VIRTUAL WASHINGTON ARTCC AND UNITED STATES NAVY VIRTUAL LETTER OF AGREEMENT

SUBJECT: COORDINATION   **EFFECTIVE: 1 August 2025**

1. PURPOSE. This Letter of Agreement (LOA) establishes the procedures and mutual responsibilities between Virtual Washington ARTCC (vZDC) and United States Navy Virtual (USNv) regarding USNv operations within the ZDC Area of Responsibility (AOR), to include scheduling and activation of Special Use Airspace (SUA), specific phraseology for SUA entry, return-to-base coordination, release of airspace to non-National Airspace System facilities, and air traffic control service provisions by USNv personnel operating within the ZDC AOR on the VATSIM network.

2. SCOPE. This Letter of Agreement is in effect for USNv and all Virtual Special Operations Association (VSOA) partner organizations IAW *VATSIM-POL-Special Operations para 8.2, Partnership Categories*, and *8.4, Agreements*. This Agreement prescribes the procedures for operations conducted within the ZDC AOR for all pilots and all controllers, both home and visiting, of vZDC. The procedures herein ensure compliance with all vZDC, VATUSA, and VATSIM policies and the VATSIM Code of Conduct.

3. DISCLAIMER. This publication is for use on the simulated VATSIM network. This agreement and its associated organizations have no affiliation or association with any Federal Aviation Administration air traffic control facility or Department of Defense organization.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES.

   a. vZDC retains sole jurisdiction over all controlled airspace delegated to ZDC by VATUSA and VATSIM and will maintain oversight and operational integrity of all air traffic within the Washington ARTCC airspace. Special Use Airspace (SUA), to include Air Traffic Control Assigned Airspace (ATCAA), Military Operations Area (MOA), Restricted Area (R), and Warning Area (W), is controlled by ZDC and may be delegated to authorized VSOA pilots and facilities in accordance with this agreement.

   b. vZDC will release special use airspace to VSOA pilots, and other authorized operations, upon request and when in accordance with this agreement.

   c. VSOA pilots will comply with all standard air traffic procedures for operations on the VATSIM network, including the VATSIM Special Operations Policy.

   d. USNv controllers with an S3 rating will be accepted by vZDC on the vZDC visiting controller roster and have all privileges and responsibilities as prescribed in vZDC policy. This includes the staffing of any non-Tier 1 facility within vZDC. All facilities within ZDC are part of the National Airspace System and any controller staffing any facility within ZDC is responsible for providing air traffic service to all users, regardless of organizational affiliation.

e. USNv controllers with an S2 rating will be accepted by vZDC, when authorized under VATUSA's S2 Visiting Controller exception policy, and included in the vZDC visiting controller roster.

f. All controllers, regardless of assigned organization, will comply with the requirements of this LOA and all applicable vZDC policy governing facility and air traffic control operations.

g. VSOA pilots are expected to remain in the confines of the cleared SUA until clearance from the airspace from the controlling agency is received. vZDC will provide standard IFR separation from the SUA boundary for all non-participating aircraft. VSOA pilots will not cancel IFR when complete with working airspace if their intent is to return directly to base as this will cause an even higher workload on the controller.

h. vZDC will provide traffic alerts to the lead aircraft when non-participating aircraft not under the control of vZDC enter active SUA. Non-participating IFR aircraft will be issued routing or vectors to always remain clear of all SUA. Traffic alerts will be broadcast on the assigned working frequency.

i. vZDC will provide a designated mission working frequency for aircraft to monitor while operating in activated SUA. The frequency will be managed by ZDC/FE within vNAS Data Admin.

j. VSOA partner organizations are responsible for deconfliction of missions operating within the same SUA. vZDC will clear any aircraft requesting access to any SUA as scheduled or as real time requests permit. vZDC will not manage or validate any shared airspace agreements.

k. vZDC will provide facilities support in vNAS and AFV as permitted by VATSIM and as directed by the ZDC/ATM.

l. vZDC will provide an SUA scheduling module on the vzdc.org website. Access to the scheduling module will require use of the pilot's VATSIM network credential. VSOA will ensure its organization's pilots comply with any VSOA applicable policies for use of SUA.

