



## Special Operations, Policy & Procedures Manual

### **WARNING**

Information contained in this document is intended for flight simulation purposes only.

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# 1 Control Pages

## 1.1 Document Identification

<b>Document Identification</b>	
<b>Type</b>	Policy
<b>Version</b>	2.0
<b>Issue Date</b>	-
<b>Effective Date</b>	-
<b>Scope</b>	This policy applies to all the constituent components that comprise the VATSIM network. It applies to all levels of the organisation, including, but not limited to, the Founders, the Board of Governors, the Executive Committee, the component Regions, their subsidiary Divisions, and all structures comprising each division.
<b>Prepared by</b>	Director Special Operations
<b>Approved by</b>	Vice President Virtual Airlines and Special Operations
<b>Review date</b>	-
<b>Identification</b>	VATSIM-SOA-001_Policy & Procedures Manual

## 1.2 Revision Records

<b>Revision Number</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Description of Change</b>	<b>Author</b>
1.0	01/10/2020	Initial Draft	DSO
1.0	22/11/2021	Initial Release	DSO

### 1.3 Related Documents

Document Name	Document Identification
VATSIM Code of Conduct	TBA
VATSIM Code of Regulations	
ATO Policies and Procedures Handbook v1.4	
Pilot Training Department Standard Operating Procedures v1.4	
Military Pilot Certification Standards	

## 2 Overview

### 2.1.1 Preface

This document shall serve as the written document of requirements and daily operational procedures for all Virtual/simulated civilian, military, paramilitary, and other government agency organizations that wish to use the VATSIM network for online flight simulation.

### 2.1.2 Overview

VATSIM provides the framework for regulation and control of events and activities so that these can be properly conducted to ensure minimal negative impact to other users of the VATSIM network.

### 2.1.3 Authority

In accordance with the VATSIM Code of Regulations, the VATSIM Vice President of Virtual Airlines and Special Operations (VPVASO), shall be the determining authority for all individuals and organizations wishing to utilize the VATSIM network for events and activities described in this document

*“The VPVASO reserves the authority to remove any individual or organization from Virtual Airlines & Special Operations (VASO) partnership, thereby suspending their privilege to conduct any event or activity described in this document. An email notice of removal will be sent to the member and/or organization and to the VATSIM Vice President of Conflict Resolution (VPCR). The VPCR may review a removal and provide the targeted party or parties with an appeals process.”*

### 2.1.4 Applicability

These procedures shall apply to all VATSIM pilots and Air Traffic Control Divisions on the VATSIM network conducting any type of event, activity, or operation described in this document.

### 2.1.5 Requirement

Any pilot or ATC Division wishing to conduct an event or activity described in this document shall first be members in good standing. Any individual or organization in breach of this requirement shall be subject to disciplinary procedures in accordance with VATSIM Code of Regulations Article VI.

### 2.1.6 Responsibility Overall

VPVASO is responsible for building and maintaining VATSIM's partnerships with virtual airlines and with Special Operations organizations.

## 2.1.7 Activities Restricted to Special Operations Partners

SOA organizations are permitted to engage in the following activities:

- Conducting joint training exercises with other approved VSO organizations
- 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 & Rescue Operations\*\*
- Firefighting Operations\*\*
- Aeromedical Evacuations\*\*
- Launch and Recovery of Space Vehicles
- Air Displays (Flying Displays, Races) \*\*\*

VATSIM does not allow civilian airlines or pilots who do not belong to a VSO organization to perform the above operations. Any pilot wishing to take part in the activities are required to join a VSO organization and complete the required training. Any pilot found online and not complying with the rules may be subject to disciplinary actions in accordance with VATSIM Code of Regulations and Code of Conduct.

# - ATC staff can in special circumstances request an intercept or scramble by an approved Special Operations Partner Pilot when they are unable to contact an aircraft within their airspace or at the request of the pilot should all pilots agree, Due regard is to be taken into consideration of all users experience on the network.

