



ALBUQUERQUE POLICE DEPARTMENT
GENERAL ORDERS

SOP 1-15 (Currently 5-2)

Effective: 04/02/2021 Review: 04/02/2022 Replaces: 01-10-2018

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Related SOP(s), Form(s), Other Resource(s), and Rescinded Special Order(s):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

B. Form(s)

None

C. Other Resource(s)

14 C.F.R. Part 61 Certification: Pilots, Flight Instructors, and Ground Instructors
14 C.F.R. 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D. Rescinded Special Order(s)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 airborne unit, utilizing fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters, to perform observation patrol, and assist ground units during apprehensions, surveillance, searches, and calls for service.

1-15-2 Policy

It is the policy of the Albuquerque Police Department (Department) to operate its aircraft in a safe and legal manner, 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 the Department's units; and to increase efficiency to detect, prevent, and reduce 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), as categorized by the FAA.

B. Aircraft Movement Area



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

C. Flight Crew

At a minimum, a Pilot in Command (PIC) and a Tactical Flight Officer (TFO).

D. Pilot in Command

A sworn employee who is an Air Support Unit (ASU)-certified Tactical Flight Officer and an FAA-licensed individual qualified to operate the controls of the aircraft for which they are in command.

E. Tactical Flight Officer (TFO)

An ASU-certified TFO who is assigned to conduct visual observation of ground activity and communicate such observations with other sworn personnel and units working on the ground.

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

A. Surveillance

1. ASU may, upon request from Department personnel, observe suspected criminals and known areas of criminal activity for varying lengths of time based on crime trends and Department needs.
2. ASU may, upon request from Department personnel, observe suspected individuals, vehicles, residences, businesses, or areas.
3. ASU shall relay information to ground or investigative units when conducting requested surveillance.

B. Searches

1. The ASU shall assist ground units in searching for:
 - a. Lost children;
 - b. Missing persons;
 - c. Wanted persons; and
 - d. Escapees.
2. The ASU may check various locations, particularly remote areas, for abandoned or stolen vehicles and car stripping activities.
3. The ASU may provide nighttime illumination by searchlight for crime scene or area searches as necessary.



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C. Crowd Management

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

D. Special Events/Traffic Management

1. The ASU may be tasked with assisting Field Services Bureau (FSB) personnel or the Traffic Section during special events or other events with traffic management.
2. When assisting on these events, the TFO shall update ground units with traffic conditions, movements, and any other pertinent information that could impact the traffic flows.
3. The TFO shall provide traffic re-routing recommendations and additional options, which may assist FSB personnel to increase traffic flow efficiency and safety.

E. Patrol/Operations

1. The PIC is ultimately and solely responsible for the aircraft's operation and safety during flight. Department personnel shall refer to the ASU Operations Manual for complete, minimum requirements, licensing, and certifications for PIC.
2. The TFO shall be responsible for the operation and documentation of calls the aircraft responds to and shall do so by utilizing the equipment in the TFO station of the aircraft, such as the "Infrared Camera System" (thermal imager/video camera) and the police radio. Department personnel shall refer to the ASU Operations Manual for complete, minimum requirements, licensing, and certifications for 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 also provide additional focused patrols on areas deemed as "hot spots," or areas the Department recognizes as having high rates of crime.



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5. Department aircraft shall not be used to transport any member of the public from one predetermined location to another for commercial purposes (compensation or hire). Department aircraft may, however, be utilized to transport Department personnel in the course of Department duties, provided such personnel are on-duty and conducting Department or City business. This shall be approved by the ASU's chain of command.
6. If another public safety agency requests the assistance of the ASU outside the Albuquerque metropolitan area, the ASU Lieutenant shall approve or deny the request.

F. Pursuits

1. The ASU shall respond to calls involving active pursuits.
 - a. Once the ASU has responded and confirms visual observation of the pursued vehicle, the ASU shall be the primary unit of the authorized pursuit.
 - N/A b. The ASU shall relay the direction of travel of the pursued vehicle to ground units, including during a successful StarChase activation (Refer to SOP Pursuit by Motor Vehicle for sanction classifications and additional duties).
 - N/A c. The pursuing ground unit(s) 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. The ASU shall direct the pursuing ground units to provide enough distance between themselves and the suspect's vehicle if they haven't already done so. ASU shall then notify the supervisor in charge of the pursuit, if ground units have fail to provide enough distance. The pursuing ground units shall be identified by the unit number on the vehicle when possible.

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G. Response to Incidents at the Double Eagle II Airport

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. The ASU shall respond to calls for service at the airport.
4. If the ASU is not available to respond, Department personnel shall contact Airfield Maintenance or the Tower/Ground Control prior to entering any controlled area in the airport.



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- a. Department personnel shall only enter controlled areas with Tower/Ground Control approval.
 - b. Department personnel shall follow all Tower/Ground Control directions when in a controlled area.
 - i. Airport properties are marked with both ground signage and painted markings that are not easily understood if not trained. Department personnel shall use caution when working around or near aircraft for moving parts and non-visible hazards, such as propellers and jet blast.
5. The Emergency Communications Center (ECC) shall immediately contact the flight crew via radio or telephone and advise of any incidents at the Double Eagle II Airport. Depending on the incident, the flight crew may be able to handle the incident without assistance from Department personnel.
6. Prior to arrival, dispatched personnel shall attempt to make contact with the ASU via the following, in this order:
- a. Hanger at (505) 768-3999;
 - b. On ECC frequencies;
 - c. The ASU Sergeant after hours or when there is no response at the hanger or via radio; and
 - d. On-call ASU personnel after hours or when there is no response at the hanger or via radio.
 - i. The ECC shall have the ASU on-call roster.
7. Upon arrival, Department personnel shall:
- a. Engage their emergency lights when entering controlled areas;
 - b. Follow the 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. Very High Frequency (VHF) radio, which is available from ASU personnel at frequency 120.15.
8. Department personnel shall not make any movements in the controlled area without prior approval.
9. 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



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1. The ASU 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. The ASU may also 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.
 2. Sworn personnel may only request support from the ASU for misdemeanors in special circumstances.
 - a. The ASU Sergeant or the ASU chain of command has final authority to authorize ASU support for misdemeanor events.
 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 crew shall be called out. Approval for flight crew call-outs shall be based upon the available resources, weather, and the conditions of the area of the call. Final decision for the call-out response shall be determined by the ASU Sergeant and ultimately the PIC for the mission.
 - a. The ASU Sergeant shall approve requests for ASU assistance during off-duty hours. Requests for ASU assistance during off-duty hours shall only be done after obtaining approval from the ASU Sergeant or Acting Sergeant.
 - b. If 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 contact numbers of current on-call ASU personnel.
- I. ASU Data
1. The ASU compiles and categorizes the following data:
 - a. Maintenance conducted;
 - b. Gas and oil consumption;
 - c. Downtime for weather, maintenance, and pilot unavailability; and
 - d. Number of arrests achieved through unit assistance (felony and misdemeanor).