

# From The Point To The Point



**M**ARINE  
**E**XCELLENCE  
**C**ENTER for  
**C**ONTROLLING  
**A**IRCRAFT



ATC Facility Officer – Capt Richard J. Rose  
SNCOIC – GySgt Uriah D. Bufkin  
Training Chief – SSgt Justin L. Kroemer  
Tower Chief – GySgt Christopher N. Hearn  
Radar Chief – GySgt Chad E. Roach  
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1st Quarter 2012 Volume 4

**The Best ATC Training Facility in the Marine Corps**

## Table of Contents

<b>From The Point</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Training</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>To The Point</b>	<b>5</b>



### **On the cover**

Two MV-22 Ospreys lift off from the base of the tower enroute to MCAS New River.

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Apr 2012

# From The Point

## MSgt Thacker Transfers

On 30 Mar 12, MSgt James B. Thacker transferred from MCAS Cherry Point to MACCS-X in California.

GySgt Thacker arrived at Cherry Point on 14 Jul 08, just as we were installing the new STARS equipment and working out of the old tower and a temporary radar facility. He was a crew officer until his deployment as an individual augment to Afghanistan from 13 Oct 09 to 7 Nov 10. He took the helm as SNCOIC on 18 Feb 11 and was promoted to MSgt on 1 Jun 11.

Upon his transfer he was awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal.

**“For meritorious service while serving as Air Traffic Control Staff Noncommissioned Officer in Charge, Airfield Operations Division, Marine Corps Air Station, Cherry Point, North Carolina from July 2008 to March 2012. During this period, Master Sergeant Thacker successfully led the Air Traffic Control Facility through the 2008 and 2010 biannual Naval Air Training and Operating Procedures Standardization evaluation, resulting in a mission capable rating for the division. MSgt Thacker contributed hands-on instruction and supervised 28,393 training hours of 170 ATC students, netting 397 position qualifications. This is the greatest number of position qualification of any ATC facility in the Marine Corps. His constant oversight and management resulted in more than 180,000 incident-free control tower and radar operations. His leadership, sound judgment, and tenacity made a lasting positive impact on the Marines, civilians, and the ATC facility. MSgt Thacker’s initiative, perseverance, and total dedication to duty reflected credit upon him and were in keeping with the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and the United States Naval Service.”**

## From The Schoolhouse

LCpl Scott C. Stiffel	5 Jan 12
PFC Daniel P. Goodwin	1 Feb 12
LCpl David A. Harlan	15 Feb 12
LCpl Brady R. Adams	23 Feb 12
LCpl Devin J. Turner	15 Mar 12
PFC Zeferino M. Valdez	27 Mar 12



## Controller of the Quarter

LCpl Caitlin K. Higgins was awarded Controller of the Quarter for the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2012. After earning a 7257 MOS in January, she outperformed all other Marines during the quarter with 85 hours of OJT/simulation/classroom and was in instructor for Tower Flight Data and Ground Control for a total of 190 hours.

LCpl Caitlin arrived on 12 Sep 11 from Pensacola and earned her 7257 MOS in the tower in less than 4 months. She is currently about 1/3 of the way through her training on Local Control. She assists his crew staff with airfield status, weather and traffic during crew briefings.

# Training

## Training Program Statistics

	<u>Jan-Mar</u>	<u>Total</u>
OJT Hours	3,735.03	156,499
OJF Hours	360.35	17,443
Tower Simulation (Training)	201.17	6,173
Tower Simulation (Support)	433.67	5,417
Radar Simulation (Training)	642.85	8,446
Radar Simulation (Support)	934.67	11,564
Simulated GCAs	2,243	49,427
MOSs Issued	29	975
Position Qualifications	71	2,719

