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Washington ATCT SOP

Version C – Effective July 5, 2024

July 1, 2024

vZDC DCA ATCT 7110.65C

RECORD OF CHANGES

Initial Publication – December 12, 2016

- Initial publication of the vZDC DCA ATCT SOP

January 19, 2017 (A Change 1 Revision)

- Added N90 altitude restrictions
- Typo Corrections

February 17, 2017 (A Change 2 Revision)

- Added ORF altitude restrictions
- Added runway configuration table
- Added scratchpads from Potomac TRACON

March 25, 2017 (A Change 3 Revision)

- Gave ground control to cross runways 15/33 and 3/22
- Updated altitude restrictions

April 1, 2017 (B Revision)

- Updated formatting
- Added detailed departure gate guide
- Added runway configuration chapter
- Removed “Scratchpads” section from Local Control
- Added section on CPDLC and PDC’s
- Added ATIS frequency
- Changed ground control’s ability to cross runways.

July 1, 2024 (C Revision)

- Entire Publication:
  - Formatting changes
- Chapter 1 General:
  - Added standardized sections and subsections
- Chapter 2 Operations:
  - Moved the positions table to this chapter
  - Added 2-2-1 with more information on using the standardized runway configurations
  - Added 2-2-4 with information on change in runway configuration
  - Added Section 3 regarding ASDE

    - Added Section 4 regarding SFRA operations
- Chapter 3 Clearance Delivery:
    - Added 3-1-1 establishing responsibilities
    - Clarified “Climb Via SID” instructions
    - Changed NATNL7 to NATNL8
    - Added 3-1-3 referencing vTDLS
    - Added more information on VFR flight following requirements
    - Simplified departure gates with table and removes associated narratives
- Chapter 4 Ground Control:
    - Re-worded runway crossings
    - Added 4-1-3 Runway Assignment
    - Added more information on pushback procedures
- Chapter 5 Local Control:
    - Added 5-1-2 Taxiway Usage
    - Added 5-1-3 Hold Bays
    - Added 5-2-3 Departure Releases
- Chapter 6 Helicopter Control:
    - Added reference to SFRA
- Appendix:
    - Added Taxiway Usage Diagram
    - Added Pushback Spot Diagram
    - Updated video maps and diagrams

Table of Contents

Chapter 1. General

Section 1. Introduction

1–1–1. PURPOSE OF THIS ORDER

This order describes the airspace structure, procedures, and relevant control-related policy for all controllers working an operational DCA ATCT position on the VATSIM network.

1–1–2. AUDIENCE

This order applies to all vZDC controllers and any non-assigned (i.e., visiting) controller receiving training from the vZDC Training Department to work any facility or airspace delegated to vZDC.

1–1–3. WHERE TO FIND THIS ORDER

This order is available on the vZDC web site at https://www.vzdc.org/publications/downloads under the Publications tab.

1–1–4. WHAT THIS ORDER CANCELS

This order cancels the Washington National ATCT SOP Version 1.10 document, dated as effective on April 1, 2017. This document is now the sole document outlining standard policy and procedure for DCA ATCT.

1–1–5. EXPLANATION OF CHANGES

This change introduces the new SOP formatting across the ARTCC along with updated information, diagrams, and providing clarity in certain areas not covered in the previous version.

1–1–6. DENOTATION OF CHANGES

Changes are indicated via the use of the shading tool. The changed text is highlighted in grey to indicate a change. No indication is made where text was removed from the document. Grammatical revisions and other changes to improve readability without changes in policy will not be marked.

EXAMPLE –
Changed or added text is highlighted in grey.

Chapter 2. Operations

Section 1. Operational Positions

2–1–1. ALL POSITIONS AND FREQUENCIES

TBL 2-1-1
DCA ATCT Positions & Frequencies

Identifier	Position	Frequency
Clearance	Clearance Delivery	118.050
Ground	Ground Control	121.900
Local	**Local Control**	**119.400**
Local	Helicopter Control	134.350

NOTE –
Bold text is the primary frequency.

