

Un-Manned Aircraft System (UAS) Drone Program

Index Code: 412
Effective Date: 11.25.2024

I. Purpose

The purpose of this directive is to establish an Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS), otherwise known as the Drone Program, within the Queen Anne's County Office of the Sheriff (QAC OS). This program is established to aid in officer safety, enhance area searches, and aid investigations needing aerial photographs or videos.

II. Policy

It shall be the mission of personnel of the QAC OS who are properly licensed in the use of the UAS to use this resource in accordance with our Certificate of Authorization (COA) by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to protect lives and property of citizens of Queen Anne's County and surrounding jurisdictions upon request and first responders in full compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

The primary uses of the UAS for the QAC OS will be to support tactical responses to incidents, aid in locating missing or fleeing persons, and to provide aerial photographs and video when needed to complete the overall mission of our Office. Those uses noted are not all-inclusive as to the various possibilities of the UAS.

III. Definitions

- A. **Aviation Routine Weather Report (METAR)** – Observation of current surface weather reported in a standard international format. Issued hourly unless significant weather changes have occurred.
- B. **Certificate of Authorization (COA)** – A certificate given by the FAA to governmental/ public operators of UASs. The COA certifies public operators have permission to fly within specific boundaries and airspace. COAs must be renewed every two years.
- C. **Flight Crew Member** – A pilot, visual observer, or other person with assigned duties related to the flight of a drone.
- D. **Notice to Airmen (NOTAM)** – A notice provided to essential persons involved with flight operations of information not known far enough in advance to be publicized by other means.
- E. **Remote Pilot Certificate** – Certification that allows a person who passed the Aeronautical Knowledge Test to serve as the Remote Pilot in Command (RPIC) for a Small Unmanned Aircraft System (sUAS).
- F. **Remote Pilot in Command (RPIC)** – A person exercising control over a UAS during flight.

- G. **Sectional Chart** - Aeronautical chart showing topographical features that are important to aviators, such as terrain elevations, ground features identifiable from altitude, and ground features useful to pilots. Also shows information on airspace classes, ground-based navigation aids, radio frequencies, longitude and latitude, navigation waypoints, and navigation routes.
- H. **Small Unmanned Aircraft System (sUAS)** – A system that utilizes a UAS weighing less than 55 pounds consistent with FAA regulations.
- I. **Temporary Flight Restrictions (TFR)** – Restriction on an area of airspace due to the movement of government VIPs, special events, natural disasters, or other unusual events.
- J. **Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS)** – A system that includes the necessary equipment, network, and personnel to control a drone.
- K. **Visual Observer** – A member of the flight crew who maintains visual observation of the drone while in flight who will alert the RPIC of any hazardous conditions. The observer will ensure no one interferes with the pilot during flight.

IV. **Certification/Licensing Requirements**

- A. All personnel selected to become pilots for the office shall participate in a Part 107 FAA Remote Pilot Certificate test preparation class. This class can

be self-taught, virtual, or in person. Personnel selected to be pilots for the office shall obtain their Part 107 FAA Remote Pilot Certificate prior to operating an agency UAS and shall maintain a valid certificate to fly in order to continue to fly agency drones. Pilot certificates must be renewed every two years. The office shall reimburse approved agency pilots for their initial FAA test and for their two-year renewals as long as they are approved by the drone coordinator to continue as an office pilot.

- B. To maintain proficiency, all pilots shall conduct quarterly flight training missions including three takeoffs and landings during daylight hours and three takeoffs and landings during nighttime hours (darkness) with a practical exercise as determined by the Drone Coordinator. All training flights shall be documented in the pilot's training record. Training flights are called "currency." Failure to get the required amount of training flights in a quarter will result in a suspension of pilot duties until the required training flights are completed. Failure to maintain and prove proficiency shall result in removal from the UAS program.
- C. All pilots must be able to show proficiency in specific core competencies in all UAS controls and operating systems in accordance with FAA/COA regulations and must have the express approval of the Agency Drone Coordinator before operating a UAS.
- D. Visual Observers (VO) will meet conditions of the COA issued by the FAA. The VO shall understand the obligations to see

and avoid other aircraft and possess the ability to relay positional information to the remote pilot.

V. Deployments

The UAS Commander/Supervisor shall maintain an availability list for Remote Pilot in Charge (RPIC) callouts by duty officers or other unit supervisors with concurrence of their Commander.

A RPIC may also deploy a UAS for any duty-related event or training event when safe to do so with approval by their supervisor/duty officer and after notification to the UAS Commander/Supervisor. A courtesy email or text notification must be sent to the Operations Major and Sheriff, in addition to the UAS Commander/Supervisor any time the UAS is used for flight other than training.

The UAS shall not be used for personal/recreational use, and it shall not be used for any financial gain by an employee, person, or company.

A flight log shall be maintained by each certified pilot including training and incident-based missions. The flight log shall contain the following data:

1. Purpose of flight;
2. Case number;
3. Outcome of flight;
4. Location;
5. Date/time;
6. Daylight or darkness;
7. Any special attachments used;
8. Weather conditions including temperature;
9. Altitude;
10. Any problems/damage (report to UAS Commander/ Supervisor without delay; and,

11. Duration of flight.

An annual report shall be produced in January detailing all mission-based uses of the UAS including outcomes and problems. The annual report shall include pilot certification statuses.

