

STOCKTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

GENERAL ORDER

AIR SUPPORT UNIT OPERATIONS
SUBJECT

DATE: June 19, 2019

NO: V-7

FROM: CHIEF ERIC JONES

TO: ALL PERSONNEL

INDEX: Air Support Unit Operations

I. POLICY

This policy governs the field operations of the Stockton Police Department's (SPD) Air Support Unit (ASU). Members of the Stockton Police Department will adhere to the guidelines set forth in our General Orders and Policies and Procedures. This includes extending the tenets of Procedural Justice.

II. PURPOSE

The aircraft and aircrew's primary mission and focus are to support the officers on the ground during day-to-day patrol operations while keeping in mind the security, safety, and privacy of the citizens of Stockton. Every flight shall be conducted within the scope of Federal Aviation Regulations (FAR), aircraft operation manuals, and Departmental policies and procedures. Crew members shall utilize cockpit resource management skills and decide whether a flight should be initiated, continued, or terminated, taking into consideration the weather, the condition of the aircraft, any hazards, and crew limitations or restrictions. If crew members cannot agree on a course of action, the mission shall be terminated.

III. PROCEDURES

A. STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

1. The Air Support Unit shall establish a Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) Manual which addresses specific hazards, restrictions, and conditions of operation in areas worked by the aircraft, in operations during the night and reduced visibility, and night vision goggle (NVG) operations. In addition, unit SOP should address hazards and concerns unique to the air support program.
2. Pre-Accident Plan. Unit SOP shall include a pre-accident plan. The pre-accident plan shall include, in the event of a Departmental aircraft accident or incident, the proper procedures to be followed to expeditiously and efficiently accomplish the following:
 - a. Provide rescue and care for crew members and involved civilians.
 - b. Ensure appropriate notification as specified in the SOP.
 - c. Protect the scene and Departmental equipment, and preserve evidence needed for a comprehensive investigation, until relieved by the designated investigative authority. Refer to General Order M-3 – Airplane Crashes.

B. AIRCRAFT DEPLOYMENT

1. Priorities. A citywide deployment strategy has been developed to fully utilize the capabilities of Departmental aircraft. The strategy is based on Departmental program goals.
2. Aircraft Availability. The ASU Program shall establish normal unit operating hours. The ASU Lieutenant, or their designee, must be called for any air operation outside normal business hours.

3. Request for Use of Aircraft. Requests for ASU aircraft operations for temporary use will be directed through the ASU Lieutenant by memorandum or e-mail. The memorandum or e-mail shall indicate the specific dates and reason for the request.

C. AIRCRAFT USAGE

1. Air Support may be requested under any of the following conditions:
 - a. When the safety of law enforcement personnel/public are in jeopardy, and the presence of air support may reduce such hazard;
 - b. When the use of air support can aid in the capture of a suspected fleeing felon whose continued action(s) represents an ongoing threat to the community;
 - c. When air support is needed to locate a person who is lost and whose continued absence constitutes a serious health or safety hazard;
 - d. Vehicle pursuits;
 - e. Any other situation deemed appropriate and approved by the ASU Lieutenant or their designee, or the Watch Commander.
2. Aerial Patrol and Response to Calls
 - a. Normal patrol shall be conducted within the city limits of Stockton.
 - b. The aircraft should not leave the scene of an assigned call without ground units at the scene being contacted and acknowledging the aircraft is leaving the scene.
 - c. Nothing in this section shall supersede the pilot-in-command's or Tactical Flight Officer's (TFO's) discretion to abort response or remain at a call due to flight safety considerations.
 - d. Patrol flight altitudes shall not be less than 500 feet above the ground during daylight hours and 700 feet above the ground during darkness, except as required by instructions from Air Traffic Control or the accomplishment of a specific task after safety and noise factors are considered.
 - e. Aircraft noise generation is by far the single greatest objection voiced by citizens to patrol flights. Noise reduction must be a consideration during all routine flights.
 - f. Enforcement. Ground unit officers may take enforcement action based on information provided by the flight crew member(s).
3. Passenger Transportation
 - a. Passengers transported on operational flights may be off-loaded at locations other than where boarded as mission needs dictate.
 - b. Unless absolutely necessary to complete the mission, passengers shall not occupy the normal duty station of a crew member. If the mission dictates that a passenger be seated at a position having aircraft controls, those controls shall, if possible, be removed.
 - c. Orientation flights for Departmental personnel are encouraged and may be authorized by the ASU Supervisor.