Section 2. Runway Configurations

2–2–1. USAGE OF ESTABLISHED RUNWAY CONFIGURATIONS

It is preferred to utilize the established runway configurations as listed in 2-2-3 and 2-2-4. However, the local controller may utilize non-standard runway configurations as weather and traffic conditions permit so long as:

a. The configuration does not negatively affect traffic flow.

b. The configuration is deemed necessary due to weather and traffic conditions.

c. Potomac Consolidated TRACON (PCT) is aware of the non-standard runway configuration.

2–2–2. NORTH OPERATION

Runway 1 is the primary arrival/departure runway. Regional Jets or smaller may depart, but not arrive runway 4. Regional Jets or smaller may arrive or depart runway 33.

NOTE –
North Operation is the calm wind runway configuration.

2–2–3. SOUTH OPERATION

Runway 19 is the primary arrival/departure runway. Regional Jets or smaller may arrive or depart runway 15. Regional Jets or larger may not arrive or depart runway 22.

2–2–4. CHANGE IN RUNWAY CONFIGURATION

The CIC must determine the need for making any active runway changes. A routine runway change occurs when traffic and/or weather conditions are such that the change can be made with

little or no degradation in service. In this instance, departures are allowed to depart from the runway originally assigned. Use the following procedures to complete a routine runway change:

1) Provide PCT with the last departure's identification, its estimated time of departure, and the departure runway.

2) Once the last aircraft departures, ensure that no other aircraft departs DCA without a release from PCT.

3) Ensure that departures off the new runway have received the appropriate DP and departure control frequency, as needed.

4) PCT shall inform the CIC when the sector reconfiguration has been completed.

5) Ensure the ATIS has been updated and reflects the proper status.

Section 3. Airport Surface Detection Equipment (ASDE)

2–3–1. REQUIREMENTS

Ground Control and Local Control shall ensure all aircraft operating in a movement area have transponders on.

Section 4. DC SFRA Procedures

2–4–1. PROCEDURES

DC SFRA procedures are simulated on the VATSIM network using a modified procedure. VFR departures are expected to file a DC SFRA flight plan. However, the FRZ does not impose higher requirements for operations within. Therefore, normal VFR operations, including pattern work, shall be allowed if workload permits.

REFERENCE –
VATSIM DC SFRA Procedures – vzdc.org/publications/downloads

VATSIM DC SFRA Pilot Guide – vzdc.org/publications/downloads

Chapter 3. Clearance Delivery

Section 1. Duties

3–1–1. RESPONSABILITIES

Clearance Delivery must:

a. Formulate and issue IFR and VFR clearances to aircraft departing DCA.

b. Review proposed flight plan information received and verify for accuracy and amend routings and altitudes, as necessary, in accordance with appropriate LOA's.

3–1–2. IFR DEPARTURE INSTRUCTIONS

All IFR departures should be assigned a departure and transition consistent with their direction of flight. If an aircraft is unable to fly a SID, they shall be assigned the NATNL8 departure. Climb via SID shall be used for all aircraft on a SID except the NATNL8 departure. Aircraft on the NATNL8 departure shall be issued an initial altitude of 5,000, and to expect their filed cruise altitude ten minutes after departure.

3–1–3. TOWER DATA-LINK SERVICES (VTDLS)

DCA is equipped with vTDLS to issue Pre-Departure Clearances (PDCs) for IFR aircraft.

3–1–4. VFR DEPARTURE INSTRUCTIONS

VFR aircraft requesting flight following shall have the following in their VFR flight plan prior to departure:

a. Destination airport

b. Aircraft type

c. Requested VFR altitude

VFR aircraft remaining in the pattern require a squawk code assigned to them. All VFR departures shall receive a class B clearance with a restriction to maintain VFR at or below:

a. Fixed-Wing Aircraft – 2,500

b. Helicopters – 1,500

NOTE –
VFR aircraft remaining in the pattern do not require an altitude restriction.

