

Virtual United States Coast Guard

Standard Operating Procedures Version 2.1



The vUSCG is in no way associated with the United States Coast Guard, the Department of Homeland Security, or any other real-world organization/ entity.

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Scope

This document exists to explain processes and procedures for standard operations within the virtual United States Coast Guard (vUSCG). This document is updated frequently to maintain compliance with VATSIM vSO policy, the VATSIM Code of Conduct as well as the directives of the vUSCG air staff.

Overview

The vUSCG SOP provides a high-level overview of operations, this document will go into more detail and provide examples of processes and procedures.

vUSCG Commandant

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General Conduct

All members of the vUSCG, both as a student pilot or mission qualified member are expected to behave in a manner that does not represent the vUSCG in a negative fashion - this includes but is not limited to public forums (Discord, Facebook, etc), and on the VATSIM network (hereinafter referred to as 'the network'). Examples of behavior that represents the organization poorly are included below.

1. Flying/requesting procedures or operations that the member is not confident/familiar with flying.
 - a. Do not request a procedure/operation you are not familiar with, and if a controller asks you to do something you aren't familiar with you are expected to indicate so or that you are unable on frequency, and then ask a vUSCG IP after the completion of the flight.
2. Ignoring (on purpose or by accident) ATC instructions, or requests.
3. Making frivolous or unnecessary requests of ATC particularly when they are clearly busy.
 - a. For example, requesting flight following during a SAR pattern is unnecessary in almost all cases, and canceling flight following or flying without flight following when a controller is busy will greatly improve your reputation with the ARTCC. - Helicopter/military operations on the network can have a default poor connotation attached to them as they are abnormal operations, so any opportunity to counter this should be embraced.
4. Acting or portraying yourself as 'better' than any other VATSIM member for any reason, but particularly due to your membership in a vSO.
 - a. This includes but is not limited to; messaging other VATSIM members flying USCG callsigns telling them they are doing something wrong/flying the wrong aircraft etc, expecting/requesting priority handling (explicitly prohibited in VATSIM CoC B6), or activating special use airspace clearly in the way of other flights just 'because you can'.

Failure to follow these requirements can lead to disciplinary action up to and including revocation of membership to the organization.

Discipline

The vUSCG is managed by a small team, and as such matters requiring attention are done on a case by case basis. Members who feel they have been wrongly done by, can discuss this with management. The main goal is to protect the existence of vUSCG, so if anyone in particular brings unwanted attention it will be investigated. Outcomes can be a warning, suspension for a period of time, a requirement to do remedial or extra training, and finally dismissal. We have no desire to be militant, but through discussion we improve the organization.

Ranks

The vUSCG does not employ a strict hierarchical system. Ranks are assigned, but we treat every member with respect and dignity. We encourage every member to engage and participate in creation of ideas, improvements and rectify issues. We are a team regardless of assigned rank. Nobody salutes and nobody expects privilege.

New Pilot	Awarded on application to join vUSCG
O-1 Ensign	On being accepted into vUSCG Training
O-2 Lieutenant (JG)	On completing Initial training and proficient in RW and/or FW
O-3 Lieutenant	On achieving 50 flight hours
O-4 LT Commander	On achieving 100 flight hours
O-5 Commander	On achieving 150 flight hours
O-6 Captain	On achieving 250 flight hours

A member of any rank can be provided extra responsibility such as Instructor Pilot (IP), Air Staff, or a project co-ordinator. These assignments should be respected, and assistance provided as able.

Authority to represent vUSCG on VATSIM

As previously noted, vUSCG is a VATSIM Special Operations Association (VSOA) Partner and adheres to the SOA-POL guidelines as outlined here. We submit regular audit reports to the VATSIM Special Operations Department (VSOD), and any infringements by our members may result in the dissolution of the group. When you fly you represent vUSCG and can impact our existence.

Authorization to conduct any flight activity in a particular airframe is provided by the vUSCG Training Policy.

Until you are promoted to at least vLTJG you can only conduct flights under the specific training course for new members. That is only flights mentioned in that specific course. This course meets the requirements of Section 7.4 of the SOA-POL and makes you a VSOA member on completion.

As a vLTJG, or higher, you are hereby authorized to conduct un-tasked flights on the VATSIM network but limited to Rotary Wing (RW) and/or Fixed Wing (FW) and standard operations.

Non-Standard Operations

The following operations require additional training which is discussed in the vUSCG Training Policy;

1. Vessel Deck operations
2. HITRON (Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron)
3. Blackjack (Aircraft interception)
4. UAS (Unmanned Aircraft systems)

Without successful completion of this training and subsequent authorization by CO3 you are NOT permitted to undertake these operations.