Orientation flights involving non-departmental personnel will require completion of a release and waiver of liability form. Under no circumstance will non-departmental personnel fly without prior approval of the ASU Lieutenant, a member of management, or, in their absence, the on-duty Watch Commander. The waiver shall be submitted to the ASU Supervisor and retained by the air unit for one calendar year.

- d. Prior to departure, all passengers shall be given a safety briefing by a crew member on relevant aspects of the proposed flight. The TFO will be responsible for instructing the passenger and completing the Passenger Preflight Briefing Form.

4. Helicopter Ingress/Egress Procedures

The following helicopter ingress and egress procedures shall be followed by all crew members and passengers when the rotors are in motion:

a. Crew members

- 1) Do not approach or depart the helicopter without first receiving a visual or audible signal from the pilot or a crew member.
- 2) Do not climb over rocks or other obstacles when approaching or departing the helicopter.
- 3) Do not approach or depart the helicopter when the rotors are running down or starting up to avoid contact with drooping rotor blades.
- 4) Do not wear hats while approaching or departing the helicopter.
- 5) Always depart and approach the helicopter on the downslope side when on sloping ground for maximum rotor clearance.
- 6) Always approach and depart the helicopter to the front or side. Never depart to the rear to avoid contact with the tail rotor.
- 7) Always crouch when approaching and departing the helicopter.
- 8) If blinded by dust when approaching or departing the helicopter, stop, crouch down, or sit and wait for the dust to clear.
- 9) If carrying a long object, ensure it is carried horizontally when approaching or departing the helicopter.
- 10) Protective gear for the eyes and ears should be worn whenever possible.

b. Passengers

- 1) The helicopter engine and rotor blades shall be stopped prior to loading or unloading passengers unless crew members are directly supervising the loading or unloading activity.
- 2) When crew members are supervising the loading or unloading of passengers with the engine and rotor blades in motion, crew members and passengers shall follow all procedures listed in C.4.a.1) through 10), of this policy.

D. PURSUIT RESPONSIBILITY

Refer to General Order V-1 J (Vehicle Pursuit).

E. REQUEST FOR AIR SUPPORT SERVICES

All requests for helicopter surveillance and special operations will be directed to the Air Support Lieutenant via chain of command.

F. RESPONSE TO MUTUAL AID

The aircraft shall not respond to any location outside of the City of Stockton or assist another agency without the prior consent of the ASU Lieutenant or his/her designee. Requests from outside agency

assists will be approved by the ASU Lieutenant or his/her designee. Incidents where SPD Air Support assists outside agencies will be carried on the Watch Commander's Daily.

If a flight crew becomes aware of a situation that calls for aircraft assistance involving a critical threat to an officer's life or the public and they are capable of rendering assistance in a timely manner, the flight crew shall notify the dispatcher they are responding and request permission to continue from the Watch Commander. The dispatcher should notify the Watch Commander as soon as possible for their response decision. It shall be the observer's responsibility to keep the Watch Commander, or the ASU Supervisor informed regarding the nature of the assistance and the estimated time required to complete the assistance and return to the City. The Watch Commander shall have the ability to recall the aircraft to the City at their discretion in the absence of other authority.

Rescue, Medical Aid, and Emergency Flights. Although this guideline cannot address every event, it is the policy of the Air Support Unit not to engage in physical rescue, medical, or emergency flight missions. While it is recognized that disasters may occur, or life-threatening events happen (e.g., a person being swept away in the flood control channel), the Air Support Unit's policy will be to provide assistance in an emergency situation if it can be done safely and within policy and the limitations of the aircraft.

G. FIRE DEPARTMENT REQUESTS

The Stockton Fire Department's area of responsibility covers a broad spectrum of firefighting and lifesaving operations. To enhance the efficiency and safety of these vital and hazardous duties, the Police ASU may be asked to provide helicopter support in a variety of mission-specific areas.