3–1–5. DEPARTURE FREQUENCY ASSIGNMENT

Assign departure frequencies in accordance with an aircraft's SID, departure gate, or direction of flight.

a. North/East – KRANT (125.650)

b. South/West – TYSON (119.850)

Section 2. Restrictions

3–2–1. ALTITUDE RESTRCTIONS

TBL 3-2-1
DCA Altitude Restrictions

Destination	Turbojet	Turboprop/Propeller
BWI, IAD, HEF	4,000	4,000
EWR, TEB, LGA	FL210	N/A
JFK	17,000	N/A
ORF	14,000	N/A
PHL	11,000	7,000
RIC	14,000	10,000

Section 3. Departure Gates

3–3–1. GENERAL

To standardize departure flows and ensure proper and expeditious routing of traffic, PCT uses departure exit gates for IFR Departures to destinations outside of PCT airspace. Every IFR aircraft leaving DCA must leave PCT airspace bound for one of these gates, unless coordinated otherwise.

3–3–2. HIGH ALTITUDE DEPARTURE GATES

High altitude departure gates should be utilized for aircraft filed above 10,000 feet.

NOTE –
Prop and turboprop aircraft may be routed via a low altitude gate regardless of altitude.

TBL 3-3-2

DCA High Altitude Departure Gates

Gate	Routing/Direction
BUFFR	NW
CLTCH	SW
DAILY/COLIN	S/SE
JDUBB	SW
JERES	N/NW
OTTTO	W
PALEO	NE
RAMAY	W
SCRAM	SW
SWANN	NE
WOOLY	NE

3–3–3. LOW ALTITUDE DEPARTURE GATES

Low altitude departure gates should be utilized for aircraft filed at or below 10,000 feet.

NOTE –
Low altitude aircraft may receive vectors to join any low altitude airway.

TBL 3-3-3

DCA Low Altitude Departure Gates

Gate	Routing/Direction
CSN	W/SW
EMI	N/NE
GVE	S/SW
MRB	N/NW
PXT	SE

Chapter 4. Ground Control

Section 1. Duties

4–1–1. RESPONSABILITIES

Ground Control must:

a. Sequence aircraft that have the same first fix or direction of departure with other aircraft.

b. Keep runway exits clear for landing aircraft.

4–1–2. RUNWAY CROSSINGS

Blanket crossings are not approved at DCA. Ground Control shall instruct aircraft to hold short of runway 4/22 or 15/33 and issue a frequency change to local control unless otherwise coordinated.

4–1–3. RUNWAY ASSIGNMENT

Assign runways based on traffic flow that will ensure operational efficiency.

NOTE –

1. *Reference 2-2-2 and 2-2-3 for usable runways.*

2. *Assigning an aircraft a non-standard runway requires coordination with local control via verbal or nonverbal methods.*

Section 2. Taxiway Utilization

4–2–1. PUSHBACK PROCEDURES

a. Ground Control will approve pushbacks onto taxiways Kilo and November. Tail direction should be specified.

b. During periods of high volume, such as events, Ground Control may approve pushbacks for aircraft that would pushback into a non-movement area. If Traffic Management Initiatives (TMI) are in effect, Ground Control shall instruct aircraft affected by the TMI to advise ready for pushback.

1. When approving pushbacks into alleys assign spot numbers as needed. Refer to appendix C for spot number locations.

4–2–2. AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY

Ground Control assumes responsibility for movement areas West of all runways as depicted in Appendix A.

4–2–3. HOLD BAYS

Ground Control may utilize the runway 15 and runway 4 hold bays as necessary to comply with TMI requirements or at the request of Local Control.

Chapter 5. Local Control

Section 1. Airspace Utilization

5–1–1. AIRSPACE

Local Control assumes responsibility for the airspace as depicted in Appendix B.

NOTE –
When Helicopter Control is not online, Local Control assumes responsibility for Helicopter Control airspace.

5–1–2. TAXIWAY USAGE

Local Control assumes responsibility for movement areas East of all active runways as depicted in Appendix A.

