
Cadets play crucial role at airfields

By KENT FISCHER

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When airports were closed last week in the wake of terrorist attacks, 11th-grader Seamus Bradley helped shut the airfields down.

Bradley, along with seven others from the Cadet Squadron of Pasco's Civil Air Patrol, helped stake out local airports during two night surveillance assignments from the Air Force. While on duty, the cadets patrolled four local airports and kept watch for suspicious vehicles listed on an FBI wanted list.

They were also under orders to make clear to pilots that air travel was prohibited, and they were to report to the Air Force planes that disobeyed the order.

"I came out (to the Civil Air Patrol) for the fun, but I don't think I ever imagined something like this happening," said Bradley, 16. "We basically got called out (to watch out for) people who thought that the rules didn't apply to them."

Over three days, cadets and their adult commanding officers patrolled Pilot Country, Tampa Bay Executive Airport and the Zephyrhills Airport. Some cadets also helped patrol an airport in Winter Haven.

"The orders that came through wing command were to make sure that nobody took off from any private airport," said Maj. Mario Bartoletti, the squadron's commanding officer.

It was not the first time that the Pasco squadron had been called out for emergency service. Several cadets spent two to five days last year in Bartow helping search for a pilot and his downed airplane. Several cadets said they expected to be called to service in the wake of Tropical Storm Gabrielle.

Tara Guthrie, 16, is the squadron's cadet leader holding the rank of lieutenant colonel. When she got the call Tuesday afternoon, events in New York City and Washington, D.C., still were developing. Her father was out of town on business, and her mom was a bit jittery, she said.

"My mom made the generous decision to allow me to go out," she said.

The cadets, who range in age from 13 to 20, said patrolling a dark airport as the nation was collectively ducking for cover was nerve wracking.

"There was nothing in the sky," said cadet Aaron Lyon, 20. "It was really, really eerie."

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