



DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

CHIEF, ARMY MARS  
CHIEF, AIR FORCE MARS  
CHIEF, NAVY-MARINE CORPS MARS

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LETTER OF PROMULGATION

1. The Standard Operating Procedure for Calling and Operating a Voice Net was developed under the direction of the Chiefs of Army, Air Force and Navy-Marine Corps MARS and is promulgated for use by the Army, Air Force and Navy and Marine Corps.
2. Standard Operating Procedure for Calling and Operating a Voice Net is an UNCLASSIFIED, nonregistered publication.
3. Standard Operating Procedure for Calling and Operating a Voice Net will be required for use in all three MARS as of 01 JAN 2008.
4. Standard Operating Procedure for Calling and Operating a Voice Net supersedes the procedures of the following directives:
  - a. Army MARS: Basic Training Course  
Section 2-14-a, 2-14-b, 2-14-c/1, 2-14-c/2-a, 2-14-c/2-b
  - b. Air Force MARS:
    - (1.) Radiotelephone Procedure Guide 01 January 2006.
    - (2.) USAF MARS National HF Voice Operations Guide  
(Transcon) 05 January 2006
  - c. Navy-Marine Corps MARS: NTP 8(D), Chapter 7.
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**U.S. Military Affiliate Radio System (MARS)**  
**Joint Air Force, Army, Navy-Marine Corps**  
**Standard Operating Procedure**  
**for Calling and Operating a Voice Net.**

1. **TERMS AND SUBSTITUTIONS.** The following terms and substitutions will be used throughout this Standard Operating Procedure (SOP):

A1B2 is a sample net designator

NCS is the net control station (this would be substituted with the net control's actual call sign)

FRQ1 represents a frequency designator

AAA, BBB, CCC, etc represent stations on the net.

2. **GENERAL PROCEDURES.**

a. Nets are under the direct and immediate control of the net control station (NCS). The NCS is responsible to maintain net discipline at all times.

b. Alternate Net Control (ANCS): It is often expedient to have a station assigned in advance, or for NCS to designate a station at the start of the net, to serve as ANCS. The NCS could suddenly, and without warning, be gone from the net. It is highly recommended that net managers take into consideration the value of predetermined ANCS assignments.

c. Stations must first be checked into a net before they may conduct any business on the net.

d. Once checked in stations are expected to maintain constant watch on the net, be prepared to respond when called, and be prepared to receive traffic at any time.

e. Superfluous wording must be eliminated from transmissions. Stations are expected to use prescribed procedures at all times. Transmissions shall be short and concise, consistent with clarity.

f. Stations will use only authorized prowords and in accordance with their proper meaning only.

g. No station should expect pleasantries or unnecessary explanations during a directed net.

h. Record traffic must first be listed with the NCS, shall be passed to another station only at the direction of NCS, and only when the net is in directed net status.

i. Stations are expected to remain for the duration of the net unless granted permission by NCS to close down sooner.

### **3. OPENING A NET**

a. Every net has a net designator as determined by such factors as type, administrative level, and location of the net.

b. The net designator not only identifies a specific net, it also serves as a special case of collective call sign representing all stations checked into a net, or wishing to check in.

c. NCS will make sufficient call ups at the start of the net in an effort to capture all the stations wishing to check in.

d. NCS then proceeds with handling listed traffic then any other net business and comments between stations. Training should be conducted as required, or as directed by competent authority. Training will always be done with the net in directed net status.

e. Frequent call ups are important throughout the net.

f. At the designated time the Net Control Station (NCS) will call the net as follows:

(1) Conditions good:

(a) NCS starts the net with a call up by transmitting:

A1B2, A1B2 THIS IS NCS OVER

(b) The net designator is stated twice only in the first call up. This call up serves multiple functions. It announces the net, puts the net in directed net mode, and authorizes stations to transmit for such purposes as checking in and listing traffic.

(c) Stations wishing to check in do so according to the following examples. Many nets have a large number of stations wishing to check in. It is essential that every station, before transmitting, listen carefully to avoid doubling. Key down, state the NCS call sign, let up momentarily to again be sure of no doubling, then complete their transmission if the frequency is clear.

