

**BY ORDER OF THE  
SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE**

**AIR FORCE POLICY DIRECTIVE 11-5**

**7 JUNE 2019**



***Flying Operations***

***SMALL UNMANNED AIRCRAFT  
SYSTEMS***

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This directive implements Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction 3255.01, *Joint Unmanned Aircraft Systems Minimum Training Standards*. It provides the policy to ensure safe and successful Air Force small unmanned aircraft systems (SUAS) operations. This directive applies to all regular Air Force, Air Force Reserve, and Air National Guard units. Ensure that all records created as a result of processes prescribed in this publication are maintained in accordance with Air Force Manual 33-363, *Management of Records*, and disposed of in accordance with the Records Disposition Schedule in the Air Force Records Information Management System. Refer recommended changes and questions about this publication to the Office of Primary Responsibility using Air Force Form 847, *Recommendation for Change of Publication*; route Air Force Form 847 from the field through the appropriate functional chain of command. This publication may not be supplemented.

***SUMMARY OF CHANGES***

This document has been substantially revised and needs to be completely reviewed. Section 4, *Publications Structure*, was deleted; and the roles and responsibilities sections have been updated.

**1. Overview/Background.** The Department of Defense categorizes Unmanned Aircraft Systems into five Groups based on the attributes of weight, altitude and speed.

1.1. Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems (SUAS). A Group 1, 2, or 3 unmanned aircraft and its supporting ground control elements, that does not carry a human operator, can be operated

autonomously or remotely, can be expendable or recoverable, and can carry a lethal or nonlethal payload.

1.1.1. Group 1 Unmanned Aircraft Systems. Typically weighs 20 pounds or less and normally operates below 1,200 feet above ground level at speeds less than 100 knots.

1.1.2. Group 2 Unmanned Aircraft Systems. Typically weighs 21 – 55 pounds and normally operates below 3,500 feet above ground level at speeds less than 250 knots.

1.1.3. Group 3 Unmanned Aircraft Systems. Typically weighs more than 55 pounds, but less than 1,320 pounds and normally operates below 18,000 feet mean sea level at speeds less than 250 knots.

## **2. Policy.**

2.1. The Air Force shall establish SUAS training, certification, qualification, and operational policy and guidance that comply with Department of Defense and Joint policies, including Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction 3255.01.

2.2. The Air Force shall interpret policy and provide oversight from Headquarters Air Force. Headquarters Air Force will certify and approve all departmental publications that implement policy in this directive.

## **3. Roles and Responsibilities.**

3.1. The Air Force Deputy Chief of Staff, Operations (AF/A3) establishes and interprets SUAS policy and shall:

3.1.1. Provide operational oversight including but not limited to, training, certification, qualification, standardization, evaluation, and general operations guidance and procedures.

3.1.2. Assign responsibilities for implementing the policy in this directive.

3.1.3. Ensure compliance with the requirements outlined in Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction 3255.01.

3.2. Air Force Special Operations Command is the designated lead command for SUAS and executes its responsibilities in accordance with Air Force Policy Directive 10-9, *Lead Command Designation and Responsibilities for Weapon Systems*. Air Force Special Operations Command shall:

3.2.1. Establish guidance for SUAS.

3.2.2. Consider the widely varying missions when developing and coordinating publications for SUAS.

3.2.3. Designate use of a SUAS database. Information shall be used to manage operator certifications, qualifications, training, and currency as well as tracking system availability, status and trend analysis.

3.2.4. Modify or revise vendor-provided SUAS operator's manuals and checklists, as required.

3.3. Air Force Materiel Command is responsible to develop and publish training, certification, qualification, standardization, evaluation, and general operations procedures

unique to research test development & evaluation and flight test operations and missions. Air Force Materiel Command units not conducting these operations or missions will conform to basic guidance.

3.3.1. For research test development & evaluation and flight test operations, Air Force Materiel Command and the United States Air Force Academy may incorporate a SUAS information management system into its own command-wide data management system and may maintain training records on existing approved electronic forms and automated products.

3.4. All other major commands, field operating agencies, direct reporting units, and Air Reserve Components will comply with this directive and associated guidance published in the applicable Air Force instructions, manuals, or other guidance.

HEATHER A. WILSON  
Secretary of the Air Force

**Attachment 1****GLOSSARY OF REFERENCES AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION*****References***

CJCSI 3255.01, *Joint Unmanned Aircraft Systems Minimum Training Standards*, 4 September 2012

AFMAN 33-363, *Management of Records*, 1 March 2008

AFPD 10-9, *Lead Command Designation and Responsibilities for Weapon Systems*, 8 March 2007

***Adopted Forms***

**AF Form 847**, *Recommendation for Change of Publication*

***Abbreviations and Acronyms***

**SUAS**—Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems