

GENERAL ORDER



Title		
Tactical Air Support		
Topic	Series	Number
HSC	803	07
Effective Date		
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DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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I. PURPOSE

The Special Operations Division's (SOD) Air Support Unit (ASU) operates as the primary aerial platform for the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD). ASU provides tactical air support by assisting patrol service areas improve police response time, increase patrol observation, and enhance officer safety. It is the policy of the MPD to use its helicopter fleet as an aerial platform for police operations, traffic control and reporting, apprehensions, pursuit management, crime prevention, safety, locating missing persons, water patrol operations, special events, and community affairs. The purpose of this general order is to provide procedures for tactical air support.

II. PROCEDURES

A. General

1. ASU shall comply with [Federal Aviation Administration \(FAA\) regulations Part 43 \(Maintenance\)](#), [Part 61 \(Certifications\)](#), [Part 67 \(Medical Standards and Certification\)](#), and [Part 91 \(General Operating and Flight Rules\)](#).
2. Failure to comply with this order shall result in grounding of the equipment and/or the member which/who fails to achieve and/or maintain compliance with these regulations. The duration of the grounding will continue until the deficiencies are remedied and such remedy(s) is approved by the FAA **and** the SOD commanding official.

B. Requesting Tactical Air Support

1. It is the goal of ASU to be widely available to provide air support. Flight crew members shall monitor the city-wide zone while in service and on patrol whenever possible. If not on patrol, ASU may quickly become

airborne when needed.

2. All MPD units are encouraged to request ASU support when it may help accomplish a particular mission.
 - a. For emergency or on-duty requests, members shall make a request through the dispatcher.
 - b. For advance service requests, members shall make a request through the ASU official.
3. Any ASU pilot may accept a mission or flight supporting MPD, provided the flight is deemed mission essential and can be accomplished safely.
4. Missions requested outside MPD jurisdiction shall be evaluated the SOD watch commander.

C. Limitations of Use

1. Certain limitations exist in all airborne operations, regardless of the specific mission. The final determination of readiness for flight lies with the on-duty pilot in command.
2. The pilot in command, in making a determination shall be governed by all applicable FAA regulations pertaining to the safety of flight and any airspace or weather minimums relating to the mission.
3. If, in the opinion of the pilot in command, the tactical flight officer, or any ASU official that a particular mission cannot be safely conducted the mission **shall** be cancelled. Routine patrols shall be suspended for similar reasons. Each flight shall be evaluated on an individual basis.

D. Recording

1. Helicopter footage is the sole property of MPD and shall only be used for official law enforcement purposes.
2. Upon completion of flights equipped with video recording capabilities, the tactical flight officer shall ensure footage is uploaded, categorized, and retained in [evidence.com](#) in accordance with the category and retention schedule provided in [GO-SPT-302.13 \(Body-Worn Camera Program\)](#). Absent exceptional circumstances with authorization from the SOD commanding official, footage shall be captured and retained from take-off to landing.
3. Live monitoring of helicopter footage in MPD facilities shall be limited and conducted pursuant to the procedures set forth in [GO-OPS-603.07 \(Close-Circuit Television Camera\)](#).
4. Cameras shall not target/observe individuals arbitrarily or solely based on race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, or other classifications protected by law. Cameras shall not focus on hand bills,

fliers, or other material being distributed or carried pursuant to the exercise of First Amendment rights.

III. DEFINITIONS

When used in this directive, the following terms shall have the meanings designated.

	Term	Definition
1.	Flight	Mission performed by an MPD helicopter.
2.	Flight crew	Team consisting of a tactical flight officer and a pilot.
3.	Pilot	MPD member licensed and rated to fly a particular aircraft.
4.	Pilot in command	MPD member aboard an aircraft responsible for the operation and safety during flight.
5.	Tactical flight officer	MPD member who manages the helicopter's airborne law enforcement systems (e.g., down link, moving map, police radio, thermal imaging system, spot light), conducts safety briefings for any non-crew passengers, and assists with each flight.



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