

WORLDWIDE UTILITY NEWS

Nightwatch outline - by Jeff Haverlah

The following is an attempt to 'outline' the NIGHTWATCH net activity. Very tentative! This outline is written for my amusement and benefit. It's written so that I stop forgetting this stuff. It's publicly provided at the request of others to amuse (or bore) the idly curious.

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30 March 2005

The following "note" was written in mid 1999. By CY 2000 the "Nightwatch" net rapidly went "silent." The daily connectivity communications between the various players in the net (E-6As) and the E4s became few and far between, eventually resulting in a noticeable silence on the ZULU freqs. Possible this silence was the result of the E-6As becoming E-6Bs, with the upgraded equipment finally allowing all players in the net to maintain connectivity via UHF (GEPs and direct) and satellite channels due to commonality of equipment.

The players in the nets still utilize HF and the ZULU frequencies mostly during periodic exercises in October/November (GLOBAL GUARDIAN said to be renamed GLOBAL LIGHTNING for FY 2005 and beyond), March and other times of the year. The Nightwatch NCS also still is found active with E3 AWACS connectivity comms on an occasional basis (monitoring of AWACS phone patch traffic with TRENTON MILITARY on 11232.0 USB will often produce the working ZULY frequencies for these connectivity checks.)

And for FY 2005 (beginning 01 Oct 2004) if not earlier the ZULU frequencies may have gone through a modification of unknown nature.

Note (1999):

On, or no later than, Monday 21 March 1994 (and heard active with ANDREWS VIP on utc 19 March 1994) the callsign "NIGHTWATCH 01" was utilized as the static callsign for the Net Control Station of the High Frequency radio net now known as the "NIGHTWATCH net" [prior to this date the NCS was identified as a daily changing tactical callword of between 9 and 7 characters in length, a practice that had been in effect for many years]. The identity of the HF NCS remained "NIGHTWATCH01" from at least March 1994 (with one known exception) up to the end of February or the first day of March 1999.

At 0000z (or slightly later) 23 January 1999 the station known as NIGHTWATCH 01 was aliased to a daily changing tactical callword, and utilized a daily changing callsign over the next three days (UTC) [RAILROAD; JAYWALK; HAILSTORM]. On 26 January 1999 the NCS reverted to the static callsign NIGHTWATCH 01 [with indications that certain players in his net were expecting the use of RAINCOAT and GAS HOUSE on the 26th and 27th of January].

Possibly on Saturday 27 February 1999 [HAPPY DAY], but in any case no later than Monday 01 March 1999 the station known as "NIGHTWATCH 01" again was aliased to a daily changing tactical callword and has remained aliased since that date. In addition all other static identities, with the exception of WAR 46, have been aliased to daily changing tactical callsigns as well. These identities include the front end callsigns of the UFAF's E-4Bs (GORDO ## to daily changing 5-character callsigns), WALDORF, Ground Entry Points (GEP's), Air Force alert pad locations, etc. [Or at least their intention to

remain aliased is noticable even though there are many times in which there are exceptions when the locations are identified by their common static names].

The following was compiled over a period of time beginning in late 1994 and does not reflect the change to daily changing tactical callsigns on the part of NIGHTWATCH 01 and some of the other static callsigned players. However, as of now even though NIGHTWATCH 01 is aliased to a callword the net activity still fits the "template" of pre March 1999 activity with all players still usually recognizable [except for NIGHTWATCH 02/03/04; it is suspected that 02 would still be recognizable due to certain patterns of behavior unique to him, but it's only speculation]. But as always, the net still appears to be undergoing a steady evolution of unknown resolution.

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Net participants:

Net control station

Usually, NIGHTWATCH 01.

When NIGHTWATCH 01 is in his/her 'monitor only' period, it appears that another net participant gets partial ncs duties, but not always.

Since October 1998 (+/-) it is very noticable that there is almost always no accomplished net control station in the absence of NIGHTWATCH 01.

Daily changing tactical callsigned stations

WAR46

WAR 46 MOBILE

WGY### (FEMA activity implied), sometimes 'aliased' to a callsign.

'Callsign' ## - extremely rare

'GORDO' ## - *extremely* rare

NIGHTWATCH 02 through 04.

NIGHTWATCH 04 LIMA

NIGHTWATCH 04 CHARLIE

NIGHTWATCH - Probably a sign of lax practices on the net, where they start dropping the suffix.

AWACS using their "backend" identities (DARKSTAR NOVEMBER etc)

(Possibly TROUT 99 once, and maybe not - active with a player.)

Callsign information

NIGHTWATCH ##

Heard:

NIGHTWATCH 01 - most common callsign

NIGHTWATCH 02

NIGHTWATCH 03

NIGHTWATCH 04

NIGHTWATCH 04 LIMA

NIGHTWATCH 04 CHARLIE

NIGHTWATCH 01:

Callsign was apparently activated 21 Mar 94 (or, at least very near that date) as the NCS for it's nets.

Prior to 21 Mar 94, the NCS was usually a 9-character callsigned station.

Seems to be active 24 hours a day (even when he's not active.

However, from the latter half of 1998 NIGHTWATCH 01 would be noticably out of the net for extended periods during major Presidential trips out of the country. Prior to this time the "decapitation" seemed to be for much shorter timeperiods, if at all, during Presidential foreign trips).

Often he is apparently parked on a ramp somewhere, but active.

(When on the ground at DYESS and BARKSDALE his signal is

usually unheard here - his signal will "skip" over my location) Can be reached at various DSN numbers: In the states, most common DSN is the 939 prefix. During a phonepatch in Dec 96, it was alluded that the GHFS station [MACDILL, now closed] had a total of 5 DSN numbers assigned to NIGHTWATCH 01. Twice during active net activity in late 1994, NIGHTWATCH 01 was described by a player as the "kneecap" [NEACP]. During Oct/Nov 1995 net activity (and later), he was described as "nay-ok" [NAOC] which would reflect the 1994 "name" change from NEACP to NAOC.

