
Aerial Support Response Team Procedure

1200.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this procedure is to establish guidelines under which an Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) shall be utilized, and the storage, retrieval and dissemination of images and data captured by such systems.

1200.1.1 ISSUANCE/EFFECTIVE DATE

This procedure was re-issued on Apr. 1, 2026 and shall become effective upon issuance (statutory updates).

1200.1.2 DEFINITIONS

Definitions related to this procedure include:

Aerial Support Response Team (ASRT) - Trained and specialized team made up of Sheriff's Office members under the command of the Executive Director of Fleet and Logistics, who oversees the ASRT. ASRT personnel respond to high-risk tactical incidents including hostage situations, active shooter incidents, counterterrorism operations, search and rescue operations, major traffic accidents, natural disasters, and are trained to operate specialized equipment and technology to safely resolve incidents.

Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) - A national authority with powers to regulate all aspects of civil aviation. These include the construction and operation of airports, the management of air traffic, the certification of personnel and aircraft, and the protection of US assets during the launch or re-entry of commercial space vehicles.

Flight operations supervisor - Supervisor assigned to ASRT who is responsible for overseeing operations, research and development, support and logistics, ensuring compliance with laws and regulations, providing updated information to operators, flight safety, training of UAS operators, training of ASRT pilots, and providing information and assessments for the evaluation and enhancement of the pilot program.

Information - As defined in 725 ILCS 167, any evidence, images, sounds, data, or other information gathered by the unmanned aircraft.

Logistics specialist - A team member assigned to ASRT who is responsible for support and logistics, vehicles and equipment, transporting, maintenance, inventory, operational readiness to deploy, and the overall condition of ASRT vehicles and logistical equipment other than unmanned aerial system and its associated elements.

Program coordinator - A team member assigned to ASRT who is responsible for administrative duties, research and development, inventory, registration, records, renewals, program reports, quarterly audits, and recommending program enhancement of the pilot program..

Cook County Sheriff's Office Administration

Procedures Manual

Aerial Support Response Team Procedure

Remote pilot in charge (RPIC) - Specially trained ASRT team member holding a remote pilot certificate with an UAS rating and is responsible for the safe operation of the UAS. The remote pilot in command is the final authority of the UAS (14 CFR Part 107.19(b)). RPIC is responsible to acquire Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) waivers and certificates of authorization upon approval of a UAS from an ASRT supervisor. RPIC is responsible for the care, custody and control of the UAS and its associated elements.

Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) - An unmanned aircraft system that does not carry a human operator, weighing less than 55 pounds on takeoff, and its associated elements, including communication links and the components that control the aircraft that are required for the safe and efficient operation of the aircraft.

UAS deployment log - A written documentation report completed by the remote pilot in charge (RPIC) of ASRT after the approval or denial of a UAS at the scene of a tactical incident.

Visual observer - Any individual designated by the remote pilot in command to assist the remote pilot in command and the person manipulating the flight controls of the aircraft to see and avoid other air traffic or objects aloft or on the ground.

1200.2 POLICY

It is the policy of the Cook County Sheriff's Office to ensure authorized personnel are trained and licensed by the FAA on the use of any UAS pursuant to 14 CFR Part 107(a) (2). Any use of the UAS will be in strict compliance to relevant statutes, privacy rights, the FAA, and 14 CFR 107 requirements.

For additional information, refer to the Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) Operations policy.

1200.3 PROCEDURES

1200.3.1 FLIGHT OPERATIONS SUPERVISOR

The Executive Director over the ASRT shall appoint a Flight Operations Supervisor who is responsible for the management of the Sheriff's Office UAS program. The Flight Operations Supervisor shall ensure that policies and procedures conform to current laws, regulations, and best practices. In addition, the Flight Operations Supervisor shall:

- (a) Coordinate the FAA Certification of Authorization 14 CFR 107, and/or 14 CFR 91 application process as applicable; ensure all certifications and applicable waivers are current.
- (b) Ensure authorized remote pilots in command have completed the required FAA, 14 CFR 107 training, and/or 14 CFR 91, and department approved training (as applicable) in the operation, applicable laws, policies and procedures regarding use of the UAS.
- (c) Evaluate requests to deploy the UAS, including urgent requests made during on-going or emerging incidents.

