



WEST PALM BEACH POLICE DEPARTMENT

Policy IV-29

UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEM PROGRAM (UAS)

Revised: May 2, 2024,

I. POLICY:

Unmanned Aircraft Systems may be utilized to enhance the Department's mission of protecting lives and property. Any use of a UAS will be in strict accordance with constitutional and privacy rights, Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulation, 14 CFR Part 107, and in accordance with defining the use of UAS to investigations where the agency has reasonable suspicion that swift action is needed to prevent imminent danger to life or serious damage to property, to forestall the imminent escape of a suspect or the destruction of evidence, or to achieve purposes including, but not limited to, facilitating the search for a missing person and facilitate a law enforcement agency's collection of evidence at a crime scene or traffic crash scene and perform assessments pursuant to a declared state of emergency.

II. DEFINITIONS:

Beyond Visual Line of Sight Waiver (BVLOS) – An FAA waiver permitting the operations of a UAS beyond the visual line of sight of the pilot, requiring acute observation and awareness of the airspace around the UAS in flight.

Certificate of Authorization (COA) – is a written authorization issued by the FAA Air Traffic Organization to a public operator or agency for specific UAS activity.

Remote Pilot in Command (RPIC) - the person directly responsible for the operation of the UAS. The RPIC shall be designated as the person in possession of the remote control assigned to the UAS in flight. The RPIC can abort any flight that is deemed to be unsafe due to weather or other circumstances. When the UAS is being controlled by a Teleoperator, the RPIC shall be responsible for maintaining the 2-Mile radius Visual Detection Volume as required by the BVLOS waiver to assist the Teleoperator to remain clear of other air traffic.

Remote Pilot Certification- (Part 107)- Airman Certification process for commercial operation set forth by the FAA for safe operations.

Teleoperator – The Teleoperator may operate the drone at a location separate from the launch recovery site and physical location of the RPIC. The Teleoperator can abort any flight that is deemed to be unsafe due to weather or other circumstances.

Concept of Operation (CONOPS) - is a document describing the characteristics of a proposed system from the viewpoint of an individual who will use that system.

Small Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (SUAV) System (UAS) - An unmanned aircraft of any type,

weighing less than 55 pounds capable of directed flight, with the associated support equipment, control station, data links, telemetry, communications, and navigation equipment necessary for operation.

Special Government Interest (SGI)- amendment process for expediting support of airspace authorization and Part 107 waiver requests in specific circumstances.

Visual Observer (VO) – a UAS flight crewmember designated by the RPIC to assist with the responsibility to see and avoid other air traffic or objects aloft or on the ground. Nighttime operation requires the Visual Observer to complete training pertaining to night operations. A VO may be assigned to work with the RPIC to maintaining the 2-Mile radius Visual Detection Volume as required by the BVLOS waiver to assist the RPIC in remaining well clear of other air traffic or direct visual observation of the UAS.

III. CHIEF PILOT:

- A. The Chief of Police will appoint a Chief Pilot who will be responsible for the management of the UAS program.
- B. The Chief Pilot will ensure policies and procedures conform to current laws, regulations and best practices and include but not limited to:
 - 1. Ensure authorized pilots and observers have completed all required Department approved training in the operation, applicable laws, policies and procedures regarding use of the UAS.
 - 2. Review UAS deployments, including urgent requests made during ongoing or emerging incidents. Deployment of a UAS shall be at the discretion of the RPIC and/or Teleoperator. Authorized operators shall announce via police radio when a UAS is deployed in an active incident.
 - 3. Govern the deployment and operation of a UAS including safety oversight, use of visual observers, establishment of lost link procedures, documenting all missions, and secure communication with air traffic control facilities.
 - 4. Maintain inspection, maintenance, and record-keeping protocol to ensure continuing airworthiness of a UAS according to the manufacturer's recommendations and related industry standards.
 - 5. Ensure all data is maintained and stored according to State of Florida General Records Schedule GS-2.