Requests by the Fire Department for assistance in the City of Stockton will be granted after assessment and approval by the ASU Lieutenant or, in his/her absence, the Watch Commander. Upon determination by the crew that the assistance is within the performance capabilities of both crew and aircraft, they may respond to assist.

H. WEAPONS IN AIRCRAFT

1. Shooting Policy. Firearms shall not be discharged from a Departmental aircraft.
2. Special Purpose Firearms. Departmental shotguns and tactical rifles shall not be routinely transported in Departmental aircraft.
 - a. During emergencies, Departmental shotguns or tactical weapons may be carried on Departmental aircraft with the approval of the crew and provided there is no live chambered round during transport. These weapons shall not be discharged from the aircraft.
 - b. Allied agency personnel may carry their weapons if approved by the crew.
 - c. Tactical weapons shall not have a live chambered round during transport.
 - d. Aerosol Chemical Agents. Any aerosol chemical agent (MACE, pepper spray, oleoresin capsicum, etc.) shall not be carried on Departmental aircraft.

I. ASU HANGAR

The ASU hangar is restricted to ASU personnel and Command Staff. Access by police personnel and civilians must be granted by an ASU member prior to entering the premises. All visitors must be accompanied by an ASU member.

J. TELECOMMUNICATIONS CENTER RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Flight Following

Flight following will consist of the aircrew logging on and off with SPD Dispatch. When the aircrew is flying, they will advise Dispatch of their status. Dispatch will then check on the aircrew every 30

minutes or until the aircrew advises they are no longer flying. At the end of watch for the evening/day, and if the crew inadvertently forgets to log off with SPD dispatch or a mishap does in fact occur, it is then the responsibility of the dispatcher to contact the aircrew, either by police radio or other means, to decipher the nature of the problem or confirm that the aircrew has landed safely.

2. Precautionary and Emergency Landings

a. Precautionary Landing

A precautionary landing indicates a mechanical malfunction or personnel problems of unknown seriousness. The following procedures should be followed when this type of landing occurs:

- 1) The dispatcher will advise the ASU Lieutenant, Watch Commander, and/or field supervisor immediately.
- 2) A patrol unit will be dispatched to the scene to render assistance.
- 3) The Air Support Supervisor and/or Air Support Lieutenant will be notified as soon as possible of the aircraft's status (via page), and an Aircraft Incident Report Memo will be completed by the Pilot-in-Command.

b. Emergency Landing

An emergency landing indicates mechanical or personnel problems serious enough to require an immediate landing. If this should occur, the following procedures should be utilized:

- 1) The dispatcher will notify the Watch Commander or field supervisor immediately.
- 2) The dispatcher will send police, fire, and rescue equipment to the scene immediately upon being advised of an attempted emergency landing.
- 3) Advise the Field Operations Captain, Air Support Lieutenant, and Air Support Sergeant immediately (via page).

c. Additional Notifications

The Field Operations Captain, the Watch Commander, ASU Lieutenant, and the Air Support Unit Supervisor shall be notified as soon as possible (via page) if:

- 1) Personal injury or property damage, however slight, occurs through the use of the aircraft.
- 2) A flight is overdue, and there is reason to believe that the aircraft has been involved in an accident. (N.T.S.B. must also be notified 1-844-373-9922)
- 3) More than 30 minutes have elapsed since the aircraft was due at a destination and its whereabouts are unknown. The Telecommunications Center will notify Air Traffic Control (Stockton 209-982-5764 or Terminal Radar Approach Control 1-916-366-4001).
- 4) The ASU Supervisor should notify other air support members for response and assistance. In the event the unit supervisor is not available, the Watch Commander should make sure Air Support members are notified.

d. Precautionary or Emergency Landing Outside of Stockton

- 1) Follow the same procedure as outlined under Precautionary Landing or Emergency Landing.
- 2) Pilot or observer will advise the location of landing as accurately as possible.

- 3) Advise the police agency of the jurisdiction where the landing has occurred. Request fire and rescue equipment if an emergency has been declared.
- 4) Make the appropriate notifications as outlined under Precautionary and Emergency Landings.