



ALBUQUERQUE POLICE DEPARTMENT  
GENERAL ORDERS

SOP 1-15 (Formerly 5-2)

Effective: 01/31/2023 Review: 01/31/2024 Replaces: 04/08/2021

## 1-15 AIR SUPPORT UNIT

### Related SOP(s), Form(s), Other Resource(s), and Rescinded Special Order(s):

A. Related SOP(s)

[2-45 Pursuit by Motor Vehicle \(Formerly 2-55\)](#)

B. Form(s)

None

C. Other Resource(s)

14 CFR Part 61 Certification: Pilots, Flight Instructors, and Ground Instructors  
14 CFR Part 91 General Operating and Flight Rules  
Air Support Unit (ASU) Operations Manual

D. Rescinded Special Order(s)

None

### 1-15-1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide operating guidelines for the Air Support Unit (ASU), using fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters, to perform observation patrol and assist Albuquerque Police Department (Department) personnel on the ground during apprehensions, surveillance, searches, and calls for service.

### 1-15-2 Policy

It is the policy of the Department to safely and legally operate its aircraft in accordance with all Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Regulations. It is also the Department's policy to promote Albuquerque's public safety through a quick response to life-threatening incidents, to provide professional aerial support for Department personnel, and to increase efficiency in detecting, preventing, and reducing crime through effective aerial patrols.

N/A

### 1-15-3 Definitions

A. Aircraft

Any category of flying apparatus, be it "fixed-wing" (airplane) or "rotorcraft" (helicopter), categorized by the FAA.

B. Aircraft Movement Area



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Any area where aircraft movement is possible or probable, including all ramp areas, taxiways, and runways.

C. Collateral Tactical Flight Officer (TFO)

A part-time, collateral Air Support Unit (ASU)-certified TFO assigned to conduct visual observation of ground activity and communicate such observations with other sworn personnel working on the ground. This officer is not assigned to the ASU full-time but is assigned on a part-time basis. However, Collateral TFOs may be requested to serve with the ASU for extended periods. In addition sworn personnel in this capacity must have three (3) years of non-probationary experience as sworn personnel within the Department.

D. Flight Crew

At a minimum, a Pilot in Command and a TFO.

E. Ground Unit

Any sworn personnel or Police Service Aide (PSA) who works on the ground and is not in flight or onboard the aircraft.

F. Pilot in Command (PIC)

A sworn or civilian employee who is an ASU-certified TFO and an FAA-licensed individual qualified to operate the aircraft controls for which they are in command.

G. Tactical Flight Officer (TFO)

An ASU-certified TFO is assigned to conduct visual observation of ground activity and communicate such observations with other sworn personnel and units working on the ground. In addition sworn personnel serving in this capacity must have five (5) years of non-probationary experience as sworn personnel within the Department.

**7 1-15-4 Rules and Responsibilities**

A. Surveillance

- N/A** 1. Upon request from Department personnel, ASU personnel may observe areas of known criminal activity for varying lengths of time based on crime trends and the needs of the Department.
- N/A** 2. Upon request from Department personnel, ASU personnel may observe individuals suspected of criminal activity, vehicles, residences, businesses, or areas.



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3. When conducting requested surveillance, ASU personnel shall provide information to the ground or investigative unit personnel when conducting requested surveillance.

B. Searches

1. ASU personnel shall assist ground unit personnel in searching for:

- a. Lost children;
- b. Missing persons;
- c. Wanted persons; and
- d. Escapees.

N/A

2. ASU personnel may check various locations, particularly remote areas, for abandoned or stolen vehicles and car stripping activities.

N/A

3. ASU personnel may provide nighttime illumination by searchlight for crime scene or area searches as necessary.

C. Crowd Management

N/A

1. ASU personnel may observe civil disturbances, parades, marches, visits by dignitaries, or other events where crowd management or intelligence is necessary.
2. The TFO/Collateral TFO shall update the Incident Commander (IC) and ground unit personnel on the crowd's actions, movements, and demeanor.
3. If the aircraft is equipped with the video downlink system, the TFO/Collateral TFO shall transmit video of the incident to the appropriate personnel if requested.