\*\* - Individual Organisation can apply to be a Special Operations Organisation for the specific purpose of these activities and as such would be approved under a restricted status whereby, they only have authority to conduct flight that they have been endorsed to conduct.

\*\*\* - Dispensation can be afforded to individuals on a case-by-case basis by the VPVASO or their delegate.

## 3 Structure & Requirements

### 3.1.1 Partnership Categories

All Special Operations Organisations wanting to Partner with the VSOA shall be placed into one of three categories. No partner shall be a member of more than one category at any time. The VPVASO will establish each partnership category based on the nature of operations. The categories are:

#### 3.1.1.1 *Active Partner – Unrestricted*

An organisation that meets all the criteria set forth within this document under Partnership Requirements

#### 3.1.1.2 *Active Partner – Restricted*

An organisation that meets the required criteria under section 3.4 of this document. These organisations have assigned restrictions as designated by the VPVASO or their delegate and are required to have these restrictions visible to the public upon request.

#### 3.1.1.3 *Associate Special Operation Partner*

Associate Organisations are organisations that have met the criteria under section 3.4.1 of this document. These organisations do not have the privileges afforded to Active Partners. Associate organisations must have a published Active Partner Sponsorship to act on their behalf to gain access to the Special Operations privileges in this document.

Associate organisations are for the purpose of developing aspiring Special Operations Organisations. Associate Partners can only hold Associate status for a maximum of 9 months from the date of issuance of said status.

### 3.2 Air Traffic Control Divisions

3.2.1.1 *Air Traffic Control divisions are encouraged to accommodate military pilots as much as possible, to include participating with SOA organizations in joint events, and inviting them to special events in designated airspace. ATC divisions should also educate controllers in the use of SUA, Military Training Routes (MTR), and Air to Air refuelling procedures. Controllers providing ATC services at military air bases would be an operational bonus for military pilots*

3.2.1.2 *Military aircraft do not have any priority over civilian traffic*

### 3.3 VSOA Reporting Structure

The Virtual Special Operations Administration (VSOA) falls under the overall governance of VPVASO who may appoint and delegate the day-to-day running of the VSOA to the Director of Special Operations.

#### 3.3.1 Director of Special Operations

The Director of Special Operations (DSO) is responsible for:

- Overseeing partnership groups
- Processing of petitions for new organizations,
- Maintaining oversight for compliance with VATSIM policies and procedures
- Liaison and assistant to partnership groups when planning and holding online events and activities.
- Provide regular updates to VPVASO

To allow effective management of the VSOA the DSO may choose to appoint and subsequently delegate tasks to the following roles:

##### 3.3.1.1 Deputy Director of Special Operations

The Deputy Director of Special Operations (DDSO) is the immediate deputy to the DSO and assists the DSO with the day to day running of the VSOA.

##### 3.3.1.1.1 Special Operations Training Organisation Chief Flight Instructor

The Special Operations Chief Flight Instructor (CFI) oversees the special operations ATO and is the registered CFI for the ATO. In addition, the CFI assists VSOA Partners to meet the required training expectations. The Special Operations CFI Reports to the Deputy Director Special Operations

##### 3.3.1.1.2 Special Operations Partner Instructors

Special Operations Partner Instructors are instructors approved under the Special Operations ATO to deliver training within the Partner organisation and report to the Special Operations CFI (In addition to other reporting lines within the individual organisation).

