



2024 Letter of Award Chief's Citation



To: Sergeant Bryan Tafoya
From: Justin Lundgren, Interim Chief of Police
Date: April 29, 2024
Re: Chief's Citation Award

Recently, Captain Matt Cowles nominated the Air Support Unit to receive the Chief's Citation Award. This award is intended to recognize members of a team or unit for participating in an incident, event, or series of events, or project which has a substantial, positive impact on the community or police department. It must be superior in nature and further the department's mission and overall effectiveness. When the Special Awards Committee reviewed this nomination, it was clear that your unit is most deserving of this award. Captain Cowles wrote:

"The Air Support Unit (ASU) started in 2018 with an idea to introduce drones to patrol to increase officer safety, reduce uses of force and stay with current trends of patrol response. The value of drones on calls for service was recognized therefore forcing the unit to expand.

The unit consists of a formal chain of command, seven drone operators, and three Tactical Flight Officers (TFO). Currently, the unit is looking to purchase more drones to meet the needs of the Spokane Police Department.

As part of ASU, three members are certified Tactical Flight Officers (TFO) and train on the Spokane Regional Air Support Unit better known as SRASU operated by the Spokane County Sheriff's Office. Within this roll, these officers operate the camera, radio and CAD while flying patrol flights in the Sheriff's helicopter. The two units work very closely together providing air support for law enforcement throughout the county.

In 2023, the unit had over three hundred flights and ten thousand flight hours in operations and training. With a focus on increasing officer safety and being a community resource, the unit also has the capacity for 3D mapping of major crimes scenes. The unit flew for seventeen events and focuses on providing support to units such as SWAT, TAC and K9. In 2023 alone, the unit flew one hundred and eighty missions while pilots were working their normally scheduled patrol shifts.

The unit is committed to the mission of the Spokane Police by enhancing the safety and security of individuals and continually providing services to outlying agencies.

ASU prides themselves on providing excellent service to members of the department, countless hours of training and flight time goes into making this unit eligible to receive the distinguished Chief's Citation Award."

Sergeant Tafoya, as a member of ASU, I am honored to present you with the Chief's Citation Award. The Air Support Unit's efforts epitomize the criteria set forth for the Chief's Citation Award. The Unit will be recognized and will receive a plaque at our annual awards ceremony in March 2025.

Sincerely,

Justin C. Lundgren
Interim Chief of Police