

INTRADEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE

February 16, 2024
1.15

TO: The Honorable Board of Police Commissioners

FROM: Chief of Police

SUBJECT: LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT'S RESPONSE TO THE CITY CONTROLLER'S AUDIT ON AIR SUPPORT DIVISION

RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. That the Board of Police Commissioners (Board) REVIEW and APPROVE the Los Angeles Police Department's (Department) response to the City Controller's Office.
2. That the Board TRANSMIT to the Mayor, the City Council, and City Controller the attached response.

DISCUSSION

In December of 2023, the City Controller's Office released a report auditing the Department's Air Support Division (ASD) based on data collected between February and November 2023. The final report was published under the title "LAPD Helicopter Audit" and posted to the City Controller's website.

The Department concurs with the Controller's conclusions that there are areas for improvement regarding the data collected from Daily Flight Logs and enhanced public engagement. In response to these recommendations, ASD has initiated efforts at a more standardized method of data entry procedures and categorization of activities. In addition, the Department, and ASD specifically, has increased their outreach and social media presence to provide the public with a greater understanding of the roles and responsibilities of ASD in both day-to-day operations as well as critical incident and regional disaster response.

However, the Department's review of the Controller's Audit revealed the information contained in the report was at times inaccurate and provided an incomplete picture of the services provided by ASD.

Some of the specific concerns the Department identified include:

- A lack of conformity with Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards;
- Evidentiary and statistical conflicts, as well as factual errors, which call into question the Controller's overall conclusions and recommendations;
- A refusal by the Controller to share raw data which complicated the Department's efforts to replicate and validate the information and calculations contained in the report;

- Despite the existence of valid historical documentation, the Controller's team made use of estimates and approximations based on unidentified sources which led to inaccurate calculations; and,
- The audit lacks a comprehensive overall assessment of ASD productivity or review of the benefits ASD operations provide to overall officer and public safety, to include specific cost savings and risk mitigation.

The attached report addresses the City Controller's conclusions and recommendations, and the Department's detailed findings. If you have questions regarding this matter, please contact Commander Shannon K. Paulson, Assistant Commanding Officer, Counter-Terrorism and Special Operations Bureau, at (213) 486-8780.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'MR. MOORE', written over a circular stamp or mark.

MICHEL R. MOORE
Chief of Police

Attachments

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RESPONSE TO THE CITY CONTROLLER’S
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Background. The City Controller’s Office conducted an audit of the Los Angeles Police Department’s (LAPD or Department) Air Support Division (ASD), focusing on the use of helicopters for fiscal years (FY) 2018 through 2022, and published the “LAPD Helicopter Audit” (Audit) in December of 2023. The stated intent was to evaluate costs and performance of Department helicopters, and to explore “whether the LAPD has justified the need for the program’s current size and scope.”¹ The Controller concluded that their findings “strongly suggest that the LAPD’s current use of helicopters causes significant harm to the community without meaningful or reliable assessment of the benefits it may or may not deliver.”²

This fact sheet addresses the findings of the City Controller’s Audit, provides further insight and clarifications on the critical nature of the services provided by ASD, and responds to the various conclusions and recommendations contained in the Audit.

Investigation Summary. In reviewing the published report, the Department noted the Controller’s team did not follow Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards (GAGAS) for performance audits (see Addendum A).

The Department had difficulty replicating a significant portion of the statistics cited by the audit team and locating the sources either mentioned or referenced within the Audit. Throughout the Audit, estimates³ are made with no discernable attempt to verify information or provide documentation regarding the accuracy of the data. In many instances, estimates of unknown sourcing were utilized despite verifiable, valid, and documented information being readily available. In addition, where such estimates were utilized, the stated results were inflated in comparison to actual amounts, rates or costs.

The Department’s efforts at verification and validation were further complicated by the Controller’s team refusing to share their raw data with the Department despite repeated requests to do so. As a result, the Department attempted to recreate the various statistics and locate the historical documents and reports referenced in the Audit. This was done in an effort to evaluate the full contents and context of the information it contained and conclusions it drew. These investigations revealed in many cases that the information and data utilized, and conclusions drawn, by the Controller’s team provided an incomplete picture of the services provided by ASD.

In addition, there are several instances where factual errors or false presumptions were made on the part of the Controller’s team. In some cases, this may have been due to an understandable lack of knowledge and experience regarding police practices, working conditions and requirements. However, when ASD personnel attempted to explain the nature and complications of police work, and the duties and contributions of ASD specifically, they noted a lack of interest

¹ Office of the Controller/Audit Services Division (2023). *LAPD Helicopter Audit*. City of Los Angeles. Page 3.

² Kenneth Mejia, Controller. Letter to the Honorable Karen Bass, Mayor, City of Los Angeles. *Re: Audit of the Los Angeles Police Department’s Air Support Division*. December 11, 2023. <https://controller.lacity.gov/landings/lapd-helicopters>. Retrieved December 28, 2023.

³ The Audit includes 31 uses of the term “estimate” and an additional 31 uses of the term “approximate.”

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and engagement by the auditors. For instance, at no time did any member of the Controller's team participate in any observation of that work (such as taking a ride/fly-a-long or simply monitoring radio broadcasts or flight activity with ASD personnel). Given the role of ASD in day-to-day police operations, this kind of observation is imperative to understanding their contributions to public safety.

As is documented fully in the Detailed Findings of this fact sheet, the Department has identified the following factual errors and misrepresentations contained within the Controller's Audit:

- The Controller misidentified Part I Crime, as defined by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) as the guiding factor in ASD response. This is entirely inaccurate, as the designation of a crime as Part I only occurs after an investigation is conducted and the facts are established. The response of a Department helicopter is based on professional law enforcement judgement of where they can provide the greatest benefit based on the conditions known at the time (see pages 4-5).
- The Controller attributed costs related to "overhead" which the Department could not identify or replicate despite obtaining detailed cost tracking from all servicing entities and analyzing Cost Allocation Plans (CAP) for the audited years. In most cases, the amounts in the Audit were significantly higher than any the Department could produce (see pages 7-8).
- The Controller utilized an approximated fuel burn rate based on unknown sourcing. This burn rate is heavily inflated in comparison to the burn rate documented as a result of actual ASD flights. Similarly, the Controller's team utilized an average monthly fuel price of unknown derivation, despite actual fuel invoices being available for review. Finally, the audit team utilized an inflated average for annual flight hours, despite actual flight hours for each airframe being documented in maintenance records. Cumulatively, these inaccurate estimations led to the Controller citing a fuel cost for the audit period which was inflated by 21 percent over the verifiable expenditures (see pages 8-9).
- The Controller utilized the smaller operational size of the helicopter programs within five "benchmark" cities to assert that the LAPD should reduce ASD's size and scope based on the limitations of those agencies. However, follow-up inquiries with those same agencies revealed each of them believed a more robust air support program would improve public safety and service for their jurisdictions (see pages 26-29).
- The Controller's Audit asserts ASD deployment is disproportionately spread over the City and the Department could be basing it on incorrect "perceptions." However, when calls for service and incidents of crime most likely to lead to an airship response are analyzed, there is a direct correlation with the ASD time spent over our various communities (see pages 12-16).
- Evidence reflects that suspects are more likely to be apprehended and evidence located when an airship is overhead. Additionally, pursuits which do not engage helicopter tracking are, on average, four times more likely to result in a traffic collision. This is not addressed in the Audit (see pages 17-18).
- The Controller asserted potential violations of the Los Angeles City Charter and security concerns surrounding the development of ASD's Daily Flight Log data system. This

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conclusion was made despite that the procurement went through established City contract approval processes. When the Department requested a review by officials with the City Attorney’s Office, no violations or cause for concern were identified (see page 23).

- In asserting helicopters pose a health risk to the public, the Controller mentions scientific studies and reports but provides no source citations. The Department’s review of potentially applicable reports shows the Controller’s assertions are without appropriate context and do not clearly apply to the nature of ASD helicopter operations (see pages 24-25).
- The Controller’s Audit inflates ASD CO₂ emissions by almost 20 percent and provides no context regarding overall CO₂ emissions for the region (see page 26).
- The Controller, in its assessment of the officer staffing and crime rate within each of the five benchmark cities, does not consider several additional pertinent comparable statistics. For instance, Los Angeles has more violent crime per square mile than any of the benchmark cities (see pages 27-28).
- Finally, the Controller provides no assessment of annual ASD productivity and the benefit ASD operations provides to overall officer and public safety due to their quick response and unique ability to provide tactical support and guidance.

Each of the above points, as well as additional responses to the Controller’s conclusions, are thoroughly addressed, with full explanations of methodology and sourcing, in the Detailed Findings that follow.

After a full review and assessment, and upon preparing this detailed response, the Department finds the Controller’s lack of conformity with standardized auditing best practices, lack of process transparency, and lack of engagement concerning. The Department’s opinion is the report is flawed and, in many instances inaccurate, and provides minimal value in the Department’s pursuit of continuous improvement.

Detailed Findings. The Department’s review determined the Controller’s Audit displays an overall lack of understanding of the ASD mission, its function as a component of police service, and its integral contribution to a multi-faceted law enforcement and public service strategy.⁴ The ASD representatives identified multiple areas where in-depth explanations and data were provided to the Controller’s team, but were left out of the final product. In addition, there are significant portions of the Audit which are distorted or inflated when compared to the original, measurable data which was either provided or available.

The Controller’s Audit documents a general description of ASD, to include its organization, equipment, training, and cost. It then lists five primary conclusions they assert were supported by their investigation, each followed by a series of recommendations. The five conclusions were:

⁴ An LA City View (Channel 35) video report on ASD can be found at [LAPD Air Support Division Los Angeles Police Department \(LAPD\) Air Support Division began almost 70 years ago to support traffic officers... | Instagram](#).

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- The LAPD has not justified the need for the current size and operational scope of its helicopter program.
- The LAPD should limit the use of helicopters for ceremonial and transportation purposes.
- Daily Flight Log data quality and information management practices need improvement.
- The LAPD should improve transparency and seek to minimize negative quality-of-life and environmental impacts on the community.
- The LAPD should identify rightsizing opportunities for its helicopter program.

The Department has reviewed the background and cost information provided, as well as each of these five conclusions and the supporting data, and conducted appropriate follow-up research. It is the Department's view that significant portions of these conclusions and recommendations are not based on an objective investigation or interpretation of the various source materials, and/or lack the proper breadth and context.

ASD Mission

The Controller's Audit inaccurately describes the overall mission of ASD by stating, "when on patrol, ASD's practice is to prioritize response to Part I crimes, which are the most serious crimes based on their nature and the frequency with which they occur."⁵ This displays an overall lack of fundamental understanding of ASD's function as well as Part I crime.

Part I crimes are defined as "serious" offenses by the FBI Uniform Reporting Program. These various offenses were chosen by the FBI because they occur with regularity in all areas of the country, generally share common definitions, and are likely to be reported to police.⁶

As was explained by ASD personnel to the audit team, police response, to include the generation of radio calls for service following 911 calls, are not prioritized based on the FBI's identification of Part I crime. Several incidents which occur with unfortunate regularity in the City of Los Angeles do not appear on the Part I crime schedule. Examples of this would be brandishing a firearm and kidnapping. Regardless, when a 911 call is received reporting an individual brandishing a firearm in public, or describes a possible kidnapping, those calls will be appropriately prioritized (Code 3⁷) and are likely to prompt a response from an airship.

Similarly, there are many non-violent crimes classified as Part I to which our ASD assets will likely never respond. Examples of these include scenarios such as a resident coming home at the end of the workday to find their residence burglarized or coming out to go to work in the morning and finding their car stolen or broken into. Both of these are Part I crimes, but neither are likely to prompt the response of an airship due to the lack of immediacy (i.e., the crime was likely committed some time ago and the suspect has already departed the area).

⁵ Office of the Controller. Page 8.

⁶ Federal Bureau of Investigation/Criminal Justice Information Services Division. *Crime in the U.S.* <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2011/crime-in-the-u.s.-2011/offense-definitions>. Retrieved December 15, 2023.

⁷ Code 3 is the highest priority category for radio calls and require patrol assets to respond with full lights and siren.

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The designation of Part I crime is simply a status indicator generated in order to measure the level and scope of crime occurring throughout the nation. It is a designation frequently assigned only after a thorough investigation has been conducted. In the alternative, prioritization of police response takes into account the immediate threat, or *potential* threat, to public safety posed by the suspect’s actions and other factors far beyond that of a simple data point designator.

