
Bulletin: vZDC-B-20250401

Applicability: Controllers Providing Radar Services within ZDC

Effective: 1 April 2025

Expiration: 31 March 2026

Reference: vZDC-A-01E [for inclusion in subsequent revision]

Contact: vZDC/ATM

Subject: Assumed Radar Identification Policy

PURPOSE: The bulletin incorporates best practice and VATUSA guidance on managing radar identification for airborne aircraft. VATUSA recognizes subdivisions may handle this differently; however, the intent is that within a subdivision the procedure is applied consistently throughout. This bulletin will be incorporated into vZDC-A-01E on its next publication.

BACKGROUND: vNAS introduced the concept of “auto ATC” where facilities can build in scripted control instructions for routinely issued clearances. This process simulates basic ATC in the absence of an online controller and helps keep a sector more manageable when a position is opened. The assumption made in this system is that an aircraft that would have been in radar contact will be treated as though it is in radar contact and receive instructions as such. Furthermore, as radar identifying aircraft that would have otherwise been in radar contact can increase a controller’s workload, especially enroute, and the goal of vZDC is to provide quality air traffic service, as a subdivision vZDC will adopt the following procedure.

PROCEDURE: Aircraft entering ZDC airspace, or a terminal facilities airspace that ZDC is the controlling agency for, radar identification shall be assumed for that aircraft and the controller shall initiate a track. As the VATSIM network prevents a track from being started with a callsign other than the callsign the aircraft is connected with, it is technically impossible for an aircraft track to be created that does not accurately represent the aircraft tracked. In practice, this means any airborne aircraft entering ZDC airspace is assumed to be radar identified and the controller will **not** inform the aircraft “radar contact” but will communicate with the aircraft as if a handoff had been accomplished. This is applicable for all enroute and terminal positions where an automated handoff would have otherwise been accomplished.

NOTE: This does **not** alleviate the requirement for a controller to accomplish radar identification steps for any aircraft that would have otherwise required radar identification steps to have been accomplished (i.e. departures, VFR airborne callup, etc.). In these instances, the controller **must** continue to use an appropriate method(s) of radar identification before providing radar service to that aircraft.