NCS (pause) THIS IS AAA, NO TRAFFIC, OVER  
NCS (pause) THIS IS BBB, ONE ROUTINE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA,  
OVER  
NCS (pause) THIS IS EEE, ONE PRIORITY AAA, ONE ROUTINE NEW  
YORK, OVER  
NCS (pause) THIS IS CCC, REQUEST COMMS BBB, OVER  
NCS (pause) THIS IS GGG, ONE ROUTINE AAA, OVER

(d) NCS must acknowledge all check ins. This should be done in the order stations checked in. NCS transmits:

AAA, BBB, EEE, CCC, GGG THIS IS NCS, ROGER, OUT

(e) If NCS did not fully hear a station, example CCC, NCS withholds acknowledging that station, finishes the remainder of the acknowledgements, then transmits:

CCC THIS IS NCS, SAY AGAIN OVER

(f) If NCS heard a station but did not hear the call sign, or only part of the call sign, NCS transmits an unknown station call up. Note that only stations who attempted check in, but were not acknowledged are authorized to transmit at this time. NCS transmits:

UNKNOWN STATION THIS IS NCS, OVER.

(g) If necessary NCS may call another station on the net to relay an unknown station's transmission.

## (2) Conditions Poor

(a) When conditions are poor NCS will transmit the call up using words twice, without use of the proword WORDS TWICE. e.g.

A1B2, A1B2 THIS IS NCS, NCS OVER

(b) Upon hearing the call up with words twice stations checking in will do so as under Conditions Good above by transmitting:

NCS THIS IS AAA, NO TRAFFIC OVER

(c) Stations will not normally use WORDS TWICE unless the station believes WORDS TWICE is necessary to help assure NCS receives his/her check in, or station is directed by NCS to do so. For example, NCS has a hard time hearing a station with call sign beginning with C. NCS transmits:

UNKNOWN STATION, UNKNOWN STATION THIS IS NCS, NCS WORDS TWICE,  
WORDS TWICE, OVER

(d) CCC having not heard his check in being recognized transmits:

NCS, NCS THIS IS CCC, CCC, NO TRAFFIC, NO TRAFFIC, OVER

(e) Note that the prowords THIS IS and OVER are not spoken twice.

(f) If a station has traffic to list under these conditions rather than list all the destinations, he/she should simply state the number and precedence of message(s). NCS can later obtain the destinations, or ask another station to obtain that traffic listing. Example, BBB has 1 priority Austin Texas, 1 routine for AAA, 1 routine for New York City. Under hard to hear conditions BBB would check in as follows:

NCS THIS IS BBB, 1 PRIORITY, 2 ROUTINE, OVER

(g) NCS will acknowledge check ins in the same way as outlined under Conditions Good above. Call signs will not be transmitted twice unless NCS deems it expedient to do so.

### (3) Limiting Check-ins

(a) It may be desirable on larger nets to limit check ins by type or geographic area. This must be approved for each net or series of nets (e.g. all Region ECOM nets). by the respective director or Chief MARS (authority to approve may be delegated if authorized by the respective Chief MARS).

(b) These check in limiters shall not be used except where a large number of check ins is anticipated and there use serves to help reduce doubling, save air time, and minimize confusion. Their use, when authorized, is not mandatory, unless so prescribed by competent authority. They exist as a tool to aid NCS in maintaining net control and discipline. Only authorized phrases shall be used to modify the call up process. Each subsequent call up may use a different limiter, such as calling for stations one state at a time. Use of a limiter does not require that NCS always use limiters on every call up. This should be based on a logical balance of the extra air time required versus the benefit of reducing problems.

(c) the limiting call up would be:

A1B2, A1B2 THIS IS NCS, (insert phrase here) OVER

(d) The following are authorized phrased to limit check-ins and would replace the "insert phrase here" in the above call up.

- STATIONS WITH RECORD TRAFFIC ONLY
- STATIONS WITH PRIORITY TRAFFIC ONLY (this would include any traffic of higher precedence. May be used in combination with a geographic area, example DADE COUNTY FLORIDA STATIONS WITH PRIORITY TRAFFIC ONLY)
- ALL NEW YORK ARMY MARS STAFF ONLY (substitute Navy or AF as appropriate. Replace "NEW YORK" with any logical MARS administrative or operational zone such as Region Five, or Central Area)
- ALL ALABAMA STATIONS (substitute ALABAMA with any generally understood geographic area including, but not limited to, state, county, borough, or city).
- ALL STAFF REGION ONE (this could be further limited by requesting only ECOM staff, only training staff, or any logical limitation of station type); or,
- by use of a collective call sign if that is most expedient.

