

Region 9 Army MARS Training Topic for “Phone Bridge” use

TRAINING TOPIC – Net control station tasks and responsibilities for Voice nets

LESSON INTENT – Define & Clarify what an NCS is expected to do

REFERENCES – ACP-125(G) – paragraph 6-1 through 6-41

EXPECTED TIME TO DELIVER – 55 Minutes

CONTENT OUTLINE & KEY POINTS –

1. “Sustained emergency communications operations will require a large pool of operators qualified and ready to assist in maintaining continuous networks”. In order to be “QUALIFIED AND READY TO ASSIST”, ***the only way to be comfortable in the NCS role is to do it.***
2. This Training Topic addresses NCS tasks on a VOICE net.
3. While there are many detailed tasks that an NCS might be called upon to do, there are a few that are common to all nets. Those are listed below and the details of HOW they are they are carried out are specified
 - 3.1. Open a net.
 - 3.2. Request, receive and acknowledge net check-ins.
 - 3.3. Accept and acknowledge “late” check-ins.
 - 3.4. Assign an “Alternate Net Control Station”, Report Officer, Holding Report Officer (QRU Station), an anALE Station.
 - 3.5. Managing “Relays” for check-ins.
 - 3.6. Maintaining & Transmitting the “Roster”.
 - 3.7. Shifting net to “FREE” status.
 - 3.8. Closing the net.
 - 3.9. Submitting a “Net Report” (COMSPOT).
4. There are additional tasks that an NCS may be required to do. Some of these are:
 - 4.1. Delegating and assuming “Net Control”.
 - 4.2. Requesting and interpreting “Signal Reports” .
 - 4.3. Directing a change in frequency.

3.1 Open a Net

Army MARS networks are opened and closed at prescribed times as published in your region net schedule. Nets are normally opened at one minute past the assigned time. If the scheduled NCS fails to open the net at the appointed time, the assigned alternate NCS (ANCS) or any other member will open the net after one additional minute.

3.2 Request, Receive and Acknowledge Net Check-ins

The NCS will make a Net Call Up by giving the net call twice followed by “**THIS IS**” and his/her call and “**OVER**”. Note in this example, the NCS is specifying a Directed Net. When checking into a net, all stations will call into the net using full call signs:

Stations without traffic

Transmit and say, “**THIS IS**, (Your Station call sign), **OVER**”.
Do not include, "No Traffic" in this call **THIS IS AAR2WW - OVER**

Stations with traffic

Stations with traffic transmit, “**THIS IS**, (Your Station call sign), (list traffic by precedence and destination),**OVER**”. The destination of the traffic can be given as a call sign, a city or town if in-state, a state or, if for OCONUS destinations, a country or APO with zip code.

THIS IS AAR2XX ROUTINE FOR AAR2AA – OVER

THIS IS AAR2YY TWO ROUTINE FOR AAR2BB - OVER

THIS IS AAR2ZZ ONE PRIORITY AND ONE ROUTINE FOR AAR2CC – OVER

Stations with additional information

In addition to traffic reports, stations may include additional information and requests appropriate. Examples include:

THIS IS AAR2ZZ NO TRAFFIC REQUEST TO CLOSE DOWN 1145Z OVER

THIS IS AAR2ZZ REQUEST COMS WITH AAR2AA OVER

THIS IS AAR2ZZ INFORMATION FOR THE NET, OVER

THIS IS AAR2ZZ NEW JERSEY, OVER

3.3 Accept and Acknowledge “late” check-ins

Stations entering a net after initial check-in will wait until the current net operation (conversation or exchange) is complete and after hearing the pro-word "**OUT**". However, stations will not attempt to enter the net when:

- The station transmitting has used the pro-word "**WAIT OUT**"
- Even though the station has ended his transmission with the pro-word "**OUT**", the net operation is not complete.
- The NCS directs traffic relay ending his transmission with the pro-word "**OUT**". Once again the net operation is not complete until the traffic relay is completed.
- Traffic is being acknowledged for receipt by stations transmitting sequentially in net roster order when traffic is sent to the net. Once the net operation is complete the station entering the net uses the check-in procedure described above. The net status automatically returns to directed status whenever a station checks in. The NCS may then continue the net in directed status or change it to free status as appropriate.

Acknowledging Station Check-ins

For multiple station check-ins, the NCS will acknowledge all stations at one time rather than individually as follows: "(list the call signs and their traffic in the order heard), **“THIS IS (NCS call sign) ROGER, OUT**". It is understood that the stations checking in follow the NCS as the first station in the net roster.