##### 3.3.1.2 Regional Advisors

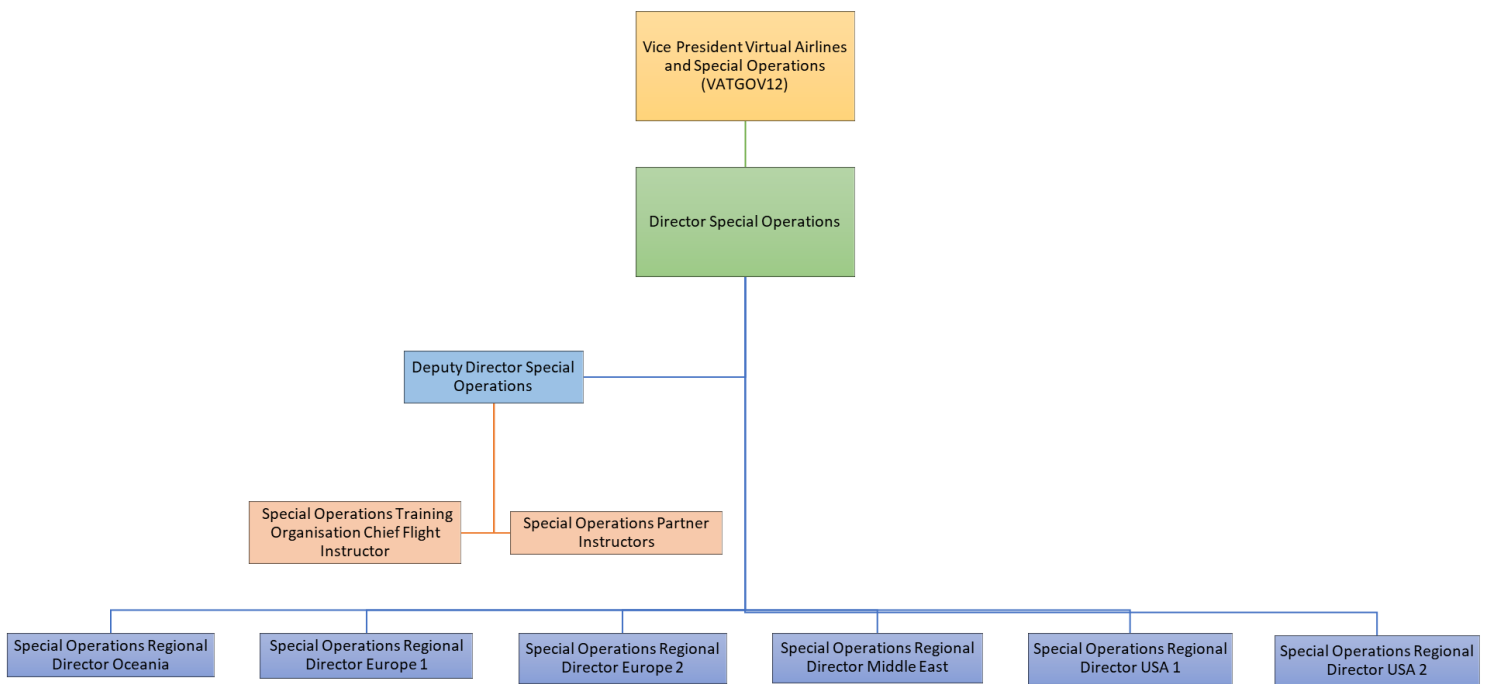
Regional Advisors act as the primary liaison between the VSOA and the VSO Partners and assist where required, any partner within their designated area of responsibility.

Regional Advisors are assigned the following areas of responsibility:

- Europe (x2)
- Middle East
- Oceania
- USA (x2)