Normal vUSCG Operations

All flights - unless prior approval by vUSCG management (IPs, DCs or AS) - must follow the outline below.

1. **ACARS/Network:** The flight must be flown on smartCARS3, and on the VATSIM network. Manual PIREP submission is only allowed on rare occasions.
2. **Aircraft Usage:** The flight must depart from the location the selected aircraft is listed at.
 - a. A list of all vUSCG assets can be found here after signing in: <https://crew.vuscg.com/dfleet>, “base” is the location the aircraft is based at, and the “location” is the current location of the aircraft.
 - b. If there is an issue with aircraft location (not where it’s supposed to be) notify Airstaff for remedy. Again, aircraft should be flown from “current” location, but if there is an issue Airstaff can resolve it.
3. **Callsign:** The callsign used on the network must match the selected aircraft (must be C and then the aircraft side number eg. C6040).
 - a. The only operational exceptions are NCRDA/SFRA missions or VIP flights approved by AS to use “Coast Guard 01” or “Coast Guard 02.”
4. **Aircraft ICAO Codes:** The ICAO aircraft type code when signing in and when filing a flight plan (or providing to ATC) must match the selected aircraft, **not** the aircraft you are using as a substitute).
 - a. If you fly the HPG H-160 in MSFS; as a substitute of the MH-65 Dolphin; you file the flight plan as though the aircraft was an AS65.
 - b. Approved ICAO Type Codes including common mistakes - [ICAO Codes Reference](#).

vUSCG Aircraft Types (name)	FP ICAO code	Do NOT use
MH-65D/E Dolphin (to be replaced)	AS65	HH65, MH65, H65, H60

MH-60T Jayhawk	H60	HH60, H60J, MH60
HC-144A/B Ocean Sentry	CN35	H144, HC44
HC-27J Spartan	C27J	HC27, H27J
HC-130J Hercules	C30J	C130 is a different aircraft
C-37A/B	GLF5	C37B, GIV, GV, G550
Bell 206 Jetranger	B06	BE06, B06J
T-6 Texan II	TEX2	T62, T6, TEXN
T-44C KingAir	BE9L	B350, BE35

5. **Flight Plans:** A full flight plan ([flight plan website](#)) with no less than “vuscg.com” included in the RMK/ section is required. e.g. RMK/[vUSCG.COM](#)
6. This ensures ATC and SUPs see you are flying as part of a VSOA and therefore subject to different rules. It also allows ease of auditing every quarter. The flight plans do not need to be extensive and can include only required fields + the RMK/ section. Below is an example of a basic flight plan.
7. IFR and VFR are both permitted subject to weather. IF you wish to file a VFR flight please enter all the required FP entries as below.
 - a. An important note: ATC cannot see any of the fields other than Remarks if you file a VFR flight plan, so do not request to open VFR flight following ‘as filed’, you will need to provide the required info (aircraft, equipment, dep, dest, alt, route and location) when flying VFR even with a flight plan in the system. This example is for VFR as the expectation is for IFR flight planning to be understood.
 - b. Callsign and Aircraft type are covered in the previous subsections. Ensure your callsign is Cxxxx, not CGxxxx.
 - c. Wake Category: Info is included on the dropdown, but for our operations the Dolphin and training fleet are light, everything else is medium, to verify use the reference in 4b.

- d. Equipment is your equipment suffix based on the navigation equipment you have on board ([reference TBL B-4](#)), most aircraft will be /G, if you have a GPS and are not sure of your equipment suffix file G. This should be filed based on the equipment in the aircraft you are flying (not the USCG asset you are replicating) so as to not confuse the controller, for example the MSFS Captain Sim C-130H does not have a GPS and would be filed as /W or /A even though the real HC-130H/Js are /L.
- e. The departure and arrival airports are required, if unsure of your destination use the departure.
- f. The route field is required, you can either enter a / or a direction of travel if you are unsure of your final routing. You can also include more detailed routing, but again ATC can not see this if VFR, so it is only for other VATSIM members.
- g. Altitude can be set to 1000, or any appropriate higher VFR altitude (1000 is the lowest), again ATC can not see this when VFR.
- h. As mentioned, the Remarks section must include at least “vuscg.com”, other entries based on the operation are included in section 9(1).
- i. All other fields (DOF, airspeed, block, enroute, and endurance times), can all be 0'd/blanked out if you would like, they are just informational.

