

**HEADQUARTERS
CALIFORNIA WING CIVIL AIR PATROL
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Civil Air Patrol Ukiah Aircraft Search On Hold, Mission Base Closing

(Ukiah, CA) Search operations continued today for a Cessna 172 aircraft that was reported missing Monday, May 26th. The Cessna departed Mendocino County Airport near Little River, CA late in the evening Sunday, May 25th. Search operations began on Monday May 26 when friends and relatives reported the aircraft had not arrived at Nevada County Airport near Grass Valley, CA. Today a total of 61 volunteers of the USAF Auxiliary-Civil Air Patrol flew 20 aircraft 115 hours in the continuing search for Pilot, Randolph Hietala, age 61 and his Cessna 172.

Major Mitch Richman, CAP Incident Commander, announced that the search today focused on the Mendocino Coast line and the last known position of the missing aircraft. A total of 401 flight hours in 22 aircraft by total staff of 217 volunteers have been expended to date on the unsuccessful search. "Today was spent checking out information and locations reported by Mendocino County citizens that heard or saw an aircraft flying that evening as well as further search of the coastal mountains. A ground team searched the beaches along the coast for any sign of aircraft parts. All leads have been followed. Therefore, after consultation with the US Air Force Rescue Coordination Center at Langley AFB, Virginia, the search is being placed on hold and the Ukiah CAP mission base closed. The mission will remain open until the aircraft and pilot are found, but no active search will occur until additional information develops." Because the terrain is primarily tree covered rugged mountains, it is possible for search crews to pass by an accident site yet not see the aircraft. Anyone who may have heard or seen anything late Sunday night, May 25th, regarding low flying aircraft or sounds of troubled aircraft from around the Mendocino County Airport and Little River, CA to points due east in Mendocino and Lake Counties, is asked to contact the Mendocino County Sheriff at 707-463-4086. The USAF Auxiliary, Civil Air Patrol is made up of volunteers who donate their talents as pilots, observers, radio operators, and base personnel to provide search and rescue services. Although tasked and partially funded by the US Air force, the volunteers receive no pay for their efforts. When asked why she gave up her time 2Lt Candice Tuttle responded "I believe that we should return something to society for all we have received. It is not really all one way; many of the skills I have learned in my volunteer activities have been directly usable in my professional life. Also, as a General Aviation pilot I feel better knowing that dedicated, knowledgeable resources are ready to help me in a possible time of need." Civil Air Patrol provides training in search and rescue as well as mission management, radio and computer operation among other skills to new volunteers. It requires two people on the ground to support the search operations of each aircrew. There are Squadrons at Marin and Sonoma County Airports as well as Eureka and Redding. There is currently no unit at Ukiah, however a number of inquiries have been received from local residents. Anyone wishing to get membership information may review the CAP web sight at <http://gp5.cawg.cap.gov>. A public information meeting to test the interest in forming a CAP unit in Ukiah is being planned. Civil Air Patrol (CAP), the official Auxiliary of the United States Air Force, is a nonprofit organization of approximately 64,000 members nationwide with approximately 4,000 members in California. It performs more than 95% of inland search and rescue missions in the continental United States as tasked by the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center. CAP volunteers also perform homeland security, disaster relief and counter-drug missions at the request of federal, state and local agencies. Most recently, CAP members flew security over the launch site of the space shuttle Columbia and later assisted in the Columbia shuttle recovery. In the days after 9/11, Northern California members flew blood products for the Red Cross when all commercial aviation was grounded. California alone had over 55 crews standing ready to be called into action. The CAP volunteers also take a leading role in aerospace education and serve as mentors to almost 27,000 of America's youth through the CAP Cadet Program. For additional information and follow-up, please contact Ray Peterson, CAP Mission Information Officer; Hm Tel 707-765-4582 or rpterson@cawg.cap.gov.