

LOS SANTOS COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

# Air Support Unit

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES



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<b>Mission Statement.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Operations.....</b>	<b>4</b>
Air Support Unit Structure.....	4
• Trainee Pilot.....	4
• Pilot.....	4
Pilot Instructor.....	4
Helicopter Crew.....	4
Pilot.....	5
Tactical Flight Officer.....	5
Pilot Instructor.....	5
Deployments.....	5
Patrol.....	5
Search.....	5
Pursuit.....	5
Transport.....	6
Overwatch.....	6
Check Rides.....	6
Maintenance.....	7
Callsign.....	7
<b>Policy Handbook.....</b>	<b>8</b>
Requirements.....	8
Activity Requirements.....	8
Activity Limits.....	8
Mandatory Reporter.....	8
Physical Appearance.....	9
Disciplinary Actions.....	9
Ground Vehicles.....	9
Air Vehicles.....	9
Safe Operation.....	9
Available Airframes.....	9
Spawning.....	10
Pre-Flight.....	10
Takeoff.....	10
Landing.....	11
No-Fly Zones.....	11
Area of Operation.....	13

## Mission Statement

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The Los Santos County Sheriff's Office, Aviation Support Unit [ASU] is the premier Special Response organization serving the greater Los Santos Metropolitan and County areas.

Deputies in the LCSO ASU serve on a specialty unit that is tasked with handling some of the most hazardous, high-risk and high-profile incidents that can occur in a jurisdiction outside the capabilities of normal departmental and law enforcement personnel.

Simply put, the Air Support Unit's purpose is to provide aerial support to LEO's on the ground across a number of scenarios, primarily focused on providing tracking, search and observation.

Specifically, the department employs a number of rotary wing helicopters equipped with high-resolution reconnaissance camera systems capable of identifying street names, postal codes, and license plates and even tracking both vehicles and people.

Additionally, the helicopters are also equipped with the necessary equipment required for the Sheriff Emergency Response Team [SERT]'s advanced tactical deployments (e.g., rappelling).

On occasion, the Air Support Unit may be the only aerial vehicle available, and a victim or deputy may require urgent medical care. In such situations, the helicopter may be requested to land at the scene and transport the injured person(s) to the nearest medical facility.

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We aim to staff the LCSO ASU with **competent, experienced, and dedicated** members who can uphold our values and represent the department, and especially of our division, with pride.

As a matter of jurisdictional authority, LCSO ASU is the premier law enforcement aviation support organization tasked with the regular patrolling and responding to emergency situations in the greater Los Santos Metropolitan and County areas.

This is conducted in support of the Patrol Services Bureau and the various specialty units and interagency partners we interface with.

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The LCSO Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) is hereby established to outline the procedures, tasking, and direction of the LCSO in a manner that ensures public transparency and accountability. This document will achieve this by outlining, specifically, their operations and standards.

This SOP, and its contents within, applies solely but utterly to all members on a full-time or part-time basis in the course of their duties participating with the LCSO.

All LCSO personnel, regardless of status, are hereby expected to withhold themselves to the outlined standards and expectations while abiding by community guidelines, department SOP, and other applicable subdivision regulation as applicable.

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## Operations

Air Support Unit operations are broken up into 4 main categories:

- **Patrol** - The helicopter crew scans the Area of Operation looking for various situations and incidents, just as with both vehicle and foot patrols.
- **Search** - The helicopter crew are tasked by other deputies or dispatch to locate something or someone.
- **Pursuit** - The helicopter crew joins in on a 10-70 or 10-80, taking over callouts and tracking the suspect(s), guiding other deputies toward them.
- **Transport** - The helicopter crew moves passengers from point A to point B, including both emergency medical evacs and SERT tactical deployments.

## Air Support Unit Structure

The Air Support Unit consists of 3 primary positions within the department:

- **Trainee Pilot**

All pilots entering the department will start in this position. They are only permitted to fly with a Pilot Instructor present. They may operate as a Camera Operator if they possess the LCSO ASU Camera Operation Certification with another Pilot or Pilot Instructor present.

- ◆ To move from Trainee Pilot to Pilot, the Trainee must complete 3 “Check-Rides” with a Pilot Instructor present, And the LCSO ASU Camera Operation Training.
- ◆ After the Trainee has completed all the prerequisites, Command and the Pilot Instructor will review the Trainee’s progress and promote them to Pilot.

- **Pilot**

Pilots are fully trained and qualified to operate the helicopter solo and may fly with other Camera-Operators as part of a crew. Has access to the vehicle spawn menu.

