

ST. PETERSBURG POLICE DEPARTMENT

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GENERAL ORDER (INSTRUCTIONAL ORDER)

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Distribution: All Employees

Subject: **SMALL UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS (sUAS)**

Index as:	Controlled Airspace	RPIC
	Daylight Flight	Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems (sUAS)
	Drones	sUAS
	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)	Uncontrolled Airspace
	NOAA	Unmanned Aerial Vehicles
	Post-Flight Log	Visual Observer (VO)
	Pre-Flight Log	VO
	Remote Pilot in Command (RPIC)	

Accreditation Standards: 41.1.3, CFA 32.03

Cross Reference: [G.O. III-14, Property and Evidence](#)
[G.O. III-15, Special Weapons and Tactics \(SWAT\) Team](#)
§934.50, F.S.S., Searches and seizure using a drone
Florida Administrative Code 60GG-2.0075, Unmanned Aerial Systems Minimum Security Requirements
Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) 14 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 107
Replaces: III-39 Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems (sUAS) (April 10, 2023)

This Order governs the use of Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems (sUAS) by the Department. It consists of:

- I. Policy
- II. Purpose
- III. Definitions
- IV. Procedures

I. POLICY

A. It is the policy of the St. Petersburg Police Department that any employee operating a Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems (sUAS) both adheres to all applicable federal and Florida state statutes governing drones and operates the sUAS in a safe manner.

II. PURPOSE

A. The purpose of this Order is to:

1. Establish a set of guidelines to ensure compliance with state and federal law and applicable Federal Aviation Administration regulations, and

2. To maintain the safe and legal operation of sUAS by authorized and trained employees of the St. Petersburg Police Department.

III. DEFINITIONS

A. Daylight Flight – Flight which occurs from one half-hour before sunrise and one half-hour after sunset. The sunset and sunrise times are determined by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

B. Controlled Airspace – A generic term that defines different classifications of airspace and defined dimensions within an identified airspace (Class A, B, C, D, and E) monitored by an air traffic control tower.

C. Pre-Flight and Post-Flight Log – Either an electronic or hard copy log that contains a safety checklist for the sUAS, flight times, area flown, and weather conditions.

D. Remote Pilot in Command (RPIC) – An individual who has full control over the sUAS and holds a valid Part 107 Airman Certificate with a Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems rating certified by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). RPICs are also considered “pilots.”

E. Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems (sUAS) – An aircraft system that operates without a human pilot on board. The flight of the sUAS is controlled remotely by the RPIC.

F. Uncontrolled Airspace – Airspace that is not controlled by an air traffic control tower (Class G).

G. Visual Observer (VO) – An individual who is trained in sUAS operations and tasked to maintain a constant visual of the sUAS while it is airborne. The VO is also responsible to scan the immediate area for hazards that could impact the safe operation of the sUAS and to coordinate with the RPIC. Hazards may include, but are not limited to, adverse weather patterns, other aircraft, and terrain.

IV. PROCEDURES

A. sUAS Readiness

1. The sUAS is identified as both Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) equipment and equipment used by the Crash Investigation Unit to facilitate the collection of evidence at a traffic crash scene **only**. The sUAS will be under the direction and order of the Assistant SWAT Commander, SWAT Commander, or Traffic Commander.

a. The sUAS will **only** be operated by SWAT or Traffic Crash Investigation personnel who hold a valid Part 107 Airman Certificate with a sUAS rating certified by the FAA.

b. SWAT or Traffic Crash Investigation personnel may operate the sUAS under the direct supervision of a member of the respective Unit who holds the valid Part 107 Airman Certificate.

2. All personnel authorized to use the sUAS will do so in a safe manner to minimize potential injury or property damage.

3. The following documentation will be maintained by designated personnel

- a. Pre-flight and post-flight logs,
- b. Maintenance logs, and
- c. Certification paperwork.

4. The sUAS will be registered with the FAA and bear the assigned registration number on the body of the sUAS.

B. sUAS Training and Use

1. A Remote Pilot in Command (RPIC) of the sUAS is required to:

- a. Possess and maintain a valid CFR 14 Part 107 Airman Certificate with a sUAS rating certified by the FAA;
- b. Pass the Part 107 sUAS refresher test every twenty-four (24) months.

and

2. To continue proficiency with the sUAS, authorized personnel will inspect and fly the sUAS at least once a month.

3. Each RPIC will keep an individual logbook documenting their flight hours and any certifications obtained.

C. sUAS Deployment Criteria and Personnel Requirements

1. All operations involving the sUAS will adhere to §934.50, F.S.S. and all applicable federal law, including the FAA sUAS CFR 14 Part 107 guidelines.
2. The operation of a sUAS may be authorized under these conditions:
 - a. To counter a high risk of a terrorist attack by a specific individual or organization if the United States Secretary of Homeland Security determines that credible intelligence indicates that there is such a risk.
 - b. If the Department first obtains a search warrant signed by a judge authorizing the use of a drone.
 - c. If the Department possesses reasonable suspicion that, under particular circumstances, 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.
 - d. To facilitate the collection of evidence at a traffic crash scene.
 - e. To provide a law enforcement agency with an aerial perspective of a crowd of fifty (50) people or more.
3. Should a sUAS be deployed for a SWAT operation, within ninety (90) minutes from the deployment of the sUAS or at any time at which the Commanding Officer on scene determines that the episode may reasonably result in criminal prosecution, the Commanding Officer on scene will designate personnel to contact the State Attorney's Office to begin the process to obtain a search warrant.
 - a. Search warrant affidavit, warrant, and return templates have been pre-drafted in light of the unique and statutorily-regulated nature of the sUAS devices.
 - b. An Assistant State Attorney has been identified as the primary contact on this matter.
4. The sUAS will be flown by an authorized Remote Pilot in Command and, when practical, an authorized Visual Observer will be present during operations.

D. Remote Pilot in Command (RPIC)

1. The RPIC is responsible for the direct control over the sUAS.
2. The RPIC has the authority to deny a flight of the sUAS due to adverse weather, aircraft limitations, terrain obstructions, and/or pilot physical conditions.
 - a. No Department employee, regardless of rank, can order the RPIC to fly the sUAS if in the judgement of the RPIC such flight cannot be done safely.
3. The RPIC will be responsible to adhere to §934.50, F.S.S., FAA sUAS CFR 14 Part 107, and any certificate of waivers issued by the FAA, if applicable.
4. The RPIC is responsible for monitoring Air Traffic Control radio traffic to the nearest airport.

E. Visual Observer (VO)

1. The VO will work to assist the RPIC during flight operations in maintaining visual awareness of the airspace and relaying any hazards to the RPIC. Such hazards may include other aircraft, adverse weather, and terrain.
2. The VO will keep a constant visual sight on the sUAS while it is airborne during an operation.

F. Maintenance

1. The sUAS will be maintained in a safe and operational condition.
2. Authorized personnel will adhere to the sUAS manufacturer's guidelines regarding maintenance, as applicable.
 - a. If the manufacturer does not provide a maintenance guideline, the Unit/Section Commander will create and implement a maintenance plan.

3. A single maintenance log for each sUAS, either electronic or hard copy, will be maintained by designated personnel.

G. Evidence

1. Video evidence collected by the sUAS will be downloaded and saved by the RPIC.

2. The evidence will be submitted to the Department's Property and Evidence Room or uploaded to Evidence.com to be stored digitally for evidentiary purposes.

Anthony Holloway
Chief of Police