## Qualifications

<u>Qualifications</u>				<u>Qualifications</u>			
<u>Name</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>MOS</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>MOS</u>
PFC C. K. Higgins	5 Jan 12	GC	7257T	Sgt C. R. Reed	16 Feb 12	GC	
SSgt J. L. Kroemer	17 Jan 12	APW	7253/54	SSgt C. S. Chandler	16 Feb 12	LC	7252
LCpl B. M. Poklar	17 Jan 12	FC	7257R	PFC A. D. Orton	22 Feb 12	FC	7257R
PFC C. Z. Curran	17 Jan 12	RD		PFC R. J. Hession	23 Feb 12	RD	
Sgt C. J. Sharpe	21 Jan 12	AR		Sgt A. S. Kinningham	23 Feb 12	GC	7257T
LCpl E. P. Dorsey	21 Jan 12	RD		PFC M. A. Van	27 Feb 12	RD	
SSgt R. C. Kelley	23 Jan 12	AR		Cpl M. S. Raphael	28 Feb 12	LC	7252
PFC K. T. Smith	24 Jan 12	FD		LCpl E. P. Dorsey	29 Feb 12	FC	7257R
Cpl C. E. Martinetz	25 Jan 12	FC	7257R	Cpl T. D. Brooks	1 Mar 12	APE	7254
2ndLt J. T. Fisher	25 Jan 12	FD		1stLt M. S. Jozaitis	6 Mar 12	LC	
LCpl I. N. Burks	25 Jan 12	GC		Cpl J. C. Skelton	7 Mar 12	GC	7257T
Cpl C. B. Fuller	1 Feb 12	GC		Sgt J. E. Fager	7 Mar 12	LC	
LCpl R. J. Cunningham	1 Feb 12	GC	7257T	1stLt M. S. Jozaitis	9 Mar 12	FC	
LCpl A. D. Rochester	3 Feb 12	FD		LCpl S. S. Jacobi	12 Mar 12	APW	7253/54
1stLt D. M. Tadross	4 Feb 12	RD		Cpl M. T. Carr	12 Mar 12	FC	7257R
Cpl M. T. Carr	6 Feb 12	RD		Cpl C. M. Balk	19 Mar 12	APW	7253/54
Cpl C. B. Fuller	6 Feb 12	FD		Cpl K. W. Thompson	19 Mar 12	RD/FC	
1stLt D. M. Tadross	10 Feb 12	FC		Cpl B. T. Thackrey	20 Mar 12	LC	7252
1stLt E. A. Forestiere	10 Feb 12	LC		SSgt R. F. Pyles III	26 Mar 12	APW	7253/54
SSgt M. J. Lange	10 Feb 12	LC	7252	Sgt C. J. Sharpe	27 Mar 12	FD	
Cpl J. C. Skelton	13 Feb 12	FD		LCpl M. J. Whelton	28 Mar 12	FC	7257R
GySgt C. N. Hearn	14 Feb 12	APW	7254	LCpl D. K. Hainsworth	29 Mar 12	GC	
SSgt W. N. Allen	15 Feb 12	RD		GySgt J. C. Frisch	30 Mar 12	APW/AR	7253/54
PFC K. T. Smith	15 Feb 12	GC	7257T	Cpl M. Dufour	30 Mar 12	RD	
LCpl I. N. Burks	16 Feb 12	FD	7257T	Sgt C. R. Reed	30 Mar 12	FD	7257T
				LCpl B. M. Poklar	30 Mar 12	FD	



# To The Point

with  
**Joe Hendrickson**

## Why I Like MARADMIN 230/04

I believe that the MOS progression established by MARADMIN 230/04 has enhanced the ATC MOS and allowed us to continuously improve its intent and application. It wasn't easy to transition into and not enough Marines were grandfathered but that is all behind us now. We can look back on several problems that led up to this landmark decision.

Problem 1 – Tower and Radar tracks were not equitable in population or promotion, resulting in Problem 2 – Marines reaching GySgt and MSgt with only one MOS. If that MOS was 7312 (Tower), there was a generous respect for a career tower expert. If that MOS was 7322 (GCA), there was an obvious lack of respect and even disdain for the individual. Approach controllers were rare and everybody knew who they were. Problem 3 – The MOS monitor could not determine a level of qualification based on MOS assignment. Problem 4 – There was no chronological progression other than an assumed timeline of 6 months for 7322 and 12 months for 7312.

An MOS change on 10 Sep 92 tried to solve problems 1 & 2 by changing all SNCOs to 7291 and requiring them to have two additional MOSs (GCA/APC or GCA/LC). This also exacerbated problem 3. Since there were still tower and radar tracks, the GCA Marines mostly went to APC/AR training and the LC Marines mostly went to RFC training. This did nothing for problem 4.

