

HONOLULU POLICE DEPARTMENT

NOTICE

Notice Number 26-62

July 31 2026

UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEM (DRONE AS FIRST RESPONDER)

I. PURPOSE

- A. The Honolulu Police Department (HPD) deploys authorized unmanned aircraft system (UAS) to enhance the department's ability to respond to priority incidents, strengthen operational decision making, and safeguard officers and the community. The HPD conducts all UAS operations with strict attention to safeguarding individual privacy rights, ensuring full compliance with the Fourth Amendment of the United States Constitution and Article I, Sections 6 and 7 of the Hawai'i State Constitution.
- B. Through rapid aerial situational awareness, the Drone as First Responder (DFR) program enables faster, more informed responses and supports the effective management of collisions, crimes in progress, search operations, and other critical law enforcement activities, including criminal investigations and routine police operations.
- C. All DFR operations shall comply with this notice and Policy 2.73, SMALL UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEM (sUAS), state and federal laws, and Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations governing sUAS (14 C.F.R. Part 107) operations.
- D. AUTHORITY AND PROGRAM OVERSIGHT
 - 1. The Major Events Division (MED) shall serve as the department's UAS Program Coordinator, consistent with section XI of Policy 2.73, sUAS.
 - 2. Authorized divisions shall maintain compliant Manuals of Operations for DFR use, as required under section V of Policy 2.73, sUAS.

3. All DFR operations must comply with the department's jurisdictional Certificate of Authorization (COA), covering O'ahu and three nautical miles offshore.

II. PARTICULARS

A. DEFINITIONS

All terms defined in Policy 2.73, sUAS, shall also apply to this notice, including but not limited to air traffic control (ATC), common traffic advisory frequency (CTAF), COA, Notice to Airman (NOTAM), remote pilot in command (RPIC), temporary flight restriction (TFR), UAS Team, visual flight rules (VFR), Visual Line of Sight (VLOS), and Visual Observer (VO).

1. Data: Media and metadata collected from the UAS and its control software and hardware.
2. DFR: Prepositioned unmanned aircraft at DFR launch sites remotely dispatched to incidents, often preceding ground units, providing real-time video and sensor feeds to dispatchers and responders.
3. DFR Launch Site: Fixed or mobile location supporting immediate sUAS deployment.
4. Main camera: An operator-controlled sensor package of the aircraft, typically containing video cameras and capable of panning, tilting, and/or zooming to focus on a subject and record media.
5. Metadata: All non-media data generated by the UAS for operation of the UAS, including application telemetry, temperature profiles, diagnostics, battery status, configuration information, and other system-level and navigation information.
6. Media: Imagery and video collected by the UAS main camera(s) and navigation camera(s) and audio from microphone(s) on the UAS or its controller.

7. Pre-Planned Flight Corridor: A predetermined, safety-evaluated route for DFR operations.
8. UAS: A remotely operated unmanned aircraft and its associated elements (including aircraft, camera, sensors, software, controller, communication links, and the components that control the unmanned aircraft) that are required for the safe and efficient operation of the unmanned aircraft in the airspace of the United States.

B. DEPLOYMENT

DFR may be initiated for:

1. Crimes in progress or high-priority calls requiring immediate situational awareness;
2. Search and rescue operations;
3. Hazardous material; Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and high-yield Explosives; or disaster-related assessments;
4. Major traffic collisions or roadway hazard evaluation;
5. Crowd management or large-scale public events;
6. High-risk tactical operations (active threat, barricaded subjects, hostage situations); and
7. Any mission authorized by the Chief of Police or designee.

C. PROHIBITED USES

DFR shall not be used for:

1. Random surveillance, intelligence gathering, or monitoring without a defined mission per section III C of Policy 2.73, sUAS; and
2. Any operation violating FAA regulations or privacy protections.

D. REQUESTS

DFR may be initiated by the Communications Division or requested by a scene supervisor or an officer on the scene through the Communications Division per section VII B of Policy 2.73, sUAS.

E. MANDATORY RPIC ASSESSMENT

Upon arrival, RPICs must assess all conditions listed in section VII C of Policy 2.73, sUAS, including safety, airspace classification, NOTAM/TFR checks, weather/VFR conditions, and FAA compliance.

F. PUBLIC TRANSPARENCY

The HPD shall maintain a high level of transparency regarding DFR operations to ensure public trust and privacy protections of the community.

1. Public-Facing Program Information: The HPD shall make available general information describing the DFR program, including:
 - a. Program purpose and community benefits;
 - b. Safety measures and FAA compliance protocols; and
 - c. Oversight structure, accountability mechanisms, and reporting obligations.
2. Annual Public Reporting: The HPD shall publish an annual report including:
 - a. Total number of DFR deployments;
 - b. Types of incidents supported;
 - c. Total aggregate flight hours;
 - d. Number and resolution of public complaints; and
 - e. Summary of privacy-related incidents or investigations.

3. Community Engagement:

- a. Present update to neighborhood boards and community organizations outlining capabilities, limitations, and safeguards.
- b. Conduct public demonstrations when appropriate to increase civilian understanding.
- c. Provide accessible channels for public feedback, concerns, and program questions.

G. RECORDING OF INCIDENTS

Recording of each incident shall begin at or near the scene of the incident and continue until the UAS or sUAS either leave the location or the investigative or enforcement activity involving a member of the public has ended.

H. PRIVACY

RPICs shall comply with section IV of Policy 2.73, sUAS. In addition, RPICs shall not intentionally record or transmit images of private activity, conditions, or locations, where a reasonable expectation of privacy exists, except when such recording or transmission of images is either (1) incidental to achieving a legitimate law enforcement objective or other legitimate public purpose, (2) authorized by a valid warrant, and/or (3) when otherwise permitted by law.

- 1. Expectation of Privacy: DFR teams shall not intentionally observe or record areas where individuals have a reasonable expectation of privacy, consistent with section IV of Policy 2.73, sUAS. However, if there is a justifiable reason, the DFR teams will observe or record these areas. Examples include but are not limited to the following:
 - a. Inside homes or enclosed structures;
 - b. Backyards, fenced properties, or curtilage; and

- c. Any location where efforts have been made to limit visibility.
- 2. Constitutional Safeguards: All DFR deployments shall comply with the Hawai'i State Constitution:
 - a. Article I, Section 6 - Right to Privacy.
 - b. Article I, Section 7 - Searches, Seizures, and the Right to Privacy.

DFR operations must never be used to bypass warrant requirements or intrude on constitutionally protected privacy expectations.
- 3. Targeted Surveillance Prohibition: DFR shall not be used to monitor or track individuals without:
 - a. A clearly defined mission tied to a call-for-service;
 - b. Legal authority; and
 - c. Supervisory approval consistent with Policy 2.73, sUAS, restrictions.
- 4. Minimization and Redaction Requirements: If private areas are inadvertently captured:
 - a. RPICs shall minimize unnecessary recording.
 - b. Sensitive footage shall be labeled, redacted, or access-restricted under section VIII of Policy 2.73, sUAS, retention rules.
 - c. Recorded data shall not be used for law enforcement purposes and/or prosecution.
- 5. Data Access Controls: Access to DFR recordings shall be strictly limited to personnel with operational or investigative need, with audit logs documenting access.

6. Privacy Complaint Process: The HPD shall maintain a process to receive, investigate, and resolve privacy-related complaints. Validated findings, if any, may be incorporated into the annual DFR program review.

I. SAFETY

This section remains consistent with section VI of Policy 2.73, sUAS, including RPIC responsibilities to halt operations if safety is compromised and VO requirements to maintain VLOS and communication.

J. COMMUNICATIONS

RPICs shall maintain secure communications with scene supervisors and monitor CTAF/ATC frequencies, following sections VII E and F of Policy 2.73, sUAS.

K. DOCUMENTATION

All deployments, recordings, and flight logs shall be maintained consistent with sections VII G and IX C of Policy 2.73, sUAS.

L. RECORDED DATA

Drone video, images, flight logs, metadata, and related records shall be treated as official department records. UAS data retention policies must be consistent with Section 2-32.5, Revised Ordinances of Honolulu, and other legal requirements.

M. STORAGE

Any UAS data that is retained must be stored in a secure local or City-approved cloud system that satisfies the cybersecurity requirements set forth in the City and County of Honolulu's and HPD's Data Management Policy.

N. TRAINING

All RPICs and VOs must hold FAA Part 107 certification and participate in required training and quarterly recall sessions, per section X of Policy 2.73, sUAS.

O. PROGRAM COORDINATION

The MED must ensure consistency, compliance, documentation, and maintenance of all DFR operations in accordance with section XI of Policy 2.73, sUAS.

III. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

An HPD policy pertaining to UAS is forthcoming.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Lazar".

DAVID LAZAR
Chief of Police

Post on bulletin board
until August 31, 2026