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By Neil Probst

On The Edge

Oregon Wing, National Guard Join Forces To Fight Terrorism

1st Lt. Mark Kemner's instructions from the Oregon Air National Guard's F-15 Eagles were specific: Fly at 10,000 feet, 115 mph, straight and level.

It may sound way too routine for the U.S. Civil Air Patrol Cessna 182 Skylane pilot, but when a supersonic jet fighter suddenly screeches alongside his plane, it is clear the mission is far from ordinary.

Two years ago, the Air Guard's 123rd Fighter Squadron asked CAP to begin flying the missions to simulate interception of terrorists flying in small aircraft,

Photo by 1st Lt. Bill Kostich, Oregon Wing

said 1st Lt. Bill Kostich, director of the wing's F-15 Intercept Program.

Since then, the relationship has blossomed, and the missions have increased.

"They are so pleased with the work we're providing, they would actually like to double the number of exercises," said Kostich.

Currently, CAP flies at least one of these missions each month, but in June CAP and the Guard flew at least six.

Mission requests come from the Air Guard and mission approvals from the U.S. Air Force's Western Air Defense Sector and 1st Air Force. In the past six months, about 20 members of the Oregon Wing have participated, as well as several ground-based radio operators from adjacent CAP wings.

Civil Air Patrol members love the partnership, in which Oregon Wing aircrews fly the missions and ground crews monitor CAP radios.

During 28 years in the Air Force, Lt. Col. Case McGinley, one of CAP's Skylane pilots, flew T-37 Tweets, C-141 Starlifters and C-130 Hercules. Then, he moved on to MD-80s as a civilian airline pilot.

Still, for McGinley, who is relatively new in CAP, nothing quite compares to serving his country by cooperating with the Air National Guard. It also brings back memories.

"It has been rewarding to get back into some of the kind of flying I missed from the military, and it's really

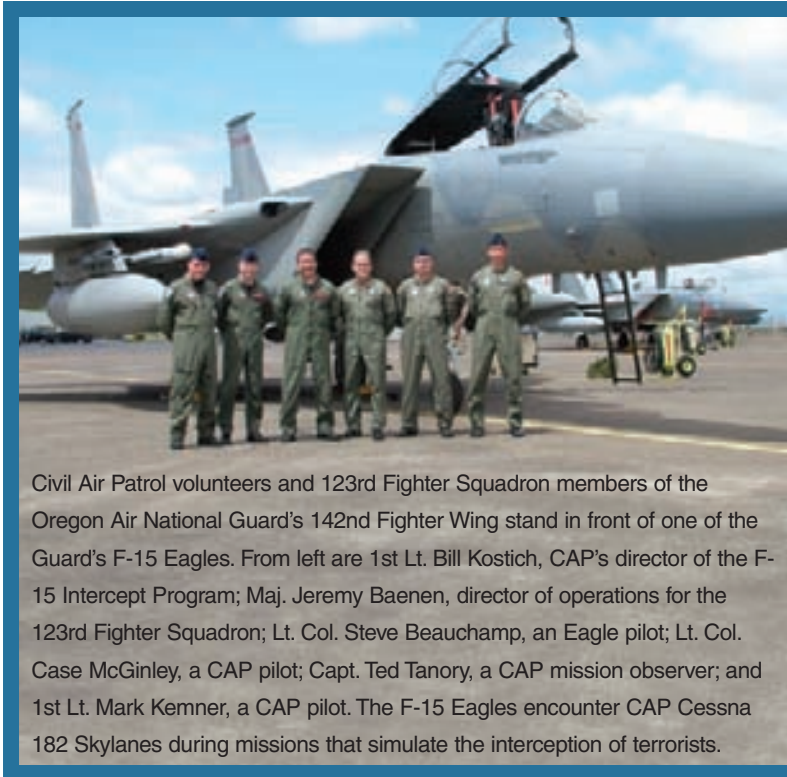


Photo by Maj. Greg Young, Oregon Air National Guard

Civil Air Patrol volunteers and 123rd Fighter Squadron members of the Oregon Air National Guard's 142nd Fighter Wing stand in front of one of the Guard's F-15 Eagles. From left are 1st Lt. Bill Kostich, CAP's director of the F-15 Intercept Program; Maj. Jeremy Baenen, director of operations for the 123rd Fighter Squadron; Lt. Col. Steve Beauchamp, an Eagle pilot; Lt. Col. Case McGinley, a CAP pilot; Capt. Ted Tanory, a CAP mission observer; and 1st Lt. Mark Kemner, a CAP pilot. The F-15 Eagles encounter CAP Cessna 182 Skylanes during missions that simulate the interception of terrorists.