VI. Operations

- A. A UAS shall only be operated by personnel who are certified UAS pilots through the FAA.
- B. All non-training flights shall be approved by the duty officer or a unit supervisor with concurrence by a member of their Command Staff. The UAS Commander/Supervisor shall be notified for **all** UAS flights. The Operations Major and Sheriff shall be notified on all non-training UAS Flights. At the time of the call-out, the RPIC shall determine with the requester if a VO shall be called out as well or if on-duty personnel will be used as a VO.
- C. UAS maintenance is the responsibility of the UAS Commander/Supervisor with input from the team of UAS pilots. A test flight is required after any non-routine maintenance that is documented.
- D. All UAS operations will be conducted within line of sight of the RPIC or VO so that hazards such as other aircraft and powerlines can be avoided, and a drone shall not be flown directly above uninvolved persons or crowds.
- E. The UAS will not be flown in conditions that exceed the manufacturer's recommended limitations including range, ceiling, windspeed, and battery charge. The UAS shall not be

flown to exceed a 400' altitude above ground level, or above any structure or obstacle.

- F. All flights will be conducted in accordance with FAA regulations 14 CFR Part 61 and 91.
- G. Under no circumstances will a UAS be used solely for the purposes of monitoring activities protected by the First Amendment.
- H. Complaints or concerns about the UAS program shall be directed to the UAS Commander/Supervisor.

Complaints about a specific pilot or employee shall be handled as any other complaint against personnel.

- I. RPICs must have their Remote Pilot Certificate and any applicable FAA Authorized Waivers in their immediate possession during all flight operations (training or deployment).
- J. The RPIC must review the most current METAR report for the proposed flight plan prior to contacting the UAS Commander/Supervisor as part of the pre-flight inspection.
- K. The RPIC must review the applicable sectional chart(s) for the proposed flight within 30 minutes of flight operations to ensure there are no TFRs in place.

VII. Pre-Flight Preparation

Both the pilot and the visual observer must participate in the pre-flight briefing. The pre-flight briefing,

including a checklist, shall include the following, but not be limited to:

- A. Mission;
- B. Weather conditions and predictions;
- C. Pilot and observer duties;
- D. Potential danger to others/notifications to interested partners;
- E. NOTAM (Notice to Airmen);
- F. ATC (Air Traffic Control notified if applicable);
- G. TFRs (Temporary Flight Restrictions);
- H. Mission parameters/boundaries;
- I. Potential hazards;
- J. Flight plan;
- K. Emergency procedures;
- L. Notification to UAS Commander/Supervisor, Sheriff, and Operations Major;
- M. Notification to others as necessary.

VIII. Emergency Procedures

- A. In the event of loss of Visual Line Of Sight (VLOS), the RPIC will hover the UA until the RPIC or VO can re-establish VLOS. If this cannot be achieved, the RPIC shall increase altitude and use live video stream to pilot the UA back to a VLOS. If this cannot be done safely, the RPIC shall bring the UAS to a safe altitude under 400' and activate the "Return Home" function to bring the UAS back to a VLOS.
- B. The aircraft shall be configured so that in the event of a lost link, the UAS will execute an automatic "Return Home" and then will establish a stationary hover.
- C. Should the "Return Home" feature fail, the RPIC will immediately notify the appropriate controllers

for the airspace and inform them of the Lost Link situation, providing last known altitude, direction, and airspeed.

- D. All emergency situations require notification without delay to the UAS Commander/Supervisor, Sheriff and Operations Commander. The UAS Commander/Supervisor, or his designee, shall investigate all UAS crashes, injuries, and/or damage to property or to the UAS.
- E. A detailed incident report shall be submitted by the RPIC where a crash, injury and/or damage occurs related to the operation of the UAS. A copy of this report shall be provided to the UAS Commander/ Supervisor. All FAA mandated reporting procedures shall also be followed without delay.

IX. Data Retention and Processing

Upon completion of each non-training UAS mission, video/photograph data shall be uploaded to the appropriate CAD/RMS or evidence database for retention.

Only authorized users of the UAS will access the data for legitimate and authorized purposes. Personnel will not edit, alter, or erase flight data and recordings without the express consent of the UAS Commander/Supervisor.

Flight data retention shall be retained for a minimum of four years if possible.

X. Protection of Rights and Privacy Concerns

All personnel involved in the UAS shall consider the protection of individual civil rights including the reasonable expectation of privacy. A pilot will not conduct a mission deemed a search under the Fourth Amendment without possession of a valid search warrant, or if it does not fall within the parameters of a lawful warrantless search.


The UAS Commander, each pilot, and VO shall ensure that operations of the UAS are consistent with local, state, and federal law including FAA regulations.

If during the course of flight operations, the RPIC or other Crew Members suspect there is a concern for the rights and/or privacy of a citizen, the RPIC shall immediately cease flight operations and return the UAS to a neutral flight location before seeking further legal guidance.

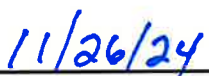
XI. CALEA References:

XII. Proponent Unit:
Administrative Services Division.

XIII. Cancellation: None



Sheriff Gary Hofmann
Queen Anne's County
Office of the Sheriff



Date of Signing