Cook County Sheriff's Office Administration

Procedures Manual

Aerial Support Response Team Procedure

- (d) Review and ensure records are maintained for when a UAS is involved in a criminal investigation, including documentation of time spent monitoring a suspect.
- (e) Implement a system for notification to the public and media outlets regarding UAS deployment, when appropriate.
- (f) Implement operational protocols governing the safe deployment and operation of a UAS, along with documenting all missions.
- (g) Review and ensure inspection records and maintenance records are logged and retained, ensuring continuing airworthiness of a UAS, up to and including its overhaul or life limits.
- (h) Review and ensure information and data intended to be used as evidence is accessed, maintained, stored and retrieved in a manner that ensures its integrity as evidence, including strict adherence to chain of custody requirements. Electronic trails, including encryption, authenticity certificates and date and time stamping shall be used as appropriate to preserve individual rights and to ensure the authenticity and maintenance of a secure evidentiary chain of custody.
- (i) Ensure retention and purge periods are maintained in accordance with established records retention schedules.
- (j) Facilitate law enforcement access to images and data captured by the UAS.
- (k) Recommend program enhancements, especially regarding safety and information security.
- (l) Ensure established protocols are followed by monitoring and reviewing quarterly program reports and audits to the Executive Director over the ASRT.
- (m) Conduct a documented annual audit of the program and flight documentation to the Executive Director over the ASRT.

1200.3.2 TRAINING PRIOR TO USE OF THE UAS

Prior to authorization to operate a UAS, assigned personnel must complete mandatory training provided by the department to obtain an understanding on how to use the UAS and the procedures outlined in this procedure.

Annually, assigned ASRT pilots will undergo refresher training on the equipment to ensure continued effective use, operation of the equipment and to incorporate changes, updates or other revisions to the FAA, 14 CFR 107, and/or 14 CFR 91 requirements, statutes or Sheriff's Office policy and procedures. Additional training may be provided at periodic intervals for personnel displaying a substandard performance in the use of UAS equipment.

1200.3.3 SHERIFF'S OFFICE USE OF UAS

- (a) The Sheriff's Office must possess applicable authorizations, permits, or certificates as required by FAA prior to deploying or operating the UAS, and ensure these documents are current.
- (b) Pursuant to 725 ILCS 167/15, the UAS may not be used to gather information, except during the following types of situations:

Cook County Sheriff's Office Administration

Procedures Manual

Aerial Support Response Team Procedure

1. Countering 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 there is a risk.
2. Pursuant to a search warrant based on probable cause under Section 108-3 of the Code of Criminal Procedure of 1963. The warrant must be limited to a period of 45 days, renewable by a judge upon showing good cause for subsequent periods of 45 days.
3. Upon reasonable suspicion that under particular circumstances, swift action is needed to prevent imminent harm to life, forestall the imminent escape of a suspect or prevent the destruction of evidence. The use of the UAS under this paragraph is limited to a period of 48 hours. Within 24 hours of the UAS initiation under this paragraph, the Chief of Staff must report its use, in writing, to the Office of the State's Attorney of Cook County using the Notification of Exigent Drone Deployment Form, available on SheriffNet..
4. Locating a missing person, engaging in search and rescue operations, or aiding a person who cannot otherwise be safely reached while not also undertaking a criminal investigation.
5. Obtaining crime scene and traffic crash scene photography in a geographically confined and time-limited manner. Use of the UAS under this paragraph on private property requires either a search warrant or lawful consent to search. As it relates to lands, highways, roadways or areas belonging to the state, a search warrant or consent to search is not required. Reasonable attempts shall be made to only photograph the crime scene or traffic crash scene and to avoid other areas.
6. The Sheriff's Office may deploy or operate a UAS during a disaster or public health emergency, as defined by Section 4 of the Illinois Emergency Management Agency Act (20 ILCS 3305/4). Such uses under this paragraph include obtaining information necessary for the determination of whether a disaster or public health emergency should be declared, to manage a disaster by monitoring weather or emergency conditions, to survey damage, or to coordinate response and recovery efforts. There is no requirement that an official declaration of disaster or public health emergency prior to use.
7. Conducting an infrastructure inspection of a designated building or structure at the express request of a local government agency. The Sheriff's Office shall make every reasonable attempt to photograph only the building or structure and to avoid other areas.
8. Demonstrating the capabilities and functionality of a Sheriff's Office UAS for public relations purposes. The Sheriff's Office shall not collect or record information when operating the UAS for a demonstration.
9. In response to Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) dispatched calls for service, when the sole purpose for using a UAS is for one or more first responders to locate victims, to assist with immediate victim health or safety

