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LAS VEGAS -- During the last two weeks of August 2003, the Civil Air Patrol participated in the Determined Promise '03 exercise for the U.S. military's Northern Command, U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency, State of Nevada and Clark County. The scenario called for a terrorist release of pneumonic plague on August 15 on the Las Vegas Strip to be contained by a quarantine and assistance from scores of local, State and federal response agencies and organizations. In addition, tabletop responses occurred for an airplane hijacking, a train derailment and a hurricane in other parts of the country plus a flash flood in Las Vegas.

On August 19, the State of Nevada's Department of Emergency Management alerted the Civil Air Patrol's Nevada Wing as a State resource in accordance with the State disaster response plan. Wing aircrews were tasked on 20 and 21 August to patrol highways in anticipation of movement of Strategic National Stockpile pharmaceuticals and medical equipment to a dispensing site where more than 100 volunteers stood in lines to receive treatment.

At the same time Nevada Wing aircraft were patrolling highways for Determined Promise '03, four other Nevada Wing aircraft were airborne on an actual multi-state missing aircraft search between Phoenix and Las Vegas. California Wing also launched four aircraft on the search. The missing aircraft was located safe on the ground at Lake Havasu airport on August 21.

Nevada Wing's LtCol Charles King said, "This demonstrates we can easily support both State and federal taskings without exhausting Civil Air Patrol's resources." CAP has more than 60,000 members, owns 550 aircraft and has access to over 4,000 member-furnished aircraft. CAP also owns or has access to thousands of ground vehicles plus radios with a national-wide repeater network with frequencies dedicated to exclusive CAP use.

On August 23, Determined Promise '03 called for State and local responders

to become overwhelmed and ask for federal assistance.

On August 25, Nevada Wing was tasked jointly by the State and the Joint Task Force of U.S. Northern Command to fly aerial reconnaissance of Clark County's quarantine borders and of locations of crowds and traffic jams. Tasking included taking digital pictures of specific sites such as medication dispensing locations at high schools and a hospital facility at the Convention Center. Wing aircrews were also tasked to take comparison photos of airfields to look for quarantine breakers while the scenario called for virtually all aircraft to be grounded.

On August 26, Nevada Wing continued with the same taskings with the addition of a demonstration of satellite downlinks of digital imagery to the U.S. Air Force and a transport flight of a U.S. Coast Guard officer assigned to do an aerial assessment associated with Coast Guard's roll in dealing with hazardous wastes during such a disaster. An actual flash flood warning cancelled all the Wing's afternoon flights.

On August 27, the final day of the exercise, Nevada Wing continued its previous taskings and was joined by an Arkansas Wing aircraft and aircrew attending the CAP Summer Convention in Las Vegas. The Arkansas Wing aircraft is equipped with a satellite telephone allowing real-time digital imagery downlinks via telephone and e-mail connections. A joint Nevada/Arkansas aircrew took imagery of a high school to demonstrate CAP's satellite telephone capability. Nevada Wing was also tasked on paper to transport FEMA photojournalists and videographers to take imagery of the estimated two day long traffic jams leaving Clark County.

Determined Promise '03 ended new taskings by the late morning of August 27 once the exercise began the transition from "response" to "recovery" mode and in order to have extra time for debriefings with the participants for lessons learned. CAP and CAP-USAF officers participated in debriefings at the Nevada National Guard Armory for those involved in field operations and a California Wing officer participated in the debriefing at the Clark County Government Center for those working in the Joint Information Center at the headquarters for the exercise.

Nevada, Arkansas and California Wing and CAP's Pacific Region together contributed about 100 personnel. Nevada and Arkansas flew approximately 30 hours on the exercise. CAP volunteers were supported by several CAP-USAF Pacific Liaison Region officers, Nevada Wing's State Director's office personnel, and staff from the CAP's National Operations Center.