NIGHTWATCH 01 apparently uses other callsigns:

CHALICE BRAVO (AWACS) placed patch (1994) via GHFS to CASELOAD. When patch was activated, the called party id'ed himself as NIGHTWATCH 01. CHALICE BRAVO refused to talk to this station (despite urging of GHFS opr and NIGHTWATCH 01 opr) until NIGHTWATCH 01 opr id'd himself as CASELOAD.

Comms can be conducted by two or more operators (male and/or female), sometimes at the same time. And sometimes during extended sentences and challenges on the nets, part of the comm can be by two different operators sometimes literally in the same sentence.

In 1994, NIGHTWATCH 01 would attempt phonepatch service for a player in the net (a call to the DSN 339 prefix associated with StratComm Wing ONE at TINKER); and he attempted to place another phonepatch on another day for an ACME ## (who had called MAINSAIL, and raised WARLORD instead, acting as sort of a go-fer for NW01) on the GHFS to another DSN 339 number (unsuccessful). [While editing this in 1999 it suddenly struck me that ACME ## was a TACAMO calling a location at StratComm Wing 1].

1999: These phonepatch attempts are very rare but have been heard in the years since 1994.

Since 1998 (since shortly after 25 September 1998) NIGHTWATCH 01 has acted as apparent designated contact party between certain players in the daily nets and WALDORF.

The players (obvious E-6Bs) will raise NIGHTWATCH 01 to request that NIGHTWATCH 01 contact WALDORF to set up comms via numbered RF channels/configurations and by particular Ground Entry Points:

GEP points heard (here) in the nets since 1998:

OFFUTT

LAMAR

ALBUQUERQUE

WILLIAMS ("AFB")

STRAWBERRY PEAK

NOBLE (OK) HILLSBORO

BARKSDALE SIGNAL MOUNTAIN (TN)

JASPER

Plus:

WRIGHT PAT GREEN HILL ELLSIVILLE (FL)

(And maybe others)

If the callsigns cannot reach NIGHTWATCH 01 via the HF net frequencies then they have been known to contact NIGHTWATCH 01 via GHFS phonepatch to coordinate this activity. Prior to shortly after 25 Sept 1998 the callsigns would contact WALDORF directly via GHFS phonepatch through a commercial toll-free telephone number. As of early Oct 1998 or so it is now very rare (but no unheard of) for the callsigns to place these requests directly, particularly if NIGHTWATCH 01 is in a monitor only mode or is out of contact of the net..

NIGHTWATCH 02: Tentative.

NIGHTWATCH 02 seems to become very active during major comm exercises. NIGHTWATCH 02 apparently does not assume a 'lead' role during it's activity. It seems to 'defer' to NIGHTWATCH 01. It's role does not appear to be passive, but it is much less active than NIGHTWATCH 01. Two major examples of when NIGHTWATCH 02 played much more than a passive role:

22/23 (UTC) Mar 95: A massive net participating in a 12 hour exercise (1800z+/- to 0600z+/-), with NIGHTWATCH 01 and NIGHTWATCH 02 very active (by local evening they were using 5700.0 as a 'backchannel' while the net was active elsewhere.)

1. NIGHTWATCH 02 would pass in-the-blind "three-six-nine messages" to the net: at 2008z 22 Mar 95, the 369 message was preceded with a call to NORMANDY. (It may have been a code word in the manner of SKYMASTER - there was no NORMANDY heard in the net at any time that day.)

Additional information: There is now (post 1997) heavy use of the callword SKYMASTER when they preface their AKAC 3-6-9 messages during these exercises (late October and March are two heavy exercise periods). SKYMASTER appears to be a general call to any airborne command post. Although only recently noted during these exercises the callword was said to have been heard in the late 80s on certain UHF circuits.

2. The NIGHTWATCH 02 operator was definitely *not* USN. At 1957z, PROLOGUE calls NIGHTWATCH 02 ("Two"), then calls CLAYBIRD (very high up in that net's pecking order), and asks CLAYBIRD to get the coordinates for NIGHTWATCH 02's "Playground". CLAYBIRD did so, and NIGHTWATCH 02 responded with a "request for spelling of callsign PLAYGROUND." This went round and round for 30 seconds, so CLAYBIRD (with a noticeable "smile" in his voice) said that they want *YOUR* Playground. With a "roger, roger," NIGHTWATCH 02 advised that he now understood, and requested (and used) ANDVT comms.

NIGHTWATCH 02, of all the NIGHTWATCHs (other than 01) is the most active of all, when he is active on days other than exercise days. Yet, this activity is still rare.

NIGHTWATCH 02 has certain characteristics/practices that are unique to him alone of all the net players in his dealings with NIGHTWATCH 01.

NIGHTWATCH 03-04: *Very rare*. Not heard by me in *any* active exercise; only heard on apparently random days. (During one week NIGHTWATCH 04 (female opr) was caught on a couple of days calling WGY 918 (Denver - and I got the strangest feeling from her station's sound that she was over the Western U.S. - a propagation thing.))

NIGHTWATCH 04 'alphacharacter'

On 17 Aug 95, NIGHTWATCH 04 LIMA periodically called NIGHTWATCH 04 CHARLIE (aka NIGHTWATCH 04 'see'). This kind of suffixed call as it applies to the NIGHTWATCH 0# is new to me and to others. These calls were active on a day during which NIGHTWATCH 01 maintained a large active net on that day's HF net frequency and NIGHTWATCH 02, 03, and 04 were all active on 11243.0. It was during these comms that the NIGHTWATCH 04 LIMA and CHARLIE comms were heard.

Daily Tactical Callsigns.

Mostly consist of eight character callsigns, at least since Mar 94.