Not much changed within the MOS for several years although 1994 saw three dramatic events. First was the announcement on 20 Apr 94 that all Marine Air Traffic Control Squadrons (MATCS) would be deactivated by the end of the year, then on 30 Sep 94 the Restricted Officer Program Study (ROPS) announced that all active duty warrant officers in ATC would be eliminated. The last few were gone on 1 Jul 97. Thirdly, there was a near moratorium on Marines going through ATC School due to an improper response to the overflow from 92-93.

On 7 Oct 96, MSgt James A. Harp floated an idea that would repair virtually all of the problems and set the ATC MOS on a solid path for continuous improvement. He proposed that all controllers have the same primary MOS (7255) and that skill designations be used for LC (7252), AR (7253) and APC (7254). These additional MOSs would be issued for both progression and accomplishment. He also asked that 7291 be returned to only MSgt and MGySgt.

This proposal became policy with the publication of MARADMIN 435/99 on 30 Oct 99. The primary MOS was now 7257 and Marines were on 5-year contracts. This document also established a requirement to complete specific levels of T&R prior to reaching 6 years from ATC School graduation. There was much debate on whether the 7257 would be required to obtain two position qualifications within one branch or four positions within both branches. I believe manpower issues ultimately decided on two-up or two-down. The ability to discern qualification level by MOS was improved but still questionable at the 7257 level.

MARADMIN 230/04 is simply an upgrade to MARADMIN 435/99, using the skill designators tied into a more specific and required progression. The 9-month to 12-year progression is now 8 years old and has not been altered. I would expect 9-month and 12-year waivers to virtually disappear but the 3-year waivers cannot be avoided with the PCS and deployment cycle as it is.

I have read some of the ideas that MGySgt Kidd has produced. While many of them would improve specific aspects of controller proficiency there would be an equal and opposite decrease in other areas due to the finite nature of training and readiness. A good example is the single branch enlistment\*, similar to our MOS before 1999 except now with 5-year contracts. The reduction in total qualifications would result in an increase in proficiency. Typically, at Cherry Point for example, 5 years would show 165 trainees attaining 470

qualifications between the four junior positions and nearly half reaching LC or APC. However, in a single branch environment, the total qualifications would drop to 330 but with a higher level of proficiency and still have about half of the trainees achieving LC or APC for a total loss of 140 qualifications. It's purely hypothetical whether the increase in proficiency offsets that many qualifications.

Another example:

**“Skill designators are utilized by Squadron, Group, and Wing Commanders to determine the unit’s ability to deploy in support of combat operations. The focus needs to shift from air station operating positions to combat skill sets that are required to perform as an air traffic controller in an expeditionary environment. This is the purpose of the Training and Readiness (T&R) program. These skill sets need to be standardized and codified so that training programs and simulations can be designed to obtain these necessary skills. The community needs to stop placing the emphasis on position qualifications at a particular geographic location, but in training controllers to be a deployable asset to the Marine Corps.”\*** - MGySgt Kidd

There is a lot of potential here in regards to the assignment of skill designators. We currently have a limitation on which skill designators can be assigned by each air station based on their NATOPS classification (MARADMIN 229/04). To use some of MGySgt Kidd's own words; If the emphasis were to change away from particular geographic locations, there should be a way to assign all of the skill designators at any MCAS or MACS based on standardized and codified skill sets. Why not? I'm not sure if we are ready to have Marines deployed that never received a position qualification, but I see no reason why MCAS New River or MCAF Quantico, for example, cannot issue a 7254 skill designator if their training program completes all of the required skill sets through OJT and/or simulation.

Although he implies the elimination of MARADMIN 230/04\*\*, MGySgt Kidd need only to tweak the T&R Directive in order to enforce some of his more palatable ideas while remaining within the confines of the MOS progression.

I like the direction that we are heading; we may just need to upgrade the path.

\*Air Traffic Control Training and Career Progression Conference, 9-13 Aug 10, Executive Summary

\*\* Marine Corps Gazette – March 2012