The field response of our ASD helicopters relies on two primary sources and considerations:

- The request of ground units based on their assessment that an airship is needed or would be beneficial (or is required by policy, such as in a pursuit); and,
- The determination by the air crew about which calls or circumstances they believe, in their professional judgement, their response will be most effective or provide the greatest benefit.

For instance, an air crew may monitor a call for a domestic violence related aggravated assault, described as an assault with a deadly weapon, a crime of violence (and a Part I crime by classification). However, if the comments of the call indicate this crime occurred or is occurring within the closed in confines of an apartment building or residence, they may determine their efforts and assistance would be more beneficial responding to a street racing or street takeover radio call. Street takeovers are not a Part I crime, and may not even involve an identifiable victim, but are an understandable threat to public safety and a call for which the assistance of an airship may be highly beneficial.

This information was provided, in similar detail, during meetings with the Controller’s team. Despite offers by ASD, the audit team at no time observed the work ASD engages in or conducted first-hand observations of police operations in general.

Finally, the Controller’s Audit ignores the critical responsibility of the Department’s aircraft in response to any regional disaster. In such a disaster, the City of Los Angeles Base Emergency Operations Plan assigns certain critical missions to ASD. The Department’s Continuity of Operations Plan and Emergency Operations Guide have been written, and are updated regularly, to ensure compliance with this overall City plan. In addition, our capabilities and resources are constantly evaluated to ensure we can continue to carry out the missions assigned to us within this City directive. All such City and Department plans are developed in accordance with guidance from, and in compliance with, a variety of national plans and directives.⁸

Following a regional disaster, ASD will provide critical services and support in the form of aerial surveillance and intelligence, damage assessments, aerial coordination of ground operations (to include evacuation routes and ingress of personnel and equipment for rescue and relief), and

⁸ Executive Order (EO) 12656, Assignment of Emergency Preparedness Responsibilities; National Security Presidential Directive 51/Homeland Security Presidential Directive 20, National Continuity Policy; Homeland Security Council, National Continuity Policy Implementation Plan; Federal Continuity Directive (FCD) 1, Federal Executive Branch National Continuity Program and Requirements, February 2008; Department of Defense Directive 3020.26; and other related Directives and guidance.

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transportation of critical personnel and resources. The City’s Base Emergency Operations Plan identifies ASD as the City’s Air Transportation Plan Coordinator. In this role, following a regional disaster, ASD is responsible for the transportation of City managers, elected leaders and critical public safety command staff, to pre-designated locations in order to re-constitute City government and ensure continuity of critical City services. This specific capability is exercised annually in the form of the ASD organized “Chili Fly In” (this exercise will be addressed in detail later in this report and is an activity that was criticized in the Controller’s Audit). The list of critical personnel covered in this plan is identified by the City’s Department of Emergency Management and updated regularly on the Executive Crisis Communications Plan. The Controller himself is listed as one of those “Essential City Personnel” who would be provided such transportation.⁹

The Estimated Cost to Operate ASD

In support of the assertion that ASD is too costly, the Audit compares the cost of operating ASD to other City departments. In doing so, it states the Department’s budget is \$3.1 billion and estimates the ASD budget at \$48.5 million. It then compares this amount to the budget of sixteen other City departments. The Department contends this is not a supportable comparison as these departments are not analogous to the LAPD in size, operational complexities, employee and public safety issues, and equipment needed. As will be discussed in further detail within this fact sheet, ASD is part of a large Department with a challenging and complex mission, and is one component of a multi-pronged public service and public safety strategy.

A better comparison would be the cost of funding and maintaining ASD in relation to the Department’s overall cost. Based on the budget numbers and estimates cited by the Controller in the Audit, ASD’s budget makes up 1.6 percent of the Department’s budget. From this perspective, the cost of incorporating ASD into the Department’s overall public safety strategy, given the critical service and operational support they provide, comes at a minimal price.

A significant emphasis within the Audit documents what is referred to as the “Estimated Cost to Operate LAPD Helicopters.”¹⁰ The Audit focused on costs stemming from Fiscal Years 2018 through 2022, but then estimated or approximated significant portions of those costs. The Department independently obtained the documented costs submitted by the various agencies, including those provided by General Services Department (GSD) and Information Technology Agency (ITA). These two agencies provide all mechanical and technology maintenance and services for all city helicopters. Despite obtaining these records directly from the involved agencies, the Department has been unable to verify or validate several of the “estimated” costs identified in the Audit.

⁹ The City’s Executive Crisis Communications Plan is exercised bi-monthly and all City employees identified as critical to such disaster recovery efforts are invited to participate. Since taking office, the Controller has declined to engage in this exercise.

¹⁰ Office of the Controller. Table 1, page 13.

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For instance, GSD provided the Controller's team with specific labor cost breakdowns obtained from a detailed cost tracking system which correlates all costs associated with specific purchase and work orders and the related air frame (helicopter). However, the Controller's Audit attributed labor costs to GSD that were inflated by between \$383,840.18 (2020) and \$451,037.57 (2019) per year, or between 19.95 percent and 22.69 percent. Much of these inflated costs appear in the category attributed to "overhead." The Department has attempted to determine what sources or methodology the Controller used which resulted in this increase, but have been met with difficulties.

The Audit makes a general reference to utilizing a Cost Allocation Plan,¹¹ or CAP rate,¹² when calculating the indirect costs. The Department acknowledges the Office of the Controller would be the best source for determining the application of such a CAP. However, even utilizing the Controller's published CAP rates for the audited years (2018-2022, Plans 41-45), the Department was unable to replicate the estimates provided. In most cases, the amounts in the Audit were significantly higher than any the Department could produce. For LAPD (sworn and civilian) and GSD personnel costs, there was a cumulative difference of \$5,769,844.35 over the five-year audit period, based on those published CAP rates.¹³ The Department could not identify any published CAP rate which corresponded to those utilized by the Controller for either LAPD or GSD labor costs.¹⁴

The Department was able to obtain the CAP rates for ITA for the audited years. These were "special" rates not published in the annual plan and were provided by ITA management.¹⁵ While the Department determined a correlation in these scheduled rates and those utilized by the audit team did exist, it was discovered the rates applied were off by a year (e.g., the rate for FY 2017/2018 was applied to the 2018/2019 gross pay expenditures). This led to a miscalculation by the Controller amounting to \$144,438.16, or 9.12 percent for the five-year audit period.

As part of the overall financial analysis, the Audit reasonably included the cost of fuel. However, similar to other significant portions of the financial assessments documented in the Audit, the Controller provided "estimated costs" which they based on a helicopter fuel burn rate. They failed to provide a source or authority for the burn rate they utilized and instead utilized an

¹¹ According to the Government Finance Officers Association, indirect cost allocation is an accounting function by which estimates are made to distribute indirect costs to programs or functions in order to approximate their full cost. It may include cost for administrative support, insurance, facilities, equipment, etc. It is reflected as a percentage factored against the overall labor cost. <https://www.gfoa.org/materials/indirect-cost-allocation>. Retrieved January 20, 2024.

¹² Office of the Controller. Page 13.

¹³ Utilizing the published CAP rates to calculate "Overhead" for each year, the Department calculations revealed the Controller estimates were, on average, inflated over \$920,000 per year for LAPD Sworn personnel costs, \$110,000 per year for LAPD civilians, and \$120,000 per year for GSD personnel. See Addendum B.

¹⁴ Published CAP rates for LAPD sworn differed from those utilized by the audit team each year by between 8.95 and 39.35 percentage points; for LAPD civilians they differed from the audit teams rates each year between 1.41 and 45.34 percentage points, and for GSD they differed from the audit team's rates by between 0.01 and 11.68 percentage points. See Addendum B.

¹⁵ Iain Blackwood, Avionics Manager, Information Technology Agency, to Commander Shannon K. Paulson, LAPD. Email correspondence dated January 9, 2024.

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“approximate burn rate of 47.6 gallons of fuel per hour.”¹⁶ The Department has determined this was an inaccurate approximation.

An accurate accounting of burn rate for LAPD helicopters was readily available, as aviators are required to complete flight plans for certain flights and operations. These plans must include an assessment of fuel requirements based on the intended activities, duration of flight, etc. To support this, ASD maintains an accurate calculation of the fuel burn rate for their helicopters. The burn rate for LAPD helicopters is between 39 and 42.6 gallons per hour (as a routine safety factor, however, they utilize a burn rate of 45 gallons per hour when conducting flight planning). The burn rate will differ slightly (i.e., between 39 and 42.6) based on the weather conditions and specific activities during flight.

Similarly, the Controller estimated the fuel costs to operate ASD based on an unknown sourced “average monthly jet fuel price paid by the City.”¹⁷ However, no estimate or average was needed, as the specific amount of fuel utilized by LAPD helicopters is well documented on a monthly basis and maintained by both ASD and General Services Division (who negotiates a variety of fueling services for a multitude of City agencies, including jet fuel purchases for the helicopter programs of the three involved City departments). These monthly invoices were available for reference and study at the time the Audit was being conducted.¹⁸

Finally, the Controller’s team estimated ASD spent an average of 16,000 hours in flight each year. However, the Department consulted with GSD and reviewed maintenance records for all LAPD airframes. These records include a strict documentation of flight hours, as much of a helicopter’s scheduled maintenance is based on hours of flight. When the appropriate maintenance records were reviewed, it was determined the actual yearly average of flight hours for ASD is accurately assessed at 15,104.5.¹⁹

The following table provides an accurate assessment of actual fuel costs for ASD over the 5-year audit period, utilizing the documented and verifiable amounts and costs, displayed in comparison to the estimates utilized within the Controller’s Audit.

¹⁶ Office of the Controller. Page 4.

¹⁷ Office of the Controller. Page 13.

¹⁸ These monthly invoices are on file at both ASD and GSD and available for review upon request.

¹⁹ See Addendum C for true flight hours by year and calculation for five-year average. These maintenance records are on file at GSD and available for review upon request.

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Table 1 – Comparison of Controller’s Estimated versus Actual Fuel Costs

		Controller's Estimated Burn Rate (47.6 gallons per hour) and Estimated Fuel Costs*	Actual Burn Rate (42.6 gallons per hour) & True Cost of Fuel Purchases**	Difference/ Overestimation
FY 2018/19	Total Gallons Burned	761,600	643,451.7	118,148.3
	Total Cost	\$1,815,147	\$1,505,232.88	\$309,914.12
FY 2019/20	Total Gallons Burned	761,600	643,451.7	118,148.3
	Total Cost	\$2,028,395	\$1,294,671.72	\$733,723.28
FY 2020/21	Total Gallons Burned	761,600	643,451.7	118,148.3
	Total Cost	\$1,592,379	\$1,097,014.39	\$495,364.61
FY 2021/22	Total Gallons Burned	761,600	643,451.7	118,148.3
	Total Cost	\$1,391,189	\$1,798,353.64	(\$407,164.64)
FY 2022/23	Total Gallons Burned	761,600	643,451.7	118,148.3
	Total Cost	\$2,509,472	\$2,020,885.86	\$488,586.14
		Total Overestimation For 5 Year Audit Period		\$1,620,423.51

*Utilized Controller's inaccurate estimations of 16,000 total flight hours per year, fuel cost and burn rate.

**Based on validated records of 15,104.5 flight hours per year, actual highest documented burn rate (42.6 gallons per hour) and actual fuel purchase receipts for each involved Fiscal Year.

When fuel costs are calculated based on receipts for actual fuel purchased, it is revealed the Controller’s estimations are inflated an average of over \$320,000 per year and result in a total estimated cost that is inflated over \$1,620,000 in comparison to the actual expenditure (or 21 percent over the actual cost).

Also not considered by the Controller’s team was the potential monetary savings, in manpower hours and time spent, as well as potential cost to society, which the airship helps to mitigate by its response and presence. A 2002 report²⁰ specifically documented a cost-benefit study which had been conducted to determine whether there are savings which can be identified as being a result of the use of helicopters in police work. This analysis determined that between 25 percent and 42 percent of the cost of a helicopter program is likely to be recouped by an agency or community when monetary amounts are attached to certain measures of efficiency and effectiveness. Determinations of efficiencies and effectiveness were based on factors such as limiting the need for additional officers to respond on some calls which are handled by an airship that is first on scene, or the increased likelihood and expediency with which suspects can be apprehended and face societal accountability when assistance is provided by an airship.

In addition, the Controller failed to consider the cost savings in other areas where damage, loss and injury are mitigated by the response and assistance of the airship. This includes injury and

²⁰ Whitehead, Paul C. (2002). “Operational Value of Police Helicopters: A Cost-benefit Analysis.” *International Journal of Police Science and Management*, Volume: 4 Issue: 3. Pages: 233-247.

