

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

AIR FORCE POLICY DIRECTIVE 11-5

8 OCTOBER 2015



Flying Operations

***SMALL UNMANNED AIRCRAFT
SYSTEMS (SUAS) RULES,
PROCEDURES, AND SERVICE***

COMPLIANCE WITH THIS PUBLICATION IS MANDATORY

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This directive 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 Command (AFRC), and Air National Guard (ANG) units. Air Force SUAS operations encompass worldwide missions, day and night. For daily operations and times of crises appropriate air crews require rules and procedures to support safe and successful Air Force unmanned aircraft operations. Ensure that all records created as a result of processes prescribed in this publication are maintained in accordance with (IAW) Air Force Manual (AFMAN) 33363, *Management of Records*, and disposed of IAW the Air Force Records Information Management System (AFRIMS) Records Distribution Schedule (RDS). The use of the name or mark of any specific manufacturer, commercial product, commodity, or service in this publication does not imply endorsement by the Air Force. Refer recommended changes and questions about this publication to the Office of Primary Responsibility (OPR) using the Air Force (AF) Form 847, *Recommendation for Change of Publication*; route AF Forms 847 from the field through the appropriate functional chain of command.

SUMMARY OF CHANGES

This document has been substantially revised and must be thoroughly reviewed. Major changes include revision of the publication structure for Groups 2 and 3 Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS). All guidance for Group 1 UAS is consolidated into Air Force Instruction (AFI) 11-5GP1-SUAS Volumes 1-3 as the Group 1 Mission Design Series (MDS)-specific AFI. Each Group 2 and 3 UAS will have an MDS-specific, Volumes 1, 2, and 3.

1. Overview/Background. The Department of Defense (DoD) categorized Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) into five Groups based on the attributes of weight, altitude and speed. Small UAS (SUAS) are Groups 1, 2, and 3 UAS flown by trained, but not aeronautically rated, SUAS Operators (SUAS-O). SUAS rules and procedures are closely aligned to those required of crews of manned aircraft. The similarities include: aerial platforms; disciplined, professional operators/crews; use of airspace; requirement for aviation maintenance/logistical support; and training. Mission requirements, SUAS capabilities, airspace of intended operations, and assessed risks are all factors used to determine specific requirements for operator training and qualifications.

2. Policy.

2.1. The Air Force will establish SUAS training, qualification, and operations policy and guidance in Air Force publications IAW current publications management guidance to meet global interoperability requirements for the full range of SUAS operations.

2.2. The Air Force shall provide policy interpretation and oversight from the Headquarters Air Force (HAF). The HAF 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 oversight for SUAS rules and procedures.

3.1.2. Approve or delegate approval authority for AFI 11-502, (Volume 1, 2, and 3) and the corresponding MDS-specific AFIs.

3.2. The Air Force Deputy Chief of Staff, Operations, Director of Future Operations (AF/A35) establishes and manages policy for training, standardization/evaluation (stan/eval) and general operations procedures and shall be the approval authority for the lead SUAS AFIs.

3.2.1. AF/A3OS is the OPR for AFI 11-502, Volume 1, *Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems Training*, and Volume 2, *Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems Standardization/Evaluation Program*.

3.2.2. Air Force Flight Standards Agency (AFFSA)/XOF is the OPR for AFI 11-502, Volume 3, *Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems Operations*.

3.3. Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC) is designated the lead command for SUAS and executes its responsibilities IAW Air Force Policy Directive (AFPD) 10-9, *Lead Command Designation and Responsibilities for Weapon Systems*. AFSOC shall:

3.3.1. Coordinate with all using commands to establish guidance for UAS Groups 1, 2, and 3.

3.3.2. Consider the widely varying missions when developing and coordinating publications for each UAS Group.

3.3.3. Designate and enforce use of a SUAS data management system. Information shall be used to manage SUAS-O qualifications, training, and currency; track system

availability and status; and conduct trend analysis. **EXCEPTION:** Air Force Materiel Command (AFMC)/CC shall incorporate a SUAS information management system into its own command-wide data manager.

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

3.3.5. AFMC/CC is responsible to develop and publish training, stan/eval, and general operations procedures unique to flight test operations. AFMC units not conducting flight test operations will conform to basic and MDS-specific guidance as specified in [paragraph 3](#).

