbors or other areas for unreported spills, and reporting their observations back to the applicable sector. Prompt detection and notification are key determinants of limiting the environmental damage associated with a spill. All means that shorten the lag time between the occurrence of a spill and notification of appropriate agencies are valuable in reducing subsequent environmental damages. Auxiliary aircraft are a useful observation platform for spill detection.

Living Marine Resources. Protecting the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and key areas of the high seas is an important mission for the Coast Guard to halt the degradation of our ocean’s natural resources associated with maritime activities. Specifically, this mission is to ensure the country’s marine protected species are provided the protection necessary to help their populations recover to healthy, sustainable levels. This includes protecting the EEZ from foreign encroachment, enforcing domestic fisheries law, and working with the Department of State to develop and enforce international fisheries agreements. AUXAIR participates in a non-law enforcement way by observing, reporting and locating.

Law Enforcement Support. While the Coast Guard has law enforce-

ment authority, the Auxiliary by law does not. However, the Auxiliary may provide direct support to law enforcement missions of the Coast Guard, including Drug Interdiction and Migrant Interdiction. Plesser explains, “Aircraft must maintain a safe distance from any possible threat.”

Drug Interdiction. AUXAIR provides direct, non-law enforcement support to the Coast Guard’s Drug Interdiction mission. Drug smuggling into the U.S. from the Caribbean is prevalent within District 7, and AUXAIR has been called upon numerous times to locate vessels suspected of carrying contraband, using SAR patterns, and directing Coast Guard vessels to intercept them, or help spot cargo thrown overboard when smugglers are about to be apprehended.

Migrant Interdiction. AUXAIR also assists the Coast Guard in performing its Migrant Interdiction mission by spotting people attempting to enter the U.S. illegally over water. The Auxiliary does not participate in apprehensions, leaving that to the Coast Guard and other law enforcement agencies.

Defense Readiness. As a component of joint and combined military forces in peacetime, crisis and war, the Coast Guard is assigned four major national defense missions: maritime intercept operations, deployed port operations/security and defense, peacetime engagement, and environmental defense. The Auxil-

iary is prohibited from a direct military role, but Auxiliary aircraft and surface vessels may be deployed on actual or practice Coast Guard training exercises. In some cases Auxiliary aircraft serve as “targets” for detection and intercept. In others, the AUXAIR asset will provide support for the exercise through observation or transport.



Active duty and Auxiliary crews brief at CGAS Borinquen before flying a maritime observation mission on an MH-65 helicopter. Auxiliarist Ken Plesser, Flotilla 12-3, Lake Murray, S.C., second from left, heads the AUXAIR program as District 7 staff officer for aviation. Others, from left, are Carlos Matos, Flotilla 1-10, San Juan, Puerto Rico, assistant AAC for operations, and Coast Guard Lieutenants “Rafy” Ramos and Min Kim. Coast Guard Auxiliary photo.

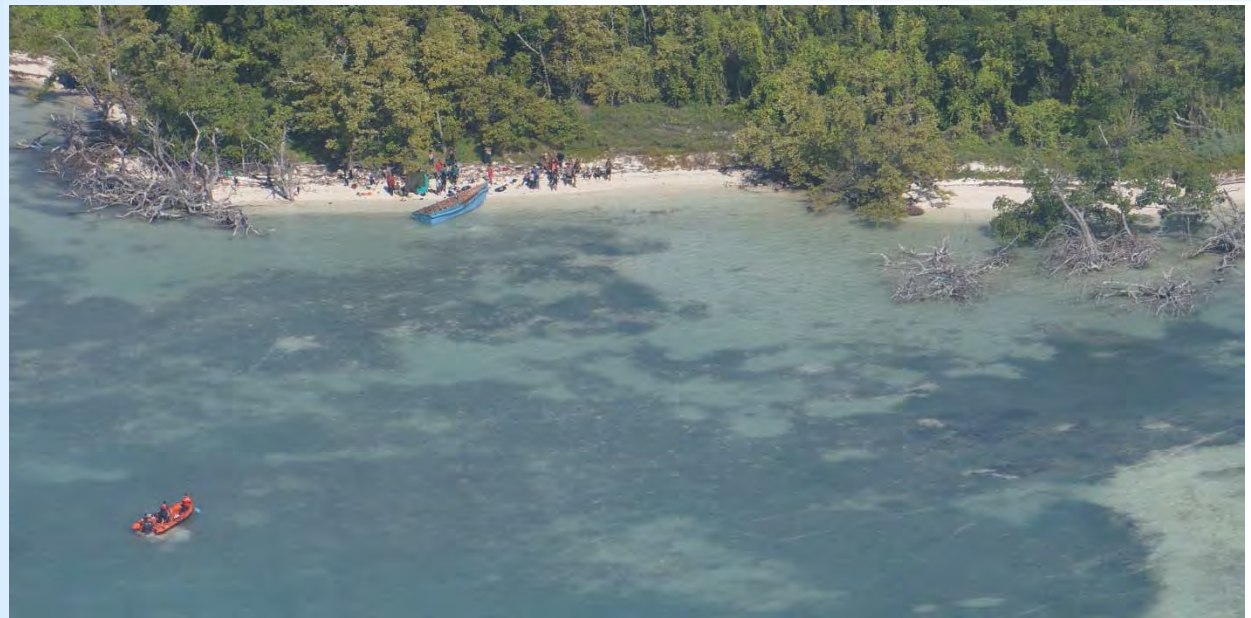
Aids to Navigation (ATONs). AUXAIR provides assistance to the Coast Guard and other concerned federal agencies in checking and verifying aids to navigation and charting details, including reporting discrepant aids to navigation, verifying private aids, and submitting chart corrections/updates. AUXAIR assists in these operations through overflights of navigation aids and waterways, observation of aids and markings, reporting of discrepancies and changes, and transport of personnel and materiel.