3.3.1.3 VSOA Structure



## 3.4 Partnership Requirements

### 3.4.1 Critical Requirements

- 3.4.1.1 *All prospective organisations should go to <https://my.VATSIM.net/> to apply. All organisations must meet the criteria as set out in section 2.4 of this document as it applies to the category in which the prospective organisation wishes to be classified.*
- 3.4.1.2 *Provide verifiable proof that the petitioner has successfully recreated a significant portion of the agency they have selected (determination of 'significant portion' shall be the discretion of the VPVASO or his/her designee).*
- 3.4.1.3 *Provide proof that the operational policies and goals are realistic in nature for the agency being modelled.*
- 3.4.1.4 *The VSOA Leadership team supports all organisations and encourages pilots to fly online. As an online flight simulation network our mission is to provide an aviation experience for pilots and air traffic controllers. Encouraging and sustaining use of the network is the primary means of achieving this goal.*
- 3.4.1.5 *Display VATSIM & Vatsim Special Operations logos on their website with a link to [www.vatsim.net](http://www.vatsim.net). Both logos must be featured either on the VA website homepage or in a clearly marked Partners section.*
- 3.4.1.6 *Active email address. VATSIM managers must be able to contact an official from each Special Operations Partner. It will be the responsibility of the Individual SOA Partner to update that primary contact information when necessary. VSOA communications will be sent to the primary contact email address registered with VATSIM.net*
- 3.4.1.7 *Any software that SOA members need to install to fulfill work for the SOA must follow any data restrictions VATSIM imposes to secure the online system. Therefore, while online, any data collection software or programs utilized by a SOA must not interfere with, or possibly be harmful to, the VATSIM network. In addition, the SOA will not permit any pirated and/or copyright-protected documents, charts, or other files or programs to be posted on or linked from its site without having received prior authorization from the legal owner of said material permitting such use.*
- 3.4.1.8 *Each SOA will maintain decorum and respect both on the VATSIM network and in their own website communications regarding comments, discussions, and interactions with other VATSIM members and participants.*
- 3.4.1.9 *Each SOA Partner will plan and execute a minimum of one (1) flight event each calendar year to be promoted and flown on the VATSIM network. It is strongly encouraged that said events be co-sponsored with ATC providers to maximize the experience.*

The requirements of the event under section 3.4.1.9:

- The SOA Partner must make it public knowledge by the myVATSIM function and via forums and social media
  - The SOA Partner is to provide a Post Event Report to the VSOA focusing on how to assist other SOA Partners in developing their events
  - The VSO event does not have a minimum number of days, it may be a single day or multiday event.
- 3.4.1.10 *Each SOA will be required to have their website GDPR compliant by making sure that website has the following information posted on the front page in a conspicuous location. Each individual SOA will have their choice of either placing a pop-up box/ modal or a general text box which must include the following:*
- Consent from each member to have their data collected and used pursuant to the GDPR Privacy Policy.
  - A link to the GDPR Privacy Policy for members to review.
  - Actual GDPR Privacy Policy located on the main website for easy access.
- 3.4.1.11 *Acknowledge and adhere to the respective administrative chain of command as outlined in this manual*

## 3.4.2 Membership & Administration Requirements

- 3.4.2.1 *Each individual Special Operations Partner must maintain an Operations Manual that governs all operations within that organisation.*
- 3.4.2.2 *Minimum 10 pilots using SOA call sign online within a 60-day period. This requirement demonstrates that the Special Operations Partner is focused on online flying.*
- 3.4.2.3 *SOA in existence minimum of three months, SOAs are often created but many fail to either achieve a critical mass of members or maintain the management commitment for a significant period of time and are quickly abandoned. A SOA that has been in existence for three months or more is likely to have overcome the initial problems that doom many start-ups.*
- 3.4.2.4 *Each applicant and their subsequent membership shall be made aware that violations of VATSIM regulations and the Code of Conduct may have substantial consequences to include, but not limited to; suspensions or permanent removal from the VATSIM network for individuals as well as entire organizations.*
- 3.4.2.5 *Acknowledge that partnership with the VSOA is a privilege, and not a right, and membership may be revoked at any time.*
- 3.4.2.6 *VATSIM does not allow operations of any kind that simulate past/present-day real-world engagements such as loss of life/property, or portraying operations covering political, social, or religious objectives. Supporting a country in mutual and/or humanitarian aid is acceptable, i.e., relief for earthquakes, volcanic eruption, other natural disasters, etc.*
- 3.4.2.7 *Three or more consecutive disciplinary issues involving members of a partnership in one calendar year (Jan thru Dec) shall result in the loss of that partnership's membership for a period of one year.*
- 3.4.2.8 *Audits will be conducted at least once a year and/or when deemed necessary to confirm status of an organization. All partners must complete all audits within ten days. Failure to comply with an audit in the time allotted will be cause for a website link to be removed from the VATSIM web page in addition to the organization losing VSO privileges, after which, the organization will then have to reapply as a new partner.*
- 3.4.2.9 *All partners are required to display their organization's website address in the remarks section of the VATSIM flight plan. This is to allow ATC to identify the organization.*
- 3.4.2.10 *The VATSIM CoR requires that everyone log in to the network (whether flying or controlling) with their appropriate naming convention as per the CoR. We understand that some Spec Ops/Military SOAs take great pleasure in giving their pilots individual nicknames or monikers, however, pilots are to login as per the CoR*
- 3.4.2.11 *All organizations must meet and maintain the requirements set in this Manual that apply to that specific Special Operations Partner Category, Failure to maintain these standards is cause for the VSOA to deem the Special Operations Partner delinquent. Any partner that fails to remedy a delinquency as directed within an allotted time established by the VPVASO or his designee shall have their membership from the VSOA revoked.*