* Call Sign C6528	* Flight Rules Please Choose IFR OR VFR	* Date of Flight 10/11/2025	* Voice Rules Voice
* Aircraft Type (ICAO) AS350	* Wake Category Please Choose LIGHT	* Equipment (ICAO) S	* Transponder T
* Departure PHJR	* Off Block UTC (HHMM) 1930	* Airspeed (knots) 120	* Altitude (ft) A020
* Route COASTAL VFR KAENA PT			
* Arrival PHJR	* Enroute Time (HHMM) 0205	* Altitude PHNL	* Endurance (HHMM) 0300
Other Information			
PBN OPTIONAL	CODE AIRCRAFT HEX CODE (OPTIONAL) SIX ALPHANUMERIC	RVR OPTIONAL	PBN H FOR HELICOPTER
GPS (OPTIONAL IF NOT PBN PERMITTED WITH SENSORS)	DAY S FOR SATELLITE IS OPTIONAL OR H FOR HF	REQ 6528 (OPTIONAL)	SEL REQUIRED FOR FW OCEANIC ONLY
COM NOT REQUIRED AS VOICE RULES COVERS THIS	OPR COX (OPTIONAL AS IT IS IN REMARKS)	SURV 	
ORIG 	RAIT 	TAKT 	
SET 			
REMARKS YUSCG.COM VSOA			

8. **Startup/Shutdown Locations:** Every effort should be made to start your flight from the USCG ramp at the selected CGAS/CGAF.

- a. Some of these locations have spawn locations in the default simulator scenery, some have add-on scenery available, others have neither and you will need to spawn in somewhere else and move (or slew) your aircraft to the ramp.
9. **Helicopter Departure/Arrival Locations:** It is permitted to depart and land at a helipad or apron. When ATC is online they must approve the request.
10. **Communications:** This subsection outlines common communications that are either unique to the vUSCG, or not encountered frequently in the civilian environment and/or by ATC.
 - a. **Note:** As mentioned, many of the items below are not commonly heard/used, and as such experience with volunteer VATSIM ATC will vary. The vUSCG staff will work with ARTCCs to standardize communications/procedures or familiarize their controllers with our operations where possible, but this will be a slow process. All vUSCG members using the procedures below consistently will help streamline/accelerate this process.
 - b. **Coast Guard Call Signs:** When communicating on the radio military aircraft do not combine/concatenate numbers, this means a flight using the callsign C6040 will be read “Coast Guard Six Zero Four Zero”, not “Coast Guard Sixty Forty”. ATC may incorrectly combine numbers, vUSCG members are expected to continue using the accurate version. Helicopters used by the USCG in some cases also use “Coast Guard Helicopter” and then the side number, particularly on first-contact to help avoid confusion for ATC. The vUSCG does not currently have a required procedure for this, and would suggest pilots use their best judgment on usage (IE if it is busy it is prudent to exclude the ‘helicopter’). Your callsign should always be provided by a mission brief, or the aircraft selected, but the USCG callsign formats are included in the table below.

Aircraft	Callsign/Side Number Format
MH-65	C6501-C6608
MH-60	C6001-C6055
HC-130H	C1701-C1721
HC-130J	C2001-C2019
HC-144	C2301-C2318
HC-27J	C2701-C2714
C-37B	C101 & C102

- c. **Landing Assured & Own Risk:** “Landing Assured” is a phrase used when an aircraft (typically a helicopter) is either landing off airport, or on a non-movement area (Any part of an airport that is not a runway, taxiway, or otherwise designated movement area). This is used because radar contact and/or visual may be lost on the aircraft, and ATC needs confirmation the aircraft has safely landed. “Own Risk” is a phrase used in the same situations (operations not involving a movement area), and indicates the pilot is responsible for any ground/terrain/traffic avoidance in the process of takeoff/landing as they are departing from a location that is not under ATC control.

Examples

- i. **Landing off airport at a hospital, freq change before landing (IRL would be used to coordinate with hospital personnel/operator):**
ATC: C6040 report the Boston Medical Center in sight
C6040: In sight, C6040
ATC: C6040, landing at Boston Medical Center will be at your own risk, frequency change approved, report landing assured.
C6040: We'll report landing assured, C6040.
 —After Landing—
C6040: C6040 is landing assured, we'll call you back in a few for departure.
ATC: C6040, roger, advise ready for departure.
- ii. **Landing at a ramp on an airfield:**
ATC: C6520, report the Santa Monica Airport in sight, and verify you want to land on the ramp?
C6520: Airport in sight. Request landing on the South Ramp abeam the B2 run-up area.
ATC: C6520, Remain East of the Runway 3 extended centerline, landing at the ramp will be at your own risk, report landing assured.
C6520: We'll remain east of the Runway 3 extended centerline, and report landing assured C6520.
 —After Landing—
C6520: C6520 is landing assured.
ATC: C6520, roger, thanks.

