Federal Aviation Administration

Memorandum

Date: ***February 28, 2017 (Original signed document on file)***

To: Air Traffic Organization Service Centers Directors
Air Traffic Organization Air Traffic Service Area Directors

From: [redacted], Director, Air Traffic Procedures, AJV-8

Subject: Interpretation Request from Eastern Service Center to JO 7110.65, Paragraph 2-1-13, Formation Flights

This memorandum is in response to a request for interpretation of Federal Aviation Administration Order (FAAO) JO 7110.65, Paragraphs 2-1-13a and 2-1-13a Note 1, Formation Flights, submitted by the Paradise District through the Eastern Service Center, Operations Support Group.

The request consisted of nine questions regarding the intent of the language in the paragraph, but the overarching question was: Once a formation flight has requested breakup, may a controller issue clearances to the aircraft involved, or must the formation be made to establish itself into individual flights with approved separation before clearances may be issued?

Note 1 of the paragraph states: "Separation responsibility between aircraft within the formation during transition to individual control rests with the pilots concerned until approved separation has been attained." FAA JO 7610.4, Special Operations, paragraph 12-11-3, concurs with this language by stating: "Separation between aircraft within the formation is the responsibility of the flight leader and the pilots of the other aircraft in the flight. This includes transition periods when aircraft within the formation are maneuvering to attain separation from each other to effect individual control and during join up or breakaway."

Therefore a controller may issue control instructions through the lead aircraft which will result in approved separation without the need for the formation to first arrange itself into individual flights.

Please forward any questions or comments to [redacted], En Route Standards and Procedures, AJV-83, [redacted]