### 3.4.3 Training Requirements

- 3.4.3.1 *Due to the unique nature of operations and the degree of control required, all Special Operation Partners (categorised as Active or Active – Restricted) are required by this policy to meet the requirements and hold an active Membership status to issue the Military Pilot Rating. (eg. have Instructors and Training Program Complaint with the Special Operations ATO)*
- 3.4.3.2 *Pilot Training requirements are to follow as close as can be achieved the mimicked Agency's training program.*
- 3.4.3.3 *All training records are to be kept and presented to either VSOA or the VATSIM Pilot Training Team upon request*
- 3.4.3.4 *All VSO partners are permitted to "fast-track" new recruits only if they have been verified as a certified VSO pilot in another VATSIM approved VSO. All candidates within each Special Operations Partner can apply for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), it is at the discretion of that Partner & Special Operations CFI to grant this.*
- 3.4.3.5 *Any Military Pilot Rating is transferrable between Special Operations Partners*

### 3.4.4 Instructor Training Requirements

- 3.4.4.1 *Instructors are required to hold the Rating in which they intend to instruct and certify*
- 3.4.4.2 *Instructors must be members in good standing at the time of application to gain Instructor Rating*
- 3.4.4.3 *Instructors are required to have accumulated no less than 25 verifiable hours on an operational airframe.*
- 3.4.4.4 *An Instructor Candidate must have taken part in a minimum of 1 multi-SOA exercise – Dispensation can be granted to new SOA applications at the discretion of Special Operations CFI or their delegate.*

### 3.4.5 Agreements

- 3.4.5.1 *Another means to assist partners are tools that are commonly used in the creation of agreements between organizations and other agencies when applying for the use of Special Use Airspace (SUA) areas, ATC facilities, or special operations and events. When a letter is authored the writer should include their name and organization for credit, but the remainder of the document should be void of naming specific military organizations unless required. There are two (2) basic letters that are used:*
- 3.4.5.2 **LETTERS OF AGREEMENT (LOA)** - *Letters of Agreement are used between different agencies, both domestic and foreign, both governmental and non-governmental when it is necessary to:*
- Delegate areas of control jurisdiction and conditions of use
  - Define interagency and inter faculty responsibilities and coordination requirements.
  - Describe special operating conditions or specific air traffic control procedures.
  - Describe procedures or deviations from procedures as contained in regulatory directives.
- 3.4.5.3 **LETTERS OF PROCEDURE (LOP)** - *Letters of Procedures are normally used for stating specific terms regarding the release by the using agency of restricted areas. It provides for the operation of nonparticipating IFR and/or VFR flight within the area. They also used for establishing procedures within a facility or unit.*
- 3.4.5.4 *All LOA and LOP authored by one partner for special operations shall be available for use by all partners. Partners shall be required to adhere to the documents established.*
- 3.4.5.5 *Any partner obtaining SUA in accordance with this policy shall immediately notify the VPVASO and/or his/her designate of the agreement and forward all applicable documentation. All agreements shall be considered indefinite and without expiration until revised by the originator or when requested to do so by the VPVASO or his/her designate. Also, the VPVASO reserves the authority to cancel or otherwise dissolve any agreement.*

