For Immediate Release
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CIVIL AIR PATROL PROVIDES CRUCIAL AIR SUPPORT FOR LOST NEVADA COUPLE

CEDAR CITY- Members of the Cedar Composite Squadron mobilized this morning after receiving a call for assistance from Iron County Search & Rescue. Iron County Sheriff Mark Gower contacted the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center (AFRCC) requesting air support to locate two lost snow-mobilers in the Cedar Breaks are of Southern Utah.

Randall Wendt, 52, and his wife Vicki Wendt, 51, both from Overton, Nevada went missing Sunday after checking out of a Cedar City, Utah motel. The couple had been snowmobiling near Duck Creek off SR-14 all day Saturday before stopping in at the Loose Wheels Polaris shop located in Duck Creek Village. Shop clerk Jessica Barbeau said that the couple frequently came in and knew the area. Mechanic Lincoln Jiminez told police yesterday that he remembered seeing the couple on Saturday and that they told him they were on their way back from the lake towards Midway.

After spending the night in Cedar City on Saturday the couple returned back up the mountain Sunday morning and continued riding. Iron County Trooper Tyrell Orme noticed their truck, a white Dodge pickup containing two small dogs and an empty snowmobile trailer, parked at the SR-14/Hwy 123 Junction on Tuesday morning and it apparently had not moved since it was spotted by a UDOT mountain crew during a routine trail groom around 2am on Sunday. A missing person's report was filed by a close friend of the Wendt's after she became concerned that they hadn't returned as usual, stating that the couple were strictly "day trippers," that they came up nearly every weekend and that it was highly unusual for them to be gone this long, as they were scheduled to return home to Overton Sunday.

Iron County Search & Rescue and a UHP helicopter were called in Tuesday afternoon and began searching the popular trails along the suspected route but were unable to locate the couple and suspended the search until the following morning.

Capt. Adrian Nielsen, Unit Commander of the Cedar Composite Squadron spoke with Sheriff Gower early Wednesday morning confirming the call to AFRCC for Civil Air Patrol to provide air support and quickly mobilized the air crew for a lifesaving mission. Nielsen, a Mission Observer and part of the air crew said that these times are met with mixed emotion. "It is exciting and even fun to train for these moments, but when they come, the seriousness of the situation sets in and you remember that you are searching for a person who is someone's mother or father, son or daughter- and the urgency is a sobering experience."

Nielsen and other members of the crew, Mission Pilot Clayton Cheney and Mission Scanner Amy Robinson, searched a vast area covering hundreds of square miles for nearly four hours at altitudes ranging from 12,000 ft., in high mountainous terrain to 1,000 ft. above the ground and employing various specialized search patterns that scanned half-mile sections of the grid at a time. They also assisted UHP helicopter pilots and county search

and rescue teams by acting as a relay for crucial messages that needed to be passed between the two agencies when communication problems occurred.

“Having the Civil Air Patrol on the scene was extremely effective. Not only did they provide long-term air support that scanning a huge area we just can’t cover from the ground, that is absolutely essential to a successful mission of this type- but there were many times when we lost communication with our ground teams and CAP responded immediately, conveying crucial information that saved time and allowed us to regroup our efforts and adjust the operations plan to suit the situation more efficiently. They are an important part of the rescue effort and we will call on them every time we need assistance,” said Terry Lee, Incident Commander for Iron County Search & Rescue.