5. PROCEDURES.

a. Flight Plans. VSOA pilots will complete an IFR flight plan for all operations regardless of the planned type of flight. This process is equivalent to completing the DD-175 or DD-1801.

1. VFR Flights. For those aircraft that are planning a VFR flight, the flight plan remarks should include "VFR FP" and the vZDC controller will amend the flight plan to VFR (*note: this procedure ensures the more complicated data associated with these operations is communicated to controllers to minimize on frequency coordination requirements*). Pilots will include routing and use the remarks field to communicate any nonstandard or operationally specific requests.

2. Planned SUA. For aircraft planning to activate scheduled SUA, include the assigned mission number in the remarks. For aircraft seeking to activate unscheduled SUA, include the specific SUA complex sought in the remarks (i.e. W72A). *Note: Unscheduled SUA is that airspace requested real time on the frequency with a vZDC controller. Any airspace reservation made through vzdc.org, including when less than 24 hours, is considered scheduled for the purpose of this*

agreement. Pilots will remain on their assigned squawk unless instructed otherwise by ATC. It is preferred that aircraft complete these operations on an IFR flight plan.

      b. SUA Scheduling. VSOA pilots are encouraged to schedule any planned use of SUA within ZDC. Scheduling is accomplished through www.vzdc.org and may be completed by any member authorized by their respective VSOA to make reservations.

      1. More than 24 hours scheduling. Airspace scheduled at least 24 hours in advance will be accommodated by all vZDC controllers.

      2. Less than 24 hours scheduling. Airspace scheduled less than 24 hours in advance, to include real time requests for activation, will be accommodated workload permitting by the working controller. Pilots are still encouraged to schedule even less than 24 hours prior to receive a mission number and aid the controller in airspace coordination.

      c. SUA Activation. Activation of SUA will be accommodated by the controller responsible for the airspace the SUA is contained within. Scheduled SUA will be accommodated with other traffic. Unscheduled SUA will be accommodated workload permitting and at controller's discretion. Pilots filed to work SUA will be assumed to be proceeding from the departure point to their filled SUA with no intermediate stop unless otherwise coordinated. ZDC will coordinate with ZJX and ZNY for requested warning area airspace within their respective AORs. ZDC will indicate in the airspace clearance if the airspace in the adjacent facilities is not released. Unless specified as not available, the airspace clearance assumes the entirety of the airspace is granted as cleared.

      1. Departure Release (different controllers). When the controller providing ATC Tower (ATCT) duties is not the controller that will manage the SUA, the ATCT controller, or controller providing ATCT services, will notify the controller working the airspace the SUA is contained within, or the overlying ZDC sector if unknown, that an aircraft has a clearance for SUA and expected time of departure, and will subsequently notify the controller when the aircraft has a departure release.

      2. Activation Time. Controllers will show airspace active no later than once the departure release notification is received. *Note: controllers will not begin activation of airspace until initial communications with the aircraft taking the airspace has occurred (i.e. airspace will not be activated simply because it was scheduled).*

      d. SUA Clearance. Clearance will be given to aircraft by the controller that is responsible for the airspace the SUA is contained within regardless of which organization will serve as airspace monitor. If a Military Radar Unit (MRU), Airborne Radar Unit (ARU), or Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) service will be utilized, the controller will release the SUA to the controlling agency upon request; however, aircraft must still receive an airspace clearance prior to reaching the SUA and instruction to change to working frequency.

      1. Airspace Clearance to Aircraft Phraseology: [CALLSIGN] CLEARED INTO [SUA NAME], [BOTTOM ALTITUDE] THROUGH [TOP ALTITUDE], WORKING FREQUENCY [FREQUENCY], REPORT FIVE MINUTES PRIOR TO R-T-B ON [FREQUENCY], FREQUENCY CHANGE APPROVED."