### 3.4.6 Special Use Airspace

- 3.4.6.1 *Each Partner organization acknowledges that the use of SUA is a privilege and not a right and may be suspended and/or revoked at any time by the VPVASO.*
- 3.4.6.2 *Special use airspace is the designation for airspace in which certain activities must be confined, or where limitations may be imposed on aircraft operations that are not part of those activities. Certain special use airspace areas can create limitations on the mixed use of airspace. The special use airspace depicted on instrument charts includes the area name or number, effective altitude, time and weather conditions of operation, the controlling agency, and the chart panel location. On National Aeronautical Charting Office (NACO) enroute charts, this information is available on the panel opposite the air/ground (A/G) voice communications.*
- 3.4.6.3 *Restricted areas are areas where operations are hazardous to nonparticipating aircraft and contain airspace within which the flight of aircraft, while not wholly prohibited, is subject to restrictions. Activities within these areas must be confined because of their nature, or limitations imposed upon aircraft operations that are not a part of those activities, or both. Restricted areas denote the existence of unusual, often invisible, hazards to aircraft (e.g., artillery firing, aerial gunnery, or guided missiles). IFR flights may be authorized to transit the airspace and are routed accordingly. Penetration of restricted areas without authorization from the using or controlling agency may be extremely hazardous to the aircraft and its occupants. ATC facilities apply the following procedures when aircraft are operating on an IFR clearance (including those cleared by ATC to maintain visual flight rules (VFR)-On-Top) via a route that lies within joint-use restricted airspace:*
- *If the restricted area is not active, the ATC facility will allow the aircraft to operate in the restricted airspace without issuing specific clearance to do so.*
  - *If the restricted area is active and has not been released, the ATC facility will issue a clearance which will ensure the aircraft avoids the restricted airspace. Restricted areas are charted with an "R" followed by a number (e.g., " R-5701") and are depicted on the enroute chart appropriate for use at the altitude or FL being flown.*

3.4.6.4 *Military operations areas (MOAs) consist of airspace of defined vertical and lateral limits established for the purpose of separating certain military training activities from IFR traffic. Whenever an MOA is being used, nonparticipating IFR traffic may be cleared through an MOA if IFR separation can be provided by ATC. Otherwise, ATC will reroute or restrict nonparticipating IFR traffic. MOAs are depicted on sectional, VFR terminal area, and enroute low altitude charts and are named rather than numbered (e.g., "Boardman MOA").*

### 3.4.7 Callsign Policy

3.4.7.1 *VATSIM will not reserve or restrict call signs for any individual or organization other than those listed in the Code of Conduct rule(s).*

### 3.4.8 Carrier Operations

3.4.8.1 *Carriers are unique in nature. To take part, a pilot must belong to an approved VSO organization and pass the organization's training program.*

3.4.8.2 *Approved Special Operations Partners may apply for and be granted rights to use landable ships in support of aircraft operations. Organization must have a landable ship Standard Operating Procedures Manual.*

3.4.8.3 *A landable ship is a ship that, generally but not exclusively, is created by the user via their simulator scenery or a third-party add-on, for single or multiplayer use, that has the capability of a hardened deck area designed for launch and recovery of aircraft and on a mission specifically authorized by the organization's command structure.*

3.4.8.4 *Ship operating full ATC include positions up to the equivalent of an Approach position with radar client settings appropriate for an Approach position. When a ship is operating at full ATC capacity the airspace around the ship shall be designated class C from the surface to 10,000 feet MSL with a radius of 70 - 100 NM centred on the carrier.*

