Golden Isles coast has eyes in sky

Patrol takes air five days a week.

Missions looking for activity are asset in southeast Georgia.

By **Loule Brogdon**
Brunswick News

BRUNSWICK – The mission of the Civil Air Patrol is still essentially what it has been since its inception in 1941, says Capt. Bill Cozine of the Brunswick Squadron.

While the patrol is no longer scouting for German U-boats off the Golden Isles, its reconnaissance missions to look for unusual activity are just as important, he said.

When in the air during its daily sundown patrol from McKinnon St. Simons Airport, pilots keep their ears tuned for requests from the U.S. Coast Guard and eyes open for distress signals from troubled boaters below.

On a recent sundown patrol, named for the time of day flights along the Golden Isles coast occur, Cozine and Civil Air Patrol Patrolman Roy Scarborough were looking for anything out of the ordinary from the cockpit of the single-engine, four-passenger Cessna 172.

The two checked on a controlled burn south of Brunswick and kept an eye on a slow moving vessel in the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway.

Weather permitting, the patrol takes to the air just before sundown five days a week, Scarborough said. A full patrol includes a person in the rear seat acting as a scanner, using a laptop computer to triangulate possible distress signals from crafts.

Sometimes agencies ask the patrol to be on the lookout for specific items of interest, Cozine said.

"We were flying one day and the Coast Guard asked us if we had photo capability. We do, and we took some pictures of an oil spill. The Coast Guard was able to make a case against the vessel that spilled it from our pictures," he said.

Otherwise, the patrol spends its time in the air looking for stranded boaters in rivers and marsh creeks as well as spotting wildfires.

Because the Civil Air Patrol is an auxiliary of the U.S. Air Force, the federal government supplies the Cessna and fuel for missions. It costs $70 an hour to operate the plane.

The Brunswick Squadron has a contract with Glynn County to conduct the sundown patrol as an adjunct of the Glynn-Brunswick Emergency Management Agency, Cozine said.

The Brunswick Squadron has 25 volunteers, nine of whom are certified Civil Air Patrol mission pilots.

Not all members fly. There are plenty of ground jobs that need to be done. "We've got so much talent that comes from so many different directions," Cozine said.

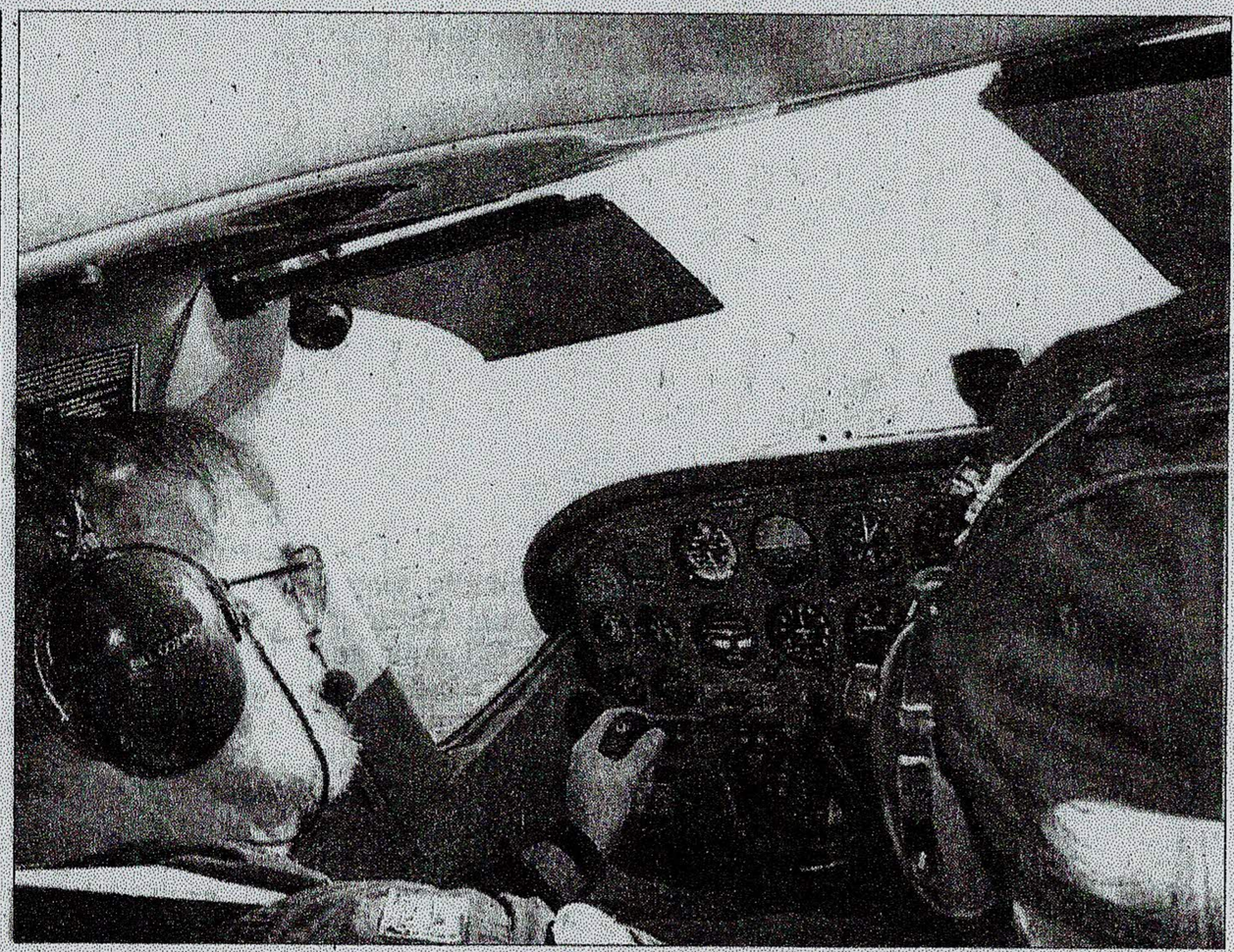
One of the great things about the group is its ability to mobilize, Cozine said.

"If somebody calls us, like the Coast Guard or the EMA, we can usually have an aircraft in the air in less than an hour," he said.

The patrol plane flies at about 1,000 feet to observe the land. Flying at 110 mph, it covers Glynn County in about one hour.

Cozine, Scarborough and other members of the squadron enjoy what they do, but the Civil Air Patrol is more than just a hobby.

"We are not just a flying club. We take this very seriously," Cozine said.



Civil Air Patrol Brunswick Squadron Commander Capt. Bill Cozine takes to the air of Glynn County for a sundown patrol. The mission of the Civil Air Patrol is essentially what it has been since its inception in 1941, he says. The Civil Air Patrol is more than just a hobby. "We take this very seriously," Cozine says. **Louie Brogdon** Brunswick News