

CHAPTER 12 - ATC ENSIGN

THE ENSIGN

1. Flags are fitted with a short length of rope, known as the tack, to facilitate fastening to the halliard. This is sewn in permanently to the sleeve of the flag and runs from top hoist corner to the bottom hoist corner then extends further down in length, about as much again as the depth of the flag. At either end of the tack is fitted an Inglefield clip. Named after their Royal Naval inventor (later an admiral), Inglefield clips are bronze C-shaped swivel hooks which are mutually interlocking and serve to fasten the flag to the halliard. In some cases the tack is fitted instead with a toggle at the top and a loop at the other end; the halliard on the mast or staff must be fitted to correspond. The action of attaching the flag to the halliard preparatory to hoisting is known as 'bending on'.

HANDLING THE ENSIGN

2. When hoisting or hauling down the Ensign, an NCO is to be detailed for the duty. He is to ensure that it is handled with becoming dignity and at no time is it touch the ground.

3. Hoisting. The Ensign is to be bent on to the halliard (taking care that the head of the flag is uppermost, thus ensuring that the flag will not be hoisted upside down) and the folds laid over the free arm. The flag is then hoisted slowly and reverently, keeping the halliard gently taut all the time otherwise the clip or toggle may disconnect from its counterpart on the halliard. On completion of the hoisting the NCO is to ensure that the flag is close up to the top of the mast (or staff) and secure the halliard neatly to the cleat (see Annex A) keeping them reasonably taut (but excessive strain is to be avoided). If the flag is to be left flying for some hours, the duty NCO is to check occasionally through the period that the flag is still close up to the head and the halliards with the resultant slack hoist.

Note: The Ensign is never to be broken during or at the peak of the hoist.

4. Hauling Down. The halliard is to be taken from the cleat and is to be kept taut. The Ensign is to be slowly lowered, with both lengths of the halliard kept gently taut all the time. When the flag comes within reach, the NCO is to use one hand to catch the flag at the fly. The folds are to be collected carefully in the arms to prevent contact with the ground. On completion of the lowering, the NCO is to remove the Ensign from the halliard and join the halliard to itself by its Inglefield clips (or toggle and loop), taking care not to let either end go. (This is most important; it is a very tiresome business retrieving halliards, especially from a high staff.) The halliard is then to be secured neatly to the cleat. The NCO is then to fold the flag (see Para 5).

5. Folding

a. The Ensign is first to be folded along its length. (For a 4m (12 ft) flag or longer, 2 folds will be necessary.)

b. It is then to be folded to half its length. This folding is to be repeated twice more, so that the Ensign is finally folded in 8 folds with the top hoist (ie part of the Union) showing uppermost.

Note: For a large flag an orderly is required to assist in catching the fly and for folding. The orderly should stand facing the NCO and on the NCO's left hand side throughout the ceremony.

