



CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY  
OF THE PHILIPPINES

# **ADVISORY CIRCULAR**

## **AC 02-004**

### **APPLICATION & PROCESS: ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY TESTING**

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#### **SECTION 1 GENERAL**

##### **1.1 PURPOSE**

This advisory circular (AC) provides guidance for individuals and organizations for compliance with the English language proficiency and testing requirements specified in Part 2 of the Philippines Civil Aviation Regulation.

##### **1.2 STATUS OF THIS ADVISORY CIRCULAR**

This is an original issuance of this AC.

##### **1.3 BACKGROUND**

- A. The use (or misuse) of language has been determined to contribute directly or indirectly to accidents. At other times, language is a link in the chain of events which exacerbates the problem. There are three ways that languages can be a contributing factor in accidents and incidents—
- 1) Incorrect use of standardized phraseologies;
  - 2) Lack of plain language proficiency; and
  - 3) The use of more than one language in the same airspace.
- B. The International Civil Aviation Organization has adopted language proficiency Standards to ensure a minimum English language proficiency for international air traffic control communications.
- C. As a signatory to the ICAO Convention, Philippines complies with the these Standards as outlined in this advisory circular.

##### **1.4 APPLICABILITY**

This AC is applicable to all individuals who intend to exercise unrestricted privileges of certain licenses issued by the CAAP. These licenses include—

- 1) Private pilots of aeroplanes, helicopters, powered lift and airships;
- 2) Commercial pilots of aeroplanes, helicopters, powered lift and airships;
- 3) All holders of instrument ratings;
- 4) Airline transport pilot of aeroplanes and helicopters;

- Advisory Circulars are intended to provide advice and guidance to illustrate a means, but not necessarily the only means, of complying with the regulations, or to explain certain regulatory requirements by providing informative, interpretative and explanatory material.
- Where a regulation contains the words “prescribed by the Authority,” the AC maybe considered to “prescribe” a viable method of compliance, but status of that “prescription” is always “guidance” (never regulation).

- 5) Flight instructors for aeroplanes, helicopters and instruments;
- 6) Aeronautical station operators;
- 7) Air traffic controllers; and
- 8) All other persons who elect to have a license endorsement for radiotelephone operator privileges.

## 1.5 RELATED REGULATIONS

The following regulations are directly applicable to the guidance contained in this advisory circular—

- PCAR Part 2, Personnel Licensing

## 1.6 RELATED PUBLICATIONS

For further information on this topic, individuals are invited to consult the following publications—

- 1) International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)
  - ◆ Annex 1, Personnel Licensing
  - ◆ Document 9835-AN/453, Manual on the Implementation of ICAO Language Proficiency Requirements
  - ◆ Circular 318, Language Testing Criteria for Global Harmonization
  - ◆ Circular 323, Guidelines for Aviation English Training Programmes

Copies may be obtained from Document Sales Unit, ICAO, 999 University Street, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H3C 5H7.

## 1.7 DEFINITIONS & ACRONYMS

### 1.7.1 DEFINITIONS

A. The following definitions are used in this advisory circular—

- 1) **Accent.** A distinctive pronunciation of a language which is usually associated with a geographical region (for first language speakers) or with the phonological influence of another mother tongue (for second or foreign language speakers). All speakers of all languages have an accent.
- 2) **Dialect.** A distinctive variety of a language, usually associated with social or geographical distinctions, which is characterized by differences in accent, vocabulary and grammar with regard to other varieties of the same language.
- 3) **Language proficiency skills.** The knowledge and abilities which impact on the capacity of a given individual to communicate spontaneously, accurately, intelligibly, meaningfully and appropriately in a given language
- 4) **Operational rater or Operational assessor.** A rater/assessor whose assessment will focus not only on the linguistic features of a candidate's performance but also on the appropriateness of a candidate's performance in a test with regard to professional standards and procedures (compare with "language rater/assessor").
- 5) **Plain language.** The spontaneous, creative and non-coded use of a given natural language
- 6) **Response.** The candidate's linguistic performance elicited by the input of a test item (e.g. an answer to a question).
- 7) **Test delivery.** The physical means by which test input is made available to the test-taker during test administration (e.g. paper documents, computer screen, audio sound-source, face-to-face encounter, etc.).

- 8) **Test examiner.** A suitably qualified and trained person who assigns a score to a candidate's performance in a test based on a judgement usually involving the matching of features of the performance to descriptors on a rating scale.
- 9) **Test-taker.** The person who is tested.

