

The Art of the Threat Based Briefing

OPSGROUP Team

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Have your briefings become a *“one-size fits all solution serving as a repository for redundant verbal crew crosschecks of highly automated, highly reliable systems”*?

If the briefings at your operation sound a bit like that, then read on for some suggestions on ways you might fix ‘em up...

First up, a reminder of why we brief?

We brief because we want to **try to identify anything that might mess up our flight up**, and work out how to stop it before it gets the chance to. That includes identifying anything silly the other person might be planning on doing, so it’s good to include them on it too.

The word ‘brief’ actually means a bunch of things – *of short duration, a set of instructions, underwear* – which all seem fairly appropriate to what we are using it for (underwear being the inner line of support, defence and protection when things get really scary...)



Briefs are important.

So, what do we want our brief to contain?

We want our briefing to cover **any threats and possible errors** we spot out in the big wide world, and we also want it to involve some ideas on how to mitigate against these.

If you're not sure then we find this list handy. If you say yes to any of these, talk about it:

- Does something feel **scary**?
- Does something look **hard**?
- Does anything seem **weird**?
- Is there a chance you'll do something **stupid**?

And what don't we want it to contain?

- Too much waffle.
- Too much explaining 'how to fly' to the person next to you (they probably know already).
- Stating the obvious or listing SOPs that you both know anyway.

- A plan for absolutely everything possible, including what to do if a Pterodactyl attacks. It just isn't necessary.

Any of these will definitely result in your co-pilot shutting off and not listening even to the bits you do need them to hear.

So how do we do this?

Well, we can play a sort of 'I-Spy' game.

"I spy with my little eye, something beginning with M."

"Merr.. Muu...Maaa...Mountain?"

"Yes, one point to the co-pilot!"

Or we can be a little more structured about it and **follow a method** which helps remind us of the big stuff to look out for. We have one to share, which is summed up in the nice tidy acronym: **C-TWO-F-U**. You might like it, you might not. But here it is.

C is for Charts

We probably want to take a fairly close look at these since they are what we need to follow, and they often lay out some of the big threats for us.

Taxi charts, arrival, departure, approach charts... A quick **confirmation of the date** to make sure it is the valid one is important, but after that really you are looking to do two things here:

1. **Look for anything unusual, threatish or dangerous on the charts.** A lot of them include some really useful little notes actually.
2. **It is no good briefing a chart to death if it isn't what you then fly.** A confirmation that what you're talking about is what you've programmed into the box (tracks, altitudes, speed constraints etc) is also important. Think of it as briefing your airplane too.

LOC DME-E



- MSA DBL VOR



Lighting -
Refer to
Airport
Chart

Circling not authorized for CAT C southwest of Rwy 15-33



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To be honest, a bad example because everything on here is horrifying and worth pointing out.

T is for Terrain

Why does terrain get its own section? Well, because it's big and if you get it wrong it's nasty. **C-FITs (Controlled Flight Into Terrain) are one of the biggest common accident types.** From 2001-2020, CFIT accidents were the second largest category (21%) behind LOC-I (33%).

So, take a look at the terrain and more importantly what it might do to you.

- Turbulence.
- Weird turns required.
- Mega RODs (after you're over it).
- Constraints on the way out. Or the way in for that matter.
- High elevation.
- Climb performance problems.
- Missed approach gradient problems.

But remember - don't just scare the pilot next to you with a list of horrifying 'death threats' - try to explain how you reckon you should deal with it all as well.

W is for Weather

Another big one. **Review it for that specific flight.** No point talking about wind shear if it's a lovely calm day - what would be the point?

It isn't a lovely calm day? Well, whatcha gonna do about it? Which heading do you want to avoid that mega storm? Do you maybe want to run the performance again since the runway is covered in ice?

O is for Operational

You might have covered some of this earlier so don't go re-listing it all again. Here are some ideas though:

- **Aircraft:** Talk about any MELs, CDLs, random or specific procedures you might have to consider for *that flight*.
- **Airport:** Are there any NOTAMs, specific procedures (Noise Abatement Procedures perhaps?), altimeter setting procedures (metric, or low transition alts)?
- **Crew:** Talk about yourselves, any threats there? I like to mention things like how irritable I might be because I didn't have lunch.
- **How you'll fly it all:** Share your autopilot usage plans and stuff like that.
- **Performance:** A good time to check this and make sure you've done it, and you've set it up in the box properly in terms of speeds, flex, all that stuff.

