The Global Voice of Pilots

IFALPA

POSITION PAPER

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Phraseology Related to the Transfer of Control and Communication

SUMMARY

Controller Pilot Data Link Communications (CPDLC) provides an alternative to voice communications between air traffic controllers (ATC) and pilots, enhancing efficiency and reducing communication errors. However, the effectiveness of CPDLC depends on the accurate interpretation and application of standard messages.

This paper outlines IFALPA's position and recommendations on the correct use of critical CPDLC messages: "Contact," "Stand by," and "Monitor." Accurate and consistent use of these messages is vital for maintaining safety and efficiency in air traffic management.

BACKGROUND

In Europe, there are reported cases of “Stand By” and “Monitor” being used to silently transfer control from a ground ATC to tower ATC Units.

With increasing frequency congestion, some ATC units use silent ways to transfer control from one unit to another using the phraseology “MONITOR”.

DEFINITIONS

According to ICAO Annex 10 Volume II

Phrase	Meaning
CONTACT	“Establish communications with...”
STANDBY	“Wait and I will call you.” *Note: The caller would normally re-establish contact if the delay is lengthy. STANDBY is not an approval or denial.*
MONITOR	“Listen out on (frequency).”

ICAO Procedures for Air Navigation

Air Traffic Management (DOC 4444) Chapter 12.3.1.4 further defines the meaning of Contact, Stand by For and Monitor in the context of transfer of Control and/or frequency change.

Transfer of control and/or frequency change

A. CONTACT (unit call sign) (frequency) [NOW]
B. AT (or OVER) (time or place) [or WHEN] [PASSING/LEAVING/REACHING (level)] CONTACT (unit call sign) (frequency)
C. IF NO CONTACT (instructions)
D. STAND BY FOR (unit call sign) (frequency)
E. REQUEST CHANGE TO (frequency) - *Denotes pilot transmission*.
F. FREQUENCY CHANGE APPROVED
G. MONITOR (unit call sign) (frequency)
H. MONITORING (frequency) - *Denotes pilot transmission*.
I. WHEN READY CONTACT (unit call sign) (frequency);
J. REMAIN THIS FREQUENCY.

An aircraft may be requested to “STAND BY” on a frequency when it is intended that the ATS unit will initiate communications soon, and to “MONITOR” a frequency when information is being broadcast thereon.

1. "Contact" instructs a pilot to establish radio communication with a specified ATC unit. Pilots should promptly comply with this instruction, confirming the message receipt and establishing voice contact with the indicated ATC unit.

2. "Stand by" is used when the ATC cannot immediately respond to a pilot's request or needs time to process the information. Pilots should acknowledge this message and wait for further instructions without taking any unsolicited actions.

3. "Monitor" instructs pilots to listen to a specified frequency without transmitting. Pilots should switch to the given frequency, actively listen, and only communicate if called upon or in an emergency.

4. Therefore, Standby and Monitor are not appropriate to transfer control. A transfer of control with the phraseology contact (*unit*) (*frequency*) includes a positive contact

with the receiving unit. This includes the positive identification and the presence of the transferred airplane.

5. Standby can only be used when an initial contact call has been made by the transferred airplane, and the ATC unit is busy. When monitoring a frequency, pilots should listen for broadcast information relevant to their flight, such as emergency descents, significant weather, or volcano eruptions, that is applicable to more than one flight in that area.

6. When using Stand By and/or Monitor in the air with the intended meaning of a silent transfer of control, safety is not ensured. Silent transfer of control is not acceptable for IFALPA in the air. Only the instruction "CONTACT (*unit*) (*frequency*)" will lead to a positive transfer of control so that everybody involved knows that the positive transfer of control is taking place.

A silent transfer of control poses a risk to safety because it may result in an incorrect frequency change (such as selecting the wrong frequency or not changing the frequency at all), leading to a complete loss of communication. In areas where Controller-Pilot Data Link Communication (CPDLC) is prevalent and voice communication is already minimized; this risk is even higher compared to areas where voice communication is the only method used.

POSITION

IFALPA's position is that in a voice and CPDLC communication environment, a clear and transparent transfer of control and communication must be achieved by the phrase CONTACT. IFALPA does not support any silent transfer control and communication *in the air*.