- ◆ Optionally, the pilot may elect to become a Pilot Instructor. The pilot should talk with ASU Command to go over the instructional material; ASU Command can then shadow the instructor as they perform either training or “Check-Rides.”
- ◆ Once ASU Command is satisfied with the Pilot's performance, they may be promoted to Pilot Instructor.

### **Pilot Instructor**

In addition to all the regular duties that Pilots may perform, Pilot Instructors can train people on the department's various trainings, as well as perform “Check-Rides” and report to Command on the Trainee’s Progress. Has access to the vehicle spawn menu.

## Helicopter Crew

Aviation Unit operations consist of one or more Pilots operating together to form a crew, which may be comprised of the following positions:



### **Pilot**

This is the member of the crew responsible for actually flying the aircraft. They are responsible for all duties related to safe operation in urban areas, such as maintaining minimum altitude, avoiding no-fly areas, and maintaining a safe distance from structures such as high-rise buildings.

### **Tactical Flight Officer**

Any LEO who has received the LCSO ASU Camera Operation Certificate may serve as the Tactical Flight Officer so long as either the Pilot or Pilot Instructor operating as the Pilot in Command of the crew allows it.

- ◆ While Pilots are required to be capable of operating Solo, the TFO makes the crew much more effective, enabling the Pilot to focus on flight operations while the TFO focuses on the task at hand, mainly operating the Camera.

### **Pilot Instructor**

If the Pilot of the crew is a Trainee Pilot, they will require a Pilot Instructor to be present to ensure the Trainee is operating the aircraft safely, as well as to assess the Trainee on their performance.

- ◆ When operating in this capacity, the Pilot Instructor acts as the Pilot in Command of the crew, and all other crew members and passengers are under their command while in the vehicle.

### **Deployments**

As a support department, the ASU primarily relies on other departments or units for tasking. This means that Helicopter Crews must be ready to switch between tasks as the situation dictates. The main tasks that crews can be expected to perform include:

#### **Patrol**

Patrol is the default task of a helicopter crew, to maintain fast response times and be available wherever needed; when not on another task, Helicopter Crews should patrol the Area of Operations.

- ◆ The primary purpose of this task is to be available to respond anywhere in the Area of Operations quickly; as such, the Crew should be positioned centrally in the AO to minimize flight times to any calls.
- ◆ While patrolling, the Crew may observe the AO. Should a situation arise, the crew may request assistance from other LEOs, providing guidance and location information to the deputies on the ground. This is optional, and crews may simply wait in the AO for a situation to develop.

#### **Search**

The powerful camera system means that the ASU often gets tasked with locating missing persons, stolen vehicles, and other items. When tasked by another department, they will often give an area to search or a last known location. The helicopter crew should proceed to the area and sweep for the target.

- ◆ Should the crew be unable to locate the target, they can decide to call off the search and report that the target cannot be located.

#### **Pursuit**

Pursuit involves following either a 10-80 vehicle attempting to evade LEOs or a 10-70 attempting to evade LEOs on foot. When a 10-80/70 is called, the ASU is the primary support element that should be requested first. ("2.9 Speciality Incidents & Contacts" in main LCSO SOP, See #LCSO-info)

- ◆ When the Helicopter Crew arrives on the scene of an active pursuit, they should take over callouts, providing the responding ground elements with location information and guiding other deputies in.
- ◆ The crew may also scout ahead of the pursuit, looking for safe areas that the LEOs on the ground can use to perform PIT maneuvers. This consists of a preferably wide stretch of road with at least 200-300 ft of space clear of other vehicles. The crew may be requested to provide information on traffic conditions for this reason, so they should maintain Situational Awareness of what other motorists are doing.
  - Deputies in the helicopter crew are considered to be a part of the pursuit for the purposes of giving pit authority. Should the highest-ranking deputy be on the helicopter, they can be given authority to perform a PIT.
  - If the highest-ranking deputy in the pursuit is not in the helicopter crew, they must be asked for permission to PIT first, and then the helicopter crew can provide information such as upcoming PIT windows and when it's safe to PIT.
- ◆ When the pursuit has come to an end, the Primary unit on the ground will call Code 4. The helicopter crew may choose to stay on scene to assist in evidence collection, scene cleanup, and overwatch for the deputies should anything else occur. They are free to depart once Code 4 has been called.

### Transport

Transport is mainly used in one of two ways.