Now not true as of fall of 95. There are now lots of 7 and 9 character calls active, all seemingly USN assets (TACAMOs probably.) [Written prior to 01 October 1998. but character count info still valid as of 1998].

There are also 9-character and 7-character callsigns as well.

Very rarely there are 6-character callsigns. Significance of the 6-character call?

Very rarely there are 5-character callsigns: BANKS, SUSAN, EVANS, NOTED, etc.

(Rhetorical question: are the 5-character callsigns, which are

almost always persons' names, maybe ground stations?? The TACAMOs have been heard discussing 5 character callsigns on occasion. EVANS is definitely associated with StratComm Wing ONE, and is apparently 'static.' [EVANS is often referenced by the players when they are discussing their WHISKEY BRAVO comms in phonepatches with BOOMTOWN]. NOTED is another 5-character callsign that appears often in TACAMO oriented conversations; it is not clear from context if NOTED is just another airborne player or if he is something else. Another rhetorical question: are the MCC's (Mobile "National" Command Centers) still active, and do/did they ever show up in the nets aliased to callwords, either pre or post 01 Jun 92? And, there are still very rare occasions where there are 10 to 12-character callsigns (but nothing larger.)

SILVERDOLLAR; GOLD DIGGER. Prior to Mar 94, RESETTLEMENT. These were usually heard during apparent exercises. SILVER DOLLAR was heard on a day when the players in the nets were conducting the once common monthly "Exercise Inject" activity on the GHFS.

Information about the callsigns:
(1994-1998):

One of the participants is a daily tactical callsign that initiates the EAMs into the nets.

Separate from NIGHTWATCH 01 who also will bcst EAMs.

Apparently, the same station each day with a different callsign (presumed 'glass but not always).

In many cases the operators are recognizable day to day. (Many have distinctive comm "habbits"/mannerisms or distinctive regional accents).

The operator is almost always male.

Female operator only heard twice in during 1994/95.

No longer the case - female operators are not nearly as common as male operators but are no longer rarely heard.

The diction of the operators is very distinctive.

The background noise level is quite high.

Voices reading alphanumeric character strings.

Voices calling out trigraph callsigns (sounds USN)

Not noticed as much in 1997+.

Sometimes rarely, 'warble tones' heard in background (very rare)

Sometime this station maybe comes up on freq with a 'growl' of a transmitter tuneup device. Mostly he just pops up. On 20 Feb 96, VALHALLA popped up for 10 seconds with keyed transmitter that sounded just like the sounds a number station makes both pre and post traffic; then he was into his EAM.

Seems to be about the same signal strength each day at my location (fair levels only; changed in 1998).

Most of the callsigns in the nets are USN assets (TACAMOs).

Distinctive USN comm chatter.

Distinctive USN rank/rating chatter.

They spend lots of time on the GHFS calling TINKER DSN 339 numbers - StratComm Wing 1.

Prior to Oct 95 (or maybe earlier):

Most common number: 339 3944, always id'd by a callword, sometimes remaining static over two days, but usually changing on a daily basis.

If they called VQ4 OPCON, they placed phonepatches to DSN 326 numbers - PAX RIVER.

Since the Spring of 1996, the DSN prefix is now 342. 1998: This number is now very rarely heard.

From Oct 95 (Nov 95, for sure), *all* VQ4 OPCON (aka OPCON) go to a single DSN 339 number, and the use of the callwords has mostly disappeared, with the exception of BOOMTOWN, which is a static call, and

has it's own "position" within viewing and shouting distance (apparently) of the VQ4 OPCON guys.

Mentions of VQ3 (OPCON) were/are much rarer [1998 and earlier]. They have their own DSN 339 number. Maybe starting in late 1996 (or maybe early 1997) many of these calls were id'd as COMMAND CENTER. As of late 1998 they may be back to using callwords for their id's instead of in-the-clear identifications.

At an airshow in mid 1995, members of a TACAMO crew confirmed that they are heavy participants with NIGHTWATCH 01 and WAR46 (although they did not directly confirm or discuss participation in the nets, nor would they discuss the nature of the nets and their participants - but they did confirm that they are often heard on HF with their "restorals" - the xmsn of their "traffic" (the EAMs)).

Just guessing, but I suspect that on most days (those days when it is not just NIGHTWATCH 01 and one or two callsigns (TACAMOs)), the nets consist mostly of all TACAMOs, plus NIGHTWATCH 01 and one other probable non-TACAMO callsigned aircraft - maybe USAF, plus the EAM initiator. Just guessing, though. [This was before 25 Sep 1998. After this date there were no EC135Cs active in these nets]. And, just maybe one of these USN 'assets' is not airborne at all, particularly during exercises.

The USN has been an active player in these nets since maybe June 1992 (August 1992 for sure.)

On 19 Aug 92 (the first day that I noticed the *heavy* USN lingo on these nets) the ncs OUTSPOKEN (9-characters) directed CROWNSAW to pass OUTSPOKEN's traffic (GVNMTM..) to SIERRA ONE WHISKEY. A quick spin through the memories found CROWNSAW on 11255.0 (location of a *very* active USN net), except CROWNSAW was now B1V calling S1W, trying to pass his traffic.

A late 1996 issue of Aviation Week and Space Technology indicated that the TACAMO's have been active with comms for the bombers and missile silos since 1990. Also alluded to in a 12 Jun 95 article on the TACAMO "Looking Glass" upgrade in Aviation Week and Space Technology.

(late 1998 and later):

The EAM broadcaster:

One of three stations on "normal" days:

Most common: a station using a daily changing callword.

Almost always at good or better signal levels here.

Common: NIGHTWATCH 01 (1999: aliased to callword).

Varies in signal strength from day to day and hour to hour.

Not rare: another station aliased to a daily tactical callword, and heard on certain "USN" HF frequencies as well.

Signal strength varies, but usually at no better than fair levels here.