#### **4. FREE AND DIRECTED NET STATUS**

a. All nets will always begin in directed net status. This means every station must have NCS permission to transmit. Record traffic may only be passed when the net is in directed net status.

b. After traffic has been handled, and while the net is still in directed net status, any necessary or prescribed training shall be conducted by NCS, designated training staff, or state, area, or region director.

c. After all traffic, training, and net business has been handled NCS may put the net into Free Net status if Free Net is authorized. Free Net means stations may contact each other directly without prior permission of NCS. A station may exchange informal comments with another station with the following limitations:

(1) All comments must, in some way, relate to MARS business or the mission of MARS;

(2) Comments need to be brief, consistent with clarity.

(3) Stations must pause between turnovers in transmission to allow for another station to break in.

(4) NCS may interrupt an exchange at any time and stop the exchange by calling a directed net. No explanation of NCS action in this regard is expected and none need be given.

## **5. ABBREVIATED CALL SIGNS**

a. After the first call up, and at his/her discretion, NCS may authorize use of Abbreviated call signs provided such use is permitted on this net.

b. Full call signs must be used upon initial check in and any time NCS directs use of full call signs. When abbreviated call signs are authorized full call signs remain an acceptable option.

c. NCS may, at his/her discretion, change back to full call signs at any time. Examples of changing abbreviated call sign authorizations.

A1B2 THIS IS NCS, ABBREVIATED CALL SIGNS AUTHORIZED, OUT

A1B2 THIS IS NCS, USE FULL CALL SIGNS, OUT

## **5. CHANGING NET CONTROL STATION**

a. Occasionally it may be necessary or desirable to transfer net control to another station. This could be for a brief period or for the duration of the net. Assuming CCC is NCS and wishes to transfer control to AAA:

AAA THIS IS CCC, ASSUME CONTROL, OVER  
CCC THIS IS AAA, ROGER OUT.

AAA is now NCS. AAA will immediately make a call up  
A1B2 THIS IS AAA, OVER

(1) This notifies the net AAA has assumed control, puts the net in directed mode, and authorizes stations to check in or otherwise contact NCS.

(2) Variations could include some instruction from NCS to AAA such as:

AAA THIS IS CCC, ASSUME CONTROL FOR 10 MINUTES, OVER, or  
AAA THIS IS CCC, ASSUME CONTROL UNTIL (state a time), OVER

(3) When CCC returns and wishes to resume control CCC will, at a call up or on a free net, transmit:

AAA THIS IS CCC I ASSUME CONTROL, OVER

(4) At this point AAA will acknowledge CCC and notify CCC of any changes in net status, new traffic listings, traffic passed, and stations that checked in or closed down while AAA was net control.

(5) CCC will acknowledge this information then make a call up. (It is never acceptable for CCC to tell AAA, "I was monitoring the entire time and have all the information." This does not confirm to AAA that CCC in fact does have all the information.)

b. Loss of NCS

(1) It may happen that NCS suddenly, and without warning, disappears from the net. This could be due to equipment failure, power outage, sudden change in propagation, or any number of reasons. If an alternate NCS (ANCS) has been assigned in advance and he or she suspects something has happened to NCS, that station will first attempt to contact NCS. If no contact is made ANCS will ASSUME CONTROL, make a call up, and proceed as outlined above.

(2) If no ANCS has been designated any station who hears the net well shall assume ANCS duties.

**7. PASSING TRAFFIC**

a. When ready NCS will call stations to pass their traffic based on the precedence of each message and the availability of addressee(s) or another station to relay that traffic. NCS will then direct the holding station on how to proceed.

Example A:

AAA THIS IS NCS, CALL BBB PASS ONE PRIORITY SAA OUT

BBB THIS IS AAA, ONE PRIORITY OVER

Assuming BBB copies AAA well, he sends

AAA THIS IS BBB, OVER

THIS IS AAA MESSAGE, RELAY PRIORITY (continue with the message header and text, pausing approximately ever 20 seconds to allow for a station with higher precedence traffic to break in.)