- ◆ **MedEvac:** The first is for emergency situations, such as an deputy being shot, requiring immediate medical attention in a remote area. In such situations, the helicopter crew, in the direction of other ground units, can coordinate a landing zone and provide immediate medical evac to the injured deputy. This is mainly used when no other medical support is available, and EMS / Medevac should take priority on such
- ◆ **SERT:** The second is in coordination with SERT. If SERT has an operation that requires the need for aerial operations, ASU Command can coordinate with SERT to have a safe and effective operation for all aboard.

### Overwatch

Overwatch is when a helicopter crew stays on scene, even after Code 4 has been called. This is primarily to provide assistance to the ground units in duties such as scene cleanup and evidence collection, and to cover them in the event that some new situation arises. This is encouraged in situations where the units on the ground have few other supporting elements with them.

### Check Rides

Check Rides are when a Pilot Instructor accompanies a Trainee Pilot. The crew will perform all the regular deployments normal Pilot crews would carry out, with the Pilot Instructor observing and, if necessary, stepping in to ensure the training of the new pilot does not interfere with law enforcement.

[Jump to Table to Contents](#)

- ◆ For the first two Check Rides, the Pilot Instructor or a Tactical Flight Officer will act as the camera operator as the Trainee focuses on safe flying.
- ◆ To certify the trainee in solo operation, the final Check Ride will have the Trainee Pilot perform everything themselves, with the Pilot Instructor observing only. Stepping in only if needed to maintain the safety of the crew and the airframe.
- ◆ Should Command or the Instructor deems it necessary, they may request that the Trainee undergo additional Check Rides.

### Maintenance

It is important to be ready at any given moment for an extended deployment; as such, it is vital that the helicopter be maintained. Fuel levels should be maintained above at least 50%, and the helicopter's mechanical status should be kept at 100%.

- ◆ In Between calls or after Code 4 has been called, if these conditions are not met, the helicopter crew should divert to the nearest maintenance facility to conduct refueling and repairs.
- ◆ To Refuel, use the F7 menu to spawn the airport fuel truck, press E to grab the nozzle and connect it to the helicopter, and be careful not to over-extend the hose.

### Callsign

All members of the Air Support Unit department may have "ASU" in their name. Even when not deployed as a helicopter crew.

Example: L010 | ASU | Sheriff W. Earp

When deploying as a helicopter crew, the crew members will replace their Callsign to E-1 (Phonetically said as Echo). If operating with a Co-Pilot / Tactical Flight Officer, update your callsigns to include an indicator, just as with Ride-Alongs. ("6.9 Ride-Alongs" in the Main LCSO SOP, See #LCSO-info)

Example: L010 | ASU | Sheriff W. Earp > E-1 | ASU | Undersheriff W. Earp

Example: E-1-A | ASU | Sheriff W. Earp

Example: E-1-A | Em Dacre

When patrolling in ground vehicles, Air Support Units may wear their traditional Patrol uniforms, as outlined in the LCSO SOP (See #LCSO-info).

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## Policy Handbook

### Requirements

To join the Air Support Unit, Deputies must meet the following requirements:

- Minimum rank of Deputy I
- No Disciplinary action within the last month

Once you have met the requirements, fill out the LCSO ASU Application. (See #LCSO-info)

A member of ASU Command will message you to schedule an interview to discuss what you'd be doing as a member of ASU and answer any questions you may have.

If you still want to join, they will schedule a time to perform the LCSO ASU Pilot Certification, after which you will become a Trainee Pilot and a member of the LCSO Air Support Unit.

### Activity Requirements

All Air Support Units Pilots are asked to attend at least one session a week. Should the Pilot be unable to attend, they should contact ASU Command to let them know.

If the Pilot is going to be unavailable for an extended period of time, they should contact ASU Command to file an LOA (Leave of Absence), i.e., "I will be gone for 2 weeks starting July 26th due to x".

### Activity Limits

ASU pilots are encouraged to form crews and should organize together to form multi-pilot crews if multiple ASU members are online.

- The primary tasking for ASU should be to patrol the Area of Operations to be ready for incoming requests such as 10-80 / 10-70 support requests. This role should be filled before other roles, but should circumstances warrant, the crew may move to another specific tasking.
- ASU may deploy one helicopter crew, no matter the number of other units on the ground, to patrol. Additional helicopter crews for patrol may be permitted if the number of ground units justifies additional helicopters.
  - ◆ At a minimum of 15 other ground units, a 2nd helicopter may be deployed to patrol.
  - ◆ At 30 other ground units, a 3rd helicopter may be deployed to patrol.
- Exceptions to helicopter limits can be made should another department require a dedicated helicopter for a specific tasking, e.g., SERT wanting to use ASU for tactical deployments, Detectives requesting a helicopter for observation/surveillance reasons.
- Helicopter crews may form and operate for these specific tasks as requested; when the task is complete, this dedicated crew should return to base and either return to ground operations or wait for another dedicated deployment.