Cook County Sheriff's Office Administration

Procedures Manual

Aerial Support Response Team Procedure

needs, or to coordinate the response of emergency vehicles and personnel to an emergency.

10. Deploying a UAS for a routed event or special event, as defined by 725 ILCS 167/5. The Sheriff's Office shall deploy a UAS under this paragraph pursuant to the following procedures:
 - (a) The Sheriff's Office shall post notice at the event location for at least 24 hours before the event commences. The notice shall clearly communicate that a UAS may be used during the event for the purpose of real-time monitoring and participant safety. The Office may coordinate with the event organizer to determine the form of the notice; the notice shall contain, at a minimum, the information contained in the Routed and Special Event Notice of Drone Deployment (available on SheriffNet). The Chief of Staff of the Sheriff's Office shall review and approve all public notifications for routed and special events prior to their posting pursuant to 725 ILCS 167/15(10)(A)-(B).
 - (b) The Sheriff's Office shall post copies of the notice, if practical, at major entry points to the event. The notice shall clearly inform attendees of possible UAS use during the event and the stated purpose of any UAS use.
 - (c) Use of UAS at a routed event or special event shall comply with applicable FAA safety regulations. The Sheriff's Office may use a UAS:
 - i. In advance of an event, before event participants have begun to assemble, for the sole purpose of creating maps and determining appropriate access routes, staging areas, and traffic routes, provided that no personal identifying information is recorded and provided further that no recorded information is used in any criminal prosecution; or
 - ii. During the event to proactively support public safety personnel by monitoring the event footprint in real time, including to protect a breach of event space by an unauthorized vehicle, an interruption of a parade route, or a breach of an event barricade; evaluate crowd size and density; identify activity that could present public safety issues for the crowd, including size; assist public safety personnel with real-time public safety incident responses at the event; and assess traffic and pedestrian flow around the event in real time.
 - (d) The Sheriff's Office shall make reasonable efforts to communicate its UAS deployment notice requirements with event organizers prior to the commencement of the event.
- (c) Requests to deploy the UAS flight shall be made to the Flight Operations Supervisor who will confer with the Executive Director over the ASRT as to the status of the proposed flight.

Cook County Sheriff's Office Administration

Procedures Manual

Aerial Support Response Team Procedure

- (d) Whenever possible, if the UAS will be flying within close proximity to a hospital heliport, which could create a hazardous situation for a manned aircraft, notification shall be made to the respective hospital's security office.
- (e) When appropriate, notification of the UAS deployment shall be made to the public and/or media outlets.
- (f) At the conclusion of each deployment, the information collected during a flight, including but not limited to, video recordings, shall be securely downloaded and proper evidence procedures shall be followed.
- (g) All uses of the UAS will be documented on a form or database. Information shall include the reason for the flight; the date, time and location; the person who approved of the deployment, assigned staff; whether video was recorded; whether video is designated for retention for training purposes; and a summary of the activities covered, actions taken, and outcome of the deployment.

