



GENERAL ORDER:	6.15
CHAPTER:	Operations Support
SUBJECT:	Small Uncrewed Aircraft System (UAS)
ISSUED DATE:	July 15, 2015
REVISION DATE:	February 06, 2025
NOTES:	
RELATED ORDERS:	General Order 1.02, 1.14, 1.15, 1.17, 4.02, 5.04, 5.07, 5.08, 5.10, 5.12, 5.15, 5.16, 5.18, 5.19, 5.21, 5.24, 5.32, 5.35 & 6.05
ATTACHMENTS:	1: Small Uncrewed Aircraft System Mission Report Form 2: ACSO UAS Operations Manual

PURPOSE: The following procedures are intended to promote the safe, efficient, and lawful operation of the Alameda County Sheriff's Office (ACSO) small Uncrewed Aircraft System (UAS). Safety, above all else, is the primary concern in every operation, regardless of the nature of the mission.

POLICY: It shall be the mission of those personnel of the ACSO who are trained in the use of the UAS to use this resource to protect the lives and property of citizens and first responders in compliance with applicable laws and regulations, including but not limited to applicable State and Federal Constitution and Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations. The use of a UAS can support first responders in situations which would benefit from an aerial perspective and enable responders to detect dangers that could otherwise not be seen. The UAS can also be utilized for approved training missions.

OVERVIEW: The FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012 provides for the integration of civil uncrewed aircraft systems into national airspace by September 1, 2015.

DEFINITION:

SMALL UNCREWED AIRCRAFT SYSTEM (UAS): Consists of the small uncrewed aircraft weighing under 55 pounds, the command system, a secure control link, and other related safety support equipment.

UNCREWED AIRCRAFT (UA): An aircraft that is intended to navigate in the air without an on-board pilot.

UA Flight Crewmember: A pilot, visual observer, or other persons assigned duties for a UAS for the purpose of flight.

Uncrewed Aircraft Pilot: A person exercising control over uncrewed aircraft during flight. The pilot will be ultimately responsible for the operation and solely responsible for the input of commands/piloting during flight. The pilot will be certified in the operation of the UAS by successful completion of an approved training course. The pilot must meet standards required by the FAA. Pilots are authorized to evaluate and accept or decline any mission or portion thereof due to safety concerns.

CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORIZATION (COA): COA given by the FAA which grants permission to fly within specific boundaries and perimeters. The ACSO will maintain current COAs consistent with FAA regulations.

OBSERVER: The observer is responsible for the visual observation of the UAS while inflight. The observer will maintain a visual observation of the UAS while in flight and alert the pilot of any conditions (obstructions, terrain, structures, air traffic, weather, etc.) which affect the safety of flight. The observer will be responsible for all aviation related communications required by the FAA. To accomplish this, the observer will be in close proximity to the pilot to ensure instant relaying of information. The observer will be certified in the operation of the UAS by successful completion of an approved training course. The observer shall meet standards required by the FAA.

ORDER: ACSO will obtain all applicable COAs from the FAA to conduct operational or training missions. Requests for deployment of the UAS will be made through Emergency Services Dispatch. The commanding officer of the UAS Unit can authorize a UAS call-out.

All requests for a UAS call-out should be made to Emergency Services Dispatch (ESD). ESD personnel receiving the request for a call-out shall contact the commanding officer of the UAS Unit with the available information regarding the request. The commanding officer will gather the information pertaining to the request. If the call-out is approved ESD will contact the UAS Unit staff listed on the UAS on-call schedule and notify him/her of the mission. The pilot will determine if the UAS can be deployed safely and practically. If the request comes from an outside public safety agency the request will be directed to ESD.

1. When the UAS is being flown, operators will take steps to ensure the camera is focused on the areas necessary to the mission and to minimize the inadvertent collection of data about uninvolved persons or places.
2. ACSO will maintain a website for public input to address citizens' concerns and recommendations.
3. The use of the UAS will be limited to the authorized missions described herein.
4. The UAS will not be equipped with any weapons.
5. The authorized missions for the ACSO UAS are:
 - a. Post-incident crime scene preservation and documentation.
 - b. Explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) missions.
 - c. Response to hazardous materials spills.
 - d. Search and Rescue (SAR) missions as defined in California Government Code Section 26614.
 - e. Public safety and life preservation missions to include barricaded suspects, hostage situations, active shooters, apprehension of armed and dangerous and/or violent fleeing suspects.

