

Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) Operations

10.12.01 PURPOSE

The San Francisco Police Department's (SFPD) use of Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) will be in strict compliance with constitutional and privacy rights, in accordance with Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations and [California Government Code § 7070-7073](#).

SFPD is mandated to use UAS technology, "to the maximum extent possible to improve its efficiency and effectiveness in combatting crime, and to reduce dangers to the public, subject to the City's policies to protect privacy and civil liberties," ([SF Admin Code § 96L.2\(e\)](#)).

SFPD's use of drones under [SF Admin Code § 96L.2\(e\)](#) shall not be subject to the requirements of [Chapter 19B of the Administrative Code](#).

10.12.02 DEFINITIONS

- A. Counter-UAS (C-UAS)** – Operations focused on identifying, tracking, and mitigating unauthorized UAS activity (Pursuant to 19B Compliance).
- B. Drone as First Responder (DFR)** – A concept of UAS operations involving an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) launched in response to an incident with the goal of the drone arriving before or in coordination with ground units.
- C. Public Footage** – Drone footage with no evidentiary value, for UAS operations.
- D. Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS)** – Integrated group of ground control, communications, uncrewed aerial vehicles, and other supporting networks and equipment.
- E. Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV)** – An aircraft with no human pilot, crew, or passengers onboard, controlled remotely or autonomously; commonly known as a "drone."
- F. UAS Operator** – A member who has completed the required training and certifications and is authorized by the UAS Program Manager to pilot drones.

10.12.03 POLICY

Use of drones is authorized for legitimate law enforcement purposes. Only authorized and certified members may use drone technology. Sworn members shall serve as the UAS operators and the drone shall be treated as an extension of the member during police actions.

10.12.04 PRIVACY

- A.** UAS operations will consider the protection of individual civil rights and the reasonable expectation of privacy as a key component in any decision made to deploy a UAV.
- B.** UAS operators shall take reasonable precautions to avoid inadvertently recording or transmitting images of areas where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy, unless authorized by law.

10.12.05 AUTHORIZED USE

- A.** Except as listed in section 10.12.06, drones may be used in any situation in which an SFPD member may be deployed.
- B.** UAS operators are authorized to evaluate and, if need be, decline any mission or portion thereof due to policy, safety concerns, or FAA requirements.
- C.** UAS operators are authorized to provide a disposition and clear calls for service without the need for a member on the ground at the scene.

10.12.06 PROHIBITED USE

UASs shall not be used:

- A.** For any manner prohibited by law;
- B.** For the purpose of harassing, intimidating, or discriminating against any individual or group;
- C.** To monitor individuals based on their race, gender, religion, or sexual orientation;
- D.** For conducting personal business of any type;
- E.** In an unsafe manner or in violation of FAA regulations; or
- F.** As a force option.

10.12.07 PROGRAM MANAGER

The UAS Program Manager is appointed by the Chief of Police and shall have authority over all UAS and C-UAS operations, personnel, and equipment within SFPD. The UAS Program Manager will be responsible for the following general provisions:

- A.** Oversee the maintenance and flight records of UAS equipment;

- B.** Ensure the training/certifications of members in the UAS program are current under FAA regulations;
- C.** Ensure UAS and C-UAS operations are employed within current regulations, policies, and MOUs;
- D.** Ensure data storage, video retention, and access requirements are met and maintained;
- E.** Ensure any audits are conducted and reported;
- F.** Ensure UAS data reporting requirements are met; and
- G.** Ensure that joint operations/incidents with partner agencies fall within SFPD policies and applicable MOUs.

10.12.08 DATA COLLECTION AND RETENTION

- A.** UAS recordings relevant to criminal, civil, or administrative manner shall be retained for a minimum of two (2) years, in accordance with laws governing evidence, or upon order of the Court.
- B.** Public footage shall not be retained beyond 30 calendar days ([SF Admin Code § 96I.2\(e\)](#)).
- C.** Footage collected during UAS operations may be shared with relevant partner agencies in accordance with laws governing evidence, order of the Court, MOUs, Charter Authority, state, or local laws.
- D.** The public may submit public information requests for footage and SFPD will defer to general counsel and the SFPD Legal Division to consider the requests.

10.12.09 REPORTING

Annual reporting shall be governed by [California Government Code Section § 7072](#). Reports shall be publicly posted on the SFPD website and a copy will be forwarded to the Police Commission.