1200.3.4 FLIGHT OPERATIONS

Flight operations shall be administered as follows unless a valid and current waiver is obtained by the FAA. UAS operations governed by a waiver shall conform to all conditions of the applicable waiver(s) and to FAA rules to which the waiver does not apply:

- (a) Prior to each mission, the remote pilot in command must complete a preliminary mission log, pre-flight inspection and a check of the UAS and shall ground the UAS if it is no longer in a condition for safe operation (14 CFR Part 107.15). This check should include control links, batteries and any payload attached to the UAS during flight.
- (b) In the event operations take place during periods of civil twilight (i.e., 30 minutes before official sunrise; 30 minutes after official sunset), the UAS must be equipped with an anti-collision light visible for at least three statute miles (14 CFR Part 107.29(b)).
- (c) During UAS operations, a visual line of sight to the UAS must be always maintained by the remote pilot in command, a person manipulating the flight controls or a visual observer (14 CFR Part 107.31).
- (d) Prior to each flight, the remote pilot in command shall assess the operating environment, both on the surface and in the air. The assessment shall include (14 CFR Part 107.49):
 1. Local weather conditions (e.g., winds, visibility, precipitation via NOTAMs and METARs);
 2. Local airspace and flight restrictions (e.g., aeronautical charts, supplemental charts, TFRs, special advisories;
 3. Location of persons and property on the surface; and
 4. Other ground hazards.
- (e) Operating limitations are as follows (14 CFR Part 107.51):
 1. The groundspeed of a UAS may not exceed 87 knots (100 miles per hour).

Cook County Sheriff's Office Administration

Procedures Manual

Aerial Support Response Team Procedure

2. The altitude of a UAS cannot be higher than 400 feet above ground level unless it is flown within a 400-foot radius of a structure, and it does not fly higher than 400 feet above the structure's uppermost limit.
 3. Flight visibility must be no more than three statute miles.
 4. The minimum distance from clouds is no less than 500 feet below the cloud and 2000 feet horizontally from the cloud.
- (f) Additional considerations for the safe operation of a UAS includes:
1. Not carrying hazardous materials (14 CFR Part 107.36).
 2. Yielding the right-of-way to all other aircraft (14 CFR Part 107.37).
 3. Not operating over human beings unless they are participating in the operation, or, if not a participant, they are located under a covered structure or inside a stationary vehicle (14 CFR Part 107.39).
 4. Not operating in certain controlled airspace unless prior authorization is obtained from Air Traffic Control (14 CFR Part 107.41).
 5. Not operating in the vicinity of an airport/heliport that interferes with the operations and traffic patterns (14 CFR Part 107.43).
 6. Not operating in prohibited or restricted airspace unless prior authorization is obtained from the controlling agency (14 CFR Part 107.45).
 7. Complying with notices to airmen (14 CFR Part 107.47).
- (g) Following each mission:
1. The remote pilot in command shall complete a post flight inspection and a final mission log.
 2. The remote pilot in command shall reference the Drone Flight Requirement Chart for further guidelines.
 3. Upon completion of an operation a ASRT Deployment Report must be completed and submitted to the Flight Operations Supervisor.
 4. The remote pilot in command shall refer to the section entitled Records Retention.

1200.3.5 ACCIDENT REPORTING

- (a) The FAA requires notification of certain UAS accidents. Pursuant to 14 CFR 107 - UAS Operation & Certification Regulations, within 10 days after the accident, the remote pilot in command must report accidents to the FAA, via the Drone Zone Portal at https://www.faa.gov/uas/report_accident/, for the following situations:
1. Serious injury to any person or loss of consciousness; or
 2. Damage to any property, other than the UAS, unless one of the following conditions is satisfied the cost of repair including materials and labor does not exceed \$500.00 or the fair market value of the property does not exceed \$500.00 in the event of a total loss.

Cook County Sheriff's Office Administration

Procedures Manual

Aerial Support Response Team Procedure

- (b) The remote pilot in command is required to initiate an incident report for any accident involving the UAS. The incident report shall include the following information:
1. Name and contact information for operators and witnesses;
 2. Type of operation;
 3. Type of device and registration number/certificate;
 4. Event location and incident details; and
 5. Evidence collection such as photos, video, and device confiscation, if necessary.