### Mandatory Reporter

All Aviation Support Unit members are mandated reporters of harassment, abuse, bullying, stalking, doxing, and other harmful behaviors. If you see or hear something, you must bring it up the chain. Depending on the severity, you may go to your immediate supervisor, or you can go to Admins. Any Aviation Support Unit member knowingly withholding information about harassment or other behaviors will be removed from the Aviation Support Unit.

All Aviation Support Unit members, regardless of department or status, are expected to abide by all Community Guidelines, departmental Standard Operating Procedures, and subdivision regulations.

### Physical Appearance

All members of the LCSO Aviation Support Unit will be expected to conform to the LCSO's appearance standards at all times. ("6.7 Physical Appearance" in the LCSO Main SOP, See [#LCSO-info](#))

### Disciplinary Actions

A lot of trust is put into members of the Aviation Support Unit not to abuse the access they have to some of the game's systems, i.e., the vehicle spawner. Abuse of this trust will result in harsh disciplinary action within the department, and continued misuse of the spawner or other assets will result in removal from the Aviation Support Unit.

- Breaking Aviation Support Unit Policies will result in the pilots involved receiving a strike, as well as a Verbal Warning. They will also lose access to the vehicle spawning role and must ask someone else to spawn a helicopter for them.
- Receiving two strikes will result in the pilot being "Grounded"; they will not be allowed to fly for a period of two weeks. They will also receive Written Disciplinary Action.
  - ◆ They may continue to fly with an instructor present in command of the aircraft, and that instructor may choose to recommend to ASU Command that the pilot be exonerated early.
- Receiving a third strike will result in immediate removal from the Aviation Support Unit. The Deputy will be barred from applying to the ASU for a period of 1 month.
- If the pilot demonstrates good behavior, at the discretion of ASU Command, strikes may be removed. Typically strikes will be removed after 1 month without incident.

### Ground Vehicles

When not deployed as part of a helicopter crew, Aviation Unit members may patrol as per LCSO Main SOP in any of the normal LCSO vehicles. ("2.5 Vehicles" in the LCSO Main SOP, See [#LCSO-info](#))

### Air Vehicles

Air vehicles refer to any vehicle employed by the Aviation Support Unit, mainly helicopters.

#### Safe Operation

Personnel operating in and around helicopters should exercise caution, ground vehicles should be kept a safe distance away from the aircraft at all times, and personnel should avoid the rotors when they are in motion, Waiting for the rotors to come to a stop before approaching.

Personnel should also ensure the pilot of the aircraft is aware of their intentions. For example, if you wish to board or disembark, you should keep the Pilot informed.

#### Available Airframes

We currently have two aircraft available to us. Upon becoming a full pilot, you will be given access to the vehicle spawn menu. An Instructor / ASU Command member will also spawn the two helicopters for you to save them so that you can spawn them yourself.



McDonnell Douglas MD-530



Leonardo AW139



### Spawning

As SSSO does not have a hangar suitable for the storage of a helicopter, LCSO ASU Pilots will need to drive down to Sandy Shores Airfield in order to “get the airframe out of the hangar.”

- ◆ To do this, drive to the Sandy Shores hangar east of the airport. You should “store your car” (delete it) on arrival.
- ◆ Open the M menu, go to Vehicle Options > Vehicle Spawner > Spawn Saved Vehicle > Helicopter > MD530/ AW139
- ◆ In the future, we will gain access to more involved systems such as helicopter towing trailers, and this process may change.



### Pre-Flight

Once the vehicle has been taken from the hangar to the helipad (spawned), the Pilot may choose to perform pre-flight checks to ensure the vehicle is ready for deployment.

- ◆ First, ensure the area is clear of obstructions and that it’s safe to start the engine.
- ◆ Check the fuel level. At the start of deployment, the aircraft should be fully fueled to ensure maximum flight time.
- ◆ Perform a visual inspection of the airframe, looking for any damage, and check the windshield, rotors, tail, and gear.
- ◆ Once in the helicopter, engage the starter and check that all warning and caution lights move from amber to green.
- ◆ Once the RPM reaches green, you are ready to take off.