5–1–3. HOLD BAYS

Local Control may utilize the runway 19, runway 1, runway 33, and runway 22 hold bays as necessary to comply with TMI requirements.

Section 2. Departure Procedures

5–2–1. DEPARTURE INSTRUCTIONS

Assign headings/instructions to departures as follows:

a. All IFR aircraft on a SID shall not be issued departure headings. For all other aircraft, issue departure headings in accordance with table 5-2-1 “IFR Departure Headings.”

TBL 5-2-1
IFR Departure Headings

North Operation		
Aircraft Type	Departure Sector	
	TYSON	KRANT
Turbojets	320	
Props	280	090
South Operation		
Aircraft Type	Departure Sector	
	TYSON	KRANT
Turbojets	190	
Props	230*	150

NOTE –
Props to TYSON in South Operations shall be instructed to maintain 3,000.

b. All VFR aircraft shall be issued departure instructions in accordance with table 5-2-2 “VFR Departure Instructions.”

TBL 5-2-2
VFR Departure Headings

North Operation	
Direction of Flight	Instruction
North/East	Heading 090
South/West	Northwest over the river
South Operation	
Direction of Flight	Instruction
All	South over the river

5–2–2. LINE UP AND WAIT (LUAW)

LUAW Procedures are authorized at DCA. Such operations are generally viewed as necessary to maintain airport efficiency. Use LUAW when it is expected the aircraft will depart after conflicting traffic is clear of the runway/ intersection. Utilize good operating practices and memory aids as needed when using LUAW procedures.

a. Landing clearances need not be withheld for traffic holding in position.

b. LUAW procedures are not authorized on runway 22.

5–2–3. DEPARTURE RELEASES

DCA has blanket IFR releases unless one of the following conditions is met:

a. There was a previous missed approach/go around and automatic departure releases have not been given back by PCT.

b. PCT cancels automatic releases and local control must call for release.

c. An aircraft is departing a non-standard departure runway.

When one or more of the above conditions are met, Local Control must call PCT for release stating the following information:

a. ACID

b. Runway and departure heading

c. SID and transition or Initial fix

Section 3. Arrival Procedures

5–3–1. REDUCED SEPARATION MINIMA

Separation of IFR arrivals may be reduced to 2.5 NM within 10 NM of the runway on the final approach course, regardless of operation or runways in use, providing that wake turbulence is not a factor.

5–3–2. MISSED APPROACH/GO AROUND PROCEDURES

Local Control shall immediately coordinate with PCT when a missed approach/go around occurs. Unless otherwise coordinated, issue the aircraft instructions per table 5-3-2 “Missed Approach/Go Around Instructions.”

a. After a missed approach/go around automatic releases are suspended until released by PCT.

b. Tower may re-sequence props providing the Tower ensures separation between the go around and all other pertinent traffic and does not affect the sequence of other IFR arrivals sequenced by PCT.

TBL 5-3-2

Missed Approach/Go Around Instructions

Operation	Altitude	Heading
North	3,000*	320
South	3,000	185 or RH

NOTE –
In North Operation, aircraft South of DCA VOR/DME shall maintain 2,000 until over the airport to avoid ADW departures.

5–3–3. RUNWAY EXITING PROCEDURES

a. Once aircraft are clear of the runway, they shall be taxied across all other runways prior to handing off to Ground Control.

b. Local Control may utilize runway 22 as a high-speed exit for aircraft arriving runway 19. Aircraft should be instructed to turn right on taxiway Juliet before handing off to Ground Control.

c. Local Control may utilize runway 33 as a high-speed exit for aircraft arriving runway 1. Aircraft should be instructed to turn left on taxiway Sierra or November before handing off to Ground Control.

NOTE –
Aircraft may not make a left turn onto taxiway Kilo from runway 33.

Chapter 6. Helicopter Control

Section 1. Airspace Utilization

6–1–1. AIRSPACE

Helicopter Control assumes responsibility for the airspace as depicted in Appendix B.