Ice Operations. Auxiliary aircraft may be assigned missions to fly over channels or harbors to report ice conditions. Ice reconnaissance missions are conducted primarily to ensure shipping channels are safe and free of ice. For obvious reasons, this mission is more common to some other districts covering colder climates.

The following missions of general support assigned to AUXAIR are not listed among the Coast Guard's statutory missions but were created specifically for the Auxiliary.

Area Familiarization. Auxiliary aircraft provide excellent resources for familiarization of a Coast Guard unit's area of responsibility (AOR). Commanding officers (COs) may request that personnel at Coast Guard groups, sectors, other units or cutters travel as passengers or crew aboard Auxiliary aircraft for area familiarization purposes. It is often helpful to provide area familiarization overflights for ATON personnel. Flying a "pre-cruise" mission for the crew of buoy tenders provides them with a bird's eye view of the mission area.

Logistics and Interagency Support. The Auxiliary Aviation Program is often tasked with transport of personnel or equipment



A single-engine AUXAIR aircraft based at Miami Air Station and piloted by Peter Hecht, Flotilla 69, Opa-Locka, Fla., with Marty Rosenberg, Flotilla 54, Delray-Boynton Beach, Fla., as air crew, responded to tasking in support of Sector Key West on January 11, 2014, to investigate a "good Samaritan" report of a group of migrants ashore on the Marquesas Keys. A total of 39 migrants had landed in what is believed to be one of the largest single migrant events in several years in the largest rustic vessels ever seen in the Key West area of operations.

The Marquesas Keys form an uninhabited island group about 20 miles west of Key West, 4 miles in diameter, and largely covered by mangrove forest. They are an unincorporated area of Monroe County, Fla.

The AUXAIR facility remained on scene for more than an hour until the Cutter Nantucket arrived to rescue the migrants. Because they had reached U.S. soil, the migrants were turned over to U.S. Customs and Border Patrol for "dry foot" processing. The U.S. initiated the "wet foot, dry foot policy" in 1995 as an amendment to the 1966 Cuban Adjustment Act that Congress passed when Cold War tensions ran high between the U.S. and the island nation. Under the amendment, when a Cuban migrant is apprehended in the water between the two countries, he is considered to have "wet feet" and is sent back home. A Cuban who makes it to the U.S. shore, however, has "dry feet" and can qualify for legal permanent resident status and U.S. citizenship. Coast Guard Auxiliary photo.

both within a district and across its boundaries. Deployed active duty crews are often asked to operate outside their normal support infrastructure for prolonged periods. Under these conditions, the occasional mechanical problem might be a support issue. Sometimes this means diverting active duty fixed wing assets to deliver components and specialists at great cost to remote locations.

Coast Guard AUXAIR units can provide this much needed support often for less than 10 percent of the cost and, because these units deploy from locations closer to the forward operating area parts, can be delivered in less time. District 7 AUXAIR units often conduct missions to the Bahamas, Guantanamo Bay (Cuba), Dominican Republic and other areas across the Caribbean.



An MH-65 helicopter from Coast Guard Air Station Savannah on a training mission takes up the signaling position on an AUXAIR facility serving as a 'target.' One of Savannah's missions is to deploy to Washington, D.C., to conduct air intercept over the National Capital area. Note the wingtip in the foreground and the digital signboard in the helicopter's rear window. It scrolls "U.S. Coast Guard" followed by instructions to the intercepted airplane. Crew of the "target" is Ken Plessner, Flotilla 12-3, Lake Murray, S.C., pilot; Bob Hastie, Flotilla 10-2, Savannah, Ga., copilot and Peg Peterson, Flotilla 12-3, observer. Coast Guard Auxiliary photo by Bob Hastie.

In times of local disaster or emergencies (flood, storms, earthquake, etc.), the use of Auxiliary aircraft may be requested by outside agencies. Only the district commands and/or Coast Guard air stations may approve such use.

Auxiliarists are encouraged to carry digital cameras on patrols, since photographs of areas of interest are of great assistance in homeland security of harbors, pollution spills, vessel traffic, public relations events, and environmental concerns.