AAR2XX AAR2YY AAR2ZZ THIS IS AARNCS, ROGER OUT

If the NCS cannot understand the identity of the calling station(s), the NCS transmits:

UNKNOWN STATION(S), THIS IS AARNCS, SAY AGAIN, OVER.

If the NCS understands the station's identity, but fails to understand other transmitted information, the NCS transmits:

AAR2YY THIS IS AARNCS SAY AGAIN, OVER

Once the NCS feels that all of the initial stations have been acknowledged, he/she should call the net and transmit the net roster in Informal by voice or in Message Format ACS-126 format Include the designation of the ANCS, RO, ALE stations and the actual designation of the alternate frequency and time.

Example:

NET THIS IS AARNCS THE FOLLOWING STATIONS ARE IN THE NET, AARNCS, AAR2XX, AAR2YY, AAR2ZZ, ALTERNATE NET CONTROL STATION IS AAR2YY, ETC – ALTERNATE FREQUENCY IS KBC – TIME 1234 ZULU – OUT.

3.4 Assign an “Alternate Net Control Station”

The NCS assigns ANCS duties to a station.

AAR2XX THIS IS AARNCS ACT AS ALTERNATE NET CONTROL STATION. OVER.

The station called to be ANCS responds:

THIS IS AAR2XX WILL COMPLY OUT

This indicates to the NCS that the ANCS accepts the assignment and has properly copied the net roster to that point. If for some reason the ANCS does not have a complete net roster he will request it from the NCS at this time.

Net Call Up for Additional Stations

The NCS should make frequent Net Call-Ups to allow new stations to enter the net or existing stations to list additional traffic.

NET THIS IS AARNCS ADDITIONAL STATIONS FOR THE NET OVER

Note: The net call sign is a collective call sign for all the stations in the net. A call to the net call sign, ending with **OVER, and made without the words such as “**ADDITIONAL STATIONS FOR THE NET**” represents a call being made by the NCS in which he/she is requesting each of the current stations in the net to respond in net order and therefore should not be used unless such a response is being requested. Stations joining the net at a later time should be given their place in the roster.**

AAR2ZZ THIS IS AARNCS ROGER, YOU FOLLOW AAR2YY OUT

In the case of multiple stations:

AAR2YY AAR2ZZ THIS IS AARNCS ROGER, YOU FOLLOW AAR2XX OUT

3.5 Managing “Relays” for check-ins

If propagation conditions are poor, once the NCS acknowledges check-ins that he is able to hear, he may call the ANCS or another appropriate station to determine if there are any relays.

AAR2XX THIS IS AARNCS MAKE A NET CALL, OVER

The ANCS responds, "**THIS IS (Station call sign) WILL COMPLY, OUT**". He then performs the function by transmitting:

NET THIS IS AAR2XX, ADDITIONAL STATIONS FOR THE NET OVER

Stations not previously recognized will check-in at this time.

AAR2XX THIS IS AAR2QQ ROUTINE OVER

The station representing the NCS responds to calling stations as described previously.

AAR2QQ THIS IS AAR2XX ROGER YOU FOLLOW AAR2ZZ OUT

The station representing the NCS then reports additional check-ins to the NCS by transmitting,

AARNCS THIS IS AAR2XX DID YOU COPY BY INTERCEPT? OVER

The NCS either has or has not copied the calling station by intercept and responds:

- NCS copied by intercept: **THIS IS AARNCS AFFIRMATIVE, OUT**
- NCS not able to copy by intercept: **THIS IS AARNCS NEGATIVE, REQUEST RELAY, OVER**

If relay is required:

THIS IS AAR2XX I RELAY AAR2QQ ROUTINE OVER

The NCS acknowledges the check-in of the additional stations, notes their traffic reports, information and/or requests, establishes their position in the net roster and continues with the net. Any station who can hear stations attempting to check-in but who are not acknowledged by the NCS or ANCS, should wait for an appropriate pause and notify the NCS by transmitting,

“THIS IS (Station call sign), **I RELAY** (Call sign of station(s) attempting to check-in) (traffic report and information), **OVER”**. The NCS will then acknowledge these stations, enter them into the net roster and continue with net operations.

Stations that are unable to copy the NCS should include that information during their check-in transmission. As a technique these stations can identify a station they are able to copy in order to streamline the follow-up relay process.

3.6 Maintaining & transmitting the “Roster”

At the conclusion of performing all of the net check-in procedures the net roster should be delivered to the net members by voice or digitally. The NCS is responsible for maintaining a current net roster. The NCS informs the ANCS and the net of deletions when stations leave the net.