6. Carrying. When folded, the Ensign is to be carried on the left forearm extended forward (with the upper arm close in to the side).
7. Daily Hoisting and Hauling Down. An officer, normally the Orderly Officer, is to attend the daily hoisting and hauling down of the Ensign and the Orderly Sgt is responsible to the Station WO for the task. The following procedure is to be carried out:
 - a. The NCO is to prepare for the ceremony by taking the halliard from the cleat. (For hoisting: he will also unclip the halliard and bend the Ensign on.) He then stands at Ease with his back to the flagstaff, holding the halliard (for hoisting: with the flag over one arm), to await the arrival of the officer. As the officer approaches and takes up his position, the NCO is to come to attention.
 - b. On orders from the officer in attendance, the NCO is to sound the Still (one long blast of the whistle). On hearing this, all personnel out of doors are to stop movement, turn and face at attention the direction of the flagstaff; officers are to salute. (If the Orderly Officer is a WO he is to salute; other WOs do not.)
 - c. The NCO, without further orders, is then to start hoisting or lowering the Ensign, as appropriate.
 - d. On completion, the NCO is to resume the position of attention (holding the as yet unsecured halliard). On orders from the officer, he is to sound the Carry On (two blasts of the whistle), whereupon officers cease saluting and all personnel carry on with their duties.
 - e. The NCO then secures the halliard (after lowering: folds and puts the Ensign away), and falls out.
8. Half Mast. On occasions when instructions have been given for the Ensign to be flown at half-mast, the following procedures are to be carried out:
 - a. Ensign to be Hoisted to Half-Mast. The procedure described in Para 7 is to be followed, the NCO first hoisting the flag up to the peak (or head) and then, as a continued movement, immediately lowering it to the half-mast position (see Note). The Carry On is not to be ordered until the flag has come to rest at half-mast.
 - b. Ensign to be Hauled Down from the Half-Mast. Similarly, the procedure described in Para 7 is to be followed. The NCO first hoists the flag close up to the peak (or head) and then, as a continued movement, immediately hauling it right down in the usual manner.
 - c. Ensign Already Flying. No Still or Carry On need to be sounded for this change. The NCO detailed is to remove the halliard from the cleat and lower the flag to the half-mast position; then secure the halliard again. The Ensign remains in this position until the daily routine lowering ceremony.

Note: The half-mast position is midway between the head (or peak) and the securing cleat for the halliard.

9. Unit Cdr's Flag or Pennant. The appropriate rank flag or pennant of the Unit Cdr is to be flown at the head or truck of the mast. This flag remains aloft at all times during the period of command and, unlike the Ensign, is not lowered daily. When a deputy is in temporary command, the rank flag should also correspondingly be changed temporarily as appropriate, thus showing the rank of the officer in actual command at the time. No formal procedure is necessary; the flag being changed by the duty NCO when detailed by the Station WO. The rank flag, bent on to its own halliard which runs to the button at the head (or truck), is hauled down or hoisted and the halliard resecured to the cleat.

Note: At a formation HQ flying the Ensign on a staff over the main building, a rank flag is not flown together on that staff. The air officer's rank flag may, however, be flown on a small staff mounted just over the entrance porch or doorway to the HQ building.

MISCELLANEOUS UNIT FLAGS

10. In a few instances, some units have been privileged over the years to receive a non-Service flag as a gift of esteem, often in token of recognition by some local association, or with a city, some other significant corporate body or a distinguished person.

11. Such flags, while being recognized as a valuable emblem by the unit concerned, are never to be flown in association with any official Royal, State or Service flag (eg it is not correct to fly it on the same mast with the Ensign etc). They may be displayed within the unit on a separate lesser mast or pike as appropriate.

ROYAL STANDARDS

4. On the occasion of a Royal (or Presidential) visit, it may be required to break the visitor's personal flag at the masthead. (This personal flag is generally known colloquially as a 'Royal Standard', although it is technically a personal Banner. A true Standard is the consecrated lesser Colour awarded to operational Sqns.) The personal standard is broken at the head at the moment of the visitor's arrival on the Station, signifying the presence. It remains there until the personage leaves the unit at the end of the visit. Should the visitor be remaining overnight, the standard remains aloft in the same manner as the Unit Cdr's rank flag does normally.

5. Parade. If a formal parade is being reviewed by the visitor, a Standard may also be broken at the parade flag staff at the moment of The Royal Salute. This standard remains flying only so long as the personage is present at the parade ground. It is immediately hauled down as the person leaves (unless this happens to be the main Station flag mast, in which case the instructions at Para 1 apply).

PREPARING A STANDARD FOR BREAKING

6. The Standard is to be laid flat with the head uppermost on the table. Fold the foot (or bottom) of the flag to the head and fold again. Fold the flag edge in half to the hoist, then tightly roll the Standard towards the hoist. Pass the tack round the resultant roll and tuck it under itself.

7. To ensure that the Standard does not break whilst being hoisted, pass 2 or 3 turns of cotton round the roll and tie them tightly.