Section 2. Procedures

6–2–1. DUTIES

Helicopter Control is responsible for IFR and VFR helicopters into, out of, and through the Washington Class Bravo and the Washington SFRA. Helicopter Control should utilize D.C. Heli routes as appropriate.

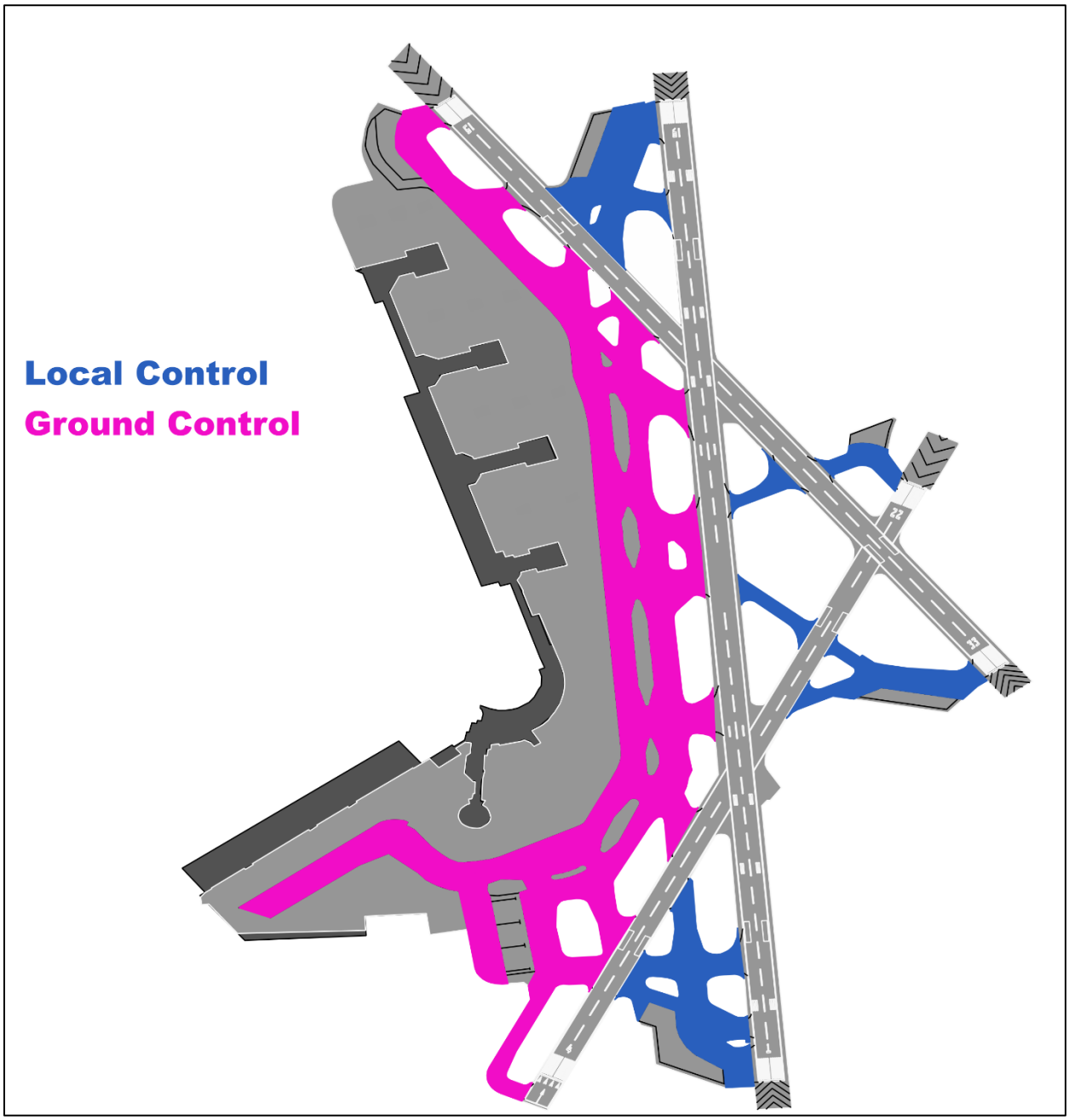
6–2–2. REQUIRED COORDINATION

a. Helicopter Control shall coordinate with Ground Control and Local Control as necessary for departures or arrivals within a movement or non-movement area.