(a) Example SUA clearance: *"BACON ONE ONE, CLEARED INTO WHISKEY SEVENTY-TWO ALPHA, FLIGHT LEVEL TWO ZERO ZERO THROUGH FLIGHT LEVEL SIX ZERO ZERO, WORKING FREQUENCY ONE TWO NINER POINT SIX FIVE, REPORT FIVE MINUTES PRIOR TO R-T-B ON THIS FREQUENCY, FREQUENCY CHANGE APPROVED."*

(b) Example SUA clearance with other aircraft in airspace: *"TOAST FIVE ONE, CLEARED INTO WHISKEY THREE EIGHT SIX, SURFACE THROUGH FLIGHT LEVEL THREE ZERO ZERO, WORKING FREQUENCY ONE TWO NINER POINT SIX FIVE, REPORT FIVE MINUTES PRIOR TO R-T-B ON THIS FREQUENCY, USE CAUTION JELLY TWO TWO IN AIRSPACE, FREQUENCY CHANGE APPROVED."*

2. Transfer of Control. When automation supports such functionality, vZDC will complete an automated handoff to MRU/ARU/AWACS that SUA has been released to. In the event an automated handoff is not possible, the transfer of control will be coordinated manually in the vZDC TeamSpeak Server.

e. SUA Exit & Return to Base Procedures. When five minutes (5 min) prior to R-T-B, notify ATC on the assigned frequency and advise. If flights will split up or have other requests not previously coordinated advise ATC at this time so the controller can begin coordinating. Once ready for R-T-B, advise ATC ready and ATC will issue further clearance.

f. VSOA Provided Air Traffic Services. VSOA controllers on the vZDC Visiting Controller Roster may control any unrestricted facility within ZDC. VSOA controllers will utilize CRC and comply with all vZDC, and underlying facility procedures, where applicable, when staffing a vZDC (National Airspace System) facility.

g. Formation Flight Handling. Until VATSIM flight plans accommodate formation flight aircraft modifiers in the aircraft type field, indicate the total aircraft in the formation in the remarks (i.e. 3/F18).

1. Standard Formation. Formation flights will be assumed to be standard unless the flight lead advises the controller otherwise. The lead aircraft will squawk the assigned code and all other aircraft in the flight will maintain squawk standby.

2. Non Standard Formation. Flights operating in non standard formation, to include radar in trail, will have the lead aircraft squawk the assigned beacon code and the trail aircraft in the formation squawk the non-discreet subset (i.e. lead squawking 2355, trail aircraft squawk 2300, intermediate aircraft in formation squawk standby).

h. Carrier Operations. This LOA supplements and expands guidance and policy for Carrier Operations as defined in the VATUSA/USNv Policies and Procedures document. Carrier operations will be coordinated as follows:

1. Operations with Carrier Air Traffic Control Center (CATCC).

(a). Ships will be operated no closer than 100nm from the shoreline except for those operations that remain fully within activated warning airspace.

(b). CATCC will provide ZDC a "K-fix" (i.e. KW39A) or other named waypoint to use as an approximate ship location. ZDC will release the airspace surface to 10,000 MSL within a 100NM radius of the provided reference fix to CATCC. ZDC will coordinate with ZNY and ZJX for release of requested airspace when airspace is scheduled through vZDC. Reference fix position updates should be passed as applicable with ship movement.

(c). Transfer of control will be coordinated via automated handoff when automation exists and through manual coordination otherwise. ZDC will assign 11000ft to aircraft inbound to CATCC control, CATCC will assign 10000ft to aircraft departing.

(d). CATCC will coordinate aircraft that will utilize SUA in accordance with paragraph 5c1 of this LOA.