IV. PILOT RESPONSIBILITIES:

- A. All pilots flying the UAS for law enforcement missions shall be responsible for the safe operation of the UAS in flight. All pilots will be properly trained and maintain a current Remote Pilot Certification (Part 107) set forth by the FAA.

1. All pilots must undergo Mission Training Exercises to increase core competencies to include operation of the UAS, visual observer role, and camera operation. Pilots authorized to act in the role of Teleoperator shall receive additional training on the operation of UAS from remote locations.
2. All pilots must have a minimum of three qualifying UAS flights to include pre-flight check, setup, take-offs and landings, for a duration of no less than 15 minutes total including one battery change, post flight log and breakdown in the preceding 90 days to be eligible to fly a UAS mission.
3. In order to accomplish the required training, pilots will participate in monthly training as determined by the Chief Pilot.
4. Training will not be limited to actual pilot/observer skills but must include knowledge of all pertinent UAS and aviation matters.
5. All pilots will be familiar with the COA, FAA Waivers, Part 107 operations, this policy, and maintain proficiency in their operator and observer abilities. Members who do not have documented training or flight time for the proceeding 90 days shall demonstrate proficiency before performing pilot duties during a mission.
6. Failure to maintain proficiency will result in removal as a UAS pilot.
7. RPIC prior to any mission will inspect the UAS utilizing a pre-flight checklist to ensure it is airworthy.
8. Prior to flight operations the RPIC will determine whether to operate under the COA or conduct flight operations under Part 107.
9. Operators and nighttime observers will conduct night operation training on a yearly basis and complete a written test in accordance with the FAA Operational Wavier.
10. Flight Time / Duty Time Limitations: No WPBPD UAS crewmember may operate a UAS for more than ten (10) hours of flight time during any one duty day. No WPBPD UAS crewmember may operate more than six (6) hours of flight time between the hours of 2400 and 0800 during any one duty day. No WPBPD UAS crewmember may continue to operate a UAS after sixteen (16) duty hours during any one duty day.
11. Student Pilots may operate a UAS under the direct supervision of a Licensed Part 107 pilot for training missions only.

V. DRONE AS FIRST RESPONDER (DFR):

- A. Only authorized operators (pilots) will be permitted to operate the UAS. Prior to any flight, the pilot in command (RPIC) will perform a pre-flight check following the approved checklist. UAS deployment will be at the discretion of the RPIC / Teleoperator.
 1. All DFR operations require two approved pilots (RPIC and Teleoperator). The RPIC shall be designated as the pilot in control of the remote-control unit assigned to the UAS conducting flight operations. The RPIC will be responsible for pre & post flight inspections,

is responsible for safe operation of the UAS, and may take control of the UAS from the Teleoperator as deemed necessary for safe flight operations. While the UAS is under the control of a Teleoperator, the RPIC shall be responsible for maintaining visual observation of the 2-Mile radius airspace around the UAS in flight.

2. The Teleoperator shall be allowed to assume remote control of the UAS at a location separate from the launch and recovery location and conduct remote flight operations while not having view of the aircraft in flight.
3. The Teleoperator and RPIC shall conduct a pre-flight inspection of the UAS being used for flight operations and the launch/ recovery site at the start of every operational period.
4. A RPIC and a Visual Observer is required for all patrol-based practice and mission flights of a UAS. The observer must participate in the pre-flight briefing, be familiar with the conditions of the COA, BVLOS, Part 107 guidelines, and ensure scene safety. The observer is not required to be an authorized operator. Observers shall complete the required training before assuming an observer role.
 - B. The Visual Observer must maintain line of sight, or visual observation of the 2-mile airspace around the drone in flight at all times as required by the CONOPS UAS will not operate directly over any persons not involved in the mission or call for service unless authorized by the COA or approved SGI.
 - C. The pilot must yield the right-of-way to other manned or unmanned aircraft. Pilots will not operate the UAS in a careless or reckless manner.
 - D. The UAS will operate in accordance with the maximum AGL set forth by a current Facility map published by the FAA or approved SGI.
 - E. The UAS operations may be conducted during daylight and nighttime hours. Authorized operators must be familiar with emergency/contingency procedures including UAS system failure, flight termination, divert, and lost link procedures.
 - F. Operations will be conducted in coordination with the FAA while in controlled airspace.
 - G. The RPIC will complete the post flight inspection and flight logs after each mission.
 - H. The use of the UAS potentially involves privacy considerations. Absent a warrant or exigent circumstances, operators and observers will not intentionally record images of any location where a person would have a reasonable expectation of privacy.
 - I. Recording of the UAS camera stream shall only occur while the UAS is on scene. Recording will not occur while enroute to the call for service or after leaving the incident location.
 - J. Recordings from the UAS shall be uploaded to Evidence.com and categorized with the appropriate retention period as established in the Body Worn Camera Policy. UAS flights which do not result in an investigative report will be assigned a 30-day retention period in accordance with State of Florida General Records Schedule GS-2 for Audio / video Recordings: Patrol Units. *Subject to redaction.*