1200.3.6 UCR CLASSIFICATIONS

The following UCR classifications shall be used relative to reporting Aerial Support Response Team activities (e.g., in RMS):

- UCR 7425: Aerial Support Response Team: Training
- UCR 7426: Aerial Support Response Team call out - Sheriff's Office
- UCR 7427: Aerial Support Response Team call out - outside law enforcement agency

1200.4 RESTRICTIONS

- (a) The Sheriff's Office may not use a drone to gather information unless a specific exception exists as listed in the subsection entitled Sheriff's Office Use of a UAS.
- (b) The UAS will not be used under any circumstances to:
1. Conduct random surveillance activities.
 2. Target an individual based solely on actual or perceived characteristics such as, but not limited to race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, economic status, age, cultural group, or disability.
 3. Harass, intimidate or discriminate against any individual or group.
 4. Surveil political protests, marches, demonstrations, or other forms of assembly protected by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution. See the First Amendment Assemblies policy for further guidance as necessary.
 5. Conduct personal business of any type.
- (c) UAS deployments by the Sheriff's Office must also adhere to the operating procedures established by the FAA. These rules are outlined as follows, but are not limited to:
1. Conducting a pre-flight check to ensure the UAS in condition for safe operation.
 2. Keeping the UAS in visual line of sight.
 3. Flying at or below 400 feet above ground level.
 4. Flying at or below 100 mph.
 5. Yielding right-of-way to manned aircraft.
 6. Avoiding fly over people.

Cook County Sheriff's Office Administration

Procedures Manual

Aerial Support Response Team Procedure

7. Avoiding fly from a moving vehicle, except in rural areas.
 8. During an emergency situation, deviations from policy/procedure are permitted.
- (d) The Flight Operations Supervisor shall request a certificate waiver from the FAA which authorizes deviation from specific regulations. The certificate waiver will be granted when the FAA determines that the UAS operation can be safely conducted under the terms of the certificate waiver.
 - (e) Personnel shall notify the Flight Operations Supervisor when they know or have reason to know that they have a physical or mental condition that would interfere with the safe operation of the UAS.
 - (f) The Sheriff's Office shall not equip a UAS with, or operate a UAS equipped with, a firearm, weaponized laser, kinetic impact projectile, chemical agent or irritant, or any other lethal or non-lethal weapon (725 ILCS 167/18).

1200.5 PRIVACY CONSIDERATIONS

Use of the UAS potentially involves privacy considerations. Absent a warrant or exigent circumstances, operators and visual observers shall adhere to FAA altitude regulations and shall not intentionally record or transmit images of any location where a person would have a reasonable expectation of privacy. Operators and visual observers shall take reasonable precautions to avoid inadvertently recording or transmitting images of areas where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy.

When there are specific and articulable grounds to believe that the UAS will collect evidence of criminal wrongdoing and/or if the UAS will be used in a manner that may intrude upon reasonable expectation of privacy, the department will obtain a search warrant prior to conducting the flight.

The Sheriff's Office shall not operate a UAS with onboard facial recognition technology that works in conjunction with its operation (725 ILCS 167/17). In addition to general restrictions on the use of facial recognition technology, the Sheriff's Office prohibits the use of facial recognition technology to analyze information gathered during a UAS flight, except under one of the following conditions:

1. The information gathered from a UAS flight is used to counter the high risk of a terrorist attack by a specific individual or organization and the United States Secretary of Homeland Security has determined that credible intelligence indicates that there is such a high risk; or
2. The information gathered from a UAS flight demonstrates reasonable suspicion that, under particular circumstances, swift action is needed to prevent imminent harm to life or to forestall the imminent escape of a suspect or the destruction of evidence.

Refer to the Information Technology Usage policy for further guidance on the use of facial recognition technology.