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potential death to officers in dangerous incidents where observations by the airship prevent tragedies, and the resulting loss in workforce productivity and medical costs for injuries suffered on duty. The “costs” of ASD must also consider the potential liability which could stem from dangerous but necessary police encounters, including pursuits (a topic which will be specifically addressed in more detail later in this report) where assistance by ASD has been proven to mitigate potential damage or injury.

An objective assessment of the cost of a program must reasonably factor such savings and benefits into any comprehensive review.

Controller’s Conclusion No. 1: The LAPD has not Justified the Need for the Current Size and Operational Scope of its Helicopter Program

The Controller stated the primary purpose of the Audit was “to determine whether the current size of the LAPD’s helicopter program and its scope of operations are justified and an efficient use of public safety resources.”²¹ The Audit purports to address this, and asserts a lack of measurable performance or benefit. This was done without any member of the audit team engaging in observation of the Department’s air operations and their actual “performance.” As noted previously, no effort was made to conduct a “ride/fly-a-long” or engage in any other activity which would have provided a greater depth of understanding. Given that a significant indicator of ASD’s value to the Department’s role in public safety and service is the level of assistance they provide daily to ground units and officers, this lack of engagement by a team assessing “performance” is concerning.

According to the Controller’s Audit, “the extensive number of hours flown by the LAPD and the 20-hour per day patrol coverage results in a significant portion of ASD’s flight time being dedicated to medium and lower priority call types, training flights, and flight time where crews are not actively engaged in a response activity or targeted patrol.”²²

The Audit highlights, and is critical of the fact that “less than half of helicopter flight time was dedicated to the highest priority crime types.”²³ It then goes on to assert the importance of ensuring ASD “resources are either dedicated to response activities related to the most serious types of crime, where the risk to the members of the public are greatest, or at a scale that is appropriate based on need.”²⁴

In making this assessment, the Controller’s team failed to grasp the primary function and mission of ASD. Department helicopters and crews are primarily an extension of ground based uniformed police resources – the patrol officers answering the public’s calls for service.²⁵ The

²¹ Office of the Controller. Page 7.

²² Office of the Controller. Page 15.

²³ Office of the Controller. Page 20.

²⁴ Office of the Controller. Page 20.

²⁵ The motto of ASD is “The mission is the same, only the vehicle has changed.” ASD Manual, Volume 1, Section 110.

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call load or responses initiated by ASD will therefore largely reflect the call load carried by the patrol resources on the ground. Similarly, like patrol assets, deployment and planning in public safety must account for, and be prepared to respond appropriately to, the unknown emergency.

An emergency is specifically defined as "an unforeseen combination of circumstances or the resulting state that calls for immediate action," or "an urgent need for assistance or relief."²⁶ As a public safety service provider, the Department has a duty to stage appropriate and necessary assets in a fashion that makes them most reasonably capable to handle such urgent, unusual and potentially life-threatening circumstances. That is a fundamental function of the police service and must be a primary consideration in all staffing, equipment and deployment efforts.

The critical assistance and reliability of our Department's air assets are a principal component of this emergency service capability, and as such must be appropriately prepared for response. Even the Audit admits, "helicopters may provide critical law enforcement support in many situations, such as vehicle pursuits, kidnappings, and violent crime response."²⁷ The specific nature of an emergency (such as a pursuit or violent crime) requires immediate response; this cannot be facilitated by air assets which are grounded, even if on a "stand-by" status with crews prepared to deploy. The ASD personnel have assessed a minimum period of seven to eight minutes would be required for a "stand-by" flight crew to board a helicopter, warm it up and conduct the minimum safety checks, then take to the air prior to initiating a flight response to the location of any emergency. This delay would make the services they are capable of providing largely obsolete in many emergency scenarios – they would simply be arriving too late to be of major assistance during the critical initial moments of most emergencies. The very existence of emergency public services, such as police and fire, is predicated on the concept of emergency community needs, thus an effort at appropriate 24-hour staffing. One cannot forecast an emergency, nor can anyone predict the "likely need" for emergency response based on historical patterns.

The Department is also concerned with the Audit's apparent lack of understanding in regards to the importance of "lower priority" calls for service and the critical assistance provided by our air assets. While they are reasonably defined as "medium" or "low" priority for purposes of triage (air crew determination on which call to handle first), their importance or urgency to the victim and public, and the importance of disrupting the involved criminal behavior and apprehending the offenders, cannot be discounted.

The Audit's dependence on the identification of Part I crime as a sole determiner of "high priority" incidents eliminates a multitude of calls which are of serious concern and are thus appropriately prioritized for response by the involved personnel. This would include incidents like street takeovers, assaults and disputes involving verbal threats of violence, radio calls of a man or a woman screaming in distress, prowlers or trespassers, vandalism and other calls of

²⁶ Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 10th Edition. (1995). Page 377. Also https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/emergency?utm_campaign=sd&utm_medium=serp&utm_source=jsonld. Retrieved December 15, 2024.

²⁷ Office of the Controller. Page 7.

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importance to the general public or which have a potential to develop into something far more serious.

The Audit asserts that airship activities are disproportionately spread over the City, again utilizing their misguided application of Part I crime as a determining factor of where they believe ASD assets should be focused. The Controller’s team went on to claim their analysis “suggests that helicopter flight activities may not directly correlate with actual criminal incidents in some areas, but instead could be driven by other factors, such as perceptions about crime.”²⁸

The airship will prioritize activities and responses based on requests from other Department personnel and commands, and those radio calls or incidents where they determine they could be most useful or effective. While there is a certain amount of professional judgement involved in that human calculation and decision making, an objective, fact-based analysis still provides the general foundation.

Below are three more reasonable methods of determining the appropriateness of ASD activity or time spent. In each, the percentage of ASD time spent correlates closely with the assessed criminal activity or calls for service.

The first involves a breakdown of statistics centered specifically on Part I *violent* crime. This is based simply on the logical conclusion that, if faced with a property crime in progress versus a violent crime in progress, a police officer will undeniably determine the life safety issue must be prioritized. As referenced by the Audit, a review of *overall* Part I Crime reveals Operations-South Bureau has the lowest percentage of the four geographic bureaus. However, when you isolate solely Part I *violent* crime, Operations-South Bureau leads all four geographic bureaus, carrying over 30 percent of the crime.

The table below displays the Part I violent crime statistics for the five-year audit period with the percentage of citywide incidents which are attributed to each division. The table includes, for comparison, the percentage of time spent by ASD crews in each division for the same year, as originally reflected in the Controller’s Audit.

²⁸ Officer of the Controller. Page 25.

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Table 2 – ASD Time Spent versus Violent Part I Crime by Geographic Area²⁹

LAPD Area	ASD Activities	ASD Activity Percentage	Part I Violent Incidents	Part I Violent Percentage
77th Street	13,072	8.90%	16,813	11.31%
Southwest	10,212	6.90%	10,588	7.12%
Newton	8,622	5.80%	10,117	6.80%
N. Hollywood	8,240	5.60%	5,355	3.60%
Southeast	7,911	5.40%	13,148	8.84%
Hollenbeck	7,793	5.30%	6,309	4.24%
Hollywood	7,887	5.30%	7,959	5.35%
Northeast	7,728	5.20%	4,698	3.16%
West Valley	7,347	5.00%	4,585	3.08%
Mission	6,985	4.70%	5,747	3.87%
Wilshire	6,774	4.60%	5,414	3.64%
Rampart	6,645	4.50%	8,662	5.83%
Van Nuys	6,642	4.50%	4,242	2.85%
Central	6,561	4.40%	10,827	7.28%
Devonshire	5,873	4.00%	3,747	2.52%
Topanga	5,770	3.90%	4,420	2.97%
Olympic	5,600	3.80%	7,535	5.07%
Foothill	5,156	3.50%	4,294	2.89%
Pacific	4,881	3.30%	5,101	3.43%
West LA	3,988	2.70%	2,769	1.86%
Harbor	3,894	2.60%	6,352	4.27%
Totals	147,581		148,682	

An additional manner by which to assess the appropriateness of ASD’s time and attention may be to look at the frequency of a singular type of incident which embodies extremely high public safety concerns – those involving shots being fired. These types of calls are likely to prompt the immediate response by an airship, and may even create a potential for the airship to disengage from the scene of other lesser incidents.

²⁹ Extracted from Department CompStat records for the five-year audit period (2018 through 2022). Records accessed on December 22, 2023.

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Table 3 – ASD Time Spent versus Shots Fired Incidents by Geographic Area³⁰

LAPD Area	ASD Activities	ASD Activity Percentage	Crimes Involving Shots Fired	Shots Fired Percentage
77th Street	13,072	8.90%	2,302	16.70%
Southwest	10,212	6.90%	937	6.84%
Newton	8,622	5.80%	1,417	10.34%
N. Hollywood	8,240	5.60%	408	2.98%
Southeast	7,911	5.40%	1,843	13.45%
Hollenbeck	7,793	5.30%	1,029	7.51%
Hollywood	7,887	5.30%	339	2.47%
Northeast	7,728	5.20%	552	4.03%
West Valley	7,347	5.00%	323	2.36%
Mission	6,985	4.70%	447	3.26%
Wilshire	6,774	4.60%	286	2.08%
Rampart	6,645	4.50%	530	3.87%
Van Nuys	6,642	4.50%	261	1.90%
Central	6,561	4.40%	424	3.09%
Devonshire	5,873	4.00%	262	1.91%
Topanga	5,770	3.90%	200	1.46%
Olympic	5,600	3.80%	329	2.40%
Foothill	5,156	3.50%	529	3.86%
Pacific	4,881	3.30%	272	1.98%
West LA	3,988	2.70%	85	0.62%
Harbor	3,894	2.60%	928	6.77%
Totals	147,581		13,703	

Shots fired incidents may ultimately involve an investigation, arrest or report for a crime such as assault with a deadly weapon or attempted murder. Or, they may ultimately be documented by officers as a lesser crime such as shooting into an inhabited dwelling, shots fired within the city limits or even vandalism (none of which are Part I crimes). However, at the time they are reported (i.e., when 911 is called), they are handled as an emergency, and prompt an appropriately high priority response, due to their potential threat to public safety.

³⁰ Extracted from Department CompStat records for the five-year audit period (2018 through 2022). Records accessed on December 27, 2023.

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A further comparison can be made through a statistical analysis of those radio calls ASD is most likely to respond to, or what in Department vernacular are referred to as “hot shots.”³¹ These are crimes in progress or serious disturbances occurring in an environment where the airship is most likely to be able to render assistance. This is likely the most accurate single source rationale for ASD time spent, as it is based on actual emergency calls as they were described at the time police were dispatched (as opposed to a later determination of facts and a formal crime classification).

Table 4 – ASD Time Spent versus “Hotshot” Radio Calls by Geographic Area

LAPD Area	ASD Activities	ASD Activity Percentage	"Hotshot" Radio Calls	Percentage of Total "Hotshots"
77th Street	13,072	8.90%	9,884	9.30%
Central	6,561	4.40%	6,013	5.66%
Devonshire	5,873	4.00%	3,191	3.00%
Foothill	5,156	3.50%	3,822	3.59%
Harbor	3,894	2.60%	3,419	3.22%
Hollenbeck	7,793	5.30%	4,853	4.57%
Hollywood	7,887	5.30%	6,149	5.79%
Mission	6,985	4.70%	4,712	4.44%
N. Hollywood	8,240	5.60%	5,091	4.79%
Newton	8,622	5.80%	6,412	6.04%
Northeast	7,728	5.20%	4,111	3.87%
Olympic	5,600	3.80%	4,537	4.27%
Pacific	4,881	3.30%	4,984	4.69%
Rampart	6,645	4.50%	5,640	5.31%
Southeast	7,911	5.40%	5,834	5.49%
Southwest	10,212	6.90%	6,857	6.46%
Topanga	5,770	3.90%	3,392	3.19%
Van Nuys	6,642	4.50%	4,082	3.84%
West LA	3,988	2.70%	3,228	3.04%
West Valley	7,347	5.00%	4,509	4.25%
Wilshire	6,774	4.60%	5,497	5.18%
Totals	147,581		106,217	

³¹ These statistics reflect actual calls for service from 2018 through 2022, as compiled by Communications Division Projects Unit. They are based on the following call classifications: pursuits, officer needs help call, officer requesting back-up, shots fired, assault with a deadly weapon, robbery, grand theft-auto, hot prowl burglary, disturbance-man with a gun, disturbance-group with a gun, attack/rape in progress.

