



# SAN ANTONIO POLICE DEPARTMENT GENERAL MANUAL



## *Procedure 613 – Carrying Weapons on Airport Property*

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### **.01 INTRODUCTION**

- A. This procedure provides direction for the carrying of weapons by sworn members while within the passenger boarding area of the San Antonio International Airport and on commercial aircraft as a passenger
- B. The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has the sole authority to allow officers into the secure area of the Terminal based upon successful screening, authorized escort, or a pre-arranged law enforcement officer adhering to the defined policy and procedure for flying armed.
- C. This procedure is predicated by existing Transportation Security Administration (TSA) regulations and 49 CFR 1554.219 “Carriage of Accessible Weapons” for Law Enforcement Officers (LEO) who have demonstrated an operational need to fly armed. Officers are subject to those penalties prescribed by the F.A.A. for violations of these regulations.

### **.02 SAPD OFFICERS ENTERING THE AIRPORT PASSENGER BOARDING (SECURE) AREA**

- A. TSA regulations prohibit ANY non-ticketed person from by-passing the passenger boarding security checkpoint. This includes SAPD officers, unless they are on official business with proper authorization (i.e., execution of a warrant, prisoner transfers), credentials, and identification.
- B. SAPD officers on-duty, in uniform or plainclothes, who must enter the passenger boarding area of the San Antonio International Airport on official business, will:
  1. Proceed to the exit lane of the TSA Checkpoint (The lane where arriving passengers exit the secure area);
  2. Upon contacting the Transportation Security Officer (TSO) assigned to the exit lane Checkpoint, will identify himself/herself as an SAPD officer;
  3. Present their San Antonio Police Department credentials (badge and photo ID) and Government-issued photo identification to the TSO; and
  4. Sign in on the appropriate register.

### **.03 CARRYING WEAPONS AS A PASSENGER ON A COMMERCIAL AIRCRAFT**

- A. SAPD officers are not allowed to carry any weapon on or about their person while on a commercial aircraft without a National Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (NLETS) message that contains a Unique Alphanumeric Identifier. This is applicable regardless of the duty status or dress of the officer. This Unique Alphanumeric Identifier is presented for verification at the airport on the day of travel. This is a TSA regulatory requirement. Failure to use the NLETS message will result in denial to the sterile area for failure to comply with the requirement delineated in 49 CFR§ 1544.219.
- B. SAPD officers flying armed shall adhere to the following:
  1. Must have successfully completed the approved TSA “Law Enforcement Officers Flying Armed Training Course;”



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2. Must have a need to have the weapon accessible from the time he or she would otherwise check the weapon until the time it would be claimed after deplaning; The need to have the weapon accessible must be determined by the Office of the Chief based on one of the following;
  1. A LEO conducting protective escort duty and related travel;
  2. A LEO conducting a hazardous surveillance operation;
  3. A LEO on official travel with a requirement to arrive prepared for duty; or
  4. A LEO in control of a prisoner (includes traveling to or returning from).
3. Must obtain a letter of authority signed by the Chief of Police confirming the need to travel armed and detailing the itinerary of the travel. The letter of authority is then presented to the Department's Communications Unit, who shall transmit a properly formatted message via NLETS to TSA. A Unique Alpha-numeric identification number, generated by TSA, will be assigned for every day the LEO is required to travel armed. If an NLETS message is not on record with TSA, a weapon will not be allowed beyond the checkpoint;
4. If the dates of travel change or airport information changes, a new NLETS identifier will need to be issued. Therefore, the SAPD officer should be prepared to communicate with the Communications Unit to have a new NLETS message sent;
5. If the officer encounters a delay, exceeding twenty-four (24) hours, in his travel due to weather, airlines, mechanical, etc., the officer may contact the TSA office at the airport where he is delayed and request a new NLETS identifier. The officer must have all of his travel paperwork, itinerary, and identification ready to present to TSA;
6. Must notify the Aircraft Operator (airline) at least one (1) hour prior to departure, or in an emergency, "as soon as practical";
7. Provide identification to the Aircraft Operator with approved credentials which must contain a clear full-face picture, the SAPD officer's signature; the signature of the Chief of Police; and the official seal of the Police Department.
  - a. Officers shall verify that their credentials contain their signature to meet the guidelines, or obtain new credentials that do meet the guidelines, through the office of The Chief of Police.
  - b. A badge cannot be used by the LEO or accepted by the Aircraft Operator, as the sole means of identification.
  - c. The Aircraft Operator should issue a Notice of Law Enforcement Flying Armed Form to the LEO. The form must be presented to the gate agent and then to the flight crew upon boarding the aircraft for EVERY segment of the flight. Officers should check with the airline, at baggage check-in, and ask if the airline issues this documentation in order to board the aircraft.
8. LEO checkpoint procedures vary from airport to airport. Generally, LEOs flying armed will enter the sterile area of the airport through a designated LEO checkpoint, commonly an exit. LEOs should make contact with a TSA representative at a checkpoint to determine the correct LEO check-in procedure for that airport.
9. All LEOs will present approved credentials, a second form of identification, a boarding pass, the airline paperwork, and the Unique Alphanumeric Identifier from the NLETS message to the TSA representative and/or LEO at the security checkpoint for verification. All LEOs are required to sign the TSA LEO logbook. Authority for LEOS to carry a weapon beyond the Security Checkpoint is subject to the approval of TSA, regardless of all criteria being met. The TSA Screening Supervisor is the best person to contact to resolve conflicts at the LEO checkpoint. Be professional at all times.



