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ASPECTS OF FLIGHT RULES PERTAINING TO ARRIVING FLIGHTS EXECUTING NON-INSTRUMENT APPROACHES.

1. Visual, VMC and VFR Approaches

There are three types of non-instrument approaches which although quite different in concept are often confused. Misinterpretation of the terms “**VISUAL APPROACH**”, “**VMC APPROACH**” and “**VFR APPROACH**” is not infrequent and can result in serious consequences.

2. Visual Approach

2.1. A Visual approach is an approach by an IFR flight when either part or all of an instrument approach procedure is not completed and the approach is executed with visual reference to terrain. IFR flights may be cleared by ATC to execute visual approaches provided that the pilot can maintain visual reference to the terrain. In addition, the reported ceiling must not be below the approved initial approach level or at any time during the instrument approach and he was reasonable assurance that a landing can be accomplished.

2.2. Throughout a visual approach the flight remains an IFR flight and ATC remains responsible for separation from other IFR flights and from controlled VFR flights. Thus the object of the visual approach is to obviate the requirement to execute an instrument approach procedure whilst retaining the protection inherent in the control of an IFR flight.

Consequently a clearance to execute a visual approach cannot be interpreted as a clearance for an unrestricted descend to circuit altitude, e.g. for successive visual approaches, radar or non-radar separation shall be maintained until the pilot of a succeeding aircraft report having the preceding aircraft in sight.

3. VMC Approach (VMC descend) for controlled IFR and controlled VFR

When requested by a pilot ATC may clear a controlled IFR flight or a controlled VFR flight to approach maintaining own separation and VMC. Clearances for a VMC approach cannot be initiated by air traffic control units, but if requested, an arriving controlled flight may be cleared to execute a VMC approach if the other prescribed conditions are met (see doc. 444-RAC/501/13 part 111 PARA 13.1). Pilots making a VMC approach are responsible for avoidance or collision with other aircraft during the limited portion of the VMC approach.

4. VFR Approach

A pilot has the choice of conducting a flight under either instrument or visual rules, and the flight can only be conducted under one set of rules at a time. Thus an IFR flight cannot execute a VFR approach unless the IFR flight plan is cancelled.

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5. Summary of differences between Visual, VMC and VFR approaches.

	Visual Approach	VMC Approach (VMS descend)	VFR Approach
Type of flight	Only IFR	Both controlled IFR and controlled VFR	Only VFR
Responsibility regarding separation	ATC responsible for separation	Pilot responsible for Collision Avoidance	Pilot is responsible for Collision Avoidance except when flying in an airspace where it is subject to Air Traffic Control Service
Period	Applicable H24	Applicable HJ	Applicable HJ

Note: See AIC 1/95 dated October 23, 1995, classification of airspaces in the Netherlands Antilles.

CANCEL AIC 2/97 dated January 8, 1997