AAA ends his/her transmission with

OVER,

or in the case where there are additional messages to send to this station,

MORE TO FOLLOW, OVER

Assuming BBB copied the message completely and does not need repetitions he sends

THIS IS BBB, ROGER OUT

Or, to accept another message

THIS IS BBB, ROGER OVER

Example B:

If BBB does not copy well he must notify AAA of the problem using correct radio check prowords

AAA THIS IS BBB, WEAK READABLE, OVER

Or

AAA THIS IS BBB, UNREADABLE, OVER

#### b. Breaking the Net

(1) A station may interrupt the current flow of communications on a net if he or she has a communication of higher importance which must be conveyed as quickly as possible. Such communications includes:

(a) record traffic of a higher precedence than the traffic being passed;

(b) non-record traffic communication for one or more stations that is urgent, time sensitive, and may impact the safety of persons or property.

(2) The station wishing to break the net should wait for the next natural pause in the communication currently taking place; preferably waiting for the end of that communication.

(3) The content of the breaking station's communication should be the determining factor for establishing urgency, not simply that the station has, for example, a PRIORITY precedence message and a ROUTINE message is currently being sent.

(4) Breaking the net is a rare event. Normally, waiting a minute or two is not going to make a difference. If the breaking station knows the current communication is lengthy or several messages are going to be sent then interrupting may be necessary.

EXAMPLE:

When a station has determined it is essential to break the net he or she shall wait for a pause in the current transmission. He or she will then transmit the precedence of his/her traffic three times, e.g.:

PRIORITY, PRIORITY, PRIORITY (pause) NCS, THIS IS AAA, OVER  
(The pause is to see that the other station has heard and is not continuing his or her transmission.)

NCS will transmit:

AAA, THIS IS NCS, OVER

AAA will then list his or her traffic or reason for breaking the net.

If it is evident that NCS does not hear the breaking station any station on the net may relay by calling NCS and advising him or her of the breaking station. This should normally be one of the stations being interrupted.

If NCS hears the breaking station, but it appears the station currently engaged in communications did not, NCS will acknowledge the breaking station by transmitting

AAA, THIS IS NCS, WAIT OUT

NCS will then take steps to regain control of the net.

c. Requesting Radio Check

(1) If a station first wishes to determine how well another station hears him/her the station asks for a radio check.

AAA THIS IS BBB, RADIO CHECK OVER.

(2) If AAA copies BBB well AAA will reply

BBB THIS IS AAA, LOUD AND CLEAR, OVER

(3) Only authorized radio check phrases will be used. The use of ROGER to mean loud and clear is not an adequate response

since ROGER simply means "I copied your transmission correctly". It does not adequately state the condition.

## 8. CLOSING DOWN

a. Stations checking into a net are normally expected to be able to remain on the net for its duration, except in the case of on-going ECOM nets of long duration. Any station wishing to check out prior to end of net will call NCS, during a call up or on a free net, to request permission.

b. NCS may authorize the station to secure if NCS believes there will be no further need for that station. EEE wishes to leave the net.

NCS THIS IS EEE, REQUEST TO CLOSE DOWN, OVER  
EEE THIS IS NCS, CLOSE DOWN, OUT

c. NCS may acknowledge the request, but delay authorization.

EEE THIS IS NCS, WAIT, OUT

d. In the latter case EEE's request has been acknowledged, but is not yet approved. NCS will need to call EEE back to authorize his closing down.

e. Stations may request a time to close down when they initially check in.

NCS THIS IS EEE, NO TRAFFIC, REQUEST TO CLOSE DOWN AT 1520Z,  
OVER

f. When acknowledging check ins NCS may require EEE to wait for future authorization or he may grant the permission at that time.

EEE THIS IS NCS, CLOSE DOWN AT 1520Z, OUT

g. Stations who have listed traffic during a check in shall not be given permission to close down until a disposition has been reached regarding all traffic listed by that station. Traffic must be passed to another station, delivered to the addressees, or the station agrees to take it to another net.

h. At the appointed time for a net to end, and NCS is satisfied that all traffic has been handled, NCS will close the net as follows:

A1B2 THIS IS NCS, CLOSE DOWN, OUT

i. It is imperative that NCS be aware whether a net is authorized to continue on past the designated end time. If it is not, NCS must arrange with stations holding traffic to dispose of that traffic on another net. This must be done well enough in advance of net end time to adequately take care of this business.

j. In some cases NCS may be authorized to close down a net before it's designated end time. For example, B1C3 net is assigned a one hour slot, but is authorized to close down after 30 minutes of operation if there is no further traffic or business to handle.

k. Once the net is closed down no further transmissions are authorized.