N/A

4. Upon approval of the ASU Lieutenant, ASU personnel may assist other agencies if requested.

D. Special Events/Traffic Management

N/A

1. ASU personnel may be tasked with assisting Field Services Bureau (FSB) personnel or the Metro Traffic Division during special events or other events that require traffic management.
  - a. When assisting on these events, the TFO/Collateral TFO shall update ground unit personnel with traffic conditions, movements, and other pertinent information that may impact the traffic flows.
2. The TFO/Collateral TFO shall provide traffic re-routing recommendations and additional options, which may assist ground unit personnel with increasing traffic flow efficiency and safety.



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E. Patrol/Operations

1. The PIC is ultimately and solely responsible for the aircraft's operation and safety during flight.

N/A

- a. Department personnel may refer to the ASU Operations Manual for complete minimum requirements, licensing, and certifications for PIC.

2. The TFO/Collateral TFO shall be responsible for the operation and documentation of calls the aircraft responds to and shall do so by using the equipment in the TFO/Collateral TFO station of the aircraft, such as the infrared camera system (thermal imager/video camera) and the police radio.

N/A

- a. Department personnel may refer to the ASU Operations Manual for complete minimum requirements, licensing, and certifications for TFO/Collateral TFOs.

3. The Flight Crew shall go in-service, notwithstanding any mechanical problems or inclement weather, and assume aerial patrol responsibilities over the greater Albuquerque metropolitan area during assigned shift times.

4. The Flight Crew shall conduct aerial observation patrol and provide additional focused patrols on areas deemed as hot spots, or areas the Department recognizes as having high criminal activity rates.

5. The ASU Lieutenant shall approve or deny requests from another public safety agency if they request assistance from the ASU outside the Albuquerque metropolitan area.

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6. ASU personnel shall not use Department aircraft to transport any member of the public from one predetermined location to another for commercial purposes (compensation or hire).

N/A

- a. However, ASU personnel may use Department aircraft to transport Department personnel in the course of their duties, provided such personnel are on-duty and conducting Department or City business.
  - i. Approved for transport shall be made through the ASU's chain of command.

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F. Motor Vehicle Pursuits

1. ASU personnel shall respond to calls for service involving active motor vehicle pursuits.

- a. Once ASU personnel have responded to the call and confirmed that they have a visual observation of the pursued vehicle, ASU personnel shall be the primary unit of the authorized pursuit.



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N/A

b. ASU personnel shall relay the direction of travel of the pursued vehicle to ground unit personnel, including during a successful StarChase Pursuit Management System activation (refer to SOP Pursuit by Motor Vehicle for sanction classifications and additional duties).

N/A

c. Pursuing ground unit personnel shall stop the motor vehicle pursuit and provide enough distance so as not to affect the driving of the pursued vehicle (refer to SOP Pursuit by Motor Vehicle for sanction classifications and additional duties).

2. ASU personnel shall direct pursuing ground unit personnel to provide enough distance between themselves and the individual's vehicle if they haven't already done so.

a. ASU personnel shall notify the supervisor in charge of the motor vehicle pursuit if ground unit personnel fail to provide enough distance.

b. When notifying the supervisor, ASU personnel shall identify the pursuing ground unit personnel by the number on the Department-issued vehicle when possible.

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G. Response to Incidents at the Double Eagle II Airport

1. ASU personnel shall respond to incidents at the Double Eagle II Airport.

2. The Emergency Communications Center (ECC) shall immediately contact the Flight Crew via radio or telephone and advise them of any incidents at the Double Eagle II Airport.

N/A

a. Depending on the incident, the Flight Crew may be able to handle the incident without assistance from Department personnel.

