

DRONE PROGRAM

UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS
PHASE ONE STATUS UPDATE



SAN FRANCISCO POLICE DEPARTMENT

September 4, 2024



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Following the passage of Proposition E, SFPD deployed six unmanned aircraft systems (drones) as part of initial deployment, with more on the way
- These drones are SFPD's first air support in 24 years.
- All drone operators are trained and certified with a Remote Pilot's License (Part 107) issued by Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to ensure drones are operated in accordance with all laws and the manufacturer's approved flight manuals.
- To more effectively and efficiently respond to crime, SFPD is integrating drones with other technologies including Automated License Plate Readers (ALPR) and public safety cameras.
- Drones are deployed within the City & County of San Francisco, SF Airport property, and during SFPD operations outside of San Francisco as allowed.
- Benefits include faster response times, situational awareness, more precision, de-escalation, officer safety, avoiding unnecessary police chases, and force multiplier during staff shortages.



POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Policies

- SFPD has policies in place to ensure drones are used responsibly with safeguards to protect the Constitutional rights and privacy of the public.
- The Technical Services Unit (TSU) has oversight of the program in coordination with the Tactical Team (TAC) to ensure compliance with all federal, state, and local laws as well as Department policy and guidelines.

Compliance with AB 481/Local Ordinance

- As required under Government Code Sections 7070 *et seq.* and Ordinance 257-222, SFPD has submitted a Use of Equipment Policy to the Board of Supervisors.
- This proposed ordinance, File 240636, is tentatively scheduled for discussion before the Government Audit and Oversight on September 9, and once approved, will move to the full Board for review and approval.



AUTHORIZED USE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Authorized Use

- Under Prop. E, the SFPD is authorized to use drones along with or in lieu of vehicles during pursuits and to assist with active criminal investigations.
- Under the policy submitted to the Board of Supervisors , drones will be used for training and simulations, critical incidents, exigent circumstances, search and rescue, missing persons, Crime Scene Investigation, during suspicious device assessments, planned operations, and disaster response.

Deployment Responsibilities During Phase One

- Drones provide aerial support and situational awareness to responding officers during:
 1. Pre-planned crime prevention and investigation operations.
 2. Spontaneous criminal investigations at the discretion of the Program Manager or designee.
 3. Response to Major and Critical incidents as defined by SFPD General Order 8.01.



PROHIBITIONS AND RESTRICTIONS

Department-owned drones, their accessories, and/or features/functions shall not be used:

1. To harass, intimidate, or discriminate against any individual or group.
2. To monitor individuals based on their race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or membership in any protected class.
3. For a non-law enforcement related matter.
4. In an unsafe manner or in violation of regulations.
5. The drone shall not be equipped with weapons of any kind.
6. The drone shall not be a force option.

When the drone 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.



DATA AND REPORTING

Data Retention

- Video footage with no evidentiary value is deleted within 30 days.
- Recorded data that is found to have evidentiary value relevant to a criminal, civil, or administrative matter, shall be retained for a minimum of 2½ years.
- Recorded data is not collected or retained for protected First Amendment activities.

Data Sharing

- Data may be shared with law enforcement partners for law enforcement-purposes and the Department of Police Accountability.
- Data may be shared with media outlets or on SFPD social media with the Chief of Police approval and in accordance with Media Relations and Legal Division guidelines.

Standard Reporting

- SFPD will post a standard report of drone deployments on its website.
- The inaugural report will be due 90 days after the first recorded, non-training related deployment and will be updated monthly thereafter.
- Equipment and use of drones will be reported in the annual AB 481 report.



EXAMPLES OF DRONE USAGE RESULTS

Drones already have assisted SFPD in numerous cases including sex assault suspect arrest, several auto burglaries, Fourth of July disturbances, and violent and wanted fugitives.

Recent Incidents:

- On July 26, officers responded to two subjects on dirt bikes breaking into cars around the Embarcadero. A drone was able to follow the subjects and locate their position allowing officers to make an arrest.
- On July 27, plainclothes officers identified an auto burglary crew breaking into vehicles in the same area. With help from the drone, SFPD located the suspects, spiked their tires, placed them under arrest, and recovered all the stolen property.

In both above incidents, the District Attorney was able to file criminal charges and both cases are being prosecuted and are pending before the court.





Questions?