### 1.7.2 ACRONYMS

The following acronyms are used in this manual—

- 1) **AEPT** – Aviation English Proficiency Test
- 2) **AOC** – Air Operator Certificate
- 3) **CAAP** – Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines
- 4) **ICAO** – International Civil Aviation Organization
- 5) **PCAR** – Philippines Civil Aviation Regulation
- 6) **SARPs** – ICAO Standards and Recommended Practices

## SECTION 2 PHILIPPINES AVIATION LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY POLICY

### 2.1 MINIMUM ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

All holders of Philippines PEL licenses listed in the “Applicability” section of this advisory circular must satisfactorily complete English-language proficiency testing in a manner acceptable to the CAAP.

PCAR Part 2 specifies the ICAO Level 4 English language proficiency requirement for each of the licenses identified in this AC.

### 2.2 COMMON LANGUAGE IN COCKPIT

A. The PCARs require that flight crews of Philippines AOC holders must have a common language where all members of the crew have a minimum language proficiency of Level 4.

PCAR Part 2 requires that an AOC holder employing crews must ensure that the operational common language is at least ICAO Level 4 (English).

B. At the present time, that language must be English, the only language proficiency that is tested by the CAAP.

### 2.3 CORRECT USE OF STANDARDIZED PHRASEOLOGIES

A. The CAAP is committed to the use of standard ICAO phraseologies in aviation communications. In some countries, the only English words that controllers clearly understand are the ICAO recommended phrases.

The purpose of phraseologies is to provide clear, concise, unambiguous language to communicate messages of a routine nature.

B. Studies of real en-route radiotelephony communications revealed that 70 per cent of all speech acts uttered by native and non-native speakers, and for which a phraseology is prescribed, are not compliant with the recognized standards.

For phraseologies to have the most significant safety impact, all parties need to use ICAO standardized phraseology

## 2.4 VALIDATION & CONVERSION

- A. Flight crew members applying for a Philippines PEL license based on validation of a foreign license that has been annotated with English-language proficiency will be issued a Philippines license with such an annotation.
- B. Flight crew members applying for a foreign license or ratings to be converted through validation to a Philippines license must satisfactorily complete the CAAP language proficiency testing process.

## SECTION 3 ASSESSING LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

- A. Philippines uses a structured assessment process to determine English language proficiency of PEL license holders consisting of satisfactory completion of either—
  - 1) A formal test administered by trained CAAP personnel, called the “Aviation English Proficiency Test (AEPT), to determine the English language proficiency of PEL license holders; or
  - 2) A formal aviation English-language proficiency test administered by an internationally recognized organization.
 

The CAAP maintains a list of organizations that are acceptable for this testing.
- B. The ICAO SARPs outline 6 levels of language proficiency. For the purpose of administration of the CAAP language proficiency program only 2 levels will be assigned based on an CAAP administered AEPT—
  - 1) “Operational” (corresponding to ICAO Levels 4 and 5); or
  - 2) “Below Operational” (corresponding to ICAO Levels 1-3)
- C. The following qualification and recurrent testing requirements apply to the results of language proficiency testing—
  - 1) Those assessed at the Below Operational level do not qualify for a Philippines crew or air traffic controller licence.
  - 2) Those assessed at the Operational level must be re-tested every 3 years;
  - 3) Those assessed at the Expert level require no further testing;
 

The CAAP does not maintain the testing capability to give an valid assessment of an “Expert” English language speaker without traces of dialect or accent.
- D. The CAAP will accept an “Expert” assessment resulting from testing by an internationally recognized language testing organization.
 

Contact the CAAP to determine the acceptability of a test and testing organization before submitting to such a test.
- E. The acceptability of such a test will be based on the following four characteristics as an appropriate assessment of aviation language testing—
  - 1) The test must be a proficiency test of speaking and listening.
  - 2) The test must be based on the ICAO Rating Scale and holistic descriptors.
  - 3) The test must test speaking and listening proficiency in a context appropriate to aviation.
  - 4) The test must test language use in a broader context than in the use of ICAO phraseologies alone.