3. If ASU personnel are not available to respond, Department personnel shall contact airfield maintenance or the tower/ground control before entering any controlled area in the airport.

a. Before arrival, dispatched personnel shall attempt to make contact with ASU personnel in the following order:

i. The hanger at (505) 768-3999;

ii. On ECC frequencies;

iii. The ASU Sergeant, after hours or when there is no response at the hanger or via radio; and

iv. On-call ASU personnel after hours or when there is no response at the hanger or via radio.

b. The ECC shall have the ASU on-call roster.

c. Department personnel shall only enter controlled areas with tower/ground control approval.

d. Department personnel shall follow all tower/ground control directions when in a controlled area.



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N/A

- i. Airport properties are marked with both ground signage and painted markings that are not easily understood if not trained.
  1. Department personnel shall use caution when working around or near aircraft for moving parts and non-visible hazards, such as propellers and jet blasts.
- ii. Department personnel shall be aware that ground and flight operations may continue during a call for service at the Double Eagle II Airport (airport), which is a general aviation airport governed by the FAA.
- iii. Department personnel shall use extreme care and caution at all times due to inherent dangers. Aircraft have the right of way at all times unless otherwise directed by the tower/ground control.

4. Upon arrival, Department personnel shall:

- a. Engage their emergency lights when entering controlled areas;
- b. Follow Double Eagle II Airport personnel or ASU personnel as directed and as available;
- c. Proceed with caution as directed by the tower/ground control or Double Eagle II Airport personnel; and
- d. Remain in contact with tower/ground control, Double Eagle II Airport personnel, or ASU personnel via:
  - i. Telephone;
  - ii. ECC to tower/ground control; or
  - iii. A very high frequency (VHF) radio at frequency 120.15, that is available from ASU personnel.

5. Department personnel shall not make any movements in the controlled area without prior approval.

6. The IC shall ensure that the tower/ground control is notified when all units are clear from controlled areas at the conclusion of the call for service.

H. Call-Outs

1. ASU personnel shall be subject to call-outs when not on regular duty times for certain types of situations, including, but not limited to:
  - a. Surveillance for felonious activities with exigent circumstances or high profile conditions in which ASU coverage is needed for Department personnel's safety (e.g., surveillance on individuals, vehicles, residences, businesses, etc.);
  - b. Searches for lost children; missing or wanted persons; perimeter searches for felons; and searches for escapees;
    - i. ASU personnel may be called out to assist with Search and Rescue missions, provided conditions are safe to do so.
  - c. Crowd management to assist in civil disturbances, parades, marches, dignitary visits, or any event where crowd management intelligence is needed; or
  - d. At the discretion of the ASU Lieutenant or command staff.

N/A



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N/A

2. Sworn personnel may only request support from ASU personnel for misdemeanors crimes in special circumstances.

- a. The ASU Sergeant or the ASU chain of command has final authority to authorize ASU support for misdemeanor crimes.

N/A

3. Flight Crews may be held over for calls provided such a hold over does not constitute a safety hazard or exceed any limits, consistent with FAA Regulations (14 C.F.R. Part 91 General Operating and Flight Rules).

4. The ASU Sergeant shall be responsible for determining if a Flight Crew shall be held over or if a Flight Crew shall be called out.

- a. The ASU Sergeant and PIC shall approve Flight Crew call-outs based upon the available resources, weather, and the conditions of the area they are called to.
  - b. The ASU Sergeant shall be responsible for approving requests from Department personnel for assistance from ASU personnel during off-duty hours.
  - c. If Department personnel request assistance from ASU personnel and the ASU Sergeant cannot be reached, the ASU Lieutenant or command staff shall be contacted in that order.

5. The ASU Sergeant shall ensure the ECC has a current on-call list with the contact phone numbers of current on-call ASU personnel.

I. ASU Data

1. ASU personnel shall compile and categorize the following data:

- a. The maintenance conducted on Department aircraft;
  - b. The amount of gas and oil used by ASU personnel for Department aircraft;
  - c. ASU downtime due to weather, maintenance, or pilot unavailability; and
  - d. The number of felony and misdemeanor arrests achieved with assistance from ASU personnel.