F is for Fuel

Check you have what you wanted and check it's still what you need.

U is for yoU?

I added this in because I thought 'FU' sounded funny. Really this is just a last *"any questions?"* Or a *"anything I've missed that yoU can think of?"* moment.

For your safety
Für Ihre Sicherheit
Pour votre sécurité
Mo to haumaru

PILOT SAFETY CARD

C-TWO-FU BRIEFING

Please print this card. Put it in places. Feel free to remove it and use it if you find it!

OPSGROUP

C - CHARTS



CONFIRMATION

MAKE SURE DATES ARE
CORRECT



CHART VS BOX

ARE YOU BRIEFING WHAT
YOU'RE FLYING?



THREATS

WHAT DO YOU SEE THAT'S
DIFFERENT OR UNUSUAL?



STRATEGY

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO
DO ABOUT IT?

T - TERRAIN



OPERATIONAL

THE OPERATIONAL BITS LIKE
CONSTRAINTS



SAFETY

GETTING OVER IT, AVOIDING
IT, THE RISK OF NOT...



OTHER THREATS

OTHER THINGS LIKE
TURBULENCE, ELEVATION...



STRATEGY

HOW ARE YOU GOING TO
DEAL WITH IT ALL?

W - WEATHER



PERFORMANCE

TAKE OFF AND LANDING



SAFETY

WIND SHEAR, STORMS,
GUSTS, ICE/SNOW...



PROCEDURES

ANY SPECIFIC PROCEDURES
OR LIMITATIONS?



STRATEGY

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO
DO ABOUT IT?

O - OPS



AIRCRAFT

MELs, CDLS, RANDOM OR
SPECIFIC PROCEDURES?



AIRPORT

NOTAMS, PROCS (NABT,
ALTIMETER SETTING), OTHER
TRAFFIC IN AREA?



THE PLAN

THE OVERALL PLAN - HOW
YOU'LL FLY IT (AUTOPILOT?)



CROSSCHECKS

A GOOD TIME TO CHECK
EVERYTHING YOU'VE SAID IS
SET UP

F - FUEL



WANTED?

WHAT DID YOU ASK FOR?



NEED?

DOES IT MATCH THE FPLN,
LATESTS CONDITIONS ETC



HAVE?

DOES IT ALL ADD UP?

U - YOU



YOU?

HAVE YOU SEEN ANYTHING?
KEEP IT INTERACTIVE!

DON'T BE BORING.
DON'T TALK ABOUT STUFF YOU DON'T NEED TO TALK ABOUT.

Here's something we made for you. Click on it for the printable one.

How do we brief?

If we do the briefing out loud then it definitely helps – few of us are mind readers. If you make it **interactive** – well then now you've got two pilots both thinking about it and working it out together. Bonus.

I said it before, a quick reminder again – a good threat based briefing is about **identifying threats specific for that day, for that flight, and then coming up with strategies for preventing them.**

What?: *A steeper than normal approach gradient? Ok, great, spotted it.*

Why?: *That could be a threat to our stabilisation and speed control. So what to do about it?*

How?: *Configure early, get the PM to keep an eye on that speed, be prepared to go-around if it becomes unstabilized.*

Any other methods?

Airbus have recently changed their recommended briefing method and it is now super simple. All SOPs, standard stuff, checks etc are out, and the briefing now follows this format:

PM: Begins the briefing with the general **plan** – runway, SID, stop altitude and any extra fuel

PF: Talks through the general **strategy** – how to get to the runway (including any taxi hotspots), how to fly the SID (use of automation), any Notams or operational stuff to affect it all, and any other relevant stuff specific for that flight on that day.

PM: Raises any **threats** they spot

PF: Talks through how to **mitigate** those threat.

Watch it in action here (and you don't have to be Airbus to use this!)

Brief done!

That's the why, the what and the how...

A decent threat based briefing any time you head in or out of any airport is important. If you've just been there earlier that day, maybe don't repeat the whole thing all over again though.

And what about when you are heading to an airport you are not familiar with? At Opsgroup we like to put together **Airport Lowdowns**. These are briefing aids that you might find handy because they include information from other members (other people who have been there before!) to try and give you a heads up on what to expect.

They are just trying to capture some of those Big Threats that you might want to think about and talk about in your briefings. You can find them in the Documents Library on your Dashboard, but if you want email us and we'll see if we can put together one for you.