## SECTION 4 TESTING METHODS & STANDARDS

- A. The test is a proficiency test of speaking and listening. It is scored using a rating scale and holistic descriptors developed by ICAO.
- It tests language in a broader context beyond the use of ICAO phraseologies.
  - The test is designed to measure language proficiency in an aviation context.
- B. The AEPT will focus on assessment of the test taker's —
- 1) Listening comprehension
  - 2) Speaking ability; and
  - 3) Responses to different scenarios
- C. The language proficiency testing will include situations designed to invoke the following holistic descriptors, allowing the test taker to—
- 1) Communicate effectively in voice-only (telephone/ radiotelephone) and in face-to-face situations;
  - 2) Communicate on common, concrete and work-related topics with accuracy and clarity;
  - 3) Use appropriate communicative strategies to exchange messages and to recognize and resolve misunderstandings (e.g. to check, confirm, or clarify information) in a general or work-related context;
  - 4) Handle successfully and with relative ease the linguistic challenges presented by a complication or unexpected turn of events that occurs within the context of a routine work situation or communicative task with which they are otherwise familiar; and
  - 5) Use a dialect or accent which is intelligible to the aeronautical community.
- D. The following minimum standards must be met for all 6 areas of verbal communications during the course of the test—
- These standards paraphrase the ICAO Level 4 "Operational" language proficiency scale.
- 1) **Pronunciation:** The test taker will not be expected to 'sound like a native (English) speaker' but their local accent/dialect must only "sometimes interfere with ease of understanding", the core sounds of words should most of the time be clear.
  - 2) **Structure:** The test take should demonstrate at least basic English grammar (verbs, word order etc) competency without making mistakes, but for "unusual circumstances" small errors can be made, but it must be understandable to overall meaning.
  - 3) **Vocabulary:** Ability to communicate in Aviation context. if in doubt of words the test taker must be able to "paraphrase successfully" using communication strategies, e.g. "container for animals" instead of "cage."
  - 4) **Fluency:** Good speed of communication should be made, although when changing from phraseology to plain English there may on small occasions be a pause or a small mistake made.
    - ◆ "Fillers should not be distracting," which means words like "you know" and "like" do not interrupt flow of interaction.
  - 5) **Comprehension:** The test taker should for the most part understand what is spoken to them and then for them to respond or take action.
    - ◆ However, if there is a non-routine situation the test taker should be able to get around it by a system of checking, confirming and clarifying.

- 6) **Interactions:** There should be “immediate and informative” interaction between the test taker and pilot/controller, the test taker must never stop communicating in any type of interaction (routine or non-routine).

◆ If there are “misunderstandings”, test taker must be aware of this and check, confirm and clarify.

- E. A trained test examiner conducts the Aviation English Proficiency Test, presenting several different scenarios and ask the candidate to respond as if he or she were part of the scenario (“role-play”).

The test consists of up to 20 responses and takes about 35 minutes to complete.

## SECTION 5 TAKING THE TEST

### 5.1 SCHEDULING THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY TEST

- A. Individuals wishing to complete the test should contact the CAAP Flight Standards Inspectorate Service to schedule the test. The test taker will be provided a date and time for the test, as well as instructions for the completion of the test.

### 5.2 FORMAT OF THE TEST

- A. A trained test examiner conducts the AEPT.
- 1) The test ideally should be conducted over a telephone.
  - 2) The test examiner and test taker should be located in different rooms and a telephone or similar device should be used for communication between the two.
  - 3) It should not be conducted in a face-to-face manner.
  - 4) The test examiner will present several different scenarios and will ask the test taker to respond as if they were part of the scenario (“role-play”). The test consists of up to 25 responses and will take up to 35 minutes.
- B. The test examiner is not at liberty to deviate from the test script. However candidates may ask that a question be repeated.

### 5.3 TEST EQUIPMENT

- A. To take the AEPT test, the test taker will need —
- This advisory circular;
  - A pen or pencil.
  - A piece of paper to make notes; and
  - The maps in Appendix A of this advisory circular.
- B. It is very important that the test taker have a PRINTED copy of—
- 1) This advisory circular; or
  - 2) At least Appendix A to this AC.

### 5.4 SCORING OF THE TEST (CAAP ADMINISTERED)

- A. The test taker should receive their results from the test examiner shortly after the test is completed.