Since 1998 some of these stations (including NIGHTWATCH 01) will pop up on a frequency approximately 500hz

"high" and noticable move down in frequency to zero beat the proper frequency - this was explained by one NIGHTWATCH 01 operator to a questioning callsign operator as being the result a transmitter being just turned on and quickly "warming up" (!). [From comm chatter, there was apparently a major equipment upgrade performed in 1997 or 1998].

'Daily Tactical callsign' stations with numeric suffixes:

On 22 Aug 95, SEAOTTER was a very active player in that night's NIGHTWATCH net on 6730.0. At 0415z+, a station id'ing as SEAOTTER TWO periodically calls SEAOTTER THREE,

with no response. This kind of suffixed 'daily tactical callsign' is very new to me in reference to these nets (or anywhere else, for that matter.)

On 24 Aug 95, GUIDEPOST (female opr, and the EAM initiator to the Net), id'd herself later as GUIDEPOST 01, working GUIDEPOST 02 (male opr.) Approx 30 min. later, female opr, now iding as GUIDEPOST 02, worked the male opr, iding as GUIDEPOST 01, and checked GUIDEPOST 01 out of the net with the 'challenge' process. ?????

On 07 Nov 95, FACECARD 02 seemed to replace FACECARD 01 in the net, and FACECARD 02 seemed to become FACECARD.

The above suggests that during these periods of time, the callsign is to remain static, but the a/c is replaced. A hand-off. [No instance of this was heard in 1998].

TACAMO PAC and TACAMO CENT mentioned in the NIGHTWATCH net of 31 Dec 96 on 9016.0; probably aliased to callwords (at the time, maybe DIGNIFIED and DOORKNOB).

WAR46

FORT RICHIE, Md. (Site "R" - Raven Rock, PA..)

Seems to check in near top of hour and around H+40 for signal checks with NIGHTWATCH 01 only. (He can check in at any time, though; but, as a general rule the H+40/45 time frame seems to hold on many days.) [This was true at the time but does not seem to be the case in 1998].

He (female oprs are *very* rare here: 06 Oct 95 for instance) [still true as of 1998+] has vary rarely worked callsign stations though in the past, mostly to advise that NIGHTWATCH 01 is 'monitor-only.' Does not engage in chatter, otherwise - seemingly ignoring requests for info from callsigned stations. In 1998 NIGHTWATCH 01 would sometimes use WAR 46 to contact stations that NIGHTWATCH 01 was having problems hearing.

Prior to 21 Mar 94, WAR46 would often work the callword stations active in the net, presumably the ncs (who seemed to be mostly 9-character calls prior to 21 Mar 94, which may or may not suggest that the 9-character callsign was the JCS's NEACP).

Seems to constantly monitor the nets.

Very powerful signal at my location (usually much stronger than the players in the net at my location, including NIGHTWATCH 01.) He's powerful to me even on days that NW01 cannot hear WAR46's calls to NW01. (But not always. Since 1997 there have been days when he is barely heard here; maybe an effect of changing propagation with the increase in solar activity).

NIGHTWATCH 01 will rarely use WAR46 to place phonepatches.

Recent DSN number was described as "seven figures", and not by it's actual number (which was at OFFUTT.)

WAR46 was also caught once (in late 1994) placing a phonepatch to a DSN 339 number for a non-NIGHTWATCH player in the net.

NIGHTWATCH 01 was also caught once in 1994 attempting this as well for a player.

In the past year or so [1998] NIGHTWATCH 01 will often raise WAR 46 for quick hi 'n bye connectivity checks with certain DSN numbers usually associated with NIGHTWATCH 01 itself. Often these patches are unsuccessful for apparent technical reasons. Many of the successful patches are often noticable for their "echo'y" audio and telco-type feedback ("whales"). Rarely NIGHTWATCH 01 has been monitored making phonepatches that, when initiated, consist of sign/counter-sign conversations. And, every now and then a patch will consist of apparent operational matters over an above a simple "hello goodbye".

Does not seem to take an active role in the nets otherwise.

Per Bruce G. Blair in his 1985 "Strategic Command and Control" book, page 109, the ANMCC maintains ground links with various unified and specified commands; and radio links with the NEACP. The ANMCC's apparent role is to effect an orderly

transition of control from the NMCC (Pentagon) to the NEACP during 'tactical attack warning.' This would be from McNamara's time in the early sixties. Still true today??
When NIGHTWATCH 01 is in 'monitor-only' mode, WAR 46 will stay in contact with NIGHTWATCH 01 via LL (landline.)

Two indications of this from monitoring:

- 1: A long quiet frequency will suddenly light up with WAR 46 calling and working NIGHTWATCH 01, with NIGHTWATCH 01 telling WAR 46 that NIGHTWATCH 01 will now terminate the landline.
- 2: WAR 46 will call NIGHTWATCH 01 on a long quiet frequency with no response. A few minutes later WAR 46 will again call NIGHTWATCH 01 and this time raise NIGHTWATCH 01. It happens often, and there is a sense that WAR 46 worked NIGHTWATCH 01 between the two HF calls on the landline to get his attention.

In the minds of a recent TACAMO crew, both stations (NW01 and WAR46) seem to be of equal importance to them. (May 1995.)
WAR 46 MOBILE

No better than weak levels here.

Usually works WAR 46 for signal checks.

When heard he is also usually attempting to work NIGHTWATCH 01 (no successful comm has been heard here).

Usually heard around 1500z+/- during standard time periods and 1400z during daylight savings time (10:00 AM ET).

WGY ###

Very rare FEMA participants in these nets.

WGY 912

Per Callsign Directory: FEMA Special Facility at Berryville, VA.

Only heard during selfdescribed 'exercises.'

Provides open phonepatches to other (non listed) WGY### callsigns.

As with WAR46, WGY912 has a very powerful signal at my location.

WGY 913

FEMA location.

Per Larry Van Horn in Sept 95 MT, WGY 913 is believed to be located in Winchester, Virginia. Function????