1200.6 INSPECTION AND CARE OF THE EQUIPMENT

The UAS and related equipment shall be maintained in the state of operational readiness. Assigned ASRT pilots shall use reasonable care to ensure the proper functioning of the UAS

Cook County Sheriff's Office Administration

Procedures Manual

Aerial Support Response Team Procedure

equipment. Malfunctions shall be brought to the attention of the Flight Operations Supervisor as soon as possible. Extra caution must be taken to ensure the equipment is not stored in extreme temperatures.

Prior to use, assigned ASRT pilots shall:

- (a) Using an equipment checklist, inspect the UAS and related equipment to verify proper functioning and ensure the battery is fully charged in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations.
- (b) Inspect the body of the UAS, the charging and camera cables to look for signs of visible damage. Ensure the propellor blades are in flight worthy condition.

1200.7 SECURITY OF RECORDINGS

Personnel should be aware that recordings may contain sensitive information and are responsible for ensuring compliance to the information in this procedure. A breach in security, careless handling of the recording and/or intentional release of recordings to non-authorized individuals may jeopardize relationships with citizens, subject victims to an invasion of privacy, jeopardize prosecutions and endanger the safety of individuals.

- (a) All recordings are considered property of the Cook County Sheriff's Office. The utmost care and caution shall be taken to ensure the recordings are not mishandled or misused.
- (b) ASRT personnel shall not edit, alter, erase, duplicate, copy, share, or otherwise distribute in any manner recordings without written authorization by the Executive Director over the ASRT.
- (c) Any violations related to unauthorized edits, alterations, and dissemination of this data shall be cause for disciplinary action.
- (d) Pursuant to 725 ILCS 167/25, the disclosure of information is prohibited, except to another government agency when there is reasonable suspicion that the information contains evidence of criminal activity, or the information is relevant to an ongoing investigation or pending criminal trial.

1200.8 RECORDS RETENTION

The ASRT Flight Operations Supervisor shall destroy all information gathered by a UAS flight within the timeframe specified by law unless a statutory exception applies (725 ILCS 167/20).

Information gathered by a UAS flight maybe retained by the ARST Flight Operations Supervisor when:

- (a) There is reasonable suspicion that information contains evidence of criminal activity.
- (b) The information is relevant to an ongoing investigation or pending criminal trial.
- (c) The information will be used exclusively for training purposes, and all personally identifiable information has been removed.

Cook County Sheriff's Office Administration

Procedures Manual

Aerial Support Response Team Procedure

- (d) The information contains only flight path data, metadata, or telemetry information of the UAS.

Information gathered by a UAS flight authorized for retention by the ARST Flight Operations Supervisor, pursuant to 725 ILCS 167/20, as well as information about UAS operations not gathered by a UAS flight (e.g., the member(s) authorizing the deployment, the outcome of the deployment) is subject to destruction pursuant to the Sheriff's Office's Record Retention Schedule.

1200.9 REPORTING

Annually, by April 1, the ARST Flight Operations Supervisor shall report to the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (725 ILCS 167/35):

- The number of drones owned by the Sheriff's Office;
- The number of times a drone was used pursuant to statutory exemptions, including the date of use, time of use, reason for use, location, whether video was recorded, and whether the video is designated for retention for training purposes; and
- A copy of the Office's latest policy concerning drones as of the most recent April 1.

1200.10 INFORMATION FROM PRIVATE DRONES

The Sheriff's Office may utilize information from private drones only for the purpose of undertaking the tasks outlined.

No Sheriff's Office member shall acquire information from or direct the acquisition of information through the use of a UAS not owned by the CCSO unless the use of the drone is consistent with the restrictions in this procedure, the Unmanned Aerial Systems policy, and applicable law.

Private third parties may voluntarily submit information acquired by the privately owned drone to the Sheriff's Office.

Any information gathered by a UAS not owned by the CCSO is subject to the information retention and reporting procedures listed in this procedure, the Unmanned Aerial Systems policy, and in applicable law

The Sheriff's Office shall not disclose any information gathered by the private drone. However, the Flight Operations Supervisor may disclose information to another government agency when there is reasonable suspicion that the information contains evidence of criminal activity, or the information is relevant to an on-going investigation or pending criminal trial.