3.4. All major commands (MAJCOM), field operating agencies (FOA), and direct reporting units (DRU), and the Air Reserve Component shall comply with guidance published in the applicable MDS-specific AFI.

4. Publications Structure:

4.1. The standardized AFI sets are a three-volume lead-AFI and additional three-volume sets of MDS-specific AFIs for each SUAS. The three lead-AFIs provide guidance common to all three groups and shall be structured as follows:

4.1.1. AFI 11-502, Volume 1, *Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems Training*. This is the basic training guidance which creates standardized training programs for SUAS.

4.1.2. AFI 11-502, Volume 2, *Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems Standardization/Evaluation Program*. Establishes the stan/eval program that supports Air Force objectives. This instruction provides guidance on how to structure and monitor a stan/eval program.

4.1.3. AFI 11-502, Volume 3, *Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems Operations*. Prescribes the rules that govern the operations of Air Force SUAS operated by Air Force, other services, foreign, civilian, and contractor personnel. It provides the basic operational guidance for all operators of systems designated in this directive.

4.2. Lead command shall author and coordinate a single AFI set that includes all Group 1 UAS. This is the MDS-specific AFI for all Group 1 UAS. It shall be labeled as follows:

4.2.1. AFI 11-5GP1-SUAS, Volume 1, *Unmanned Aircraft Systems Group 1 Operator Training*. Specifies training programs, to include initial qualification, mission qualification, instructor upgrade, and continuation training. This instruction shall employ basic guidance provided in AFI 11-502, Volume 1.

4.2.2. AFI 11-5GP1-SUAS, Volume 2, *Unmanned Aircraft Systems Group 1 Operator Evaluation Criteria*. Establishes basic evaluation criteria. Uses AFI 11-502, Volume 2, as the template to implement and monitor the program.

4.2.3. AFI 11-5GP1-SUAS, Volume 3, *Unmanned Aircraft Systems Group 1 Operations Procedures*. Provides the regulatory guidance for general operations. This AFI will address many of the employment procedures and shall use AFI 11-502, Volume 3, as the foundation for operational procedures.

4.3. Lead command shall author and coordinate an MDS-specific AFI set for each Group 2 and 3 UAS. For example, RQ-XX publications shall be labeled:

4.3.1. AFI 11-5RQ-XX, Volume 1, *RQ-XX Operator Training*. It provides the system-specific training program, to include upgrade, continuation, and mission. This instruction builds on the basic guidance provided in AFI 11-502, Volume 1.

4.3.2. AFI 11-5RQ-XX, Volume 2, *RQ-XX Operator Evaluation Criteria*. This AFI establishes basic evaluation criteria and uses AFI 11-502, Volume 2, as the template to implement and monitor the program.

4.3.3. AFI 11-5RQ-XX, Volume 3, *RQ-XX Operations Procedures*. Provides the regulatory guidance for general operations. This AFI will address many of the employment procedures and shall use AFI 11-502, Volume 3, as the foundation for operational procedures.

4.4. AFMC shall author and coordinate an AFI set to govern AFMC flight test operations. Procedures shall be published in AFI 11-5FT, Volumes 1, 2 and 3 and shall be labeled as follows:

4.4.1. AFI 11-5FT, Volume 1, *Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems (SUAS) Flight Test Training*. Institutes the mission specific training program, to include upgrade, continuation, and mission. This instruction shall employ basic guidance provided in AFI 11-502, Volume 1.

4.4.2. AFI 11-5FT, Volume 2, *Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems (SUAS) Flight Test Evaluation Criteria*. Establishes mission/airframe specific evaluation criteria. Utilizes AFI 11-502, Volume 2, as the template to implement and monitor the program.

4.4.3. AFI 11-5FT, Volume 3, *Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems (SUAS) Flight Test Operations Procedures*. It provides the regulatory guidance for general operations. This AFI will address many of the employment procedures and shall use AFI 11-502, Volume 3, as the foundation for operational procedures.

4.5. SUAS fundamental operating procedures and tactics may be incorporated as non-directive tactical level doctrine. These documents shall be established by the lead and using commands and incorporated into the Air Force Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures (AFTTP) 3-1 and 3-3 series of publications.

