

# **War Hawks Forward Air Controller Tactics and Procedures Guide**



*For DCS: Blackshark and Flaming Cliffs 2.0*

*Based in part on the SimHQ article:*

*Hog Basics: RAF Bentwaters Tactics Guide, 1982*

## ***Forward Air Controller Concepts***

Long before you ever get to the target area, the FAC has gotten the situation from the local ground commander. He knows where the bad guys are... and are not... and most importantly, he knows where the good guys are. He has familiarized himself with the target area and has definite ideas about attack axes and weapons types. In a word, he's in charge.

When you arrive in the general area of the target, you should go to the contact point (CP) and do just that, contact the FAC. This is called the "fighter check in". Your message to him is very simple...what you are, how many of you there are, what you are loaded with, and how much time you have before you must return to base (playtime).

Your initial call is to authenticate the FAC...and he authenticates you.

Example: *Papa 1, this is Bravo 1, over.* And his reply: *Bravo 1, Papa 1. Welcome to the war.*

Once the authentication is done, then you provide the FAC with your flight data:

1. Call sign (of flight if multi-ship element)
2. Mission number (if appropriate).
3. Number and type of aircraft
4. Ordnance
5. Playtime (how long you can be on station due to fuel state or other considerations)

For example; *Bravo 1 is on station with 2 Frogs, HE rockets, gunpods, 2 SAB-100, and we've got 45 minutes of playtime.*

His initial response will be to give you the target area basic info:

1. Rendezvous info (where FAC is in relation to CP)
2. De-confliction instructions (Altitude restrictions to reduce possible collisions)
3. Intel update (if applicable)
4. Altimeter setting (if applicable)

Example; *Roger Bravo 1, FAC is 5 clicks Northeast of CP. Hardeck is 1000 meters. Intel Update: we have a tank column to the East of target.*

With these pleasantries out of the way...and with the fighters ready to receive their specific instructions... the FAC prepares his briefing for the fighters. This is called the **"Nine Line Brief"** as it consists of nine items. The fighters will be holding at the contact point when this info is given.  
(See Appendix A)

The 9-line brief looks like this:

1. IP (initial point)
2. Heading to the target
3. Distance to the target
4. Target elevation above sea level
5. Target description
6. Target coordinates (TACAN radial/DME, lat/longs, or grid)
7. How the target may be marked (smoke, laser TISL code)
8. Location of friendlies
9. Egress direction

The thing to remember is that this war stuff is serious business! Now is not the time for someone trying to be cool! For example, lets imagine a 9-line that sounded like this:

*"Alpha, 360, 7, 500, convoy, AB7550, smoke, east, south".*

Then imagine yourself at low altitude trying to fly a holding pattern while checking your buddies' six... and copying this info. Doesn't say much, does it? When it comes to giving a 9-line brief, the FAC wants to be brief... but he doesn't want to be cryptic! With just a few more words, he can make the radio call much easier to understand:

*"IP Alpha, 360 degrees for 7 kilometers, elevation 500 feet, truck convoy on north-south road, grid AB7550, FAC will mark with smoke, friendlies 2 kilometers east in town, egress south."*

Which one would you rather receive?

In addition to the nine items, the FAC may want to add some remarks. These include known threats, run-in restrictions, clearance rules, winds, and best bail out areas. Run-in restrictions are particularly important...the standard rule is that the fighters will not overfly friendlies on their attack runs (this is to prevent short rounds). If this is a factor, the FAC will specify that attack headings must comply with certain restrictions... such as:

*"Make all attacks from the South to the North. Avoid overflying friendlies in town to the East".*

As for clearance rules, the FAC may authorize the fighters to begin their attacks once they reach the target area...or he may direct that each flight member will need to get an individual clearance. The FAC may also tell the fighters his location... he'll set up an orbit close enough to be able to monitor the target and also removed from the attack direction of the fighters.

Sometimes the FAC may want to mark the target with a smoke rocket...this is helpful if the bad guys are hunkered down in the trees and are hard to see. The FAC needs time to set up for his pass, so he'll tell the fighters to give him a "head's up" as they approach the target. Often this is a 30 second call (the fighters are 30 seconds out from the initiation of their attack runs). In this case, the FAC will add the remark...

*"Call 30 seconds out for your mark".*

Ok! Now we're ready to get to work! Copy the 9-line while you are holding at the CP. If in a bone, do it when wings level, not in the turns if possible. Write the data down on your kneepad... in real life, pilots often write this data on the side of the cockpit canopy with a grease pencil!

Now the stage is set for the attack. Once the fighter lead acknowledges the briefing, the FAC will tell him to call departing the IP. The FAC computes the IP-to-target flight time and maneuvers to be in position for a rocket marking pass if needed. He flies away from the fighter attack axis but close enough so that he can see that the fighters are attacking the correct target. His last call to the fighters is "call departing".

The fighter lead then calls "departing" when he leaves the IP and begins his ingress. If needed, he'll make a heads-up call to the FAC as he approaches his action point.

From now on, the flight members including the FAC fly their respective roles. If needed, the FAC turns towards the target and fires a marking rocket at the enemy position. He then tells the attackers to aim relative to the location of his mark... such as:

*"Hit 50 meters west of my mark".*

Of course, most FAC's will want to nail the target with their rocket... in this case, they'll tell the fighters to *"Hit my smoke!"* But the important thing is not that the FAC hit the target, but that he gets close enough so that the mark can be used as a reference. In a high threat area, the FAC may well use a loft delivery when firing the rocket... if so, the rocket will impact only in the general area of the target. The FAC may make things easier by designating a ground reference such as a road or stream as oriented in a general direction... then he can make corrections off of that reference.

For example, the FAC can tell the attacking flight to consider a nearby road to be running north and south. He then makes all of his follow-on corrections using that reference. Using the rocket smoke as a starting point, he can direct where he wants the ordnance to go... such as:

*"Hit 100 meters west of my mark".*

"West" means a 90 degree direction relative to the road... not the aircraft heading indicator.

The fighters will call in on their attacks:

*"One's in from the south."*

He may also add whether or not the FAC is in sight. The FAC then answers:

*"One, cleared hot."*

This means that the leader is authorized to release his weapon. If the FAC does not want the fighter to expend weapons for any reason, he'll most likely just say *"Continue"* or use the abort code to order the fighter to break off the attack if needed... otherwise, he adds *"Cleared, One"* when he can see that the pilot is aimed in the proper direction.

The FAC will use the attacker's weapons impact location to cue the next attacker:

*"Two, hit 100 meters south of one's bomb" or "Shack, one... two, hit lead's bomb".*

"Shack" is the fighter pilot's term for "Bulls-eye"!!

Depending on target damage, available playtime, and ordnance remaining, the FAC may halt the attacks and brief a new target.

At some point, the fighters will be out of ammo or fuel...it will be "bingo" time. They will advise the FAC that they are leaving, and he then will give them their target results.

This is known as the "BDA" report... BDA stands for battle damage assessment. The FAC will give the fighters their time on target (TOT), the target coordinates, weapons delivery results in percentage of hits and targets destroyed, and any observed duds (weapons that did not explode). It might sound like:

*"Nice job Bravo...let's call it 1215 Local, AB7550, 75% on target with four trucks destroy"*

# **Appendix A**

## **Forms and checklists**

**Fence Check**

**FAC Initial Contact Info**

**Nine Line Brief**

**SAM Engagement Envelopes**

**Weapons Envelope**