8. The Standard can now be bent on to the halliard, taking care that the head of the flag goes uppermost (otherwise the flag will be upside down), hoist the roll to the staff or mast head, where it replaces the Cdr's rank flag.

9. Breaking. At the appropriate moment, a sharp tug on the track end of the halliard will break the Standard clear. (NB. A rehearsal practice before the formal occasion is strongly recommended.)
10. Hauling Down. On departure of the distinguished visitor, the Standard is hauled down without ceremony by the duty NCO and the Unit Cdr's normal rank flag is hoisted again.

Annexes:

- A. Flagstaff and Mast.
- B. Cdr's Rank Flags and Pennants.

FLAGSTAFF AND MAST

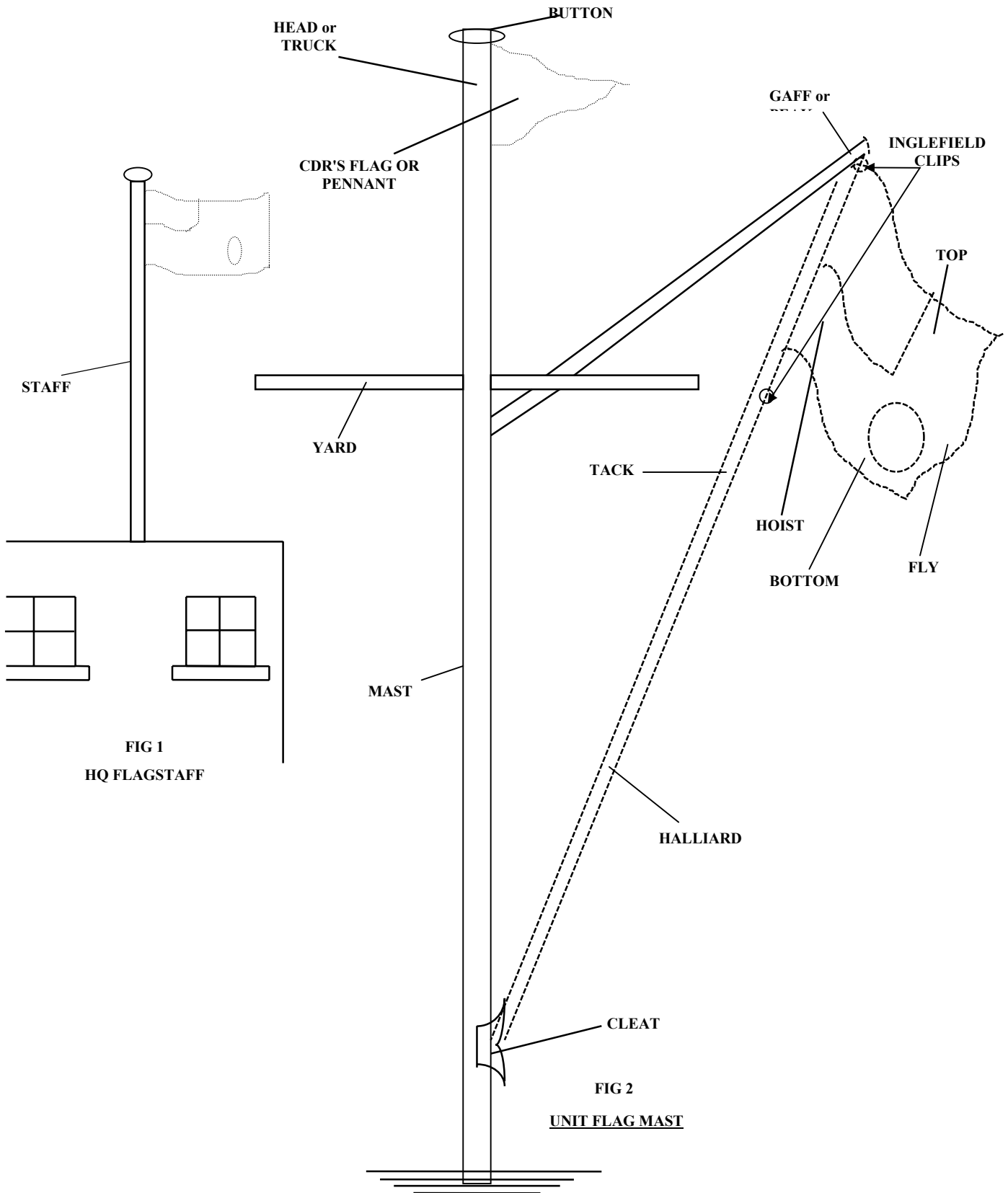