- The test taker may be given a copy of the results to process additional temporary privileges.
  - Test takers should receive their formal results within three weeks after successful completion of the test.
- B. A letter will be sent from the CAAP with a single score for the entire test; you will not receive a score for each spoken response.
- C. The test examiner cannot give the test taker his / her score over the telephone, but you can contact the examiner later on after the assessment calculations have been completed.
- D. Your score will be at one of two levels
- 1) Operational
  - 2) Below-operational

## SECTION 6 SAMPLE TEST & QUESTIONS

- A. When you take the test, the Examiner will introduce himself or herself and ask you for your name and Test Taker ID number, licence or file number. You will be asked if you have all of the materials needed for the test.
- This introductory conversation is not scored.
- B. Then the Examiner will say:
- **“THIS IS A TEST OF SPEAKING ABILITY. IT IS NOT A TEST OF AVIATION KNOWLEDGE. ONLY YOUR SPEAKING AND LISTENING ABILITY WILL BE SCORED. THE SITUATIONS YOU ARE ASKED TO IMAGINE IN THIS TEST ARE FICTITIOUS AND MAY NOT SEEM REALISTIC TO YOU. NEVERTHELESS, ANSWER THE QUESTIONS TO THE BEST OF YOUR ABILITY.**
- **“IN THIS TEST YOU WILL BE ASKED TO IMAGINE THAT YOU ARE IN CERTAIN SITUATIONS. TRY TO SPEAK AS IF THAT SITUATION WERE TAKING PLACE.”**
- C. The test is based on scenarios. There are five types of scenarios on the test—
- Each scenario will consist of several questions. The test will contain up to 25 questions.
- Routine procedural
  - plain language
  - Non-routine procedural Routine plain language
  - Urgency/emergency
  - Repeating of clearances

### 6.1 ROUTINE PROCEDURAL SAMPLE QUESTION

- A. The Test Examiner might say—
- **IMAGINE THAT YOU ARE FLYING AN AIRCRAFT WITH THE REGISTRATION NUMBER D9-BGE. YOU ARE ON THE PARKING RAMP OF THE FIXED BASE OPERATOR, BARNES AVIATION, READY TO TAXI. (REFER TO APPENDIX A, ITEM 1) CONTACT TOWER AND ASK FOR TAXI CLEARANCE. I WILL BE TOWER.**
- B. The test taker might respond—
- **HOPEWELL TOWER, THIS IS DELTA 9-BRAVO GOLF ECHO. AT BARNES AVIATION, REQUEST TAXI FOR TAKEOFF.**

### 6.2 NON-ROUTINE PROCEDURAL SAMPLE QUESTION

- A. The Test Examiner might say—
- **IMAGINE YOU ARE GETTING READY TO TAKE OFF FROM AN AIRPORT AND YOU SEE A DONKEY ON THE RUNWAY. RADIO THE TOWER CONTROLLER TO INFORM HIM OF THE SITUATION.**

- B. The test taker might respond—

■ **HOPEWELL TOWER, THIS IS DELTA 9-BRAVO GOLF ECHO. THERE'S A DONKEY ON RUNWAY ZERO-EIGHT NEAR THE RUN-UP AREA.**

### 6.3 ROUTINE PLAIN LANGUAGE SAMPLE QUESTION

- A. The Test Examiner might say—

■ **"NOW LOOK AT THE DIAGRAM OF HOPEWELL AIRPORT (REFER TO APPENDIX A, ITEM 1) OF THIS ADVISORY CIRCULAR. IMAGINE THAT YOU ARE A LICENSED PILOT AND ARE APPROACHING THE HOPEWELL AIRPORT FROM THE EAST AFTER A CROSS-COUNTRY SIGHTSEEING FLIGHT. DUE TO THE WIND CONDITIONS, YOU HAVE BEEN ADVISED TO LAND ON RUNWAY ZERO EIGHT. I WILL BE YOUR PASSENGER.**

- B. The Test Examiner acting in the role as a passenger might say—

■ **WHY AREN'T WE LANDING NOW?**

- C. The test taker might respond—

■ **SINCE THE WIND IS COMING FROM THE EAST, WE'RE GOING TO LAND ON A DIFFERENT RUNWAY - IT'S BEST TO HEAD INTO THE WIND. WE'LL BE LANDING ON RUNWAY ZERO EIGHT, WHICH IS AT THE WEST END OF THE AIRPORT. DON'T WORRY THOUGH; WE'LL BE ON THE GROUND SHORTLY.**

### 6.4 EMERGENCY PLAIN LANGUAGE

- A. The Test Examiner might say—

■ **IMAGINE THAT YOU ARE A LICENSED PILOT AND HAVE JUST DEPARTED THE HOPEWELL AIRPORT FOR A CROSS-COUNTRY SIGHTSEEING FLIGHT. YOU ARE 10 MILES NORTH OF THE AIRPORT. ONE OF YOUR PASSENGERS BECOMES ILL AND YOU NEED TO RETURN TO THE AIRPORT. ADVISE HOPEWELL TOWER. I WILL BE HOPEWELL TOWER.**