Participated once through open patch from WGY912 (03/22/95 during massive comm exercise.)

He 'aliased' himself to one callsign before 0000z(DOOLITTLE), and another callsign (FASTBALL) after 0000z.

Periodically sent 'test' messages that consisted of a single trigraph (or maybe a three letter acronym, but I don't think so, since the thing would increment by one letter or so at each test.) Example: FAK

WGY 918

FEMA location.

Said to be a Denver FEMA MERS vehicle.

Heard referenced when NIGHTWATCH 04 (female opr) tried calling WGY 918 back in Feb 95 with no response on 11243.0.

BRANDY and "A" callsigns:

BRANDY was often heard during apparent exercises involving the WGY ## calls on 'FEMA' freqs and frequencies such as 11243.0 (11244.0 after maybe sometime in 1995 or 1996) and 9023.0.

This station would usually pass HFU SB "datetimegroup" (obviously "HF USB" dtg) messages between himself and other participants in these nets, some of whom would be NIGHTWATCH 01 and/or other players in the NIGHTWATCH net. Sometime during the mid-90s these HFUSB messages were "shortened" to simply HOTEL dtg messages. The location of BRANDY is unknown and many hobbyists sort of assume that it is located at BRANDYWINE, Md. However during one such exercise in the mid-90s BRANDY was active on 9023.0. At one point it appeared that his audio became very distorted and very "choppy" almost as if it were bad broad CW. It probably was

because someone privately wondered why KKN50 (the, uh, "State Department") was transmitting it's CW marker on 9023.0 at that time(!). This suggests a Virginia location.

BRANDY has not been heard by me since maybe 1997 or so; definitely not noticed in 1998 by me and I can recall no reported logging of them in 1998. It was very common prior to this and heard often throughout the 90s.

"A" callsigns

These exercises are now noticeable because many of the participants use "long" callsigns that begin with the letter "A". As with the above players these stations also pass "HOTEL" dtg messages. Very noticeable in the past two years [written in 1998]. They apparently do not participate directly in the NIGHTWATCH nets but appear to sometimes exchange "HOTEL" messages with players in the NIGHTWATCH nets during certain apparent exercises.

"Callsign"

VARIABLE 13 calling GUNBOAT 11 Jul 94

AIRCRAFT 054 wkg NIGHTWATCH getting players in the net on 04 Oct 1994.

LOOK ## - Not in the net, but working NIGHTWATCH on a net freq, and aware of the surrounding net. [Question for future investigation: will the LOOK ## callsign be heard again after 25 Sept 1998? The E-6Bs seem to be using callsigns such as RAZZ ## or PUP ##].

Activity in late Spring 94 involving very weak stations with numeric suffixes, and maybe single alpha character calls.

"GORDO"

Very rare - heard only once or twice over last 12 months (96) as a participant in a NIGHTWATCH net, mostly informally. [Still rarely heard as of 1998; ? in 1999].

Alternate (frontend) callsign for E4 ex OFFUTT.

NIGHTWATCH

Initially presumed to be separate station in Spring 94.

Problem is that as a net progresses, the operators get lax, and start referring to the NIGHTWATCH ## callsigns as 'NIGHTWATCH.' Think of it as NIGHTWATCH 01 without the suffix.

TROUT 99

I'm assuming that my one logging of them with a net participant (SYRACUSE) was due to possible equipment T&E - plus the two stations were run off their freq by unid station (presumed ANDREWS or OFFUTT as it was a known MYSTIC STAR freq) and told to basically get back to work).

AWACS

AWACS aircraft will contact NIGHTWATCH 01 on the net primary working frequency for a quick hi 'n bye signal check. Before they depart the frequency they will always go through the challenge process with NIGHTWATCH 01. NIGHTWATCH 01 will always welcome these aircraft into the net but in all cases the AWACS operator will beg off, saying that he is just conducting a connectivity check, and go. This activity has been most noticeable during 1998 (but not earlier - it was apparently much rarer earlier).

Net frequencies:

As of 01 Jun 1996, the NIGHTWATCH nets utilize the "ZULU" bandplan. This bandplan appears to bring the net activity into compliance with the 3khz spacing required in the OR sections of the HF spectrum. The bandplan appears to be a combination of certain "old" XRAY, WHISKEY, PAPA, and SIERRA frequencies used prior to 01 Jun 96, and certain "common" OR frequencies also used as apparent primary discrete frequencies by GHFS stations (frequencies such as 4745.0; 6715.0; 9016.0; 11181.0; 13242.0).

Most accurate, up-to-date list will be found maintained on the web site for the World Utility Newsgroup (<http://www.gem.net/~berri/wun/>) - click your way to the most

recent newsletter and then to the Military Frequency List maintained by Graham Tanner.

There are usually two frequencies given out initially: the 'primary' and the 'secondary.'

Recently, the GHFS and the nets themselves have sometimes been giving out a primary, a secondary, and a tertiary frequency. [Still heard in 1999].

There appear to be no instances of the nets using any frequency other than a ZULU designated frequency.

On rare occasion some of the net players might move to a frequency such as 11244.0 for some "backchannel" chatter.

The apparent TACAMO's will also sometimes move to CHARLIE designated frequencies to conduct some of their business (see the WUN web page URL above).

The lower freqs seem to be kept in use for many hours after local sunrise. It's not until midday or later that they might start moving up in freq. It suggests a 'tight' net grouping. [This was true in the mid 90's during sunspot minimums, but for the second half of 1998+ the nets seem to move to 9016.0 or 10204.0 or higher by North American mid morning; in 1999 they are moving even higher].

NIGHTWATCH 01 apparently tries to keep only 2 HF freqs active at any one time; however, there have been instances where they might juggle more than 2 freqs if the players are having problems hearing each other.

NIGHTWATCH 01 will also apparently sometimes (mostly during large self-described 'exercises') setup specific frequencies for data and 'secure' activity.