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The table above reflects the percentage of those radio calls or requests which originated in each of the geographic Areas, again in comparison to the percentage of ASD time spent as originally reported by the audit team. As can be noted, when percentages of call load and percentages of ASD time spent are compared, in 18 of 21 geographic Areas the totals are within one percentile of each other (the standard referenced in the Controller's Audit), with half of the geographic Areas (ten) being within less than half a percentage.

As these three tables clearly reflect (and as is visually represented in the maps in Addendum E), the time ASD spends in any given area is measured and appropriate. In addition, there are a multitude of factors that potentially influence ASD activity. Central Area, for instance, reflects a higher percentage of both overall Part I violent crime and "hotshot" radio calls, yet reflects a smaller percentage of airship activity. In a vacuum, this may seem like an anomaly. However, upon closer examination, the time ASD spends there makes sense as the environment within Central Area (or "downtown") is not conducive to air support activity due to the multitude of high-rise buildings. Also, as noted in the Audit, an airship is generally dedicated to the San Fernando Valley region. This may provide a slightly higher level of ASD responsiveness to the seven Operations-Valley Bureau divisions and other divisions immediately adjacent to them (such as Northeast Area), despite their slightly lower violent crime rate or rate of "hotshot" radio calls. However, the topography of the Los Angeles Basin and the San Fernando Valley (specifically, the Santa Monica Mountain range between the two) make this deployment a reasonable operational strategy.

Finally, the stated purpose of the Controller's Audit was primarily to "evaluate costs and performance of Department helicopters."³² Any assessment of the value of a public service and safety entity should reasonably include an accounting of the contributions that entity makes to the public it serves. While not conclusive, the overall productivity numbers must be included in any comprehensive study. With the exception of three bullets on one page which very briefly reference three general categories,³³ there is no mention or numerical analysis of the critical contributions airships make to the prevention of criminal acts, the apprehension of criminals and the protection of lives and property.

Simply put, to evaluate costs, one must look at the benefits the public receives. To do this, the Department compiled the following productivity statistics, based on the daily logs and productivity tracking systems developed and currently in use by ASD. All of this statistical information was available to the audit team. However, instead of requesting this specific information, or making any request regarding the productivity of the division, the Controller's team accessed statistical data from the company which maintains the records. In addition, ASD and other Department personnel remained available to provide any requested assistance in deciphering the data. However, the Controller's final published Audit contains no data reflecting a comprehensive analysis of detailed productivity by ASD.

³² Kenneth Mejia, Controller. Letter to the Honorable Karen Bass, Mayor, City of Los Angeles. *Re: Audit of the Los Angeles Police Department's Air Support Division*. December 11, 2023.

³³ Office of the Controller. Page 28.

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The following table provides a brief excerpt of some of the productivity categories and contributions by ASD over the five-year audit period.

Table 5 – ASD Notable Productivity by Year³⁴

ASD Activity	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total Responses	36,445	33,068	34,706	33,620	32,543
First at Scene	6,588	6,001	7,984	6,800	6,787
Perimeters	1,281	1,242	1,353	1,270	1,354
Felony Arrests - Initiated by Aircrew	1,350	1,235	1,609	1,482	1,167
Felony Arrests - Assisted by Aircrew	7,407	7,358	9,883	8,170	7,275
Pursuits - Assisted LAPD ground units	354	344	427	482	434
Assisted at Foot Pursuit	817	788	743	823	759
Suspect Vehicle Following	1,246	1,074	1,185	1,251	1,093
Pursuits - Assisted Outside Agency	37	24	16	23	19
Firearms - Assisted with Recovery	259	262	316	604	473
Missing Persons - Searches	696	732	681	638	685
Fires – Observed/Initiated FD Response	25	28	40	48	42

In a specific reference to firearm recoveries, the Controller’s Audit states, “this metric does not necessarily mean a gun would not have been recovered if not for the assistance of the air unit.”³⁵ However, members of the LAPD air crews can attest to countless times they have directed ground personnel to weapons discarded by suspects and otherwise unobserved by officers. By the conclusion of 2023, officers opined this was happening on a virtually daily basis. This is well documented in arrest reports and, when necessary, is testified to in court by the ASD officers making the observations from the air.

The Audit report mentions the potential value of helicopters in police pursuits, but makes no further analysis of their specific value or effect, despite the fact statistical data exists for examination. For instance, Department records indicate that when an airship is involved in a police pursuit, the success rate of suspect apprehension increases substantially.

Table 6 – Pursuits: Suspect Apprehension Rate³⁶

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
With Airship Overhead	84.87%	89.54%	84.40%	83.11%	83.42%
No Airship	68.15%	61.65%	64.02%	61.37%	42.23%

³⁴ Productivity statistics pulled from ASD’s Shotover/Churchill Daily Flight Log system. Accessed between December 15, 2023 and January 5, 2024.

³⁵ Office of the Controller. Page 29.

³⁶ Extracted from Department Records, Traffic Group – Pursuit Review Unit, on December 14, 2023.

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As an example, in 2022, the rate of suspect apprehension almost doubled when an airship was used. The statistics over the five-year audit period show that without the presence of an airship, an average of 25 percent of the criminals the LAPD engages in a vehicle pursuit each year would escape to continue their criminal behavior and victimization.

Similar to overall productivity, the Controller’s Audit failed to address the contribution airships make to the reducing the danger to public safety from the erratic driving behavior of the pursued suspects. In 2003, the LAPD introduced the tactic of “tracking” to our police pursuit policy. This tactic relies on the airship to take over the monitoring of a suspect vehicle, allowing pursuing vehicles to drop back. The intent is to reduce a suspect’s compulsion to continue their high speed and reckless driving behavior due to closely following police vehicles. The implementation of tracking is not universal and depends on the totality of the circumstances. However, in those circumstances which support the initiation of tracking, the Department has found it results in a marked reduction in pursuit-related traffic collisions.

Table 7 – Pursuits Involving Traffic Collisions³⁷

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
With Tracking Engaged	17.50%	19.00%	20.00%	19.00%	22.00%
No Tracking	82.50%	81.00%	80.00%	81.00%	78.00%

Over the five-year audit period, pursuits that did not involving tracking by an available airship were at least four times more likely to result in a traffic collision.

The Audit asserts that, while the data collected by the ASD Daily Flight Log system “does provide information about the day-to-day activities of ASD, these data points do not focus on outcomes, and there does not appear to be any formal evaluation by ASD that measures performance against established goals or objectives.”³⁸ However, no specific explanation is provided as to exactly what specific “outcomes” the Controller feels should be addressed beyond those productivity statistics currently maintained by ASD.

Given that the primary functions of any law enforcement agency are the prevention of crime and the apprehension of criminals, it could reasonably be argued, and both statistical and testimonial proof exists, that airships play a critical role in the successful capture of suspects. The report includes no statistical presentation of this performance metric.

Any direct effect on the crime rate by a police presence, to include ASD assets, cannot be scientifically proven to any high degree of certainty. Academics, social scientists and politicians have for decades attributed fluctuations in the crime rate to a plethora of individual and societal influences and circumstances. It is impossible to identify what crimes did *not* occur based solely on a highly visible law enforcement presence (i.e., “proving a negative”). However, the Controller’s team sites no quantitative study, conducted no study themselves, and provided no

³⁷ Extracted from Department Records, Traffic Group – Pursuit Review Unit, on December 14, 2023.

³⁸ Office of the Controller. Page 27.

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evidence, scientific or anecdotal, which supports the contention that helicopters have *no* effect on the crime rate. The Audit asserts no organization would be able to support a conclusion that police helicopters deter crime.

To the contrary, there is an abundance of anecdotal evidence which indicates the criminal element is less likely to commit their offensive acts in the presence of law enforcement or when circumstances exist which increase their likelihood of apprehension. In addition, there are a multitude of tenured police officers across the country, both on the ground and in the air, who can testify to interrupting crimes in progress and having suspects cease their criminal behavior, or attempt to flee, upon the arrival of law enforcement. Arrestees have been interviewed providing specific statements indicating they selected the time of their criminal activities during weather periods they believed were less likely to allow for the flight of police helicopters, or in areas or communities where they knew police helicopters were not present. Criminal cases involving surveillance, informants and wire taps have all revealed criminals’ fear of police helicopters. Finally, and the Department would contend most importantly, there are countless victims, potential victims, and concerned or scared residents, business owners and visitors to the City of Los Angeles, who have called for a police response and been relieved by the presence of an ASD helicopter when it arrives first on scene.

Controller’s Conclusion No. 2: The LAPD Should Limit the Use of Helicopters for
Ceremonial and Transportation Purposes

The Controller’s team reviewed the variety of activities that ASD crews engaged in over the audit period which were not directly related to responses to criminal conduct or investigations. These included ceremonial flights (such as funerals, promotions and Police Academy graduations), “fly-bys” at special events (community events and large gatherings), and transportation of a variety of Department and City personnel. The Controller then summarily concluded “the need for some of these flights is questionable,” and, “several flights also appear to provide little to no public safety benefit, and represent either an inefficient or inappropriate use of LAPD resources.”³⁹ The Department disagrees with this conclusion.

The Controller finds fault with the fact the ASD “policy does not provide any specific guidelines dictating the types of LAPD events, local community events, special events, or aviation community events for which aircrews may conduct flyovers,” and asserts that, “insufficient guidelines governing the division’s fly-by activities and the discretionary nature of the flights creates an increased likelihood of fly-by engagements that constitute an inefficient or improper use of air unit assets.”⁴⁰

As a public service entity, and especially as an agency with the duties and responsibilities of law enforcement, community engagement is a critical component of building and maintaining trust and partnership with the people we serve. This must be embodied in every potential interaction

³⁹ Office of the Controller. Page 29.

⁴⁰ Office of the Controller. Page 30.

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by every facet of our agency. Just as we expect our front-line patrol officers to be responsive to community requests for interaction and public appearances at special events and community gatherings, the officers in ASD must be equally responsive. Their uniqueness makes them in some cases more appealing for such appearances and is a valuable tool in both community engagement and employee recruitment. Similarly, just as our patrol division watch commanders and Area command officers are accountable for reviewing and approving and assigning such public appearances, those authorities and responsibilities are similarly held within ASD.

The Audit attempts to provide a cost analysis which is attributed to these various fly-by activities.⁴¹ This cost attribution is inaccurate and misleading because in the vast majority of these incidents, the helicopter utilized for the fly-by was already in the air and conducting its normal shift operations. Thus, there was no additional "cost" above the cost of normal ASD operations. In all such cases, the helicopter responded to the fly-by request only because it was available for those few minutes with no priority incidents requiring its attention. Had there been a pressing public safety or priority need, the helicopter would have been redirected and the fly-by would have been cancelled or possibly rescheduled, depending on the flexibility of the event.

The Audit highlighted four specific incidents they believe had "Limited or No Public Safety Benefit."⁴² Three were retirement ceremonies, where fly-bys were conducted to show appreciation and respect for public servants who spent a lengthy career dedicated to ensuring the safety of others. The fourth example provided was in regards to 29 minutes spent for a fly-by at the 2019 West Valley Division Boosters Golf Tournament in Tarzana (West Valley Area). This event garnered over \$29,000⁴³ for the Boosters, who raise funds to support the purchase of specialized equipment and training for the division as well as support other police-related activities (youth programs, etc.).

Also encompassed within this conclusion, the Controller appears to opine that utilizing the airship for transportation is an inappropriate allocation of resources. The Audit lists the total number of transportation activities which occurred over the five-year audit period, breaking them down by category.⁴⁴ It identifies a total of 2,592 transportation incidents, attributing 890 hours and 47 minutes to them at a cost of \$2,597,123. This identification of cost provides a misleading inference that this is over and above normal operating cost. That is not the case and there is no supplemental cost as the airship involved in most cases was already in the air and conducting normal operations.

The Controller also incorrectly attributes a cost to 82 transportation activities involving Port Police employees. Unmentioned in the Audit is the fact these activities are provided in compliance with a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) which also specifically requires payment

⁴¹ Office of the Controller. Table 6, page 31.

⁴² Office of the Controller. Table 7, page 31.

⁴³ Banking records are on file and can be provided upon request.

⁴⁴ Office of the Controller. Table 8, page 33.

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by the Los Angeles Harbor Department to the LAPD for such services.⁴⁵ These flights directly support a Homeland Security mission and fill a capability shortfall within the Harbor Department and the Los Angeles Port Police. In addition, a significant provision of this MOA requires ASD helicopters to regularly support Port officials’ efforts at locating, identifying and investigating oil slicks or other toxic materials polluting the waterways.