### Takeoff

- ◆ To take off, first ensure all passengers are seated and ready for you to move.

[Jump to Table to Contents](#)

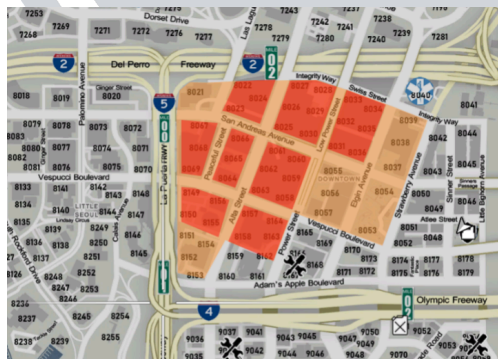
- ◆ Next, inform everyone that you are taking off by calling over the radio with your intentions, e.g., “Echo 1 taking off Sandy Airfield, Departing to the north.”
- ◆ Finally, once everyone is ready and has been informed, you are clear to take off, raise the collective and climb to the minimum safe altitude for the local area.
- ◆ Once at this altitude, you may depart on your desired heading.

### Landing

- ◆ Landing is similar to taking off. First, you should inform the destination of your intentions, e.g., “Echo 1 inbound Paletto SO, approaching from the south, landing at the helipad.”
- ◆ Once you have announced your arrival, approach the landing site and perform a visual observation to ensure the area is clear and that it is safe to land.
- ◆ Only if the area is clear can you proceed to land. Bring the helicopter to a stable hover 10-20 ft above the helipad, then perform a constant rate descent until your landing gear has made contact.
- ◆ Ensure the “gear indicator” reads “P” for Park. If it does not, raise the collective and attempt to nudge the helicopter against the direction of drift until it settles into the parked state.

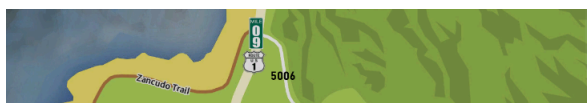
### No-Fly Zones

- ◆ **Minimum Safe Altitude**  
For most areas of Los Santos, 200-300 ft is more than high enough to avoid buildings, power distribution and terrain. Certain areas of downtown, however, require operating at a higher altitude to remain safe while moving throughout the city.
  - Unless otherwise stated, the default Minimum Safe Altitude is 300 ft AGL (above ground level)
  - The Minimum Safe Altitude should be maintained at all times. The only exception to this is when landing or taking off.
  - The downtown area marked in Orange (see right/above photos) has a Minimum Safe Altitude of 500 ft AGL.



### ◆ Hard No-Fly Zones

Hard no-fly zones are areas that must be avoided at all times (e.g., the Red zones marked above and locations below).



[Jump to Table to Contents](#)

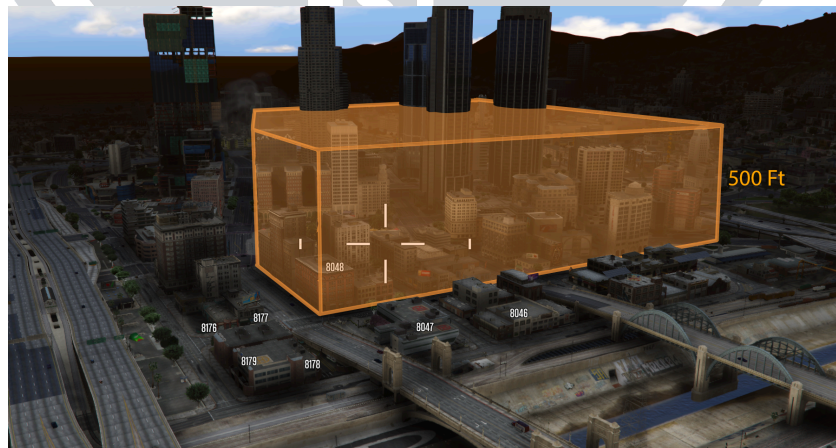




◆ **High-Rise Buildings**

Extreme caution needs to be taken when operating in and around high-rise zones. Especially when operating solo, the Pilot needs to maintain situational awareness of the surrounding obstructions.