Participating in AUXAIR

To enter the AUXAIR program, one must first join the Coast Guard Auxiliary and become a "basically qualified" (BQ) member. This involves getting some education about the Auxiliary, its structure and

organization, and having a Personal Security Investigation completed. As the Auxiliary predominantly deals with boating safety, some background knowledge about boating is a necessity. New Auxiliarists therefore must take an Auxiliary boating safety course, another qualified course or self-study, and then pass an examination. Once basically qualified, they may undertake study in any of several Auxiliary programs including AUXAIR. Every Auxiliarist must maintain membership in a flotilla.

AUXAIR offers several very worthwhile ways to be part of a valuable team. One can serve as observer, air crew, copilot, first pilot or aircraft commander and participate in a number of mission areas. Auxiliarists involved in AUXAIR take Auxiliary aviation training, completing the syllabus for their level of qualification and passing a physical examination. After having their knowledge and skills approved by an Auxiliary flight examiner, they may be certified by the district director of Auxiliary (DIRAUX) as pilots, observers or air crew in the AUXAIR Program.

"Aviation, in general, is intensely demanding; military aviation even more so," Plessner notes. "Participants in the AUXAIR program are expected to make a very substantial commitment of time in order to maintain their operational proficiency at a very high level. The level of professionalism in AUXAIR, measured in airmanship, dress, comportment and attitude, is expected to be on par with active duty pilots and crew."

Pilot Qualifications. Pilot candidates must successfully pass two written open book tests, five Incident Command System (ICS) courses from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), take water survival training and pass a rigorous check flight. Auxiliary aviators are held to high standards of training and safety. An Auxiliary pilot is pilot-in-command (PIC) of each mission. Pilots are required to be qualified and current for the mission. In the event that any mission occurs at night or in instrument meteorological conditions, there must be two instrument rated pilots at the controls in most circumstances.

There are three qualification levels for pilots, similar to active duty Coast Guard: aircraft commander, first pilot, and co-pilot. Minimum requirements for the different levels for pilots are measured by PIC time and are:

- 1000 hours with an Instrument Flight Rules (IFR) rating for aircraft commander,
- 500 hours for first pilot, and
- 200 hours for co-pilot.

These levels of pilot qualification are also linked to the types of missions they are authorized to fly. All pilots must pass recurrent flight checks and undergo annual safety training.

AUXAIR does not offer flight training for pilots. Rather, it builds on what certificated pilots already have learned. Pilot applicants learn about search and rescue (SAR) techniques and patterns, Coast Guard communications, and Coast Guard flight safety rules and procedures.

Non-Pilot Crew Positions. Non-pilot crew positions include observer and air crew. Observers must pass air operations training and egress/water survival training. Aircrew are observers with additional training and qualifications. Observers generally handle communications between aircraft and Coast Guard units, assist the pilot with navigation, keep records in the air, and focus their attention outside while searching. Observers are the payload for search missions. AUXAIR cannot perform most missions without the observer.

Observer training includes: aviation orientation, observation techniques, communications, search techniques and patterns, and safety and survival skills. Observer candidates must successfully pass a written open book test, take water survival training, and gain experience in the air on missions, then demonstrate their skills to a first pilot or aircraft commander. Experienced observers may be eligible to earn the air crew rating. The training for the air crew rating rounds out the observer's knowledge with more instruction on aviation and aircraft operations, crew resource management, aviation communications, and navigation procedures.

Candidates for air crew must learn the contents of the air crew training syllabus, are trained and examined on that material by instructor pilots and flight examiners and, if successful, are certified by the director of Auxiliary. All flight crew members (including all observers, air crew, and pilots) must have annual emergency egress training and water survival training. This includes a 75-yard swim wearing a flight suit and uninflated life jacket, life raft and emergency gear familiarization, and may include optional training in the SWET—Shallow Water Egress Trainer.



Juan Carlos Porcello of the Dominican Naval Auxiliaries; Chuck Fischer, Flotilla 16-1, Christiansted, U.S. Virgin Islands, Auxiliary air coordinator for Air Station Borinquen, Puerto Rico; and Coast Guard Capt. Drew W. Pearson, Sector San Juan commander, discuss AUXAIR operations during the Auxiliary annual aviation workshop. Coast Guard Auxiliary photo by Robert A. Fabich, Sr., Flotilla 16-1.

AUXAIR training is ongoing, with aviation training workshops held at least annually. Recurrent training is conducted in AUXAIR patrol and administrative topics plus crew resource management, aviation decision-making, risk management, aero-medical topics, Federal Aviation Regulations, and general aviation safety topics.

Success of the Auxiliary Aviation Program depends in large part on coordination and liaison within the district structure with Coast Guard air stations, units and sectors. Maintaining these important relationships and assisting these entities in joint training is essential to the AUXAIR program's success.

For information on joining AUXAIR, email Ken Plessner. □

This feature was developed from multiple sources, including the Response Directorate, U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary; Auxiliary Aviation Training Manual, COMDTINST M16798.5B; Clarification of Auxiliary Roles in Homeland Security, ALCOAST 033/06, and interviews.