NIGHTWATCH 01 has also set up a separate freq (again during large exercises) as an 'intercomm' freq to be used between NIGHTWATCH 01 and 02. (5700.0 on 03/22/95 for example.)

1994-mid1998:

The EAM initiators in the NIGHTWATCH nets will also simulcast their EAMs on various GHFS freqs (such as 6739.0; 8968.0; 11244.0; and 11175.0 and 17976.0) in addition to the current active net primary freq. Common frequency pairings: 8968.0/15016.

Used by players (TACAMOs?) for "repeat" EAM xmsns at h+25/h+55 over a two hour window.

Sometimes the players on these freqs are not yet active in the NIGHTWATCH net.

8968.0/11244.0 (11243.0 prior to Dec 94)
6739.0/8968.0/11244.0

July 98+:

NIGHTWATCH 01:

Usually only heard on net primary working freq but often heard simulcasting on the net secondary frequency as well.

11244.0

11175.0 (only player noted here using this frequency - rare)

Maybe also 8992.0 on occasion.

Callword

Net working frequency and 8992.0/11244.0.

8992.0/11244.0 at h+25/h+55 usually over a 2 hour window.

2nd Callword

Net working freq plus 8992.0 and/or 11244.0 and 8968.0 and 11267.0.

8968.0/11267.0 at h+07/h+37

(8968.0 was dropped as a primary GHFS freq on 01 Jul 98 and replaced by 8992.0. Which leads to the question: who is using 8968.0 at this time?)

11267.0 was a former USN HICOM LANT freq - TACAMO LANT is the presumed user. Monitors in the U.S. Northeast usually report this freq to be at good levels (always at fair levels in Texas; often unheard on 8968.0 during the daylight hours).

or

8776.0 at h+15/h+45 (+/-)

8776.0 was a former USN HICOM PAC freq - TACAMO PAC is

the presumed user. Monitors in California usually report this freq to be at good levels (always fair to mostly weak levels in Texas).

(8996.0 was also heard with EAM activity at the end of March 98 over a 2 to 3 day period at h+25/h+55 but nothing reported since. Suspected USN centric - the USAF usually conforms to the 3khz OR bandplan when they operate within the OR (off route) HF spectrum, and the USN usually does not [8996.0 does not conform to the official bandplan]). Since 01 July 1998 (the date on which the GHFS appeared to drop the use of 8968.0 and 17976.0) the nets appear to use only 8992.0 and 11244.0 for their EAM simulcasts - no instance of them using 6739.0 or 15016.0 for this activity since this date. (Just after the change there were at least a couple of instances where 17976.0 was heard with these transmissions but they have not been reported since the late summer of 1998).

The NIGHTWATCH 0# operators do not seem to engage the nets on more than one freq at the same time, with the possible exception of voice/data traffic taking place on one freq while the normal voice traffic is active on another freq (suggesting two different operator positions). But the multiple voice freqs do not seem to be active at the same time from any one station.

(Exception: The EAM broadcaster can be active on 8992.0/11244.0 with an EAM while another operator is working net members on the net primary working frequency).

Net interaction with GHFS:

Finding 'working frequencies':

The standard procedure apparently is for a 'callsigned station' to come up on the GHFS; call MAINSAIL; raise a GHFS station (any GHFS station) and 'request working frequencies for NIGHTWATCH 01.' After a few seconds delay, the GHFS station will give out (usually) accurate working frequencies.

If the callsigned station cannot raise NIGHTWATCH 01 on the indicated freqs, he (very rarely she) will come back up on the GHFS and request a phonepatch to NIGHTWATCH 01 to work out some good frequencies. In many cases, NIGHTWATCH 01 is in what they call a 'monitor only period'. In that case, all the callsigned station can do is wait it out if nobody else is 'in the net'.

There is an indication that the callsigned stations are actually aware of what freqs they are to use before they contact the GHFS. In early August 95 a station contacted THULE for working freqs, and was told that NIGHTWATCH 01 was in a 'monitor-only' period, and no designators were passed. The callsigned station then gave two designators (S310 and S312), and asked if these were correct. They were. (Rhetorical question: Is this info off something called a 'Daily Status Message?' heard mentioned and described during the March 95 exercise)

GHFS frequencies used to 'find the net.'

Prior to 1996, the two most common GHFS frequencies used by new net players to find the net were 11243.0/11244.0 and 8968.0. By 1996, the players seemed to spend more time on 11175.0, and much less time on 11244.0. In 1998+ it's now very rare to find a player attempting to use 11244.0 to obtain this info. They can often be heard calling MAINSAIL on 11244.0 with no response from any GHFS station.

Calling StratComm Wing ONE:

Periodically, participants will show up on the GHFS freqs (particularly, but not limited to, 11244.0 and 8968 [11175.0 in 1998+]) looking for phonepatches to DSN 339 numbers. Usually DSN 339 3944 prior to Oct 95, and another DSN 339 number since Oct 95 (VQ4 OPCON) [This is pre July 1998; 8968.0 is no longer in use].

The ground party was always identified as another daily tactical callsign, at least prior to Oct 95.

Since Oct 95, the ground party is simply VQ4 OPCON (aka OPCON.)

Maybe since 1996 or 1997 they would identify this party as COMMAND CENTER.

In late 1998+ they are maybe back to using callsigns to identify these ground parties.

They will place phonepatches directly to BOOMTOWN, a static call associated with StratComm Wing ONE at TINKER. These calls are usually to determine if their Whiskey Bravo comms are being properly received; and, to set up voice and data work on CHARLIE 'alphacharacter' freqs (discovered as of early 1999):

CA 6691.0 (a very common freq.)

CB 11187.0

CC 17982.0

CD ?

CE ?

CH 11264.0

CJ ?

CQ ?