11. **Special Operations:** As a vSO approved organization the vUSCG is permitted to conduct some operations not typically allowed on the VATSIM network. You SHOULD whenever possible include the activity in the FP RMK/ section.

Suggested Flight Plan Remarks

- a. "Search and Rescue Op, vSO - vUSCG.com"
 - b. "Law Enforcement Op, vSO - vUSCG.Com"
 - c. "International Ice Patrol, vSO - vUSCG.com"
 - d. "Maritime Security Patrol, vSO - vUSCG.com"
 - e. "Drug Interdiction, vSO - vUSCG.com"
 - f. "Environmental Patrol, vSO - vUSCG.com"
 - g. "National Defense Zone Patrol, vSO - vUSCG.com"
 - h. "Medical Evacuation, vSO - vUSCG.com"
 - i. "Repositioning, vSO - vUSCG.com"
 - j. "Training, vSO - vUSCG.com"
2. For special operations flights everything is taken into consideration for speed and altitude such as weather, airspace, and mission type. As a general rule the door speed for RW is 100kts (only after landing/hover checklist completed). Most search patterns for RW should be around 70-80 kts. Altitudes are not only affected by weather, topography, and airspace but also target size. For small objects (PIW) the search altitude should be around 300AWL. The bigger the target the higher the altitude can be (500/800/100/1000/3000 AGL/AWL). RW aircraft should not exceed 500 ft AGL/AWL while fixed wing assets are on station. FW will also vary altitude based on target size and search altitude starts at 1000 ft AGL/AWL (can go down to 500 ft AGL/AWL if no other aircraft present but not authorized for lower).
 3. As a **LTJG** you are permitted to undertake vUSCG Standard Operations without a task or being tasked.
 4. The full range of SOA activities requires further training before you undertake them.

Discord Use and Bot Commands

All vUSCG members are expected to remain in the official Discord server and utilize the resources available. The vUSCG bot provides helpful tools for mission generation and aircraft tracking:

/location

Allows users to query the current location of vUSCG aircraft. You may search by:

Airframe (e.g., MH-65, C-130J)

Tail Number (e.g., 6004)

Airport ICAO Code (e.g., KCGX)

/mission

Generates a mission profile. Inputs include:

Mission Type (e.g., SAR, LE)

Aircraft Type

Base Location (optional)

Mission Duration (optional)

If aircraft type, base, or duration are not provided, the bot will randomly generate these values for a realistic scenario. All mission types provided by the bot are approved for vUSCG use unless otherwise stated.

USCG Operations (Non-VSOA activities)

The VSO-POL restricts the following activities to VSOA members only;

- Conducting joint training exercises with other approved VSOAs
- War games
- Air to air refuelling
- Carrier operations
- Flying low level military routes
- Flying escort missions
- Executing air combat manoeuvres
- Interception/scramble of other aircraft
- Having access to special use airspace.
- Search and Rescue Operations
- Firefighting Operations
- Launch and Recovery of Space Vehicles
- Air Displays (Flying Displays, Races)
- Fly unmanned aerial vehicles, e.g. Global Hawk

Outside of these activities it is permitted to fly as a vUSCG representative, however it is strongly discouraged. If a member flies an aircraft they are not certified by vUSCG to fly they must NOT reference the vUSCG in their flight plan and are prohibited in participating in any vSO operations listed above. We would instead suggest requesting training for the platform you wish to fly as soon as practical.

Active members should remember that we are not VATSIM police and should make use of appropriate supervisor requests as necessary. Active members are encouraged to promote vUSCG.com and the VSOA to VATSIM users flying Coast Guard style aircraft on network that are not already part of vUSCG.com

Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
USCG	United States Coast Guard (Real world Coast Guard)
vUSCG	Virtual United States Coast Guard
vSO(A)	Virtual Special Operations (Administration)
ATC	Air Traffic Control
ARTCC	Air Route Traffic Control Center (The "Center"s that provide ATC coverage.
AS	Air Staff, see POH Chain of Command (vUSCG 01 and vUSCG 02).
DC	District Commander(s), see POH Chain of Command
IP	Instructor Pilot(s), see POH Chain of Command
CGAS / AirSta	Coast Guard Air Station
CGAF	Coast Guard Air Facility
NATCOM	vUSCG National Command Center

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