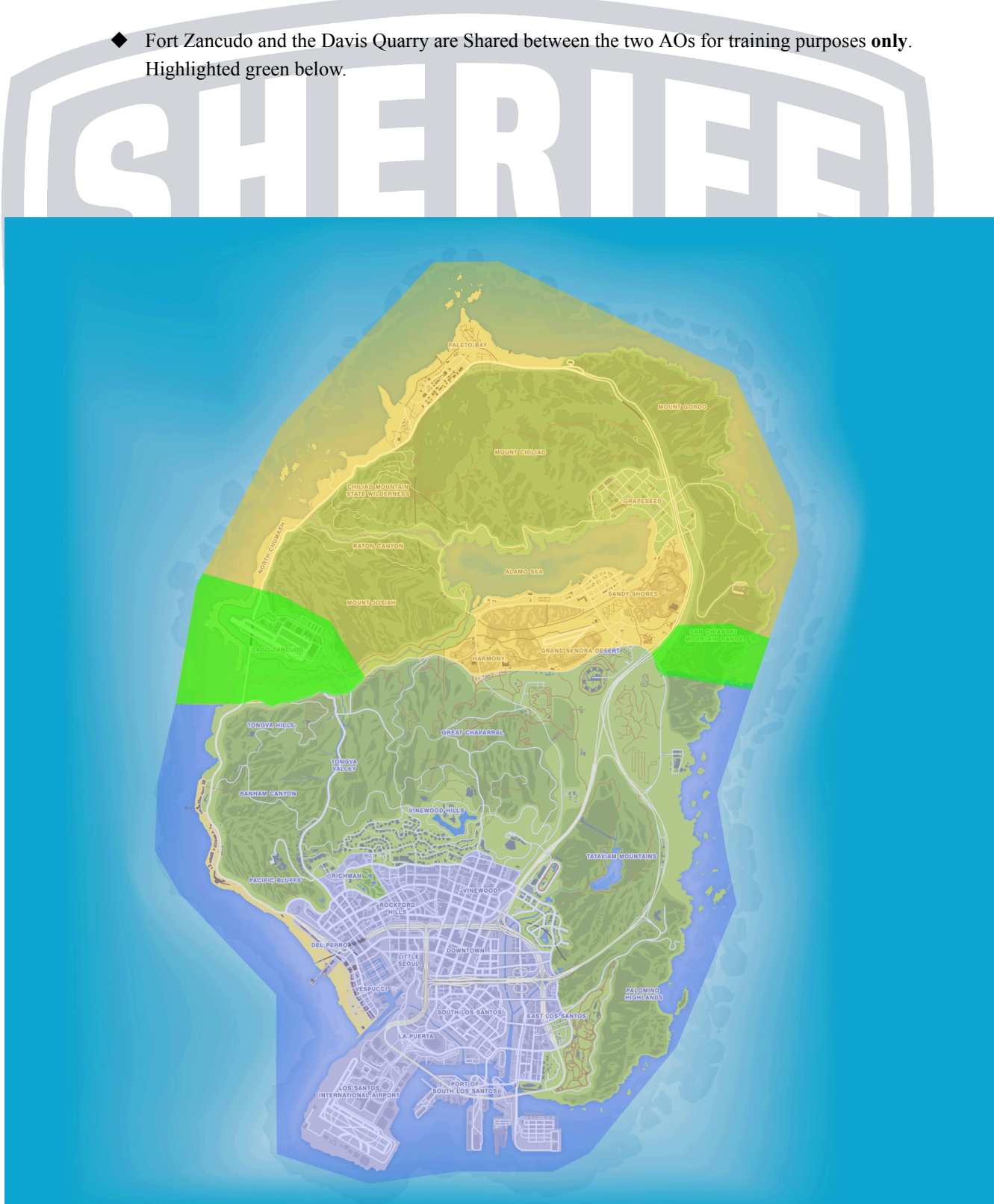
- When following a pursuit, care must be taken to ensure the helicopter maintains above the roads. When the suspect makes a turn, the Pilot needs to be aware that the helicopter cannot always directly follow them and needs to be maneuvered around obstacles.
- As the red “Hard No-Fly” zones indicate, the helicopter should maintain separation from the structures at all times. When operating solo in areas with orange or red zones, the Pilot should avoid “target fixating” in the camera and should periodically exit the camera to maintain situational awareness of the helicopter's orientation, positioning, and speed.



[Jump to Table to Contents](#)

**Area of Operation**

- ◆ The Area of Operation is the City of Los Santos as well as the Los Santos County area. Highlighted blue below.
- ◆ The Area of Operation for LCSO is the entire state of San Andreas. Highlighted yellow below.
- ◆ Fort Zancudo and the Davis Quarry are Shared between the two AOs for training purposes **only**. Highlighted green below.



[Jump to Table to Contents](#)