It should be noted these transportation details identified by the Controller involved durations which averaged less than 21 minutes each. With rare exception, as previously highlighted, these activities were conducted in the course of regular patrol activities and the airship would have been diverted had priority public safety needs emerged. In addition, a significant number of these flights were conducted in support of specific ASD operations, such as the transport of ASD related equipment, parts and maintenance personnel.

The Audit highlighted five activities involving the transportation of personnel “with limited or no public safety benefit.”⁴⁶ This list, which we can reasonably assume the Controller identified as the most egregious transgressions, included six hours spent on a “Chili Fly-In,” where an ASD helicopter engaged in transportation between various facilities in Lancaster, Torrance, Camarillo, Van Nuys and March Air Reserve Base in Riverside County. This event was highlighted not only in the final Audit, but the Controller drew specific attention to it in the cover letter he provided to the Mayor.

Implying that this exercise has limited public safety benefit shows a misunderstanding of both the exercise and public safety service requirements. The event being referenced is the Public Safety Aviation Disaster Preparedness Exercise,⁴⁷ held annually in the region in conjunction with regional airborne public safety agencies and the Federal Aviation Administration. The exercise serves to solidify and enhance relationships, cooperation and interoperability amongst the departments who would respond to a critical regional disaster. It specifically addresses the missions involved in the City’s Emergency Air Transportation Plan and ASD’s responsibility as the City’s designated Plan Coordinator.⁴⁸ In the course of the exercise, air traffic controllers from regional airports take the place of actual government personnel who would be the passengers in a critical incident. They are transported to a centralized location as part of a timed exercise, replicating what would be required in a disaster to ensure the continuity of critical government operations.

During a real disaster, the on-duty air traffic controllers will be the only personnel supporting aviation units while they are transitioning/transporting between governed airspaces. This

⁴⁵ Los Angeles Harbor Department & Los Angeles Police Department. *Memorandum of Agreement for Aerial Patrols and Specialized Missions Services*. Entered into on June 24, 2015, and renewed annually. A copy of this agreement is on file and can be provided upon request.

⁴⁶ Office of the Controller. Table 9, page 34.

⁴⁷ A link to CBS News coverage of the 2023 exercise can be found at [Law enforcement agencies take to the sky for annual disaster-relief helicopter training - YouTube](#) .

⁴⁸ The Emergency Air Transportation Plan and the responsibilities of the Coordinator are further explained on page 5 of this fact sheet.

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exercise serves to integrate the ground personnel at these various locations with the critical role they would play in this response to a disaster.⁴⁹ The “chili” reference which has gained popularity amongst participants is simply due to the fact that those air traffic controllers are ultimately transported to LAPD Hooper Memorial Heliport where they are welcome to enjoy a bowl of chili before being returned to their outlying regional airport. Thus, the Public Safety Aviation Disaster Preparedness Exercise became nicknamed the “Chili Fly-In.”

Also highlighted by the Controller was the round-trip transportation of a doctor from the West Hollywood Sheriff’s Station to ASD headquarters to complete medical evaluations of ASD employees. The cumulative time spent on this detail was approximately one hour. Federal guidelines require pilots to pass regular flight physicals. To facilitate this, and save taxpayer expense, ASD has recruited a highly qualified surgeon as a specialist reserve (an unpaid, volunteer position within the Department). He completes all the mandated flight physicals for ASD personnel, which requires him to travel downtown multiple times per year. As a courtesy for this valuable service, and because he frequently works the exams into his demanding surgery schedule, ASD provides transportation for him in the course of regular air deployment operations. It is important to note that without the services provided for free by this recognized expert in his field, the Department would incur the costs of medical examinations and potentially expend overtime funds sending individual personnel to appointments at offsite medical facilities.

Controller’s Conclusion No. 3: Daily Flight Log Data Quality and Information Management Practices Need Improvement

The Department concurs with the audit team’s determination that the Daily Flight Log entries can be improved. Adjustments to ASD practices are currently being reviewed and evaluated with the goal of providing greater consistency in entries and a higher quality report with more concisely searchable data. Improvements in this area have been pursued by the Department in the past but budgetary concerns have halted any progress. It was therefore fortuitous that, several years ago, the Airbus subcontractor provided adjustments to the software for the mapping system included at purchase.

The system used for the logs is the standard mapping system included in the original purchase of the various ASD helicopters. The subcontractor offered to make certain minor modifications to provide additional functionality as a logging system. Without these adjustments the logs would have been hand recorded daily by each flight crew and likely maintained in hard copy, with little or no searchable database.

As noted in the Audit, the subcontractor who provided the system maintains the network in which the Daily Flight Log data is recorded. This is done at no charge to the LAPD. The information that is maintained is limited to general locations, times, natures of the call or activity and disposition. The system allows for data entry by the flight crew in the course of their shift

⁴⁹ This critical Continuity of Operations/Continuity of Government function of ASD will be explained in more detail later in this fact sheet.

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and was modified by the subcontractor to make that entry process easier and conform better to ASD needs. It contains no personal information relative to victims or suspects, and the majority of that same data could be acquired by any member of the public through a variety of open-source means or public inquiries, or by monitoring police radio frequencies as is done by most news services.

The Controller asserts the manner in which the software was acquired from the vendor results in “procurement related ethics risks,” citing City Charter Sections 370 and 371. The Department disagrees with the Controller’s contention that the offered adjustments to the contractually procured mapping system amounted to a violation of the City Charter. Again, this system is the standard mapping system included in the purchased technology build-out of the helicopters. The subcontractor made minor customized adjustments to the program to fit certain needs of ASD.

Finally, it is critical to acknowledge that following established Department procedure and City policy, all facets of this contractual purchase were reviewed and approved by the Office of the City Attorney prior to entering into the purchase agreement.

The Deputy City Attorney assigned to the Department’s contract matters reviewed the referral from the Controller’s team as well as supply and purchase order documentation maintained by GSD. He opined that no reasonable presumption could be made that the Department made any mistakes relative to the City Charter and Administrative Code regarding contracting requirements. In addition, based on the information he was provided regarding the actual limited data collected and system uses, he did not identify the need for a standalone contract with specific data protection provisions, such as may be required in other contexts in which sensitive or regulated data are at issue.⁵⁰

Controller’s Conclusion No. 4: The LAPD Should Improve Transparency and Seek to Minimize Negative Quality-of-Life and Environmental Impacts on the Community

The Audit asserts the audit team sought community input to “gauge Angelinos’ views on the LAPD’s helicopter program, including their level of support or issues of concern.”⁵¹ The Audit contains several direct quotes presumably gained from feedback at these meetings, and the Audit documents that, “the majority of participants expressed support for the LAPD helicopters, particularly in situations where helicopters are responding to violent crimes.”⁵²

This portion of the Controller’s Audit references “multiple community members” and “some residents” with no context or quantitative information. The Department formally requested the raw data from these meetings in order to gain insight or feedback which may have been provided, but the Office of the Controller refused to provide it. No information was provided on

⁵⁰ Sam Petty, Deputy City Attorney III, Office of the City Attorney, Public Procurement and Contracting Division, to Commander Shannon K. Paulson, LAPD. Email correspondence dated February 7, 2024, and February 12, 2024.

⁵¹ Office of the Controller. Page 39.

⁵² Office of the Controller. Page 40.

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the total number of participants at each meeting or the specific context in which the information, questions or queries were presented which resulted in this feedback.

The Controller highlights negative health effects of helicopter noise, citing the interruption of sleep cycles by intermittent helicopter noise as well as long-term noise exposure. The Audit refers to two agencies who they assert have studies on this topic: the National Academy of Sciences and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). However, no specific study by either entity is identified or cited. The Department endeavored to conduct a review of publications by these two organizations which dealt with related subject matter. Three studies were identified, two from the National Academy of Sciences (in 2016⁵³ and 2017⁵⁴) and one from the ICAO in 2019.⁵⁵

A search of these publications and the scientific studies found the audit team failed to disclose that these scientific studies rarely address specifically intermittent helicopter noise such as that produced by ASD airframes and activities. In most cases these studies are focused solely on prolonged exposure to low flying aircraft, referencing aviation “corridors” such as within regular flights paths of airports with continuous low altitude operations. The long-term health effects associated with aviation noise which are referenced in these reports cannot be attributed to the kinds of activities involved in daily ASD operations.

The Audit then criticizes the Department for allegedly not complying with the Fly Neighborly Program. This is a voluntary program initiated collaboratively between the Helicopter Association International and the Federal Aviation Administration. The Audit states the Department fails to adhere to what they assert is the Fly Neighborly Program’s recommended operational altitude of 2,000 feet above ground level (AGL). However, the altitude recommendation they are citing is for medium weight helicopters. The helicopters flown by ASD are categorized as light weight, for which the Fly Neighborly Program recommends an operational altitude of 1,000 AGL.⁵⁶ Department helicopter operations do comply with the Fly Neighborly Program when other factors do not dictate alternative operational needs or restrictions (see below).

The Audit also ignores that the operating altitude in many regions of the City is limited by the flight restrictions imposed by each of the airports in the Los Angeles area, including Los Angeles International Airport (LAX), Hollywood Burbank Airport (Burbank), and Van Nuys Airport.

⁵³ National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2016. *Helicopter Noise Information for Airports and Communities*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/23609>. Retrieved December 28, 2023.

⁵⁴ National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2017. *Assessing Community Annoyance of Helicopter Noise*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/24948>. Retrieved December 28, 2023.

⁵⁵ International Civil Aviation Organization (2019). *Environmental Report – Aviation and the Environment*. Montreal, BC, Canada. [https://www.icao.int/environmental-protection/Documents/ICAO-ENV-Report2019-F1-WEB%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.icao.int/environmental-protection/Documents/ICAO-ENV-Report2019-F1-WEB%20(1).pdf). Retrieved December 28, 2023.

⁵⁶ Helicopter Association International, Fly Neighborly Committee. *Fly Neighborly Guide*. Page 7. <https://rotor.org/fly-neighborly/>. Retrieved December 28, 2023.

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Each airport has rules regarding the use of their surrounding airspace to ensure flight safety for all aircraft.

In particular, LAX has areas where ASD is restricted in their ability to change altitudes and other areas where they are not allowed to enter. As a result, a significant portion of ASD’s operational area in Operations-Central Bureau and Operations-South Bureau are restricted to altitudes no higher than either 500 or 900 feet (see maps in Addendum F). Planes inbound to LAX are flying east to west (generally) and descending towards the runway. Therefore, the ASD helicopters must remain below the incoming flight path. Similarly, in the Valley, the airspace of Hollywood Burbank Airport and Van Nuys Airport mandate a maximum altitude of 500 feet above ground level in all areas except the hills and regions of Pacoima and Sylmar.

While the Audit is critical of the noise and potential health impacts of LAPD helicopter operations, the Controller makes no mention of scientific studies of decibel measurements regarding the noise specifically produced by the precise airframes utilized by ASD. This information is exceptionally germane to this issue and readily available. Testing has revealed the helicopters in use by ASD, when flying at an elevation of 492 feet (150 meters) will subject a person on the ground to a noise level of approximately 82 dB(A).⁵⁷ This is comparable to a street legal motorcycle driving by a stationary subject at 55 miles per hour (90 kilometers per hour) heard from a distance of 50 feet (15.2 meters).⁵⁸ The Fly Neighborly Program contains similar information and compares noise created by a helicopter flying at this altitude to a diesel truck travelling at 40 miles per hour and passing at a distance of 50 feet.⁵⁹

It is also important to note that, absent our helicopter circling, which only occurs during a tactical encounter requiring emergency police response, this noise will be fleeting (thus the reasonable comparison to a passing motorcycle or truck). This is similarly supported by data available from the Center for Disease Control, which reports a noise reading of 80-85 decibels is roughly the sound of City traffic heard from within a closed vehicle, and for which *prolonged and constant* exposure may cause annoyance.⁶⁰ Again, with certain tactical exceptions, our airships create a fleeting or passing audio sensation.

Finally, the Controller presents the detrimental effect ASD helicopters have on the environment due to their production of fossil fuel emissions. The carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions produced by helicopters are, without a doubt, more expansive than ground-based gasoline-powered passenger vehicles. However, it is important to put these operational emissions in the proper context given the activities of the Los Angeles region.

The Audit asserts LAPD helicopters burn 761,600 gallons of jet fuel per year. As has been previously addressed, the Department disputes the estimated fuel burn rate for our helicopters, and contend this figure has no factual application given our documented data (see pages 7-8 of

⁵⁷ A-weighted decibel is an expression of relative loudness; a traditional unit used to consider relative noise.

