**Policy Section 1.0 - Social Media - Investigations**

**Statement of Intent**

[This statement articulates the importance of establishing guidelines for appropriate use of online accounts, services, and software for the purpose of online criminal investigations. It should be brief and reflect the mission statement of your organization. Consider borrowing language from existing policies related to appropriate investigative tactics.]

**1.1 Definitions**

[If not addressed elsewhere in the section]

**Browser –** Software which translates various forms of internet code into human understandable formats including, but not limited to, plain text, graphic images, and animations.

**Private** – Content is private when transmitted or conveyed in a manner that shows reasonable measures and intent to limit access to specific individuals, and where it is reasonable to expect that only those individuals will have access.

**Public** – Content is public when shared on a site or service in a manner wherein a reasonable person would expect that it is accessible to a broad or non-specific audience.

**Post** – Submitting information to the Internet or a social media site.

**Site** – A page or series of pages hosted on the internet.

**Social Media** – Various online platforms, sites, and services facilitating the “posting” or sharing of information on the internet. Examples of social media content include text, images, audio, and video.

**1.2 Appropriate Use**

Investigative accounts and tools will be used for agency purposes only. Investigative social media profiles, software, and services will not be used for personal purposes. Agency resources will be used in compliance with local, state, and federal law. Personal equipment, services, and accounts will not be used for investigative purposes.

Investigations will abide by all legal restrictions relating to private vs. public data and consistent lawful search and seizure. Where required by law, legal orders will be obtained from the appropriate magistrate and/or jurisdictional authority.

**1.3 Approval Process**

Social media accounts and online identities used in an investigative capacity will be reviewed and approved by the unit supervisor to ensure they are within policy. Ongoing casework will be periodically evaluated by the unit supervisor for compliance with agency policies and investigative best practices.

**1.4 Training**

Personnel will only participate in the creation and use of investigative social media accounts after successfully completing an approved Covert Online Investigations training course. Unit supervisors are responsible for ensuring that all personnel utilizing investigative technologies are provided with appropriate training and supervision.

**1.5 Retention/Audit**

Data obtained during online investigations is handled and stored per the agencies existing digital evidence and retention policies. Where operational constraints necessitate unique data management procedures, the unit supervisor will review, approve, and log any non-standard measures along with a written justification.

All operational documentation and investigative logs are subject to review by the Office of the Inspector General [or appropriate body of oversight].

**1.6 Agency Forms**

* Authorization & Training Verification – Covert Online Investigations
* Unit Compliance Log – Online Investigations

**1.7 Acknowledgement of Technological Advancement**

The state of the internet and social media technologies evolve rapidly, and it must be acknowledged that the pertinence of overly specific policy will limit the effectiveness of said policy. It is for these reasons that appropriate and responsible use, rather than specific products or technologies, are the foundation of this section.

**1.8 Revision History**

*\*Legacy versions of this policy which are typically presented in reverse chronological order.*

Rev. 19.32 [Link to official archive if applicable] [Date of inception]-[Date Rescinded]

**1.9 Appendix**

[Appendices are used for informational material that is helpful, but not directly related to the implementation of the policy. These can be references to related policies/procedures or case law providing the foundation for investigative best practices.]