

UAV OPERATIONS MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. What is a drone or UAV?

A. A drone is a term used to describe a remotely piloted aircraft; also known as an unmanned aerial vehicle or “UAV.” The word drone comes from the 1970s when the military used to purchase radio controlled airplanes for target practice. In an attempt to better describe what we do, we prefer a more descriptive term—*Unmanned Aerial Vehicle* or “UAV.”

Q. Does the Sheriff's Department Currently use UAVs?

A. The San Diego Sheriff's Department has acquired UAVs for a one year pilot program. At the end of the pilot program a decision will be made on whether to utilize UAVs on a permanent basis.

Q. Under what circumstances does the Sheriff's Department utilize a UAV?

A. The UAV pilot program will test the effectiveness of deployments involving life-saving missions and crime scene recording. Examples include search and rescue, SWAT operations, bomb squad scenes, hazardous material spills, and natural disasters.

Q. What will be done with data recorded by the UAV after the mission?

A. The retention of any recorded data will be governed by existing laws and policy developed from the pilot program. Requests for copies of UAV video and other UAV related records will be subject to the California Public Records Act.

Q. Would UAVs replace law enforcement helicopters?

A. No; UAVs cannot replace law enforcement helicopters. UAVs will be used to complement existing aerial support units.

Q. Will UAVs be used for routine patrol, surveillance, or outfitted with weapons?

A. No; UAVs will be used for life-saving safety missions and crime scene recording. There are no plans to put weapons on UAVs or to use them for surveillance.

Q. What restrictions are in place to protect citizens' civil liberties and privacy concerns?

A. Historically, law enforcement has had the ability to have an aerial view with manned aircraft (helicopters and fixed-wing airplanes) for many decades. As a result, case law has been established that guides their use. The Sheriff's Department will not use UAVs to circumvent well established 4th Amendment protections. The models we fly are available commercially to members of the public. These systems are appropriately limited. For example, our equipment

will not allow us to see through walls, listen to conversations, monitor cell phones, etc. Our unmanned systems will be mission and incident driven only and ***with the public's trust in mind.***

Q. Do other California law enforcement agencies use UAVs?

A. Yes; Currently the Ventura County Sheriff's Department uses UAVs and Alameda County and the Riverside County Sheriff's Departments are in the process of obtaining FAA approval to use UAVs. Other police departments in San Diego County are in the process of obtaining UAVs as well.

Q. What type of UAVs will the Sheriff's Department be using?

A. The Sheriff's Department will use the pilot program to determine the type of UAV we use in the future based on the specific guidelines developed, missions accomplished, field testing and evaluation. They will be outfitted with cameras, and night vision.