⁵⁸ Airbus Technical Publication No. 3684-P-00, Revision 0, November 22, 2021.

⁵⁹ Helicopter Association International, Fly Neighborly Committee. *Fly Neighborly Guide*. Page 24.

⁶⁰ https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/hearing_loss/what_noises_cause_hearing_loss.html

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this report which indicate the Controller’s estimation of fuel usage was inflated by over 18 percent). The Controller’s team utilized this exaggerated fuel burn rate to conclude ASD helicopters contribute 7,427 metric tons of CO₂ annually to the atmosphere. However, using the accurate fuel usage and burn rates discussed previously, the Department determined a more appropriate attributable emission rate would be approximately 6,237 metric tons of CO₂, a difference of 1,189 metric tons, or almost 20 percent (see Addendum C).

The Department also conducted a review of the CO₂ emissions in the context of the overall aeronautical activity for the region. Specifically studied were the emissions created by air traffic at LAX, Burbank, and Van Nuys Airports (see Addendum D). These three airports contribute a minimum of 1,195,937.01 metric tons of CO₂ emissions annually. This was calculated utilizing the smallest airframes considerably active at each airport (a Boeing 737-800 for LAX),⁶¹ and factoring only actual airport ground activity (taxiing, take-offs and landings). The estimate does not include emissions from descending approaches and maneuvering out of the area in flight after takeoff, thus resulting in an exceptionally conservative emissions calculation. Based on these *extremely* conservative calculations of airport related emissions, the LAPD ASD airframes likely contribute a fraction of one percent of the overall aircraft emissions in the region each year.

Controller’s Conclusion No. 5: The LAPD Should Identify Rightsizing Opportunities for Its Helicopter Program

In support of the Controller’s contention that ASD should be downsized, the Audit points to the fact the Department’s air operations capability is larger, with more airframes and more hours of citywide coverage, than other municipal programs. The audit team identified five “benchmark cities”⁶² with air operations programs against which they compared ASD. They highlight the “LAPD had the only helicopter program operational (i.e., ASD has helicopters and aircrews ready for deployment) 24 hours per day, and is the only program with two airborne helicopters during patrol shifts.”⁶³ They went on to note, “The gap between the size and scope of the LAPD’s helicopter program and programs of benchmark police departments indicates that rightsizing opportunities may exist, and that the department should examine whether it can meet its air support needs with fewer airborne hours.”⁶⁴

The Audit provides an overview of the benchmark cities which includes the population, square mileage and what they term the “public safety profile” of each jurisdiction. However, nowhere in that profile does it include the size or per-capita computation of the actual police department providing public safety services to the city.

⁶¹ For instance, a 747, which is a larger commercial airframe and is largely utilized by multiple carriers active at LAX, produces roughly four times the emissions of the 737.

⁶² Houston (TX) Police Department, Atlanta (GA) Police Department, San Diego (CA) Police Department, Long Beach (CA) Police Department, and Pasadena (CA) Police Department.

⁶³ Office of the Controller. Page 45.

⁶⁴ Office of the Controller. Page 46.

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Given that an air support program is an additional resource and a force multiplier for a policing agency, the size of the agency itself in comparison to the city it services should be considered in any such analysis. In addition, the Department asserts that a reasonable assessment of the need for city service resources should be based on workload, both the proven as well as potential need (e.g., unplanned emergencies or critical events). In law enforcement, such an assessment would revolve around officers per capita and call load and can be more closely analyzed through the average calls for service per officer. By extension, as the current discussion revolves around the assistance provided by an air support program, it would be reasonable to include required police activity per square mile and officers per square mile as those statistics directly impact response time and availability of officers.

The following table was created utilizing the basic information presented in the Controller’s Audit, with additional statistics and cities for greater context. Additional large cities were included in the analysis order to provide a more comprehensive comparison and holistic view of large city policing. As it illustrates, a more illuminating picture is drawn when these additional factors are considered – factors noticeably absent in the Controller’s Audit. The violent crimes per square mile are exceptionally revealing, given that many of those are the type of calls an airship is likely to respond to in order to render assistance.

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Table 8 – Comparison of Benchmark Cities and Additional Peer Agencies

City	Population	Square Miles	Police Officers	Officers per 1,000 Population	Officers per Square Mile	2018-2022 Calls for Service Average	Average Calls for Service per Square Mile	Violent Crimes (2022)	Violent Crimes Per Square Mile
Los Angeles	3,822,238	469.5	8,966	2.3	19.1	1,556,550 ⁶⁵	3,318.87	31,772	67.74
New York	8,335,897	300	35,047	4.2	116.8	6,723,564 ⁶⁶	22,411.88	*	*
Chicago	2,665,039	227	11,638	4.4	51.3	2,966,596 ⁶⁷	13,068.70	*	*
Houston	2,302,878	640.4	5,300	2.3	8.2	1,035,889 ⁶⁸	1,618.57	25,987	40.6
Atlanta	499,127	135.3	1,877	3.8	13.9	1,080,530	8,003.93	4,167	30.87
San Diego	1,381,162	325.9	1,641	1.2	5.1	559,384 ⁶⁹	1,721.18	5,932	18.25
Long Beach	451,307	50.7	772	1.7	15.4	208,987 ⁷⁰	4,179.74	2,455	49.1
Pasadena	134,211	23.0	221	1.6	10.1	112,935 ⁷¹	5,133.41	511	23.22

*The Controller’s Audit provided no sourcing or definition for the violent crime statistics for the benchmark cities they utilized, thus a similar statistic for New York and Chicago could not be researched.

Absent from the Audit’s benchmark departments was the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department, despite their jurisdiction and duties likely sharing the most similarities with the LAPD. This is also despite the fact there exists a plethora of information publicly available regarding their program, which is noticeably larger than ASD.

While the Office of the Controller, as previously noted, declined to provide raw data on any specific questions or inquiries which they directed to these benchmark police agencies, the Department conducted follow-up outreach to obtain more comprehensive feedback. The agencies openly provided us with the information requested of them by the Controller’s team. We noted none of the inquiries from the audit team explored whether the benchmark agencies found their helicopter programs valuable, whether they were fully satisfied with the current size and capability of their air operations, or if they felt a more robust program would increase the public safety and crime fighting or apprehension capabilities for their jurisdiction. The Department felt this information was germane given the stated intent of the Audit.

⁶⁵ <https://data.lacity.org/browse?q=lapd%20calls%20for%20service&sortBy=relevance>. Retrieved January 15, 2024.

⁶⁶ <https://data.cityofnewyork.us/browse?q=Calls+for+service>. Retrieved January 15, 2024.

⁶⁷ <https://home.chicagopolice.org/wp-content/uploads/2022-Annual-Report-FOR-PUBLICATION.pdf>. Extracted from the respective annual reports. Retrieved January 15, 2024.

⁶⁸ https://www.houstontx.gov/police/departments_reports/operational_summary/Year_End-2019.NIBRS_Monthly_Operational_Summary_FINAL_04272020.pdf. Extracted from the respective annual operational summaries. Retrieved on January 15, 2024.

⁶⁹ <https://data.sandiego.gov/datasets/police-calls-for-service/>. Retrieved January 15, 2024.

⁷⁰ William Bordeaux, Systems Coordinator, Disaster Preparedness & Emergency Communications, City of Long Beach, to Commander Shannon K. Paulson, LAPD. Email correspondence dated January 17, 2024.

⁷¹ <https://www.cityofpasadena.net/city-manager/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/Pasadena-Annual-Report-2022.pdf?v=1704841127658>. Extracted from the respective annual reports. Retrieved January 17, 2024.

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The Department conducted follow-up inquiries with each of the benchmark agencies.⁷² The unanimous responses from all five benchmark agencies was that air operations have a profoundly positive impact on police department performance, and that an increase in the size of their respective air support programs, with additional airframes (helicopter or fixed wing) and/or personnel, would undeniably result in increased levels of public safety and law enforcement and emergency services capabilities.⁷³ Two of these benchmark cities, Long Beach and Pasadena, have in the past requested and received helicopter assistance from LAPD during periods where their helicopters were non-operational or otherwise unavailable.

It is also important to acknowledge that a reduction in the size and scope of ASD would negatively impact the LAPD’s capability to fulfill their critical role in regional disaster response and management. This is not acknowledged in the Audit. The value of air assets as a regional resource is constantly validated by the level of responsibility placed on ASD, as well as the level of investment made at the regional, state and federal level. For instance, over the past 15 years, the Urban Area Security Initiative⁷⁴ has contributed over \$8 million dollars, specifically in equipment and technology, to enhance the capabilities of the LAPD’s air operations. The acceptance of such federal investments requires current capabilities to be maintained and available for regional multi-hazard responses in support of multiple agencies and disciplines.

Recommendations. The Controller’s Audit provided 14 recommendations based on the five conclusions drawn from their Audit. Below are the Department’s specific responses and recommendations based on the Controller’s conclusions and information put forth in the Audit.

Controller’s Recommendations Based on Conclusion No. 1

1. Update the Daily Flight Log data entry fields to capture the following:
 - a. Responses to Part I crimes;
 - b. Directed Patrols; and,

⁷² In addition, all similarly reported they were not told the inquiry was part of an audit of ASD, but instead was in support of a “research project” regarding municipal police air operations. The officials from two of the agencies, upon learning the Audit team’s true purpose, spontaneously expressed their views that this was an inappropriate comparison given the vast differences in the cities and departments (Carlyon, San Diego Police Department) and that the Controller team’s inquiries appeared “subjective” (Newman, Atlanta Police Department).

⁷³ Commander Steven Spears, Houston Police Department to Sergeant Oscar Castellanos, Serial No. 35792, LAPD. Telephonic contact on December 11, 2023, 1145 hours.

Sergeant Thomas Carlyon, San Diego Police Department to Sergeant Oscar Castellanos, Serial No. 35792, LAPD. Telephonic contact on December 11, 2023, 1250 hours.

Lieutenant Bradley May, Pasadena Police Department to Sergeant Oscar Castellanos, Serial No. 35792, LAPD. Telephonic contact on December 12, 2023, 1000 hours.

Captain Roland Thomas, Atlanta Police Department, to Commander Shannon K. Paulson, LAPD. Email correspondence dated December 19, 2023, 1617 hours.

Commander Brian McPhail, Long Beach Police Department, to Commander Shannon K. Paulson, LAPD. Email correspondence on January 8, 2024, 1626 hours.

⁷⁴ The Urban Area Security Initiative is a federally funded homeland security grant program which provides funding to enhance regional preparedness and capabilities in designated high-threat, high density areas.
<https://www.fema.gov/grants/preparedness/homeland-security>. Retrieved January 16, 2024.

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- c. The LAPD area in which an activity takes place, regardless of the flight type or its purpose.
2. Establish a formal set of performance metrics and performance goals that are routinely gathered, assessed, and made public so that residents, policymakers, the Board of Police Commissioners, LAPD management and ASD can monitor performance on a regular basis. (The Audit then provides a series of suggested metrics involving time spent and other numerics).
3. Transmit for review to the Board of Police Commissioners, at least annually, a report detailing the activities and the impact of ASD operations. The report should include performance data and performance goals described in Recommendation 2.
4. Update the ASD Manual to establish policies for the planning and use of directed patrols. The policy should include guidance on criminal activity types and trends that warrant directed patrols, and consider the frequency of directed patrols based on geographic areas to ensure communities are not subject to excessive or unnecessary helicopter patrols.

Department Response: It is the Department's belief that we currently capture a sufficient set of performance metrics to judge the value and mission support provided by ASD. Similarly, reports on performance can be, and have been, provided to the Board of Police Commissioners (BOPC), the governing body of the LAPD, upon their request. The Department further believes the request and approval process currently in place for special flights and directed patrols is sufficient.

While we do not agree with the value of the specific data fields proposed by the Controller (i.e., Part I crimes, etc.), the Department believes there are certain data capture classifications and methods which can possibly be improved. Reviews are currently being conducted to determine appropriate modifications.

Controller's Recommendations Based on Conclusion No. 2

5. Update the ASD Manual to revise its policy for fly-by engagements. Specifically, the policy update should:
 - a. Limit fly-by engagements to official LAPD events and acknowledgements for public safety professionals killed in the line of duty;
 - b. Describe the specific events and operational circumstances for which fly-by engagements may be authorized;
 - c. Describe limits on the amount of time an aircraft may be diverted from patrol duties in order to conduct a fly-by; and,
 - d. Establish a formal, documented pre-approval process for the authorization of fly-by activities.

