



The Police Commission

CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

March 19, 2026

Chief Derrick Lew
Chief of Police

Dear Chief Lew:

At the meeting of the Police Commission on Wednesday, March 18, 2026 the following resolution was adopted:

RESOLUTION 26-19

APPROVAL TO ADOPT REVISED DEPARTMENT GENERAL ORDER 5.08 "PLAINCLOTHES, NON-UNIFORMED, AND UNDERCOVER OFFICERS" WITH A FORTY-FIVE (45) BUSINESS DAY IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD; _____

RESOLVED, that the Police Commission hereby approves Department General Order 5.08, "Plainclothes, Non-Uniformed, and Undercover Officers" with a forty-five (45) business day implementation period.

AYES: Commissioners Tekkey, Scott, Leung, Elias, Vice President Benedicto and President Clay
EXCUSED: Commissioner Yee

Very truly yours,

Sergeant Stacy Youngblood
Secretary
San Francisco Police Commission

1211/sr

cc: Assistant Chief N. Jones
Manager A. Steeves/PDD
G. Rosalejos/WDU

C. DON CLAY
President
KEVIN BENEDICTO
Vice President
CINDY ELIAS
Commissioner
LARRY YEE
Commissioner
W.S. WILSON LEUNG
Commissioner
MATTIE SCOTT
Commissioner
PRATIBHA TEKKEY
Commissioner
Sergeant Stacy Youngblood
Secretary

Plainclothes, Non-Uniformed, and Undercover Officers

5.08.01 PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide operational guidelines and tactical considerations for members who are not wearing a Department uniform (DGO 10.01, *Uniform and Equipment*). Members are reminded that there are unique advantages and risks associated with taking enforcement action while not in uniform.

5.08.02 DEFINITIONS

- **Non-Uniformed Member** – A sworn member who is not wearing a SFPD uniform while on-duty. Non-uniformed members are typically investigators or perform administrative functions for the Department and do not actively participate in enforcement actions.
- **Plainclothes Member** – A sworn member who is assigned to participate in planned operations and enforcement in a non-uniformed capacity. These assignments have a reasonable expectation of conducting enforcement action.
- **Undercover Member** – A sworn member that needs to conceal themselves or change their identity to carry out their assignment. Sworn members working undercover are not planned participants in enforcement action.

5.08.03 POLICY

Plainclothes, non-uniformed, and undercover members shall identify themselves as Police Officers when enforcement action is taken, be properly equipped, and ensure their actions align with all Department policies.

5.08.04 ENFORCEMENT PROCEDURES

A. Plainclothes and Non-Uniform Enforcement Operations

1. When taking enforcement action, plainclothes members shall:
 - a. Verbally identify themselves as police officers.
 - b. Display their Department-issued star on their outermost garment.
 - c. Activate Body Worn Camera (BWC), unless granted an exemption based on the task/operation, such as if activation could compromise the identity of confidential informants and undercover operatives. If BWCs are not activated, rationale must be documented.
 - i. For surveillance operations, plainclothes members must have their BWC accessible unless a supervisor reasonably determines otherwise.

2. Enforcement plans should pre-designate an arrest team with sworn members wearing uniforms or clearly identifiable law enforcement gear (e.g. jacket or vest carrier with POLICE lettering, etc.) with their department-issued star.
 - a. Plainclothes members may act as the arrest team for tactical/safety reasons or in exigent circumstances. Rationale must be documented.
 - i. Pre-planned actions shall be approved by the Lieutenant.
 - ii. Sergeants may approve the use of plainclothes members in the field for spontaneous events or exigent circumstances.
 - iii. If non-uniformed members make initial contact with a subject to be arrested, members wearing uniforms or clearly identifiable law enforcement gear shall immediately converge and support the non-uniformed members in arresting the subject(s).

B. Undercover Enforcement Operations

1. Undercover members are generally exempt from wearing BWC, however they should have their Department-approved firearm and appropriate police identification near their person, unless prior authorization has been granted by the member's Deputy Chief.

C. Vehicle Stops

1. Plainclothes, non-uniformed, and undercover members shall not initiate vehicle stops solely for infractions.
2. Plainclothes, non-uniformed, and undercover members may initiate vehicle stops in the following circumstances (if operating a vehicle equipped with a forward-facing red light and siren) when:
 - a. There is reasonable suspicion that an occupant has committed, is committing, or is about to commit a misdemeanor or felony.
 - b. There is probable cause to arrest an occupant for a misdemeanor or felony.
 - c. There is probable cause to believe that evidence of a misdemeanor or felony is in the vehicle or the vehicle itself is evidence.
 - d. An occupant or owner is on probation, parole, or supervised release with a warrantless search condition.
 - e. Immediate action is needed to protect life or property (e.g. driving under the influence).
3. When initiating vehicle stops, plainclothes, non-uniform, and undercover members shall notify Dispatch and request a marked backup unit as soon as practical.

5.08.05 CROWD CONTROL

- A. Plainclothes, non-uniformed, and undercover members shall not be used to make arrests in crowd control situations unless there is reasonable cause to believe there is a danger to life or the possibility of great bodily injury (DGO 8.03, *Crowd Control* and *SFPD Crowd Control Manual*).

5.08.06 EXPOSING FIREARMS

- A.** Plainclothes, non-uniformed, and undercover members shall not knowingly expose weapons in public unless they conspicuously display their Department-issued stars or other clearly identifiable law enforcement gear.
- B.** Plainclothes, non-uniformed, and undercover members should advise Dispatch when deploying with a rifle/shotgun and wear clearly identifiable law enforcement gear, except if there is an imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury as defined in DGO 5.01.

5.08.07 COMPLYING WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS

- A.** If confronted by a uniformed law enforcement officer, plainclothes, non-uniformed, and undercover members shall immediately identify themselves as a police officer, provide appropriate identification, and comply with all commands of the uniformed officer.

5.08.08 OUT-OF-COUNTY OPERATIONS

- A.** Outside jurisdictions shall be notified (local Watch Commander or Dispatch) when members arrive in an outside jurisdiction to conduct stationary/static surveillance or enforcement action.
- B.** Members shall notify their direct supervisor of any out-of-county surveillance or enforcement action.
- C.** Members are encouraged to include local law enforcement in planned operations and to have communications with local law enforcement units operating in the area.

5.08.09 DUTIES OF SUPERVISORS

- A.** When practical, supervisors should notify the on-duty Platoon Commander(s) of affected district(s) in which plainclothes enforcement action is occurring.
- B.** Supervisors should ensure that the Department of Emergency Management is notified of enforcement actions.
- C.** Supervisors shall ensure a written operation plan is prepared for any planned enforcement action and that all team members are briefed on the plan.
 - 1.** If a verbal plan is developed which modifies the written operations plan, the name of the briefing supervisor shall be documented.

5.08.10 EXCEPTIONS

- A.** Deputy Chiefs may approve deviations from this policy for specific units, operations, or events. Approved deviations shall be documented.

- B.** Members assigned to the Mayor's Detail/Dignitary Protection are exempt from this policy but shall be guided by their specific Unit Orders.

POST M&C