SCOPE

The squadron is the “heart” of Civil Air Patrol. Most of our missions are conducted at the squadron level. Therefore, it is vital that squadrons understand their role in CAP and the need for them to flourish. What is that role? What is the key to developing a healthy, active squadron? This seminar examines those issues and also considers how squadrons can partner with the wing and national headquarters. It concludes with a roundtable discussion of success stories so students may gather ideas on how to improve their squadron.

OBJECTIVES

1. Defend the idea that the squadron is the “heart” of CAP.
2. Explain how the squadron fits within CAP’s overall organizational structure.
3. Describe the role of wing headquarters, national headquarters, and CAP-USAF, as they relate to the squadron.
4. Describe stories of successful squadron programs and share best practices.

DURATION

50 minutes

SPECIAL NOTES

To help the roundtable discussion get started (objective #4), the instructor should have a handful of best practices to share. Anything related to a successful squadron-level activity, process, or program would be appropriate. For example, “We pair new members with a mentor. Specifically, we do XYZ…” would be a good best practice to share.
INTRODUCTION

State your topic and introduce yourself.

ATTENTION / FILM CLIP

Depending on what you count, the Air Force has roughly 60 major installations in the United States. CAP has approximately 1500 local squadrons. This map dramatically illustrates the fact that in hundreds of communities across America, Civil Air Patrol is the only Air Force presence, and that the hometown squadron is vital to the success of CAP.

OVERVIEW

Outline the seminar objectives.

Note that some of this material may be a review for the students, but that this seminar takes a deeper look at squadron organization than what they received in Level One.
CAP HAS THREE MAIN TYPES OF SQUADRONS

LECTURE ITEM
There are three main types of squadrons in CAP: Cadet, Composite, and Senior. See the slide for an overview of each.

Squadron Leadership School is primarily intended for CAP volunteers who serve as staff officers in one of these three squadrons.

As a footnote, you should also know that CAP has headquarters squadrons at the group, wing, regional, and national level. Additionally, some wings have “holding” squadrons for inactive or patron members and legislative squadrons. These special squadrons are essentially senior squadrons, but when we speak of senior squadrons at SLS, we mean an active unit of senior members who are regularly participating in CAP missions.

DISCUSSION QUESTION
What do you see as some of the pros and cons of each type of squadron? Is there any one of these better than the rest?

ANTICIPATED RESPONSE
Will vary; what is important is that students recognize the pros and cons of each, as shown on the slide.

TRANSITION
Now that we know what types of squadrons we have in CAP, let’s consider where the squadron fits in the “big picture” organization chart.
SQUADRONS: LAST BUT NOT LEAST

DISCUSSION QUESTION
Who can diagram CAP’s overall organization structure? Which echelon fits where? How does the Air Force connect with CAP units?

ANTICIPATED RESPONSE
*Answers may vary. After giving the students an opportunity to answer, refer to the diagram shown on the slide below.*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS / LECTURE ITEMS

Obviously the squadron is at the bottom here, but what does that really mean?

**Place of the Squadron.** As you see, the squadron is at the bottom of the organizational chart, but again, because it is the basic operational unit in CAP, it plays an essential role in completing CAP missions. Therefore, the higher echelons have a service function. True, higher echelons have some authority over squadrons, and squadrons must comply with the directions of higher headquarters. But in CAP those higher echelons exist to serve the squadron, to help the squadron succeed. Put it another way, the squadron is a customer of the wing staff and national headquarters.

National Headquarters is surrounded by dotted lines. What does that mean for squadrons and staff officers like yourself?

**Dotted Line to National.** You’ll notice on this chart, all CAP “line” units – squadrons, groups, wings, etc. – have a dotted line connecting them to National Headquarters. The “CAP National Headquarters” in the middle of this chart refers to the paid administrative staff located at Maxwell AFB, AL. Again, the squadron is a customer of the National Headquarters services. If your squadron needs to expedite a Mitchell Award, request some recruiting brochures, change a mailing address, etc., you are welcome to contact national directly. The paid administrative staff is not in the chain of command. Their job is to help you, but of course realize that they are not a way to circumvent the group or wing.

What does this chart tell us about our relationship with the Air Force?

**Air Force Connections.** Shown in grey on the chart’s left side are the Air Force organizations that work closely with CAP. Strictly speaking, the Air Force is not in our chain of command, but as their auxiliary, we partner...
with them on a regular basis, and the Air Force has significant influence over CAP's Board of Governors, which is comprised of one-third Air Force members, one-third CAP members, and one-third aerospace community leaders. And as with the national headquarters staff, there are dotted lines connecting CAP units with the Air Force. Squadrons have opportunities to interact with the CAP-USAF state director and Air Force Reservists. We'll discuss CAP-USAF in greater depth in a moment.

TRANSITION
We've mapped out how squadrons, wings, CAP-USAF, National Headquarters, and other organizations relate on the wiring diagram. Next, let's consider in practical terms how squadrons can partner with these higher echelons.
THE SQUADRON / WING PARTNERSHIP

DISCUSSION QUESTION
What are some practical examples of how the squadron helps the wing?

ANTICIPATED RESPONSE:  See slide.

DISCUSSION QUESTION
What are some practical examples of how the wing helps the squadron?

ANTICIPATED RESPONSE:  See slide. Reiterate that there is a customer / service provider relationship here.
THE SQUADRON / NHQ PARTNERSHIP

DISCUSSION QUESTION
What are some practical examples of how the squadron helps CAP nationally?

ANTICIPATED RESPONSE: See slide. This slide lists just two basic points, but those points are huge. Their importance can not be overstated.

DISCUSSION QUESTION
What are some practical examples of how the national staff at Maxwell can help the squadron?

ANTICIPATED RESPONSE: See slide. Reiterate that there is a customer / service provider relationship here.
THE SQUADRON / CAP-USAFC PARTNERSHIP

DISCUSSION QUESTION
What are some practical examples of how the squadron helps the Air Force?

ANTICIPATED RESPONSE: See slide. This slide is similar to what we had for the “national” slide, and again, these three points are huge. Their importance cannot be overstated.

DISCUSSION QUESTION
What are some practical examples of how the Air Force, particularly CAP-USAFC, can help the squadron?

ANTICIPATED RESPONSE: See slide. Reiterate that there is a customer/service provider relationship here.

TRANSITION
We’ve discussed the types of squadrons, how the squadron fits into the CAP organizational structure, and how squadrons relate with higher echelons. Throughout this discussion, we’ve emphasized how absolutely vital squadrons are as the basic operational unit in CAP. Next, let’s open the floor to success stories from your home squadron.
SUCCESS STORIES

DISCUSSION QUESTION
How has your squadron been successful? Do you have any innovative programs, activities, practices, or just some fun and neat things going on in your squadron that might work in other squadrons?

Moreover, how or why was your squadron able to succeed in that area?

ANTICIPATED RESPONSE
Responses will vary. As mentioned on the cover page of this lesson plan, it would be good for the instructor to have some examples at the ready to help get this conversation started.

FINAL THOUGHT
See slide.