- B. You might respond—

■ **HOPEWELL TOWER, THIS IS DELTA 9-BRAVO GOLF ECHO. 10 MILES NORTH, I HAVE AN ILL PASSENGER ONBOARD. I AM RETURNING TO HOPEWELL AIRPORT. REQUEST LANDING CLEARANCE AND AN AMBULANCE TO MEET THE PLANE.**

### 6.5 LISTENING & REPEATING

- A. The Test Examiner might say—

■ **ASSUME THAT YOU ARE RECEIVING A CLEARANCE FROM JOHNSON INTERNATIONAL TOWER. (REFER TO APPENDIX A, ITEM 2)**

■ **DELTA 9 - BRAVO GOLF ECHO, FROM THE TERMINAL, TAXI TO RUNWAY35 VIA TAXIWAY PAPA, CROSS RUNWAY ZERO EIGHT TO TAXIWAY KILO**

- B. You might respond—

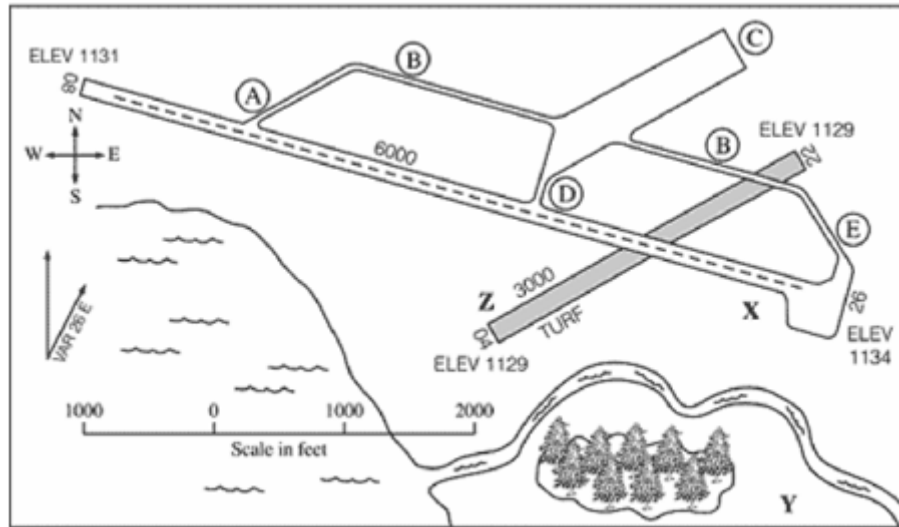
■ **DELTA 9-BRAVO GOLF ECHO, TAXI TO RUNWAY 35, VIA TAXIWAY PAPA CLEARED TO CROSS RUNWAY ZERO EIGHT TO TAXIWAY KILO.**

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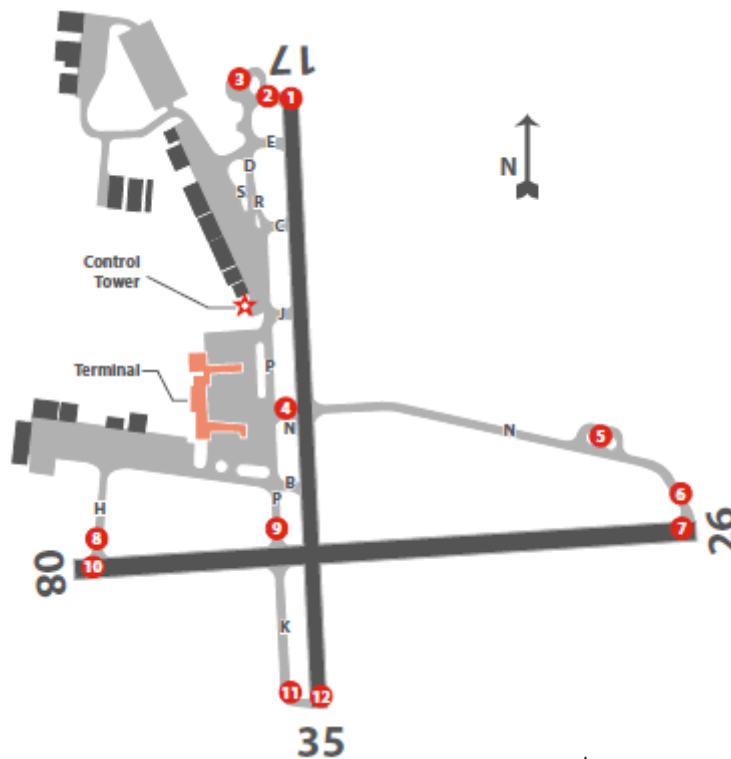


