

Flotilla 24-4 Flying to Support AUXAIR Missions During Pandemic

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but the service to our nation makes it all worthwhile.*

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GAITHERSBURG, Md.— Even during the midst of a global pandemic, the aircrews of Flotilla 24-4 in Gaithersburg, Maryland continue to fly the friendly skies. Although they were grounded for over six months, much of the personnel were able to resume their volunteer duties at the end of October 2020.

The most important missions are always those that directly support our active duty Coast Guard service members. The members of Flotilla 24-4 were very eager to get back in the air near Atlantic City, New Jersey to support the rotary wing air intercept (RWAI) training missions with the Coast Guard's MH-65 Dolphin pilots. During these missions, Coast Guard Auxiliary aircraft play the role of a bogey and Coast Guard helicopters are dispatched at high speed to intercept. These training missions are essential for the Coast Guard pilots to maintain their RWAI certifications.

But those are not the only missions Flotilla 24-4 has been flying. In January, the Coast Guard received a mayday call from a vessel in distress near the Rappahannock and Potomac Rivers, but the searching helicopter crews needed rest. The Coast Guard requested Gary Goldberg, First Pilot, and Charley Armstrong, Aircrew, to fly a first-light search and rescue (SAR) mission. Gary and Charley left Gaithersburg Airport early in the morning and began their search

of the area but were unable to positively locate the vessel. In another case, Ali Talebpour, Aircraft Commander, flew a logistics mission to pick up personal flotation devices (PFDs), life rafts, and personal locator beacons from Coast Guard Air Station Atlantic City and flew them over 300 miles south to U.S. Coast Guard Base Elizabeth City in North Carolina.

The flotilla's aircrews have also been hard at work training new members. In the last 12 months, five new people have joined or transferred to the flotilla, with another two new people participating in the AUXAIR program from other flotillas, and several more applications pending. What these new members want most, just like our seasoned veterans, is to fly!

Scheduling non-essential training missions was difficult to begin with, but now the flotilla flies several training missions every month with the goal of qualifying new members as Air Observers, Aircrew, and maybe even First Pilot.

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GAITHERSBURG, Md— On a cold day in January 2021, Gary Goldberg, First Pilot, and Bob Quackenbush, Aircrew, prepare for a mission in Gary's American General Tiger.



GAITHERSBURG, Md.— Dave McGuire, Aircraft Commander, inspects his Beechcraft Baron B-55 before flying a rotary wing air intercept (RWAI) mission in January 2021.



ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. — A Coast Guard MH-65 Dolphin helicopter appears over the port wing of Dave McGuire's Beechcraft Baron B-55 during a rotary wing air intercept (RWAI) training mission in January 2021. During these training missions, Coast Guard Auxiliary aircraft play the role of a bogey and Coast Guard helicopters are dispatched to intercept at high speed.