effective training for a real-world mission the Guard has — trying to intercept slow-speed airplanes," said McGinley.

The Guard agrees, as evidenced in a letter written to Oregon Wing Commander Col. Ted Kyle by Maj. Jeremy Baenen, the 123rd Fighter Squadron's director of operations.

"The Oregon Civil Air Patrol provides timely, professional and safe training platforms for 142nd Fighter Wing pilots to practice intercept, identification and engagement," the letter reads. "Their strict adherence to

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*— 1st Lt. Bill Kostich,
director of the Oregon Wing's F-15 Intercept Program*

scenario and special instructions provides one-of-a-kind intercept training unmatched in the Air Force. The efforts of the Oregon Civil Air Patrol have significantly contributed to the ability of the 142nd Fighter Wing to defend the United States.”

Kostich said the Oregon Wing’s relationship with the 123rd is sacred and closely guarded.

“For us it is a distinct privilege we take very seriously. It’s our goal to provide the 123rd with a consistent resource they can count on. And by that I mean people being on time, in the right position at the right time and flying the mission as it’s prescribed,” he said.

“As the director of this program, I’m very proud of the relationship we have with the 123rd,” he added. “It’s beyond anything I can describe.”

Two Cessna 182s launch from separate airfields for each mission. The first is the primary intercept plane. The second flies high bird, assisting with communications between the target aircraft and CAP mission base. If the first Skylane can’t meet the F-15 for the intercept, the second 182 takes its place.

The intercepts can be complex, but they are always fun, said Kostich.

“We fly somewhere between 110 to 120 knots. They do anything they can to induce some drag. They put their landing gear out, they put the air brake up, they put the flaps down and they fly at a very high angle of attack, and it’s quite extraordinary,” he said.

“For an aviation enthusiast, it’s one of the most exhilarating experiences I’ve ever had,” said Kostich, who flies as a mission observer in the right seat.

For the F-15 pilots, the experience can be more accurately described as agonizing, because slowing down to identify a CAP Cessna’s tail number is really hard work. But Lt. Col. George Manley, whose call sign is “Tug,” says it’s worth it.

“The guys are great. They are always willing to help, and they’re there when they say they will be,” he said.

“We’ve enjoyed flying with them. They do a great job, and they perform a great service for us.”

Manley said the terrorist intercept training started in earnest after Sept. 11.

“As opposed to experiencing it for the first time when we really had to do it (stop a terrorist in an aircraft), we wanted to train for it. Having CAP able to do it for us has been a great help,” he said.

Photo by Capt. Ted Tanony, Oregon Wing



An Oregon Air National Guard pilot flying an F-15 Eagle employs all possible strategies to slow down and come alongside a U.S. Civil Air Patrol Cessna 182 Skylane.

The CAP pilots said patriotism is a big motivation for them, but there is also the privilege and adrenaline rush that comes from being one of the few to be intercepted by a lightning-fast, growling military jet fighter.

“These guys are specialists. They’re highly trained, and you almost never get to see an F-15 up close and personal unless you’ve done something wrong,” said Kemner. “For us to be able to fly at 12,000 feet with a military jet off your wing is not something everybody gets to do, and I consider it a privilege.” ▲

Editor’s Note: Maj. Gregory Young, an Oregon Air National Guard pilot and photographer of the group photo on Page 5, died June 26, 2007, while flying an F-15 Eagle during a training mission over the Pacific Ocean. Young had flown alongside CAP aircraft during training missions on several occasions. Civil Air Patrol extends its deepest and most sincere sympathies to Young’s family and the Oregon Air National Guard.