



FIGHTER FORMATION FUNDAMENTALS



Fighter Formation Qualified Aircrews,

We hope you have had a chance to read through the new formation manual. In a continuing effort to improve our formation program we have generated new formation qualification cards. It was felt that a more official appearing card that included the qualification position was necessary. In that light, I developed the cards enclosed with this letter. Please discard the original cards in favor of the new one.

Also enclosed is a Formation Standards guide. Those that have browsed through the new manual will notice this is almost identical to the one in the manual. I have added the first section entitled "Radio Discipline". The remainder is the same. We realize that not everyone is going to commit the manual to memory. However, it would be very beneficial if everyone would at least become very familiar with these standards. Even in the Air Force tactical community, each unit developed standards to facilitate faster briefings and to insure everyone was operating from the same sheet of music. We still continue to see a lot of confusion concerning formation and shotgun take-offs, and especially radio communications. Please note the time to get current with this card. It will make us all safer and more professional.

The last item I would like to discuss is one of special emphasis. Periodically, we will distribute items of interest, weak areas, etc., that will be titled special emphasis. Our topic for this letter is Radio Discipline. The most common detractor of otherwise good formation flights is the ever-present poor radio procedures. Correct radio procedures are very simple. Problems we see over and over again are simply from lack of experience or knowledge of the correct way to accomplish it. The new manual covers this in detail. I would like to hit it again to refresh your memories. The lead pilot only should initiate all radio frequency changes (i.e., "Mustang Flight 122.75 – Go"). To acknowledge this command, each wingman should announce his position in sequence (i.e., "2, 3, 4"). This is the only way the flight lead can be sure everyone got the command. The flight lead will give his wingman enough time to move out and change frequencies and then check the flight back in (i.e., "Mustangs – Check In"). Only after commanded to check in will wingman acknowledge with their position (i.e., "2, 3, 4"). Wingman will check in with their position only (not "Two's up, etc.). The flight lead may delay the check in due to radio congestion, etc. Do not check in until commanded to do so. As wingman, be alert to impending frequency changes so you do not miss the command or check in out of order. Nothing sounds more unprofessional than botched or out of order check ins. I hope we haven't beat a dead horse with this issue, but hopefully we can all improve with a little effort.

Thanks to all of you for your efforts and friendship in this endeavor. As time goes on we will attempt to develop a strong formation program. We are in the process of combining databases of qualified crewmembers. Undoubtedly, someone will get lost in the initial shuffle. Please call me if we have made any mistakes with your qualifications. The current databases are being updated by John Ellis for the non P-51 fighter types and myself for the Mustang gang.

I hope you have a wonderful holiday season and look forward to flying with all of you again if it ever warms up.

Thanks again,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bradley C. Hood".

Bradley C. Hood
Vintage Fighters