For example:

NET THIS IS AARNCS NET DELETE AAR2ZZ. AAR8QQ YOU FOLLOW AAR8YY, OUT

Should more than one station leave the net, the procedure will be altered accordingly. Periodic declaration of the complete net roster during net operations is not required, however, it is a technique available to the NCS as the NCS deems necessary in order to maintain net discipline. Use the Informal Message Format (ACP125(g) sec 5-3).

3.7 Shifting net to “FREE” status

Once all net operations are concluded the net may be declared "free" for the remainder of the scheduled period. The NCS remains responsible for proper net operation, circuit discipline and closing the net at the correct time. The NCS declares the net to be in free status by transmitting,

(Net call sign), **THIS IS** (NCS call sign). **THIS IS A FREE NET. OUT**

Net stations may contact each other during this period without requesting permission from the NCS. During these contacts, additional information may be exchanged, signals evaluated and compared, technical operations conducted, and other authorized brief exchanges may take place. The procedure for contacting another station initially is to use the full call procedure as follows:

"(Station call sign) **THIS IS** (Station call sign), **OVER.**" The station called responds "(Station call sign) **THIS IS** (Station call sign), **OVER.**" Once communication is established stations should discontinue using call signs until their contact is completed.

3.8 Closing the net

Since most Army MARS nets run continuously, there is no Net Closing on these nets. Activities are usually scheduled for a set period of time on a continuously running net. Once the scheduled time period is over, the net returns to its normal “Free Net” status. A NCS may no longer be present. At the end of scheduled activities, the NCS will simply declare the net to be in free status. If the NCS intends on leaving the net at that time, the NCS should announce he is CLOSING DOWN in the same transmission. Example:

(Net call sign), **THIS IS** (NCS call sign). **THIS IS A FREE NET – CLOSING DOWN. OUT**

As long as the NCS remains on the net, stations will close down with the NCS using the process described above in the section “Leaving/returning to a Net”. Once the NCS closes down, stations are relieved of this responsibility.

In the case of a net that is not continuous running, it shall be closed down at the appropriate time using the Net Closing technique described below. The Net Closing signals all stations the net is over and there is no further net activity. Nets are closed by the NCS transmitting:

(Net call sign) **THIS IS** (NCS call sign) **CLOSE DOWN, OUT**

Note: ACP-125 uses the words **CLOSE DOWN NOW** while common US practice is to say **CLOSE DOWN**.

Either method is acceptable.

Optionally, The NCS may desire all stations respond to the direction to close down. This is important when there is a need for accountability of personnel; to be certain all stations have

the message the net is closed. In this case, the NCS transmits, "(Net call sign) **THIS IS** (NCS call sign) **CLOSE DOWN, OVER**". Because a call to the net was made with the proword **OVER**, all stations in the net are required to respond in net order. Example: "**THIS IS** (Station Call sign), **ROGER, OUT**". MARS stations are encouraged to practice closing networks using both methods.

3.9 Submitting a Net Report (COMSPOT)

At the conclusion of the net it is required that you submit a COMSPOT to the Region 9 Admin Officer.

Example:

VZCZCMMM041

AAA9R1 DE AAR9xx NR41

R 071825Z MAR 2019

FM MARS STATION AAR9xx

TO MARS STATION AAA9R1

MARS STATION AAR9WF

MARS STATION AAA9RD

BT

UNCLAS

MSGID/COMSPOT/MARS STATION AAR9xx/41//

COMEV/ACTIVATION/070101Z/070159Z/M9T//

LOCN/REGION NINE/US/11SKD8329//

RMKS/

1. FREQ:M023 ALT M068

2. MODE:USB 110A - *example*

3. BAND COND:GOOD

4. TOTAL STNS:7

AAR9TC NCS 1R

AAR9TC NR41 UNCLAS

AAR9CV REPORTS OFFICER 1R

AAR9WF ALE 1R

AAR9HH ANCS 2R

AAR9PG MOB

AAR9LD 1R

5.TFC:6

6.TRAINING:MINI EXERCISE. - *Example*

7.RMKS://

BT

NNNN

4.0 Additional tasks that an NCS may be required to do. Some of these are:

4.1 Delegating and assuming “Net Control”

It may be necessary for net control to be delegated to a subordinate station when effective net control cannot be maintained by the NCS or when the NCS has to leave the net for any reason. In such cases, the proword “**ASSUME CONTROL**” is used. See additional examples in ACP-125(G) paragraph 6-10.

AAR2XX THIS IS AARNCS – ASSUME CONTROL - OVER

The use of the proword **OVER** in this example requires a response from the called station accepting the assignment. The net roster will be transmitted to station assuming control if necessary. The station directed to assume control will make a call to the net and inform the net he has taken over as the NCS. The new NCS will use the proword **OVER** if a response for all stations in the net is desired. In the following example a response is not requested.