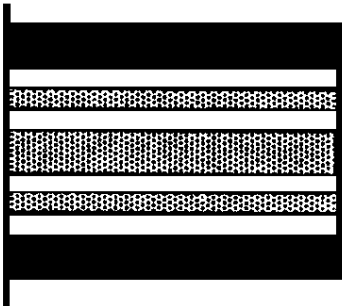
FIG 1
 HQ FLAGSTAFF

FIG 2
 UNIT FLAG MAST

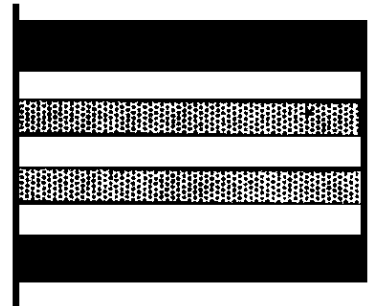
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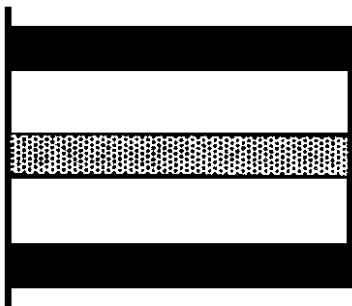
CDRS' RANK FLAGS AND PENNANTS



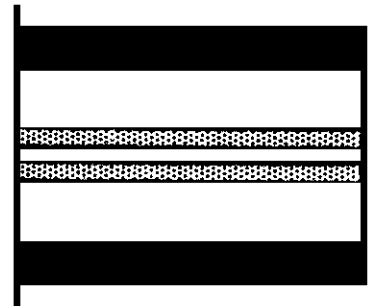
MRAF



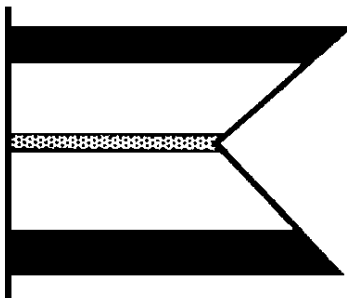
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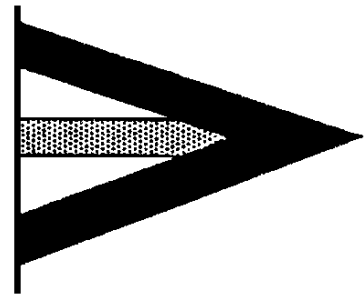
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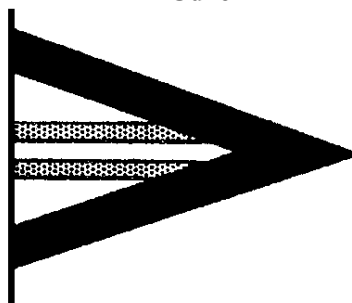
AVM



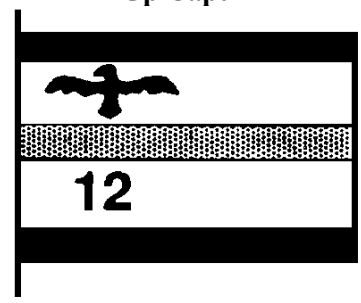
Air Cdre



Gp Capt



Wg Cdr



Sqn Ldr



Red



Light Blue



Dark Blue

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