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6. Establish an activity field for fly-by engagements in the Daily Flight Log in order to improve the department's ability to track fly-by engagements.
7. Update the ASD Manual to revise its policy for administrative flights (i.e., transportation flights). Specifically, the policy should:
 - a. Limit administrative flights to the transportation of law enforcement personnel responding to major incidents and other critical public safety missions;
 - b. Describe the specific events and operational circumstances for which administrative flights may be authorized; and,
 - c. Establish a formal, documented pre-approval process for the authorization of transportation flights. This process may exclude the transportation of ASD personnel for operational purposes.
8. Update Daily Flight Log fields to clearly delineate between transportation flights related to maintenance, the transportation of ASD personnel for operational purposes, and the transportation of law enforcement personnel for public safety purposes.

Department Response: The Department disagrees with the need to modify the ASD Manual in regard to fly-bys or administrative flights. Similarly, we believe the current request and approval process currently in place for such flights is sufficient. Currently, an audit is conducted annually to ensure compliance with Department Manual Section 4/299.20, which governs the flight request procedure and approval process. In addition, there is a quarterly review of aircraft activities to ensure compliance with the Mayor's Executive Directive regarding the use of City helicopters.⁷⁵

As previously noted, reviews are underway to determine methods for improved data capture details from the daily logs. Again, while the Department acknowledges this opportunity for review and improvement, we highlight the fact the information contained in this report, which is quite expansive, was all derived from the current existing data capture capabilities.

Controller's Recommendations Based on Conclusion No. 3

9. Update the ASD Manual to expand guidance on Daily Flight Log data entry requirements and standardization. Manual updates should include clear definitions for data fields (activity, area, etc.), and minimum requirements for free-form comment fields.
10. Coordinate with the Daily Flight Log system provider to develop data validation controls to prevent erroneous entries (e.g., flight or activity end times that precede the entered start time).

⁷⁵ City of Los Angeles, Office of the Mayor. (July 19, 2000). *Use of City Helicopters*. (Executive Directive No. 2000-18). A copy of this directive is on file and can be provided upon request.

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11. Develop a formal, legally enforceable agreement governing the relationship between the LAPD and the provider of the Daily Flight Log system. The agreement should clarify the LAPD's ownership of data entered into the system, and ensure the vendor's management of LAPD data complies with the City and LAPD data use and security policies.

Department Response: As previously noted, ASD is currently reviewing the methods of data capture and developing a more standardized system of categorization or classification of activities. In addition, certain recent developments in systems may contribute to improvements in the Daily Flight Log system, making data capture of ASD activities conform more to the systems and methods utilized by patrol entities.

Controller's Recommendations Based on Conclusion No. 4

12. Publish a monthly or quarterly report summarizing ASD activities. The report should be made available on the ASD web page.
13. Establish a clear reporting avenue which enables members of the public to submit general feedback, complaints, and recommendations related to the LAPD's helicopters. The reporting avenue, which may include a phone number, email address, web form, or other communications medium, should be made available to the public on the ASD web page.

Department Response: The Department acknowledges there is potential benefit to increasing the visibility of ASD operations on our public facing website, other social media and outreach efforts. Some growth in this area has already taken place through the efforts of ASD personnel and the Department's Public Information Officer. We do not believe a regularly scheduled formal report is necessary, as we will remain responsive to all reporting requests by the BOPC as they deem necessary.

The Department disagrees that any increased avenues of public comment or complaint are necessary. There are a variety of ways in which members of the public can provide comments, complaints or feedback to the Department. This includes telephonic contact with any Department entity which will then be directed to ASD, the Internal Affairs Complaint Hotline, written correspondence via postal mail or email to any Department entity, or by contacting the BOPC or the Office of the Inspector General. All of these methods are widely publicized and posted on websites and other Department documentation and can be utilized while maintaining anonymity if so desired.

Controller's Recommendations Based on Conclusion No. 5

14. Complete a formal assessment of air support needs for patrol and incident response operations to assess the program's current operations and whether rightsizing opportunities exist. The department should send a report documenting the results of the assessment to the Board of Police Commissioners for consideration. (The Audit then

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provides a series of their suggestions for potential changes to ASD operational hours, reducing the number of air units, and a study of cost savings for such reductions).

Department Response: The Department believes that our helicopter program provides an invaluable tool to our public safety and service efforts. It is the Department's belief the contents of this report, provided in response to the Controller's Audit, provide clear substantiation of the value of these resources, and do not support downsizing.

Conclusion. The use of helicopters in law enforcement saves lives. From assisting in locating missing children and health compromised or dependent adults, to providing a tactical view from the air that prevents or mitigates deadly encounters for officers and the public, to providing for de-escalation and a safer method of tracking offenders in vehicles, our air crews literally save lives that would otherwise be jeopardized. The Department's airborne resources have a proven history of life-saving and public safety contributions. This is the singular, most important point of validation for any public safety agency, and it is the basic foundation of every decision we make, every tactic we employ, and every resource in which we invest.

The airborne policing capabilities of the Department are part of an overall strategy with the goals of public safety, crime reduction and the apprehension of criminals. The LAPD and the City of Los Angeles, to date, have chosen to invest in this critical enhancement to public safety in an effort to provide the best possible police service to the community. A reduction in these capabilities should be made with the understanding it will compromise the Department's ability to maintain current levels of public service and safety.

Prepared by:

Counter-Terrorism & Special Operations Bureau

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ADDENDUM A

The Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards (GAGAS) involves the following methodology:⁷⁶

- Including sufficient background information to provide context for the audit;
- Defining the scope (the topic and audit period);
- Establishing objectives;
- Identifying criteria (policies, procedures, and laws);
- Describing the audit procedures (the specific steps and techniques used to collect and evaluate evidence);
- Identifying findings; and,
- Making recommendations.

Because the Controller chose not to follow GAGAS guidelines in making operational and administrative observations, the Audit did not include clear objectives, often did not provide criteria or describe the assessment process, and the findings did not include the components generally associated with an audit finding (criteria, condition, cause and effect). Additionally, the Audit did not identify if subject matter experts were consulted to make recommendations, especially those related to operational issues and crime-reducing strategies.

⁷⁶ Comptroller General of the United States. (2018). *Government Auditing Standards* (GOA-21-368G). Government Accountability Office. <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-21-368g>. Retrieved December 28, 2023.

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ADDENDUM B

LAPD Sworn – Indirect Costs

Fiscal Year	Gross Salary published by Controller (incl. CTO)	Fringe Benefits	Central Services	Dept Admin & Support	ANNUAL INDIRECT COST TOTALS UTILIZING PUBLISHED CAP RATES	ANNUAL INDIRECT COSTS PUBLISHED BY CONTROLLER
2018/19 (CAP 41)	\$11,671,393.27	75.81% \$8,848,083.24	17.16% \$2,002,811.09	78.31% \$9,139,868.07	\$19,990,762.39	\$18,371,881.80
2019/20 (CAP 42)	\$10,946,128.13	72.45% \$7,930,469.83	17.90% \$1,959,356.94	63.59% \$6,960,642.88	\$16,850,469.64	\$18,601,850.15
2020/21 (CAP 43)	\$12,807,085.98	75.25% \$9,637,332.20	21.62% \$2,768,891.99	64.89% \$8,310,518.09	\$20,716,742.28	\$19,503,911.24
2021/22 (CAP 44)	\$12,116,558.46	74.49% \$9,025,624.40	19.22% \$2,328,802.54	58.14% \$7,044,567.09	\$18,398,994.02	\$19,483,426.01
2022/23 (CAP 45)	\$11,681,559.45	64.41% \$7,524,092.44	12.93% \$1,510,425.64	34.19% \$3,993,925.18	\$13,028,443.25	\$17,625,136.90
5 Year Totals					\$88,985,411.59	\$93,586,206.10

LAPD Civilian – Indirect Costs

FY	Gross Salary published by Controller (incl. CTO)	Fringe Benefits	Central Services	Dept Admin & Support	ANNUAL OVERHEAD TOTALS (Based on CAP Rates)	ANNUAL INDIRECT COSTS PUBLISHED BY CONTROLLER
2018/19 (CAP 41)	\$653,406.58	49.28% \$321,998.76	13.94% \$91,084.88	118.44% \$773,894.75	\$1,186,978.39	\$1,158,097.82
2019/20 (CAP 42)	\$648,226.44	53.55% \$347,125.26	16.54% \$107,216.65	66.23% \$429,320.37	\$883,662.28	\$1,177,568.16
2020/21 (CAP 43)	\$666,668.81	55.37% \$369,134.52	16.38% \$109,200.35	65.98% \$439,868.08	\$918,202.95	\$908,802.92
2021/22 (CAP 44)	\$525,200.25	51.67% \$271,370.97	12.72% \$66,805.47	29.32% \$153,988.71	\$492,165.15	\$723,358.31
2022/23 (CAP 45)	\$323,613.97	49.37% \$159,768.22	9.85% \$31,875.98	9.68% \$31,325.83	\$222,970.03	\$303,258.65
5 Year Totals					\$3,703,978.81	\$4,271,085.86

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GSD – Indirect Costs

FY	Gross Salary published by Controller (incl. CTO)	Fringe Benefits	Central Services	Dept Admin & Support	ANNUAL INDIRECT COST TOTALS UTILIZING PUBLISHED CAP RATES	ANNUAL INDIRECT COSTS PUBLISHED BY CONTROLLER
2018/19 (CAP 41)	\$2,405,728.59	45.95% \$1,105,432.29	29.10% \$700,067.02	9.07% \$218,199.58	84.12% \$2,023,698.89	\$2,304,687.99
2019/20 (CAP 42)	\$2,450,317.57	50.38% \$1,234,469.99	35.78% \$876,723.63	12.03% \$294,773.20	98.19% \$2,405,966.82	\$2,405,721.79
2020/21 (CAP 43)	\$2,306,887.18	52.57% \$1,212,730.59	39.84% \$919,063.85	7.57% \$174,631.36	99.98% \$2,306,425.80	\$2,338,491.54
2021/22 (CAP 44)	\$2,191,728.50	47.01% \$1,030,331.57	35.47% \$777,406.10	7.73% \$169,420.61	90.21% \$1,977,158.28	\$2,123,346.57
2022/23 (CAP 45)	\$2,313,021.01	49.16% \$1,137,081.13	34.16% \$790,127.98	10.64% \$246,105.44	93.96% \$2,173,314.54	\$2,316,259.24
				5 Year Totals	\$10,886,569.00	\$11,488,507.13

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ADDENDUM C

LAPD ASD Flight Hours

Helicopter maintenance records, which include flight hours for each airframe, and which are meticulously maintained by GSD, reflected the following total hours flown for each of the five years of the audit period identified by the Controller.

2018: 14,923.2 hours
2019: 14,585.4 hours
2020: 15,862.8 hours
2021: 14,887.4 hours
2022: 15,264.0 hours
Total: 75,522.8 flight hours over 5 years

This reveals an annual average of 15,104.56 hours.

LAPD Helicopter Emissions

Utilizing the accurate annual average of 15,104.56 flight hours and a burn rate of 43 gallons per hour (an overestimation or rounding up of the accurately documented 42.6 gallons per hour burn rate) results in a calculation of 649,496.1 gallons. Utilizing this total and the 4AIR Fuel Carbon Calculator, this calculates to 6,237.5 metric tons of CO₂ emissions⁷⁷ per year.

⁷⁷ https://www.4air.aero/carbon-calculator?gclid=EAIAIQobChMikN6m_-PqgwMVmCvUAR1MXg-7EAAAYASAAEgJZAPD_BwE. Retrieved January 11, 2024.

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ADDENDUM D

NOTE: The 4AIR Fuel Carbon Calculator⁷⁸ was utilized to calculate the conversion of all jet fuel burn rates to carbon emissions.

Los Angeles Region Airports

In computing fuel burn and emission rates for Los Angeles International Airport, the Department utilized the smallest commercial aircraft in greatest numerical use by airlines active at LAX. This is the Boeing 737-800. The 737-800 burns approximately 100-120 gallons of fuel during take-off, and 60 gallons during taxiing activity.⁷⁹ Taking a conservative estimate of 120 gallons and multiplying that by the 556,913 flights which were active in and out of LAX in 2022,⁸⁰ results in a production rate of 89,106,080 gallons of fuel, or 855,740.9 metric tons of CO₂ annually for LAX. One should keep in mind this is extremely conservative. For instance, a 747, which is a larger commercial airframe and is largely utilized by multiple carriers active at LAX, produces roughly four times the emissions of the 737.