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10. If denied boarding the aircraft with a weapon by either TSA, airport law enforcement, or the Airline Operator, officers should be prepared to check their weapon (see .04); and
11. Officers are reminded that Federal Law prohibits armed LEOS from boarding an aircraft if the LEO has consumed an alcoholic beverage within the previous eight (8) hours and from consuming any alcoholic beverage while onboard U.S. commercial aircraft.
12. LEOs must be discreet while in the sterile area. All law enforcement equipment must be properly concealed and any items that would have been prohibited by TSA during the course of normal passenger screening (i.e. bottled water, beverages purchased outside the secure area, etc.) should be concealed so as not to draw attention to the LEO.
13. An SAPD officer traveling aboard an aircraft while armed must at all times keep their weapon:
  1. Concealed and out of view, either on their person or in immediate reach, if the officer is not in uniform;
  2. On their person, if the officer is in uniform.
  3. No individual may place a weapon in an overhead storage bin.

### **.04 CARRYING WEAPONS IN BAGGAGE ON A COMMERCIAL AIRCRAFT**

- A. SAPD officers who desire to transport a weapon on a commercial aircraft in their luggage must contact the Airline Operator well in advance to make sure they understand the procedures or if you are transporting a “shoulder weapon.”
  1. Place the weapon unloaded in a locked hard sided case. Ensure that any ammunition is in “factory” or similar packaging and does not exceed eleven (11) pounds of small arms ammunition.
  2. At the ticket counter, advise the airline agent that you are declaring that an unloaded weapon is in a container within checked baggage.
  3. Complete the necessary forms and maintain the key or number combination to the lock box.
- B. Upon arrival at the destination, reclaim the weapon through the normal baggage process.
- C. Some airports may have the officer claim their baggage and weapon at the baggage security desk and present identification in order to verify the officer is the rightful owner of the checked baggage and weapon.

### **.05 CARRYING WEAPONS AS A PASSENGER ESCORTING A PRISONER ON A COMMERCIAL AIRCRAFT**

- A. SAPD officers who are assigned to transport a prisoner on a commercial aircraft, when making the travel arrangements will:
  1. Comply with Section .03 of this procedure and Procedure 601, *Prisoners*.
  2. Advise the airline if the prisoner is a high-risk or low-risk prisoner.
    - a. High-risk prisoner means a prisoner who is an exceptional escape risk as determined by the Department, and charged with or convicted of, a violent crime.
    - b. Low-risk prisoner means any prisoner who has not been designated as a “high-risk” prisoner.



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- c. Unless authorized by the TSA, no more than one (1) high-risk prisoner may be transported on an aircraft.
  3. Notify the Aircraft Operator at least twenty-four (24) hours in advance of the scheduled departure time that an armed SAPD officer will be transporting a prisoner.
  4. Obtain a letter of authority signed by the Chief of Police confirming the need to travel armed. The letter should include the following:
    - a. Be addressed to the airline;
    - b. Name the SAPD officer and the identity of the prisoner;
    - c. Include the flight number the LEO and prisoner are scheduled to fly;-
    - d. Note the level of risk the prisoner represents: High-Risk or Low-Risk.
  5. Present the letter to the TSO at the exit lane prior to entering the passenger boarding area at the airport and comply with the directions and instruction of the TSO.
- B. The steps listed in Section .03A above must be followed at each location during the travel. This includes every time the SAPD officer and prisoner change planes or exit the sterile areas at the airports.