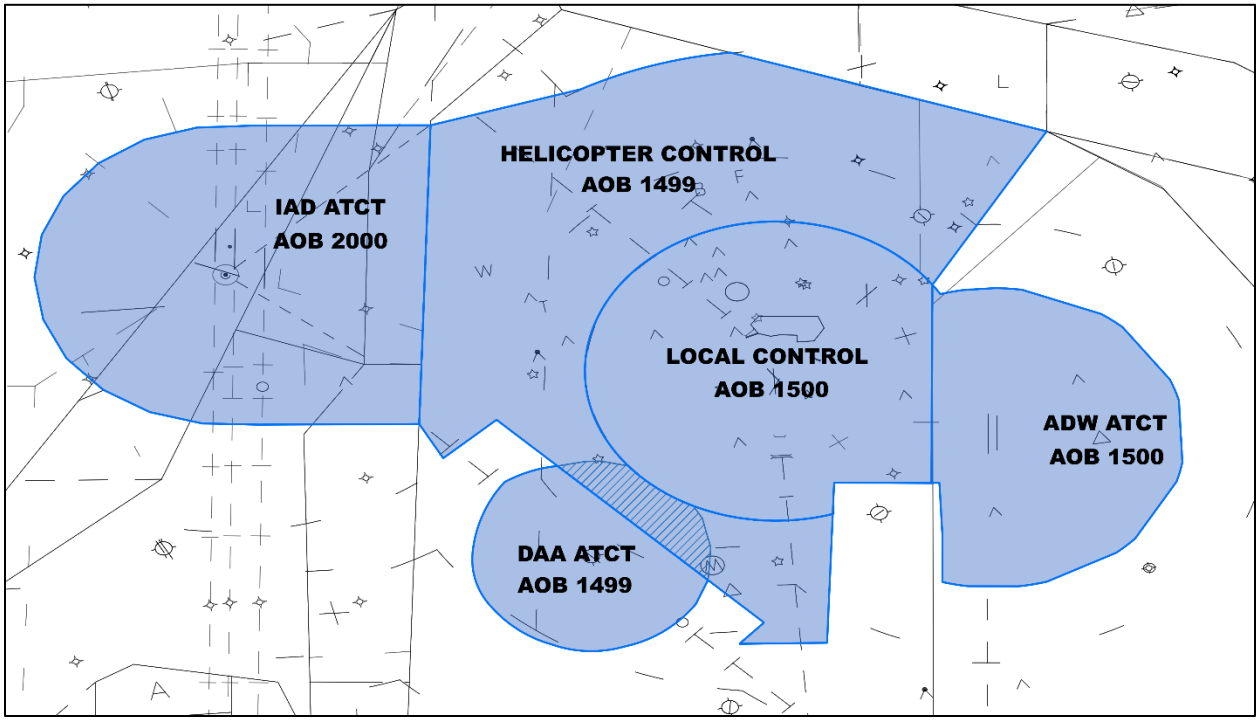
b. It may be necessary to hand off arriving helicopters to Local Control for a landing clearance.

c. Helicopter Control airspace boarders IAD ATCT airspace. Helicopter Control shall initiate radar handoffs to IAD ATCT as needed.

APPENDIX A. TAXIWAY USAGE DIAGRAM



APPENDIX B. LOCAL AND HELICOPTER CONTROL AIRSPACE



NOTE –
Helicopter Control assumes responsibility for the hatched section of DAA ATCT airspace when DAA ATCT is not online or closed.

APPENDIX C. PUSHBACK SPOT NUMBERS