Also active in the Los Angeles region is the Hollywood Burbank Airport. There were 65,381 commercial air carrier flights⁸¹ into and out of Hollywood Burbank Airport in 2022,⁸² and the same Boeing 737 burn rates may be utilized as a conservative estimate for the various commercial carriers in operation there. This reveals Hollywood Burbank Airport contributes another 100,463.076 metric tons of CO₂ annually.

Finally, Van Nuys Airport ranks as one of the world's busiest general aviation airports. This airport hosts activity from a variety of airframe sizes. Again, factoring a conservative leaning estimate we utilized a smaller average airframe, the King Air. This aircraft posts an average fuel burn of 88 gallons per hour, likely significantly smaller than many of the private jets which make regular use of Van Nuys Airport. In 2022, Van Nuys Airport hosted 283,668 take offs and landings.⁸³ This results in 239,733.1 metric tons of CO₂ emissions.

⁷⁸ https://www.4air.aero/carbon-calculator?gclid=EAJalQobChMIkN6m_-PqgwMVmCvUAR1MXg-7EAAYASAAEgJZAPD_BwE. Retrieved January 11, 2024.

⁷⁹ https://www.boeing.com/commercial/aeromagazine/articles/qtr_4_08/article_05_3.html and <https://executiveflyers.com/how-much-fuel-does-a-plane-use/>. Retrieved January 14, 2024.

⁸⁰ <https://www.lawa.org/lawa-investor-relations/statistics-for-lax/volume-of-air-traffic>. Retrieved December 28, 2023.

⁸¹ The 51,971 air taxi, general aviation and military flights active at Hollywood-Burbank Airport in 2022 were not factored into this calculation.

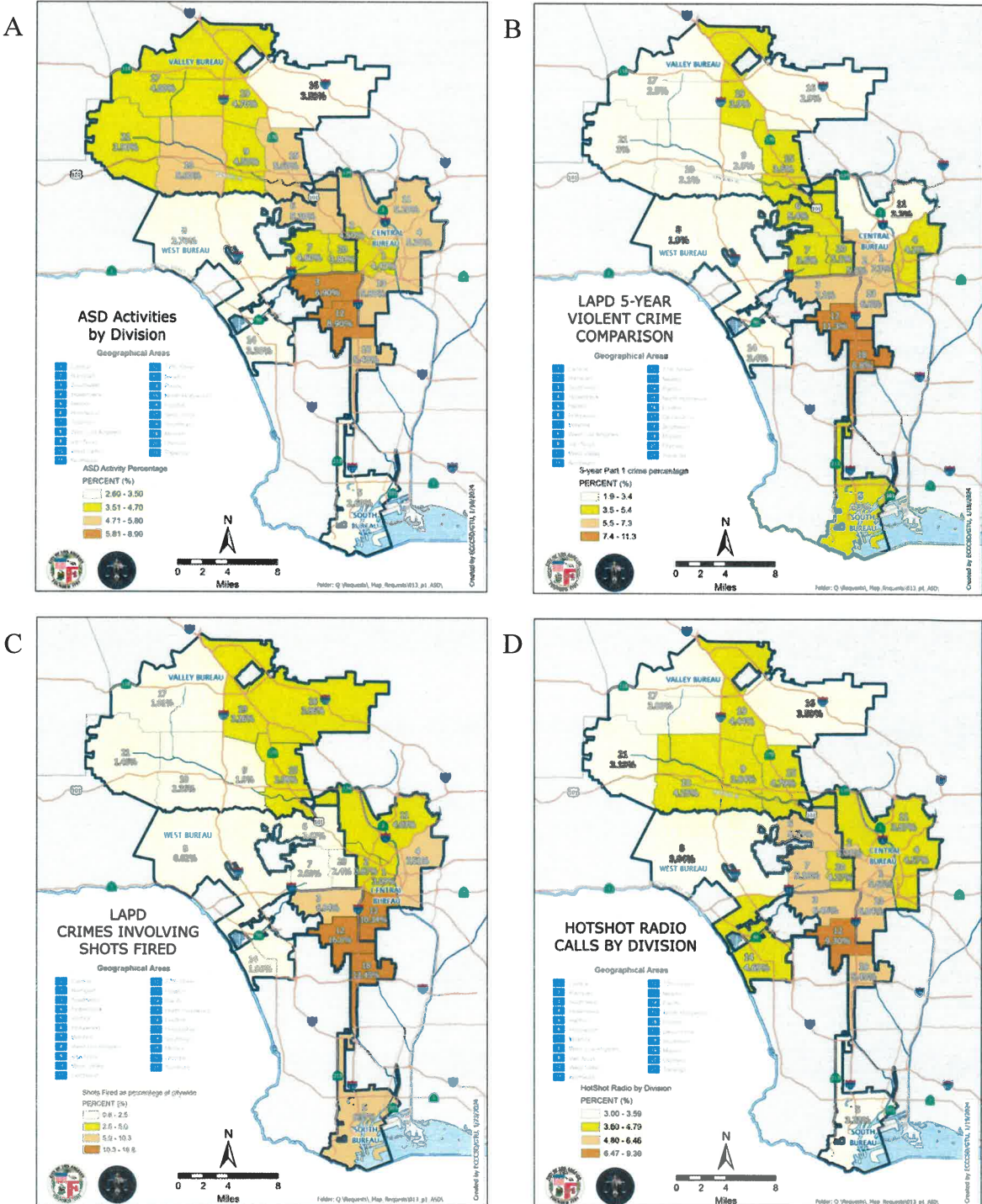
⁸² <https://www.hollywoodburbankairport.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Stats-12-2022.pdf>. Retrieved January 14, 2024.

⁸³ <https://www.iflyvny.com/airport-facts/general-description>. Retrieved December 28, 2023.

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ADDENDUM E

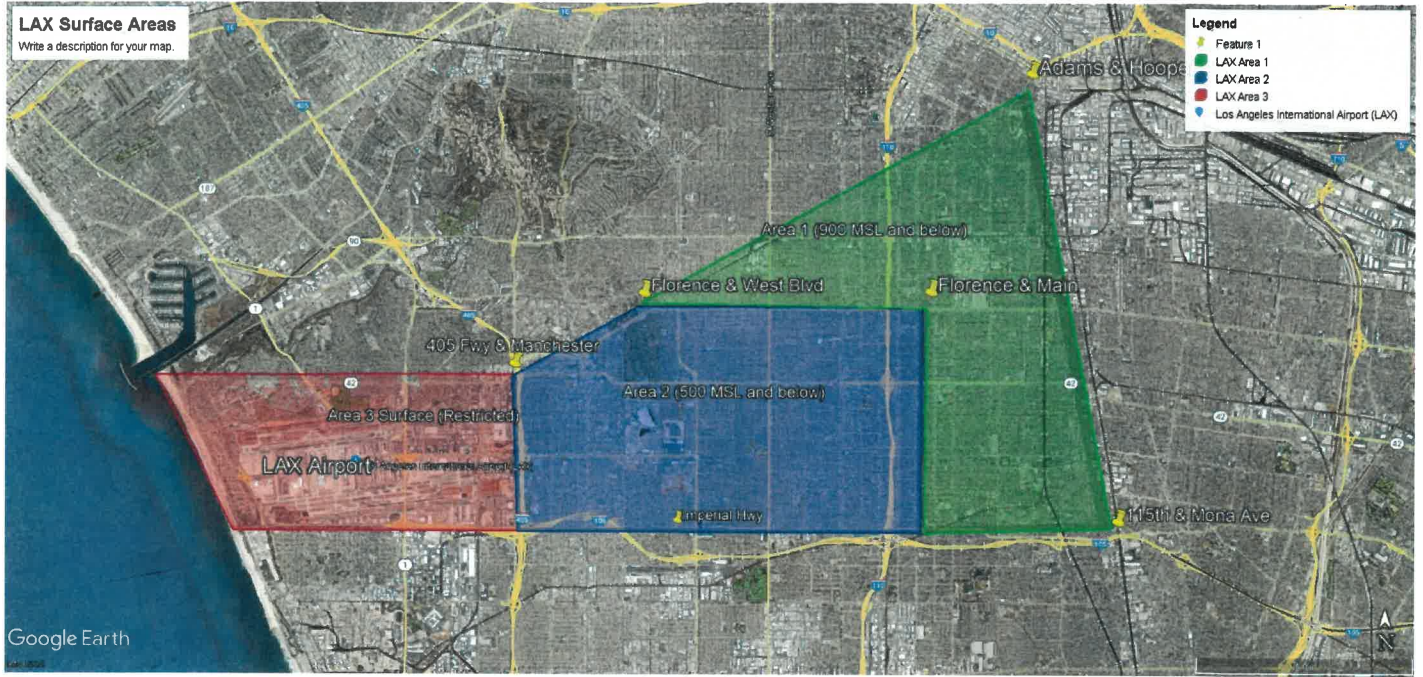
These maps reflect (A) ASD time spent over the 21 patrol divisions in comparison to (B) Part I violent crime, (C) shots fired and (D) "hotshot" radio calls (referenced in pages 12-16).



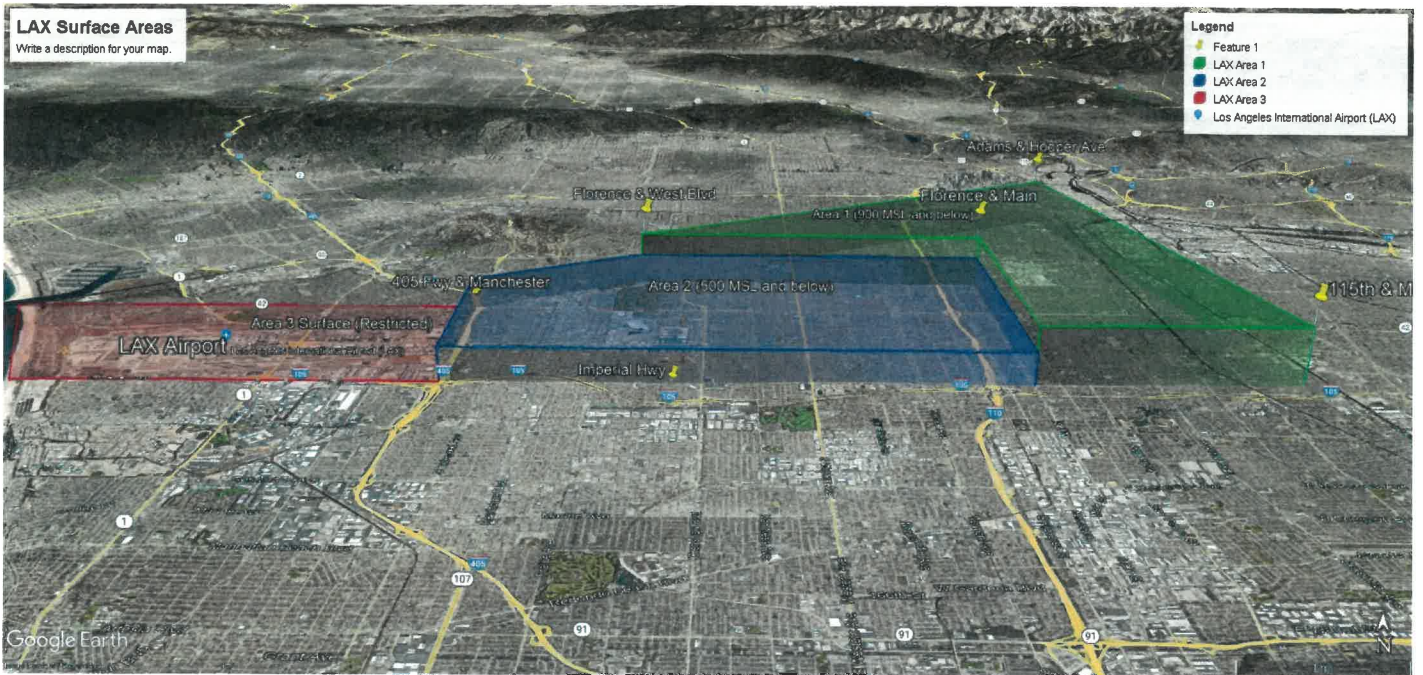
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ADDENDUM F

LAX Flight Restrictions: Area 1 is Restricted (No Navigation). Areas 2 and 3 limit flights to 500 and 900 foot elevations, respectively (our airships must stay at or below those elevations).



Overhead View



Lateral View – Looking North