NET THIS IS AAR2XX – I HAVE ASSUMED CONTROL – OUT

4.2 Requesting and interpreting “Signal Reports”

A station wanting to inform another station of his signal strength and readability will do so by means of a short concise report of actual reception such as,

"WEAK BUT READABLE", "LOUD BUT DISTORTED", "WEAK WITH INTERFERENCE", etc.

Reports such as **"FIVE BY FIVE", "FOUR BY FOUR", or "LIMA CHARLIE"** will not be used to indicate strength and quality of reception (See ACP-125(G) section 6-14)

Report of Signal Strength

LOUD Your signal is very strong.

GOOD Your signal strength is good.

WEAK Your signal strength is weak.

VERY WEAK Your signal strength is very weak.

FADING Continuous reception is not possible due to fading.

Report of Readability

CLEAR The quality of your transmission is excellent.

READABLE The quality of your transmission is satisfactory.

UNREADABLE I cannot read you.

DISTORTED Your signal is has distortion.

WITH INTERFERENCE Your signal has interference.

INTERMITTENT Your signal is intermittent.

Stations with a need for a signal report will request such checks by transmitting:

AAA9TC THIS IS AAR3BE. RADIO CHECK, OVER

AAA9TC hears AAT3BE loud and clear and replies:

AAR3BE THIS IS AAA9TC. ROGER, OUT

Note “**LOUD AND CLEAR**” is not verbalized in the example. It is assumed the signal report is Loud and Clear.

The NCS may wish to obtain a radio check from every station in the net, to check propagation conditions or determine if communications still exist. The NCS will make a call to the net call sign, ending with the proword “**OVER**”. A response from all net stations is required in net order.

NET THIS IS AARNCS. RADIO CHECK, OVER

All net stations hear AARNCS loud and clear except AAA9TC and AAA3VA. The replies of each station, in net roster order, are:

THIS IS AAA3USA. ROGER, OVER

THIS IS AAA9TC. WEAK WITH INTERFERENCE, OVER

THIS IS AAA9USA. ROGER, OVER

THIS IS AAA3VA. GOOD READABLE, OVER

The NCS indicates his reception of each of the net stations was loud and clear by replying:

NET THIS IS AARNCS. ROGER, OUT

If all stations were not loud and clear, for example AAA9TC who was weak and distorted, and AAM3TVA, who was not heard, the NCS would transmit:

**NET THIS IS AARNCS. ROGER. AAA9TC WEAK AND DISTORTED.
AAM3TVA NOTHING HEARD. OUT**

4.3 Directing a change in frequency

The NCS directs the net to change to a new frequency using a frequency designation.
(See ACP-125(G)sec 6-7)

Mxx THIS IS AARNCS. CHANGE TO FREQUENCY KILO ALPHA ALPHA.. OVER

Because the proword **OVER** is used, each station in the net is required to answer in order.

THIS IS AAR2XX. ROGER, OUT

THIS IS AAR2XY, ROGER, OUT

THIS IS AAR2XZ, ROGER, OUT

When the shift has been executed, the NCS will re-establish the net on the new frequency by following the procedures described previously. Example:

Mxx, NET THIS IS AARNCS. OVER

Stations will check into the net on the new frequency using procedures described previously, as it is being re-established.

THIS IS AAR2XX., OVER

THIS IS AAR2XY, OVER

THIS IS AAR2XZ, OVER

IN SUMMARY

NET OPERATIONS

The NCS directs all net operations. This includes the opening of the net at the proper time; ensuring proper net operation and discipline in accordance with ARMY MARS policies and practices; directing message traffic relay; ensuring that appropriate training is conducted in accordance with state/region training programs; conducting other appropriate net activities; and closing the net at the proper time. A typical net outline will flow as follows:

- NCS transmits net call
- Initial members check -in
- NCS acknowledges check-ins
- NCS recognizes or assigns ANCS
- NCS directs/clears all listed traffic
- NCS conducts official MARS business
- NCS or designated instructor conducts training
- NCS declares net free as appropriate
- NCS closes the net

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION –

1. Who is responsible for taking over net control duties if the expected NCS does not come on the air?
2. How long should one wait for the expected net control station before assuming NCS duties?
3. What should you do if suddenly (and unexpectedly) the NCS apparently goes off the air (doesn't respond to calls or fails to issue expected calls)?
4. Who should maintain a copy of the net roster?
5. What do you do if you hear a station attempting to check in who is not acknowledged by NCS (or ANCS)?
6. If NCS transmits: "M9T this is AARNCS, Radio Check, Over". Who should answer?