- f. Disaster response and recovery to include natural or human caused disasters including a full overview of a disaster area for post incident analysis and documentation.
 - g. Training missions.
 - h. In response to specific requests from local, state or federal fire authorities for fire response and prevention.
 - i. When there is probable cause to believe that (1) the UAS will record images of a place, thing, condition, or event; and (2) that those images would be relevant in proving that a felony had occurred or is occurring, or that a particular person committed or is committing a felony and use of the UAS does not infringe upon the reasonable expectation of privacy.
 - j. Pursuant to a search warrant.
 - k. Operational pre-planning (planning for service of search and arrest warrants to provide up-to-date intelligence and officer safety information (e.g., terrain, building layout, ambush) to minimize the use of force.
 - l. Scene documentation for evidentiary or investigation value (e.g., crime, collision, or use of force scenes)
 - m. Sideshow events where vehicles, spectators and reckless driving is present.
 - n. ***A UAS specifically designated to the Drone as First Responder (DFR) program can be deployed to any call for service received by Emergency Services Dispatch requiring a staff member be dispatched, including using the UAS in lieu of dispatching a staff member.***
 - o. A Sheriff's Office event, which is non-enforcement related, to memorialize an event (e.g., academy graduation, parade, funeral).
6. Annually, all procedures, laws and regulations on UAS usage, shall be reviewed as follows: the commanding officer of the UAS Unit, and others as designated by the Sheriff, shall meet on the use of the UAS to review and audit UAS usage and documentation. The audit shall cover a sample size of 20% of all flights for the year, and ascertain whether each user was authorized to operate the UAS; whether each use complied with the authorized missions in #5; what data, if any, was shared with a third party including the District Attorney, and the disposition or result of each flight.

PROCEDURES:

1. A UAS operation requires a Certificate of Authorization (COA) from the FAA.
2. A UAS will only be operated by personnel who have been trained and certified in the operation of the system. All agency personnel with UAS responsibilities, including commanding officers, will be provided with training in the directives governing UAS use.

3. Absent exigent circumstances all flights will be approved in advance by the commanding officer of the UAS Unit. Once the exigency has passed the commanding officer will be advised of the deployment and circumstances concerning the exigency.
4. The UAS and all related equipment will be available and issued at the UAS Unit substation or at a secure location as designated by the Sheriff's Office.
5. All flights will be documented on the mission form designed for that purpose and all flight time shall be accounted for on the form. The reason for the flight and type of mission as specified above and name of the commanding officer approving the operation will also be documented. A summary of flight data will be included in the military equipment annual report required by Assembly Bill 481.
6. Prior to each UAS flight a Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) will be filed with the FAA.
7. The administration, safety policy, training requirements, general operating procedures and pre/post flight actions are contained within the UAS Operations Manual.

DATA RETENTION AND PROCESSING:

1. Video recording by UAS shall be deleted from the device, to include servers and cloud storage, within sixty (60) days unless:
 - a. The recording is part of a criminal investigation.
 - b. The recording is part of a Sheriff's Office Internal Affairs investigation.

Upon completion of each UAS mission the recorded data shall be reviewed and evaluated for evidentiary value. If the data has evidentiary value, it shall be uploaded into Evidence.com, annotated with an agency report number, and kept pursuant to established retention guidelines.

UAS data which is retained pursuant to this policy shall be available via public records request pursuant to applicable law regarding Public Records requests as soon as the criminal or administrative investigations have concluded and/or adjudicated.

PROTECTION OF RIGHTS AND PRIVACY CONCERNS: UAS Commanders, operators and observers will consider the protection of individual civil rights and the reasonable expectation of privacy as a key component of any decision made to deploy the UAS. Each UAS operator and observer will ensure that operations of the UAS are consistent with local, state, and federal law.