

ATC826/ATC827

Posted on 30.01.2023 by Steve Forward

Category: [Air Traffic Control](#)

Report Title Participating in Zoom call whilst on duty

Initial Report

Since the pandemic it has been customary at this unit to have weekly briefing from MATC & SATCO by a Zoom meeting on Friday afternoons. On this occasion, as per usual, MATC hosted from their office but for a segment concerning Professional Standards we were addressed by the SATCO broadcasting on a mobile device for approximately 3 minutes from an operational position. It was unclear whether SATCO actually had traffic on frequency.

Comment

The unit was contacted and they informed CHIRP that the issue had been raised and addressed internally as a result of an earlier internal report about the incident. CHIRP agrees that actively engaging in ancillary tasks such as Zoom meetings is not acceptable when conducting controller duties, even if only monitoring a sector with no traffic. It would be one thing perhaps to be passively listening to a briefing during a quiet period on sector but even that would be less than desirable. That being said, it is recognised that controllers do conduct other non-operational tasks whilst monitoring quiet sectors (such as reviewing directives, reading documents or doing other tasks to keep themselves alert) and so there's a pragmatic compromise that must be reached when interpreting the regulations. Ultimately, in respect of things like Zoom or phone calls, [CAP493 MATS Part 1 Appendix E 'Communications Technique and Standard Phraseology'](#) states:

2. Distracting Conversations

2.1 Non-operational and other conversations have the potential to distract a controller from their primary task of providing a safe air traffic service. Examples include telephone conversations with external agencies, such as airline representatives, and discussions between controllers conducted on the telephone, intercom or, in some cases, face to face, following an unplanned traffic situation.

2.2 Non-operational conversations must not be permitted to interfere with a controller's operational duties. Procedures at units should ensure that non-urgent telephone calls from external agencies could be accommodated without prejudicing the controller's primary task.

2.3 Discussions regarding unplanned traffic situations, which may include incidents and alleged breaches of procedure, are not to be conducted from operational positions. If appropriate, only brief details of the occurrence should be exchanged between the controllers involved. If there is a need to discuss the matter further, this should be deferred to a time when all the personnel affected are relieved from their operational duties. Where staffing levels permit, unit management staff that are not working at an operational position should make arrangements for further discussions.



