

St. Joseph, Missouri Police Department



DIRECTIVE TYPE: SPECIAL ORDER		INDEX NUMBER: SO1702
SUBJECT: Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems		
EFFECTIVE DATE: 6/12/17	REVISIONS: 04/09/24	AMENDS/RESCINDS: N/A
REVISIONS CONTINUED:		DISTRIBUTION: B (Sworn)

I. PURPOSE:

This policy is intended to provide personnel who are assigned responsibilities associated with the deployment and use of small unmanned aircraft systems (sUAS) with instructions on when and how this technology and the information it provides may be used for law enforcement and public safety purposes in accordance with law.

II. GENERAL POLICIES:

It is the policy of the St Joseph Police Department that only duly trained and authorized agency personnel may deploy sUAS when such use is appropriate in the performance of their official duties, and where deployment and use, and the collection and use of any audio/video recordings or other data originating from or generated by the sUAS, conform with the policy provisions provided herein and applicable law.

III. DEFINITIONS:

- A. *Digital Multimedia Evidence (DME):*** Digital recording of images, sounds, and associated data.
- B. *Unmanned Aircraft (UA) or Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV):*** An aircraft that is intended to navigate in the air without an on-board pilot. Also alternatively called Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA), Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV), or Drone.
- C. *Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS):*** A system that includes the necessary equipment, network, and personnel to control an unmanned aircraft.
- D. *Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems (sUAS):*** UAS systems that utilize UAVs weighing less than 55 pounds and are consistent with Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations governing model aircraft.
- E. *UAS Flight Crewmember:*** A pilot, visual observer, payload operator or other person assigned duties for a UAS for the purpose of flight or training exercise.
- F. *Unmanned Aircraft Pilot:*** A person exercising control over a UA/UAV/UAS during flight.

IV. PROCEDURES:

A. Administration

The Chief of Police authorizes any supervisor to request the deployment of sUAS. This agency has adopted the use of sUAS to provide an aerial visual perspective in responding to emergency situations and exigent circumstances; including but not limited to the following objectives:

1. **Situational Awareness**: To assist decision makers (e.g., incident command staff; first responders; city, county, and state officials) in understanding the nature, scale, and scope of an incident—and for planning and coordinating an effective response.
2. **Search and Rescue**: To assist missing person investigations, AMBER Alerts, Silver Alerts, and other search and rescue missions.
3. **Tactical Deployment**: To support the tactical deployment of officers and equipment in emergency situations (e.g., incidents involving hostages and barricades, support for large-scale tactical operations, and other temporary perimeter security situations).
4. **Visual Perspective**: To provide an aerial visual perspective to assist officers in providing direction for crowd control, traffic incident management, special circumstances, and temporary perimeter security.
5. **Scene Documentation**: To document a crime scene, accident scene, or other major incident scene (e.g., disaster management, incident response, large-scale forensic scene investigation)

B. sUAS Pilots

1. Only those who have been trained to operate the sUAS in accordance with all FAA rules and regulations will be authorized to pilot the sUAS.

C. Procedures for sUAS use

1. The agency must obtain applicable authorizations, permits, or certificates required by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) prior to deploying or operating the sUAS, and these authorizations, permits, and certificates shall be maintained and current.
2. Trained department sUAS operators shall be empowered to deploy as needed after notification of an on-shift supervisor.
3. The sUAS will be operated only by personnel (pilots and crew members) who have been trained in the operation of the system and are familiar with SJPD policy regarding the deployment of the sUAS
4. The sUAS-trained personnel shall inspect and test sUAS equipment prior to each deployment to verify the proper functioning of all equipment and the airworthiness of the device.
5. The sUAS equipment is the responsibility of individual officers and will be used with reasonable care to ensure proper functioning. Equipment malfunctions shall be brought to the attention of the sUAS administrator as soon as possible so that an appropriate repair can be made, or a replacement unit can be procured.
6. The sUAS equipment and all data, images, video, and metadata captured, recorded, or otherwise produced by the equipment are the sole property of the agency.

D. First-Person View (FPV) sUAS

1. SJPD personnel assigned to the sUAS program will receive training and demonstrate proficiency prior to deploying FPV capable sUAS.
2. An observer/safety officer will be utilized during FPV sUAS deployments. Inherently, the pilot in command is unable to operate the sUAS and maintain visual line of sight (VLOS).
3. All training, operational, and reporting requirements outlined within this general order will be observed.

D.

7. All flights will be documented on a form or database designed for that purpose, and all flight time shall be accurately recorded. In addition, each deployment of the sUAS shall include the following information regarding the reason for the flight:
 - a. The time, date, and location of the flight;
 - b. The staff assigned; and
 - c. A summary of the activities covered including actions taken, and outcomes from the deployment.
8. Where there are specific and articulable grounds to believe that the sUAS will collect evidence of criminal wrongdoing the agency will follow standard procedure to determine if a search warrant should be obtained prior to conducting the flight.

E. Restrictions on Using the sUAS

1. The sUAS shall be deployed and used only to support official law enforcement and public safety missions.
2. The sUAS shall not be operated in an unsafe manner and should not be operated in violation of FAA rules.
3. The sUAS shall not be equipped with weapons of any kind.

F. Digital Media Evidence Retention & Management

1. All DME shall be handled in accordance with existing policy on data and record retention, where applicable.
2. All DME shall be securely downloaded at the completion of each mission. The sUAS certified operators will record information for each file that shall include:
 - a. The date, time and location of use;
 - b. Case reference numbers or other mission identifiers; and
 - c. Those sUAS personnel involved in the mission.
3. DME files having evidentiary value will be booked into evidence.
4. All operational DME obtained from any sUAS will have a 30 day retention, after 30 days if the video has no obvious evidentiary value it may be destroyed. Videos may be kept by the sUAS Unit for training purposes if they do not hold evidentiary value or after the case has been adjudicated.
5. DME containing crime scene or other visual documentation which may be needed for further processing by investigators will be booked into evidence; copies may be obtained by the investigators for further processing; however, original files will stay in evidence.
6. Training flights and intelligence gathering operations that produce digital Multimedia are not required to be retained unless during said flight it becomes

evidentiary. The Digital Media may be retained by the sUAS Unit for future training purposes.

G. sUAS Supervision & Reporting

1. sUAS supervisory personnel shall manage all deployments and uses of sUAS to ensure that officers equipped with sUAS devices utilize them in accordance with policy and procedures defined herein.
2. An authorized sUAS supervisor or administrator will audit flight documentation at regular intervals.
3. The sUAS administrator shall comply with all reporting requirements to include monthly COA submissions.

H. Training

1. Police personnel who are assigned sUAS must complete an agency-approved training program to ensure proper use and operations. Additional training may be required at periodic intervals to ensure the continued effective use and operation and proper calibration and performance of the equipment and to incorporate changes, updates, or other revisions in policy and equipment.
2. All agency personnel with sUAS responsibilities, including command officers, shall also be trained in the local and federal laws and regulations, as well as policies and procedures governing the deployment and use of sUAS.
3. The SJPD will maintain a minimum of 2 Officers who hold a valid Part 107 Remote Pilots License.

Paul Luster, Chief of Police

Date