- K. To maintain transparency, flight logs shall be completed following each flight and published to the city's public facing web site. Flight logs shall depict flight path, time, and associated call type.

VI. AUTHORIZED/PROHIBITED USE:

A. The UAS will only be used when:

1. Agency possesses reasonable suspicion that swift action is needed to prevent imminent danger to life or serious damage to property.
 - A. Locating fleeing felony suspects, escaped prisoners, forestall escape, or prevent the destruction of evidence.
2. Facilitating the search for missing persons.
3. Facilitate the collection of evidence at a crime scene or traffic crash scene.
4. Assist with traffic management. No citations may be issued based upon UAS images.
5. Pursuant to a search warrant signed by a judge, authorizing the use of the UAS.
6. Aiding or assisting in life safety operations.
7. Department approved training missions.
8. Conducting traffic and other surveys.
9. The assessment of damage due to a flood, a wildfire, or any other natural disaster that is the subject of a state of emergency declared by the state or by a political subdivision, before the expiration of the emergency declaration.
10. To provide a law enforcement agency with an aerial perspective of a crowd of 50 people or more, including organized or impromptu events, that by their nature, require due diligence in providing maximum security and safety.
 - A. UAS operated under this mission description require the prior written authorization of the Chief of Police and must retain copy on file at the agency. This authorization may be included in the operational plan approved by the Chief of Police.
 - B. Mutual Aid missions are consistent with this policy.
 - C. Aerial Mapping & 3-D Modeling.

B. The UAS will not be used:

1. When other manned aircraft are operating in the immediate area unless in coordination with Law Enforcement Air Support Unit(s).
2. Contrary to the manufacturer's specifications or instructions.

3. In situations where there is an increase of risk or injury to others in the operational area.
4. Conducting personal business of any type.

VII. DOCUMENTATION AND RETENTION OF UAS DATA:

- A. The UAS operator will complete all Department flight documentation including pertinent information about the aircraft, flight conditions, type of mission, and mission parameters. Monthly reports will be submitted to the Chief Pilot.
- B. Digital media (videos/still images) will be collected on the mission being conducted. Digital media captured by the UAS will be uploaded to Evidence.com and retained by the Department according to the classification of the incident's retention schedule set by the State of Florida General Records Schedule GS-2. Digital Media, which is not classified by the GS-2 schedule, shall be retained for 30 days.
- C. Flight logs will be maintained electronically.

VIII. TRAINING:

- A. Police personnel who are assigned to UAS program must complete an agency-approved training program to ensure proper use and operations and any additional training to incorporate changes, updates, or other revisions in policy and equipment.
- B. Nighttime operations training for Teleoperator's and VO's will be conducted on a yearly basis to include a test to stay within compliance of Part 107 Wavier.

IX. REFERENCE:

- F.S.S. Chapter 119
- 14 CFR Part 107
- [FSS 934.50](#)

Approved:

Signature on file
Frank Adderley, Chief of Police

May 2, 2024
Date: