

NOTICE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION
Air Traffic Organization Policy

N JO 7210.928

Effective Date:
December 31, 2020

Cancellation Date:
December 2, 2021

SUBJ: Reporting Suspicious UAS Activity

1. Purpose of This Notice. This notice provides additional guidance to FAA Order JO 7210.3, Facility Operation and Administration, paragraphs 2-1-30, Reporting Suspicious Aircraft/Pilot Activities, 2-1-32, Reporting Suspicious UAS Activities Including Unauthorized, Hazardous, Or Threatening Operations, 2-1-33, Use Of UAS Detection Systems, 2-1-34, Use Of Counter Unmanned Aircraft Systems (C-UAS), 2-2-4, Duty Familiarization And The Transfer Of Position Responsibility, and Appendix 7, Suspicious UAS Response Checklist.

2. Audience. This notice applies to the following Air Traffic Organization (ATO) service units: Air Traffic Services, Mission Support Services, System Operations, Safety and Technical Training; Air Traffic Safety Oversight Service; William J. Hughes Technical Center; and Mike Monroney Aeronautical Center.

3. Where Can I Find This Notice? This notice is available on the MyFAA employee website at https://employees.faa.gov/tools_resources/orders_notices/ and on the air traffic publications website at http://www.faa.gov/air_traffic/publications/.

4. Cancellation. This notice is canceled upon the publication of FAA Order JO 7210.3CC, Change 1, effective December 2, 2021.

5. Explanation of Policy Change. This change adds Appendix 7, Suspicious UAS Response Checklist, and references the new Appendix 7 in paragraphs 2-1-30 and 2-1-32. In addition, the change adds two new paragraphs regarding the use of UAS Detection Systems and Counter Unmanned Aircraft Systems (C-UAS) and UAS activity of operational importance is included paragraph 2-2-4 as a position relief checklist item.

6. Procedures/Responsibilities/Action. Amend FAA Order JO 7210.3 by changing paragraphs 2-1-30, 2-1-32, and 2-2-4, and inserting new paragraphs 2-1-33, 2-1-34, and new Appendix 7 to read as follows:

2 –1–30. REPORTING SUSPICIOUS AIRCRAFT/PILOT ACTIVITIES

Title thru b.9. No Change

10. Any other situation that may indicate a suspicious aircraft, including reported or observed unauthorized, hazardous, or threatening Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) activity. For example, Unmanned Aircraft (UA), including remote controlled model aircraft, operating near airports above authorized altitudes may be considered suspicious. Facilities must utilize the suspicious UAS response checklist contained in Appendix 7 to assist in their determining what UAS activity qualifies and should be treated as suspicious; to support decisions to take balanced, risk-based responses; and to conduct reporting to the DEN ATSC and other facilities. For instances not related to suspicious activity or to a security issue, the reporting requirements outlined in JO 7210.632A and JO 7200.20A apply.

REFERENCE–

FAA Order JO 7110.65, Para 2–1–2, Duty Priority.

FAA Order JO 7210.3, Appendix 7, Suspicious UAS Response Checklist.

FAA Order JO 7210.632, Appendix A, Mandatory Occurrence Report Criteria, Paras 1 and 3.

FAA Order JO 7610.4, Para 7-3-1, Application.

FAA Order JO 1030.3, Initial Event Response, Paras 2-2, 2-3, and 2-5.

Advisory Circular 91-57, Model Aircraft Operating Standards.

No further changes to paragraph

2–1–32. REPORTING SUSPICIOUS UAS ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING UNAUTHORIZED, HAZARDOUS, OR THREATENING OPERATIONS

All FAA Air Traffic Control facilities, Federal Contract Towers, and Flight Service Stations, must take the following actions for any reported or observed suspicious UAS activities, including unauthorized, hazardous, or threatening operations:

- a.** No change
- b.** If the UAS activity is suspicious, creating a hazard to air traffic and/or is operating in a threatening manner (e.g., loitering near the airport fuel farm without authorization); notify local authorities (e.g., airport/local law enforcement; airport operations; and/or the responsible Federal Security Director Coordination Center) in accordance with local facility directives procedures, including Letters of Agreement with the airport owner/operator. Provide location, description, and other pertinent information regarding the activities by utilizing the checklist contained in Appendix 7.

REFERENCE-

FAA Order JO 7110.65, Para 2–1–2, Duty Priority.

FAA Order JO 7210.3, Appendix 7, Suspicious UAS Response Checklist.

FAA Order JO 7210.632, Appendix A, Mandatory Occurrence Report Criteria, Paras 1 and 3.

FAA Order JO 7610.4, Para 7-3-1, Application.

FAA Order JO 1030.3, Initial Event Response, Paras 2-2, 2-3, and 2-5.

Advisory Circular 91-57, Model Aircraft Operating Standards.

No further changes to paragraph

2-1-33. USE OF UAS DETECTION SYSTEMS

Airport owners/operators or local enforcement may contact ATC facilities to coordinate their acquisition, testing, and operational use of UAS detection systems. These systems and how they are used may have implications for FAA regulations for airports; potentially affect ATC and other Air Navigation Services systems (e.g., RF interference with radars); and/or trigger airport responses (e.g., closing runways), which should be coordinated with ATC.

- a.** Requests by airport authorities for ATC facility cooperation/authorization in the acquisition, testing, or use of UAS detection systems will be referred to the appropriate FAA Airports District Office (ADO). The ADO will initiate internal FAA coordination, including reviews by the responsible ATO offices and facilities.

- b.** ATC facilities will not enter into any verbal or written agreement with a commercial vendor or an airport authority regarding UAS detection capabilities without prior coordination and approval from HQ-AJT-0.

NOTE-

- 1. UAS detection systems do not include the interdiction components that characterize UAS mitigation technologies, also referred to as Counter Unmanned Aircraft System (C-UAS) technologies. Only select Federal Departments and Agencies have the legal authority to use C-UAS systems in the NAS. The FAA does not support the use of this technology by other entities without this explicit, legal authorization.*
- 2. The FAA does not advocate the use of UAS detection in the airport environment until appropriate policy and procedures are developed in coordination with the agency.*

No further changes to paragraph

2-1-34. USE OF COUNTER UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS (C-UAS)

Select Departments and agencies, which have been legally authorized to use this technology, are operationally using Counter Unmanned Aircraft System systems (C-UAS) in the NAS to protect certain facilities and assets. C-UAS systems are capable of disabling, disrupting, or seizing control of a suspicious UAS, and may integrate or be linked to UAS detection capabilities. These Departments and agencies are required to coordinate with the FAA to assess and mitigate risks to the NAS posed by these C-UAS systems. Nonetheless, these systems and how they are used may still: impact ATC and other Air Navigation Services systems (e.g., RF interference with radars); affect air traffic in the vicinity (including legitimate, compliant UAS flights); and/or involve operational security responses (e.g., deployment of ground and airborne security assets), which should be coordinated with ATC.

- a.** The Joint Air Traffic Operations Command (JATOC) Air Traffic Security Coordinator (ATSC) team, which manages the Domestic Events Network (DEN), will notify affected ATC facilities when C-UAS systems are activated.

NOTE-

Only select Federal Departments/Agencies have been legally authorized to utilize C-UAS to cover certain facilities and assets, and with coordination with the FAA to address risks to the NAS. Risk mitigation for the NAS typically includes notification to potentially affected ATC facilities.

- b.** The JATOC ATSC (DEN) will alert all ATC facilities affected by C-UAS deployment and JATOC National Operations Control Center (NOCC) of any possible operational impacts.
- 1.** These alerts will focus on real-time reporting regarding any possible operational impacts of C-UAS activities, enabling the facility to heighten an awareness of potential flight and equipment anomalies and to take actions needed to sustain safe operations.
 - 2.** These alerts will be made via landline communications and will not be broadcast over radios, shout lines, or direct dial lines to the air traffic controllers on position.
 - 3.** The affected ATC facilities will not discuss C-UAS operations with any outside entity.

Renumber paragraphs 2-1-33 thru 2-1-36 as 2-1-35 thru 2-1-38

No further changes to paragraph

2-2-4. DUTY FAMILIARIZATION AND THE TRANSFER OF POSITION RESPONSIBILITY

Title thru c.1.(d)(11) No Change

(12) UAS activity of operational importance.

No further changes to paragraph.

APPENDIX 7. SUSPICIOUS UAS RESPONSE CHECKLIST

See attachment: Suspicious UAS Response Checklist

7. Distribution. This notice is distributed to the following ATO service units: Air Traffic Services, Mission Support Services, System Operations, Safety and Technical Training; Air Traffic Safety Oversight Service; William J. Hughes Technical Center; and Mike Monroney Aeronautical Center.

8. Background. The number of suspected unauthorized UAS operations in the vicinity of airports is on the rise. As a result, many airport authorities are responding to these concerns by looking for ways to detect and mitigate the possible impact of malicious or errant UAS operations. In addition, legislation has granted legal authorization to use C-UAS capabilities to the Department of Defense (DOD), Department of Energy (DOE), Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and Department of Justice (DOJ). This same legislation requires these departments and their component agencies to coordinate with the FAA to characterize, assess, and mitigate risks to the NAS. In response to these activities, Headquarters Air Traffic Services (AJT) provided interim guidance, including a facility checklist, in 2018 to ATC facilities on how to handle observations of “suspicious” UAS activity. This checklist is now being replaced by this new Appendix 7 to FAA Order JO7210.3.

Natasha Durkins
Director, Policy, AJV-P
Air Traffic Organization

APPENDIX 7. SUSPICIOUS UAS RESPONSE CHECKLIST

- For a suspicious UAS sighting or detection, or report received from a credible source (ATC, DEN, law enforcement, pilot, or airport operator) follow the checklist guidance below.
- Reports from other entities based on UAS detection systems should be considered credible, but validated if possible, including using visual sightings, ***before*** taking ATC action altering normal air traffic operations ***unless*** the reported detection indicates a hazard or threat exists.
- UAS of Interest (UOI) - unauthorized or non-compliant UAS that has been observed through a validated sighting or detection that poses a potential safety hazard or security threat to an airport environment warranting additional scrutiny and, as appropriate, response action.
- ***Maintain notes and use recorded lines for any calls regarding the incident.***

1. *Take immediate and appropriate action to safely resolve any conflicts with air traffic under your control.*

2. Notify the OM/OS or CIC and gather the following information:

- | | |
|---|--|
| • Time of observation(s) | • Size and color |
| • Position, altitude, and course | • Number of reported/sighted aircraft |
| • Flight behavior (e.g. hovering, headed towards the airport) | • If able, operator controlling location |
| • UAS type (e.g. quadcopter, wing, etc.) | |

3. Validate the UAS observation (sighting, detection, or report) possible suspicious activity:

- Attempt to validate by visual observation or confirmation from another aircraft, or personnel on the ground (e.g. airport personnel, law enforcement, etc.).
 - Is the UAS a safety hazard to other aircraft, vehicles, ground personnel, or airport infrastructure?
 - Is the UAS operating in a threatening manner?
 - Is the UAS compliant and authorized?
- Suspicious UAS are designated as UAS of Interest (UOI).
- If not, take no further action

**4.** If the UAS is suspicious and could affect air traffic operations:

- Issue UAS advisory information, when in your judgement, their proximity warrants it. Continue to issue advisories to potentially impacted aircraft for at least 15 minutes following report.

EXAMPLE–

“U–A–S activity reported, 12 o’clock, 1 mile, altitude reported one thousand two hundred.”
“Unmanned aircraft system activity observed, 1 mile east of Trenton Airport, altitude unknown.”

Reference-

FAA Order JO 7110.65, Air Traffic Control, Para 2-1-22, Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) Activity Information

**5.** Reporting:

- Notify the Joint Air Traffic Operations Command (JATOC) Air Traffic Security Coordinator (ATSC) managing the Domestic Events Network (DEN) by making a DEN announcement or by calling the ATSC at (540)-422-4423/4424/4425 as soon as possible, noting a UOI has been observed
- ATM or their designee
- Responsible Regional Operations Center (ROC)
- Initiate a MOR entry into CEDAR, as operational needs permit (as indicated in step 10)

Reference-

FAA JO 1030.3, Initial Event Response, Chapter 2, Para 2.2 Notification Process for Accidents and Incidents, Para 2.3 Notification Process for Security-Related Events
FAA Order JO 7210.632, Appendix A, Mandatory Occurrence Report Criteria, Paras 1 and 3.

**6.** Determine safety hazard and/or security threat by using factors including:

- Size of the UOI
- Location, including altitude
- Flight behavior / direction of flight
- Input on hazard/threat from airport operator, airport/local law enforcement, FSD, and JATOC ATSC
- Duration of observed UOI flight

**7.** Request Support:

- Recall personnel to assist with coordination and notifications
- If the UAS activity is creating a hazard/threat to air traffic or the airport, contact local law enforcement providing location, description, and other pertinent information regarding the activities
- Request local law enforcement inform the UAS operator of the hazard/threat they are creating and ask them to cease the operation
- If the local law enforcement can obtain the operator's name and address, include this information in the MOR (completed in step 10) to support possible enforcement action
- Request the JATOC ATSC managing the DEN provide support, to include providing available law enforcement/security information and initiating other JATOC assistance

Reference-

FAA Order JO 7210.3, Facility Operation and Administration, Para 2-1-32, Reporting Suspicious UAS Activities Including, Unauthorized, Hazardous or Threatening Operations

**8. Operational response:**

- Response must be risk-based and balance the hazard/threat posed by UOI with safety and efficiency costs of taking the operational actions cited below
- Consider how altering normal air traffic operations will impact the NAS
- Sustain air traffic operations to the extent permitted by safety and security constraints
- Factors for consideration include but are not limited to:
 - Traffic volume and complexity, and weather
 - Severity of the safety hazard or security threat
 - Airport configuration – e.g., are there active runways located away from the UOI?
 - Ability to leverage local authority resources to find and halt UOI operator
- Operational response options include but are not limited to:
 - Holding arriving and/or departing traffic using the at-risk runway(s)
 - Changing runway(s)
 - Adjusting traffic flow or traffic patterns; diverting arriving traffic
 - Requesting local authority assistance to halt the hazardous/threatening UOI activities
 - Request traffic management measures by the overlying facilities and the JATOC NOM



9. If UOI operation continues and causes persistent disruptions, local authorities may stand up an airport-based Incident Command (IC) or Unified Command (UC). If a request is made for facility participation, contact the JATOC ATSC managing the DEN and request assistance.



10. Suspicious UAS/UOI are considered significant events. Operational need permitting, report the suspicious UAS/UOI incident via MOR using CEDAR or VSRP as appropriate.

Reference-

FAA Order JO 1030.3, Initial Event Response, 2.2 Notification process for Accidents and Incidents