JOINT TASK FORCE HEAVY RADIO ETIQUETTE STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

Welcome to Joint Task Force Heavy, you have the distinct honor of having the opportunity of flying with the best of the best that our U.S. Armed Forces, and NATO Allies have to offer. Congratulations, the real work starts now..

As all pilots in JTF HVY come from a diverse background, this SOP serves to standardize and streamline radio communications etiquette across Branch and Country of Service. The purpose behind this standardization is to provide clear, concise operational information transfer under disparate conditions, across organizational and cultural divides. While everyone is certain they way they do it “back home” works just fine, this is how we do it here.

Standard Radio Transmission Format: “Hey you, it’s me, this is where I am, and this is what I want.”

All initial calls whether to Airfield based Air Traffic Control (ATC), Airborne Early Warning (AEW) / Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) / Joint Terminal Attack Controller (JTAC), or inbound to an uncontrolled field on the Common Traffic Advisory Frequency (CTAF) shall be in this format.

Examples: “Al Dhafra Tower. Springfield11, Twentyseven miles north of the field, inbound full stop”

“Overlord, Springfield11, established in CAP Zone NOBEL ONE, Request Picture”

“Al Ain Area Traffic, Springfield11, single A-10, thirteen miles south of the field inbound, Straight in Runway Zero One, Full Stop.”

Mandatory Readbacks: A Mandatory Readback is any control instruction given a pilot that requires a verbal repetition back to the issuing controller.

Any control instruction that affects the direction , speed, or altitude of your flight shall be read back. This includes:

- heading assignments;
- altitude assignments;
- speed assignments;
- runway assignments
- altimeter settings (because altimeter accuracy influences your aircraft's altitude;)
- rate of climb or descent assignments;
- route changes, including holding pattern instructions;
- approach and landing clearances;
- takeoff and departure clearances;
- any hold short instructions
- taxi instructions.

Controlled airfields

At controlled airfields pilots shall request the following and await instructions from ATC. Readback instructions issued by ATC to confirm correct transmissions in accordance to the above. Follow ATC instructions as closely as able, if unable to comply with an instruction advise ATC as soon a practicable.

Departure

Request…

On Startup: do a radio check as soon as you have power to your radios.

Taxi: Once Started, pilots shall request taxi clearance to a runway via specified taxiways.

Ground charts and airport information are available in the ingame kneeboard.

Departure: Once holding short of the runway, Change to the Tower Frequency and advise ATC when ready for departure.

Landing

Call for…

Inbound: No later than 15NM away from the airport contact ATC with your position and intentions, you may receive pattern entry instructions, or be instructed to continue inbound.

Report: ATC may instruct you to report when crossing a certain point or when in a specific portion of the pattern.
Clearance: Readback your landing, touch and go, option, etc clearance in accordance with the above.

Detailed Examples:

Controlled Airfields

Departures

For Controlled Airfields general rules change quite a bit. If you have any special concerns or questions contact tower on radio and ask what you have got to ask. At worst you will get a standby call and you will get an answer after the ATC is done juggling trafic for a bit.

Here is a detailed example scenario for a flight of two F/A-18Cs Callsign Witch 3-1 and Witch 3-2 on the Ramp at Al Dhafra.

Radio transmissions by Witch 3-1 are blue.

Radio transmissions by ATC(Al Dhafra tower) are orange

As soon as practicable tune in to ATC frequency and do a radio check. Frequency is available in HVY Documentation

Al Dhafra tower, Witch 3-1, radio check.

Witch 3-1, Al Dhafra tower has you loud and clear.

Going forward endure you readback vital information. This ensures ATC has been understood correctly and allows for any necessary corrections. **Do not be afraid to ask**

a question if you do not understand. If you require the last transmission to be repeated the phraseology is **“Say again”**

When you are ready and started up call for the tower to get a taxi clearance.

Al Dhafra tower, Witch 3-1, flight of two, North Ramp, request taxi.

Witch 3-1 Flight, Al Dhafra tower, runway 13 Left, taxi via the parallel.

Al Dhafra tower, taxi to runway 13 Left via the parallel Witch 3-1 Flight.

Sometimes you will get remarks beyond your original request like traffic or weather information. Make sure you listen closely for those as they can be quite important. When you are holding short of the runway, ATC has not given clearance for takeoff call in and request it.

Al Dhafra tower, Witch 3-1, flight of two, holding short runway 13 Left, ready for departure.

Witch 3-1 Flight, Al Dhafra tower, Runway 13 Left, Cleared for takeoff.

Cleared for takeoff 13 Left, Witch 3-1 Flight.

Once airborne, at the appropriate time you will be given permission to change frequencies.

Arrivals

Now the same flight is RTB and inbound to Al Dhafra for landing.

As always follow ATC instructions as close as possible and readback pertinent information.

First check in on ATC frequency and call inbound. Do this at best no later than 15NM out from the airport to ensure ATC has time to formulate and issue instruction. Inform ATC of any special information such as how many planes are in your flight, low fuel state or possible emergency inbound at this time.

Al Dhafra Tower, Witch 3-1, Flight of two F-18s, 15 miles north of the field, inbound full stop.

Witch 3-1 Flight, Al Dhafra Tower, Roger, continue inbound for the left base runway 13 Left and report 5 miles North.

Left base for Runway 13 Left, report 5 North, Witch 3-1 Flight.

From now on follow ATC instructions.

Al Dhafra Tower Witch 3-1 Flight is 5 North, Left Base Runway 13 Left.

Witch 3-1 Flight, Roger, Runway 13 Left, cleared to land

AWACS / GCI

GCI or Ground Controlled Interception, is an air defence tactic which was developed during World War II. GCI is accomplished through the use of one or more radar stations or other observational stations which are linked to a command communications centre that then guides interceptor aircraft to airborne targets.

Today, GCI has mostly been replaced by Airborne Early Warning and Control (AEW&C) aircraft or more commonly referred to as AWACS (Airborne Warning And Control System). While AEW&C is expensive and vulnerable in comparison to GCI systems, it has a mobility advantage. Most often, in theater, a combination of both systems is often used.

AWACS and AWE&C aircraft are generally speaking larger, modified aircraft with a long-range radar mounted on top. The main radar antenna is either mounted on a turntable housed in a circular rotodome, or long elliptical radome along the dorsal or ventral portion of the fuslage. The radar system can detect, track and identify low-flying aircraft at approximately 370 km (200 nautical miles) and high-level aircraft at much greater distances.

Insofar as communicating with AWACS, be sure to check on and off station when

you tune in or tune out of the AWACS frequency. Confirm AWACS Callsign through your Preflight Mission Briefing,

Flight - “Sealord, Witch 3-1, single flight F18, 10nm North of Al Dhafra, checking in for CAP”

Flight - “Sealord, Witch 3-1, bingo fuel, RTB”

AWACS - “Witch 3-1, Roger, fly heading 100 for 35”

Do not clutter the AWACS frequency with off-topic chatter, use the correct frequencies as stated in mission briefing.

Do not read back a BRA call. Simply acknowledge you received and understood the message by saying your callsign. If you did not understand the transmission, ask AWACS to repeat.

AWACS - “Sealord, Witch 3-1, BRA 100 for 45, Angels 20, flanking”

Flight - “Witch 3-1”

Should you have any questions or comments, please don’t be afraid to ask.