5. Waivers:

5.1. AF/A35 will authorize waivers to this directive for an essential MAJCOM requirement.

5.2. Send MAJCOM-coordinated waiver requests to AF/A3OS who will forward to AF/A35 for approval.

DEBORAH LEE JAMES
Secretary of the Air Force

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

AFI 33-360, *Publications and Forms Management*, 25 September 2013

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

AFSA—Air Force Flight Standards Agency

ANG—Air National Guard

AFI—Air Force Instruction

AFMAN—Air Force Manual

AFMC—Air Force Materiel Command

AFPD—Air Force Policy Directive

AFDPO—Air Force Departmental Publishing Office

AFRC—Air Force Reserve Command

AFRIMS—Air Force Records Information Management System

AFSOC—Air Force Special Operations Command

AFTTP—Air Force Tactics, Techniques and Procedures

AGL—Above Ground Level

CONOPS—Concept of Operations

DoD—Department of Defense

DRU—Direct Reporting Unit

FOA—Field Operating Agency

MAJCOM—Major Command

IAW—in accordance with

MDS—Mission Design Series

OPR—Office of Primary Responsibility

PIC—Pilot-in-Command

RDS—Records Distribution Schedule

Stan/Eval—Standardization and Evaluation

SUAS—Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems

SUAS-O—SUAS Operator

UAS—Unmanned Aircraft Systems

Terms

Group 1 UAS—Typically weighs 20 pounds or less and normally operates below 1200 feet Above Ground Level (AGL) at speeds less than 100 knots.

Group 2 UAS—Typically weighs 21 – 55 pounds and normally operates below 3500 feet AGL at speeds less than 250 knots.

Group 3 UAS—Typically weighs more than 55 pounds, but less than 1320 pounds and normally operates below 18,000 feet Mean Sea Level at speeds less than 250 knots.

Lead SUAS-O—The SUAS-O specifically identified by responsible authority and tasked with the overall responsibility for the operation and safety of the SUAS mission (including equipment preparation, planning, briefing, ground and air operations, recovery, mission debriefing, and equipment accountability). The Lead SUAS-O is equivalent to the Pilot-in-Command (PIC) of a manned aircraft.

SUAS—A UAS Group 1, 2, or 3 powered vehicle 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.

SUAS Crew—The total complement of individuals (e.g. SUAS Operator, Systems Operators) required for mission execution as defined by MDS-specific AFIs.

SUAS-O—A SUAS crewmember that has completed a formal SUAS Initial Qualification Training Course and has been certified to operate that particular system.

UAS Group—Department of Defense UAS categories originally codified in the JFCOM Joint UAS CONOP and presently reflected in CJCSI 3255.01 to establish the foundation for Joint/Coalition UAS terminology. Based on weight, operating altitude, and airspeed, all current and planned AF SUAS fall into one of three Groups.

Attachment 2

AFI DEVELOPMENT AND COORDINATION

Table A2.1. AFI DEVELOPMENT AND COORDINATION.

Type of Publication	ACTION (days)						Total
	Author and Internal Coord 1	Field Coord 2	AFI Resolution 3	Edit 4	HAF Coord 5	Publishing 6	
New	45	30	14	10	45	30	174
Revised	10	30	14	10	45	30	139
Change	5	15	5	5	10	5	45

1 Author and Internal Coordination - OPR determines the need for a conversion of revision (NLT 4 years from AFI publishing date).

2 Field Coordination - OPR coordinates draft AFI with using commands. The proposed forms are submitted to Air Force Departmental Publishing Office (AFDPO) at this time.

3 AFI Resolution - OPR consolidates comments and deliberates issues. If unable to resolve at lead command level, forward issues to AF/A3OS or AFFSA/XOF for ultimate conflict resolution by the AF/A35. A final draft is then published.

4 Edit - OPR develops the final package and submits it to AF/A3OS or AFFSA/XOF for coordination and approval. The OPR forwards the final coordinating draft of the AFI to the using commands to begin writing appropriate supplements.

5 HAF Coordination - AF/A3OS or AFFSA/XOF shall coordinate with appropriate offices designated in AFI 33-360, *Publications and Forms Management*. The 45-day period is established for one full edit cycle to input the proposed changes at the Headquarters level.

6 Publishing – Processing time for publication and posting on the AF Publications web site.