The first three known freqs conform to the "new" USN OR freq assignments. A good assumption is that some of the other unk freqs will also conform to those plans; and, in fact others have found heavy BOOMTOWN activity on certain other USN OR freqs with simple searches. The players in the NIGHTWATCH net will often be caught on these freqs working BOOMTOWN with voice and data. These stations are believed to be E-6A/B's with USN backend crews pulling TACAMO duty.

A good number of the patches are placed to send 'immediate precedence' traffic to the ground party that consists of varying numbers of 3-element groups (trigraphs.) [This has not been heard in a year or so - 1998].

Once, the 3-element groups were heard being sent with 'slant' characters; and the 'slant' character (from context of the comms) took up one 3-element group each.

In 1999 these stations are heard passing 369 message traffic via phonepatch.

A good number of the patches are placed to discuss what they call TACAMO OPS (apparently sometimes shortend to TACOPS.)

A good number of the patches are placed to discuss Whiskey Bravo activity.

A good number of patches are placed to discuss VQ4 (and sometimes VQ3) administrative matters; parts order status; etc. [Prior to 1998 - post 1998 they are using callwords for the ground party].

A very rare number of patches are used to send FLASH precedence messages. Sometimes trigraphs, but mostly apparently verbal 'scenarios' or whatnot.

Calling PAX RIVER

Usually for weather information at ETA.

Sometimes for housekeeping activities.

Since maybe early 1996, they describe PAX RIVER as VQ4 DET OPCON.

[This activity is much rarer since 1996 or so].

NIGHTWATCH 01 connectivity checks.

NIGHTWATCH 01 will occasionally pop up on the GHFS to place a phonepatch to OFFUTT DSN prefixes (that identify on the phone as the last 4 digits of the phone number; or sometimes as STRATCOM; or maybe other callsigns) for a very brief 'exercise directed check.' Also sometimes selfdescribed as a connectivity check.

NIGHTWATCH 01 will very rarely use WAR46 to place these patches.

Since maybe 1998 these NIGHTWATCH 01/WAR 46 phonepatches are now very common [WAR 46 will have equipment problems seeming more than half the time].

1993/1994:

They use the GHFS as 'sources' for something called an 'exercise inject' on the third/next to last Tuesday of many months. [Noticed often in 1993 and 1994 and maybe into 1995 but not heard in the last half of the 90s].

1994 - Jul 1998:

NIGHTWATCH 01 will use the GHFS to raise specific GHFS stations in order that both stations may move to a listed discrete freq for voice

and (mostly) data transmissions (for 'injection into AUTODIN.')
Stations heard: HICKAM; MCCLELLAN; MACDILL; LAJES. Presumed
others such as CROUGHTON. Never heard: ALBROOK, ANDREWS,
OFFUTT, BAYONNE, ASCENSION.

[MACDILL, ALBROOK and BAYONNE are closed - 1998].

NIGHTWATCH 01 will work ANDREWS (probably VIP) for data work on MYSTIC
STAR freqs (see the WUN web site for known frequencies).

1994 - Jul 1998:

NIGHTWATCH 01 has been heard working MACDILL on published discretes,
where NIGHTWATCH 01 will pass a verbal EAM to MACDILL 'for injection
to AUTODIN.' At completion of 'exchange' MACDILL will confirm
'injection', and within seconds will bcst the thing on the GHFS along
with rest of GHFS. NIGHTWATCH 01 has also been heard working LAJES
with voice EAM injections, in the same manner as MACDILL. NIGHTWATCH
01 has not yet been heard working any other CONUS or non-CONUS
station with voice EAM injection requests.

Jul 1998+:

NIGHTWATCH 01 has been heard working MCCLELLAN with voice EAM traffic
to inject into AUTODIN as above. Not yet heard with LAJES (and LAJES
is now [1999] somewhat limited in frequency usage [4724.0/15016.0]).
NIGHTWATCH 01 will work ANDREWS (VIP) on MYSTIC STAR frequencies in
data comms.

NIGHTWATCH 01 will work MCCLELLAN and ANDREWS (GLOBAL; this appears to
be new) on GHFS discrete frequencies for data traffic for injection
to AUTODIN and to test comms from MCCLELLAN and ANDREWS to
NIGHTWATCH 01.

Net activity

The nets are usually more 'quiet' than active on a day to day basis.
Heavy activity apparently only during lots of EAM activity.
Heavy activity during self described 'exercises.'

Entering and exiting the nets.

Callsign station gets working freqs from GHFS.

Callsign station goes to primary freq, and calls NIGHTWATCH 01.

If successful, callsign station requests a check on secondary.

Sometimes NIGHTWATCH 01 is not active, but another callsign
station is filling in for NIGHTWATCH 01. This backup station
will perform NIGHTWATCH's duties for this procedure.

Since early Fall of 1998 this no longer seems to be true
except on a sporadic basis. If anything it appears that the
players are unsure of what to do in the absense of NIGHTWATCH
01. A player other than NIGHTWATCH 01 will now perform the
challenge procedure, but it now appears to be done only at
the direction of NIGHTWATCH 01 (in the event that NIGHTWATCH
01 is unable to have successful comms with the entering or
leaving station).

If successful (or even if unsuccessful on secondary), callsign
station requests to 'enter the net,' through the challenge
process.

Since 01 July 1996, the "authenticators" of the challenge
process have changed from 2-character strings to 3-character
strings with the first character either an "A", "B" or "C",
and the last two characters date/time dependent.

If they are 'successful' in this procedure (I've never heard one
that wasn't, at least after 2 tries), then the new player is
shown 'in the net' at a 'timestamp.'

As of very late 1996, this is no longer true, probably as a
result of the new 3-character challenge process. The player with
the problem was asked by NIGHTWATCH 01 to contact NIGHTWATCH 01
by secure telephone link to complete the process.

0440z 19 Mar 96; 5700.0: CRAZYWEED attempts to enter the net
with NIGHTWATCH 01. CRAZYWEED could not get the challenge
process right, so NW01 advised CRAZYWEED to check his date and
time, and call back. That done, it still was not correct.
NIGHTWATCH 01 then instructed CRAZYWEED to verify that he was
using "day 19 and 0311z" (the current utc time.) That done,

the challenge process was successful.
Exiting the net uses exactly the same authentication procedure.

If the departing station cannot raise anyone, he will perform this procedure 'in the blind.'

Since 01 Jul 96, players exiting the net in the blind do so using 2-character authenticators, not three (date/time dependent).

During net activity (an exercise), I have heard one instance of a callsigned station saying that he has heard someone else using his callsign, and he immediately issues a 'challenge.' He and the ncs immediately perform another 'authentication' procedure to verify the station's authenticity.

Stations that DO NOT authenticate into or out of the nets:

NIGHTWATCH 01 (and 02-04)

Sometimes not true, at least since late 1998.

NIGHTWATCH 01 was challenged into the net after a lengthy absence at the conclusion of a foreign trip by POTUS.

NIGHTWATCH 02 has been issued a challenge at least once in the past year.

WAR46

WGY### stations.

GORDO ## - extremely rare activity.

Shortcallsign ## - extremely rare activity.

Since sometime in 1996, there are now cases where a callsigned station will get the working frequencies from a GHFS station; call and raise NIGHTWATCH 01 on the working frequency; but when NIGHTWATCH 01 asks the station if he wishes to enter the net, the answer is negative. Suspected TACAMOs.

Possible procedure change: On 11 Dec 95 MOTORIST worked HICKAM with a phonepatch to NIGHTWATCH 01, and MOTORIST used the patch to enter the net as above with the challenge process. A day or so later, Ed Griffin heard a station work HICKAM who patched NIGHTWATCH 01 and used the patch to exit the net. This is certainly easier than exiting the net 'in the blind.'

However, no such event has been heard then since these logs, at least to my knowledge - they still do this stuff in the blind.

Also performed at 0805z 17 Mar 96: OVERREACH (maybe) working HICKAM with phonepatch to NW01, entering the net via the patch. (Phonepatch challenges are still heard on a very rare basis into 1999).

The above information also points out a peculiar nature of the net probably having to do with the apparent fact that most players in the nets are TACAMOs (pre 1998 info). In spite of conventional wisdom, NIGHTWATCH 01 is *not* aware of the status of most of his net players unless they stay in touch with NIGHTWATCH 01 by means of periodic HF voice check; presumed WB (WHISKEY BRAVO) data circuit comms; or by means of GHFS phonepatch. He has no "backchannel" to most of his players. NIGHTWATCH 01 is often unaware that certain of his players have left his net in the blind hours earlier. A probable indication that certain of the players do not yet have the comm equipment necessary to perform these comms, and probably won't have it until they complete their "upgrade" (maybe to the E-6B) - if then.

"HF Monitor-only periods"

NIGHTWATCH 01 will on occasion go into a self-described 'HF monitor -only period.' These can last from 10/20 minutes, up to hours. It has been suggested that the shorter periods are for fueling purposes, and the longer periods are for maintenance work. A recent GHFS conversation confirms the 'maintenance' guess (or, at least confirms one reason.) [written in 1995; it's much more common now to hear the reason given for monitor only periods (usually maintenance related)].

It has been noticed since late 1995 that now often certain players in the net other than NIGHTWATCH 01 will also announce that they are going into "monitor only" mode, sometimes for hours. Often, this will be announced soon after they enter the nets. It has been suggested that these are TACAMOs that are ready to assume

their vlf transmission orbits.

Activity:

Freqs generally quite.

Usually on the primary and/or secondary freqs (but not always), the callsigned station that seems to xmit the EAMs to the net will simply pop up on freq and start broadcasting an EAM. No announcement, no general calls, just start bcsting.

Sometimes, this station will then call the other players in the nets and verify that they received the traffic.

Sometimes they don't, and it's these times when there may be a sense of 'disconnectedness' with these bcsts and the other players. Just a feeling, maybe valid, maybe not. Sometimes there seems to be a duality at work here, or maybe not.

Sometimes NIGHTWATCH 01 will start an EAM. At the completion of the EAM he/she will ask the players in the net if they received their 'traffic.'

Sometimes (usually during the self-id'd exercises) most (maybe all) the callsigned stations will start broadcasting their EAMs - it can get very noisy and confusing during this activity.

There are the occasional voice checks in 'secure' mode using ANDVT. The first instance I caught of ANDVT comms in the net appeared in Feb 95. Prior to this, all the secure comms in the nets appeared to be in PARKHILL. Then, as if a switch was thrown, the comms were in ANDVT.

As of Oct or Nov 95, for a short time in the net, there was some occasional use of PARKHILL. Not heard since maybe Nov 95.

There is very rare housekeeping activities on these freqs, usually only during their rare self-id'd exercises. Chitchat about things that are not normally heard on the nets such as schedules etc.

Examples: Discussion of "Full Summary Messages" (via WB); "Daily Status Messages"; etc.

Note: Since the middle of 1998, there is much more technical chatter between the players often involving their GEP activity. It's suspected that this is due to the equipment upgrades on the USN's E-6(B) TACAMO aircraft.

Net activity has been recently described, on one day, as 'training'. There is never any known bomber/tanker activity heard on these nets since 01 Jun 92.

The nets appear to be a communications coordination (connectivity) net that exists to pass their "traffic"..

The activity is daily, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

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As of March 2005

For GEP location information a web search on "gep ground entry point uhf" will be productive.

For information on the NIGHTWATCH E4s a web search for "neacp naoc" will be productive.

In a post 11 Sep 2001 world a web search for "site R Raven Rock" will be productive for information on the above WAR46.

For USSTRATCOM go to...

<http://www.stratcom.af.mil/>