(e). If all operations will be conducted within the confines of warning airspace, ZDC may release the warning area(s) to CATCC and will use the released airspace boundaries and coordinated altitudes as the CATCC airspace boundary and coordinate handoffs and transfer of control by the boundary of released airspace.

(f). When ZDC is closed CATCC operations may be conducted within warning airspace surface to 10,000ft. VSOAs must submit a scheduling notice on the vZDC website for the SUA reservation. If ZDC opens while CATCC operations are in effect, CATCC will contact ZDC and ensure coordination is accomplished to accommodate the current operation.

2. Operations without Carrier Air Traffic Control Center (CATCC). Airspace will be scheduled and activated in accordance with this letter. Airspace will be scheduled from the surface to the highest altitude requested by the pilots operating in the airspace for a continuous volume of airspace. All other SUA clearance and activation procedures remain applicable.

i. Aircraft Interception. The following standards and procedures are applicable for aircraft intercept operations.

1. Pilots will notify the controller they are available for intercept taskings upon request by sending a private message via the pilot client to the controller. The controller may or may not acknowledge the message, based on workload, and additional messages should not be sent.

2. Controllers requesting an intercept will send a private message to the interceptor that includes the following initial tasking information: (a) aircraft type, callsign, cause for intercept, and approximate position. The intercept pilot will respond via private message whether they are still available to respond or not.

3. If available to respond, the controller will provide the pilot an abbreviated IFR clearance and provide taxi instructions when ready.

4. Once airborne, controllers will assist intercepting aircraft by providing guidance through route and vector clearances. Controllers will issue altitudes to ensure vertical separation is maintained.

5. When the aircraft is intercepted, pilots will attempt to raise the aircraft on guard and follow standard intercept procedures to attempt to gain communication with the pilot. Use of the ATC frequency will not be utilized unless instructed by the controller.

6. Controllers may suspend intercept operations at any time and will support and request intercept operations workload permitting.

7. The intercept pilot will inform ZDC if their intention is to follow the aircraft to its destination or break off the intercept.

j. Aerial Refueling. Pilots should expect to be assigned a block of 3000ft to maintain for aerial refueling (AR). ZDC will assign aircraft altitudes that ensure at least 1000ft vertical separation between aircraft prior to join up. Controllers may verify pilots are MARSA before assigning the block altitude. When AR is complete, pilots will separate themselves by 1000ft within the assigned block altitude and advise center that AR is complete and state intentions.

1. Aerial Refueling Tracks. ZDC controllers do not have the ability to display current AR tracks. For missions seeking to utilize an AR track, the pilots will file a flight plan that defines the track via named waypoint or fix/radial/distance, i.e. ORF270015. Altitude blocks of 3000ft will normally be assigned. Controllers may approve a larger block if requested and it can be approved based on real time traffic.

2. Random Refueling. Random refueling may be approved along any route segment when requested. Pilots should ensure the flight plan includes the route that is planned for the AR operation.

6. MISCELLANEOUS.

a. Authority. This letter and its associated procedures are written to ensure compliance with all applicable VATSIM, VATUSA, and VSOA policies. *VATSIM-POL-Special Operations Section 8, VATSIM Code of Regulations, and Global Ratings Policy.*

b. Revisions to this Agreement. This document will be reviewed annually by each organization for any needed updates or changes. For identified changes outside of the revision period, each organization may coordinate to have the LOA amended as needed.

c. Termination of Agreement. Either organization may terminate this agreement by providing written notice to the signing parties of this letter.

d. Other Organization Coordination. vZDC and other VSOAs will each notify the other organization if an agreement is made, or changes are made to an existing agreement, with any organization or facility that is adjacent to or may interact with ZDC. This includes, at a minimum, ZBW, ZNY, ZJX, and other VSOAs that actively express interest in use of the provisions of this agreement.

      e. Charting and Publications. vZDC publications are available on the vzdc.org website, under Publications. Other VSOAs will make available any publications, to include internal standard training routes, to vZDC for dissemination to vZDC controllers for situational awareness.

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