3.4.8.5 *As part of the organization's application, the specific ICAO-like designators and ATC callsigns for ships to be used will be provided along with the proposed structure of the ATC association with that ship and their equal VATSIM ATC ratings. In addition, the proposed airspace structure for each ship shall be detailed in the application, any primary and secondary VHF (or UHF where possible and applicable) frequencies, and proposed transponder codes to be issued to departing aircraft.*

3.4.8.6 *ATC radar client users will move their primary visibility centre to remain within less than 10 NM of the vessel while the ship is underway and within 1 NM when stationary.*

3.4.8.7 *Unless requested and justified otherwise within the organization's application to use ships, no organization may operate more than 3 ships at the same time on the network.*

3.4.8.8 *The LOA should outline specifics of modifications to the basic airspace around a landable ship to accommodate the ship under or within the facilities existing airspace.*

3.4.8.9 *Unless otherwise authorized by LOA, all ships will connect their client at an initial position at least 100 NM from the closest land. Cruising of these ships while not in support of air operations is not authorized.*

## 3.5 Definitions

### 3.5.1.1 RPL – Recognition of Prior Learning

Recognition of prior learning is an assessment process that involves assessment of an individual's relevant prior learning (including formal, informal, and non-formal learning) to determine the credit outcomes of an individual application.

### 3.5.1.2 Conducting joint training exercises with other approved VSO organizations

Conducting events with other VSOA's with the primary focus on Restricted Operations. Non VSOA members can take part in events planned and executed by VSOA as long as the activity is not deemed restricted by this policy & procedures manual and there is referenceable acceptance of such participation.

### 3.5.1.3 War games

Conducting activities that are or can be viewed as military conflict scenarios

### 3.5.1.4 Air to air refuelling

The actions of refuelling 1 or more aircraft whereby the aircraft are airborne

### 3.5.1.5 Carrier operations

Conducting all flight operations on or within the vicinity (with intent to engage with) a carrier ship

### 3.5.1.6 Flying low level military routes

The action of conducting training through military designated areas at low levels with intent to appear with intent to be conducting it in a military manner

### 3.5.1.7 Flying escort missions

The actions of conducting flights in escort of another aircraft whether civilian or military \_ to note flying "escort" is not formation in some circumstances the aircraft conducting the escort do not need to be in formation they can be up to 1nm separated

### 3.5.1.8 Executing air combat manoeuvres

The actions of executing military manoeuvres utilised in combat scenarios whether in restricted airspace or not

### 3.5.1.9 Interception/scramble of other aircraft

The action of conducting a planned flight to meet up with another aircraft (known or unknown) with intent to escort that aircraft (Note: ATC are able to request a Intercept/scramble of unattended connections when available taking due regard for the enjoyment experience of the other pilot as it applies to the CoC &/or CoR)

### 3.5.1.10 Having access to special use airspace.

The action of requesting and utilising special use or restricted airspace on the VATSIM network

### 3.5.1.11 Search & Rescue Operations

The action of planning and executing emergency flights (fixed or rotary wing) in search for other targets (for the purposes of search & rescue)

### 3.5.1.12 Firefighting Operations

The action of planning and executing flights with the purpose of combating simulated fires (Fixed or Rotary Wing)

### 3.5.1.13 Aeromedical Evacuations

The action of planning and executing flights with the flights primary intent is to transport (simulated) medical patients (whether Emergency or non-emergency)

### 3.5.1.14 Air Displays (Flying Displays, Races)

The action of planning and executing a Flying Display or airshow – Event dispensation can be given for non-VSOA organisation upon request from the Special Operations Team



### **Approval Authorities**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Signature</b>
Roger Curtiss	Vice President of Virtual Airlines & Special Operations	
Nathan Noble	Director Special Operations	
James Pheibush	Deputy Director Special Operations	