**APPENDIX A**  
**Diagrams for Language Proficiency Test**

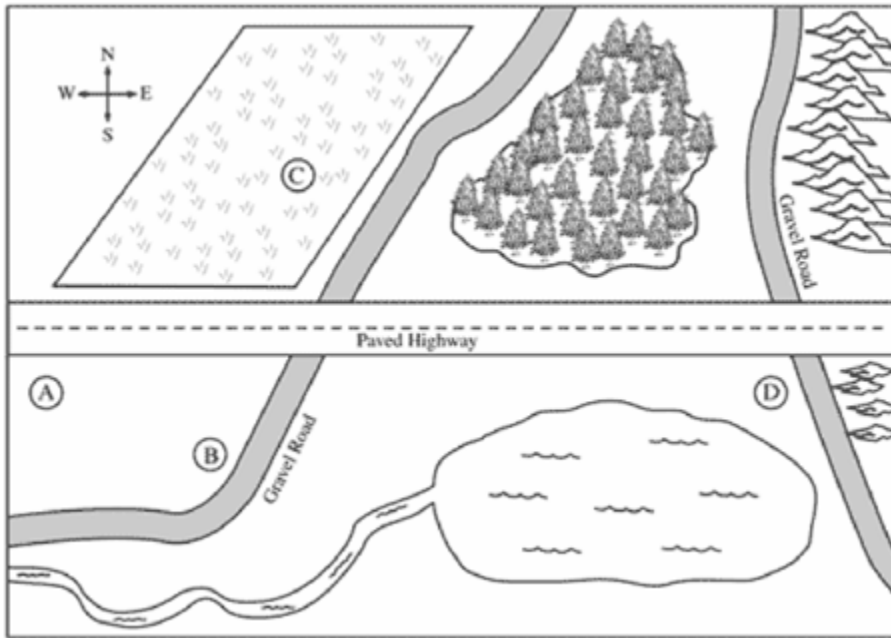
**1. Airport Diagram: Hopewell Airport**



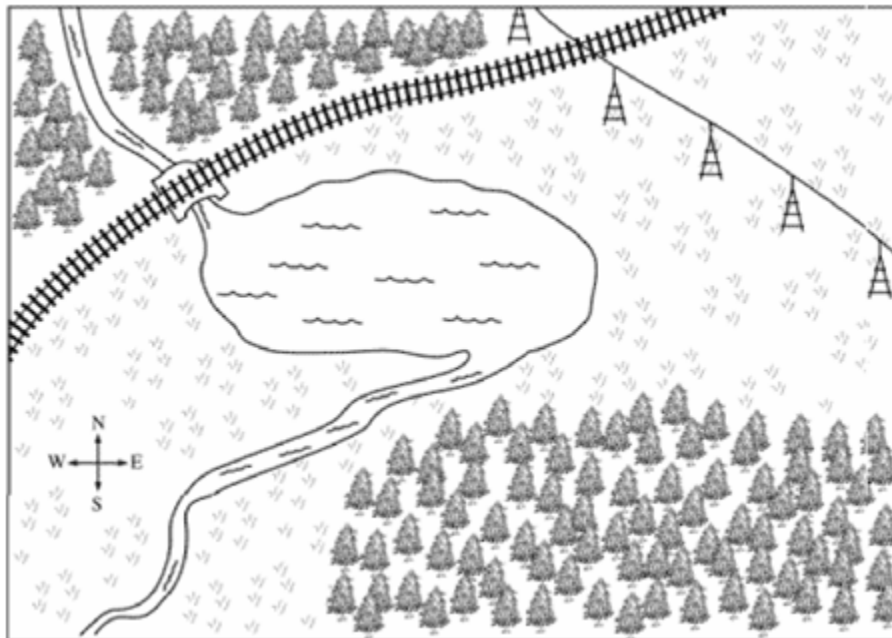
**2. Aerodrome Diagram: Johnson International Airport**



3. Terrain Map A



4. Terrain Map B



End of Advisory Circular

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RAMON S. GUTIERREZ

Director General

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